



Profiles	Teaching
Name	Jamie Scott
Age	29
Job	VSO volunteer teacher

Working within a very different environment and culture is a huge challenge and, although difficult at times, is extremely rewarding. The attitude of the students and their desire to learn is inspirational.

Career path and qualifications so far

In my final year at school I focused on Chemistry, Maths and Physics and was accepted to do a BSc course in Chemistry at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. During the four year course I had the opportunity to do an industrial placement on materials with memory properties. I enjoyed my time at Strathclyde so much that I stayed to complete my PhD (three years) and then moved to University of Cambridge for two years' postdoctoral work on the synthesis of molecules that occur in nature. I then accepted a two year placement working with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) as a science teacher. I am based in Kenya and teach chemistry and physics in a rural secondary school.

Has anything you've done been especially useful in your career?

During my time at Strathclyde and Cambridge I was involved in teaching small groups of students and supervising laboratory practicals. I really enjoyed this first taste of being a teacher and felt I was able to share some of the enthusiasm that I have for science with my students. Having the opportunity to present our research group's results at international conferences has allowed me to travel to Europe and Japan and gave me confidence and a taste for travel.

What is a VSO volunteer teacher?

VSO volunteer teachers work in developing countries and aim to improve the opportunities for disadvantaged people by contributing to developments in the quality of, and access to, education. VSO as an organisation contributes to development by sending qualified professionals rather than financial donations to parts of the world where they are needed. It actively encourages the sharing of skills and experience.

Day to day activities

Teaching and planning lessons with very limited resources take up the majority of my time, but no two days are the same. Coaching the school football team, learning to ride a motorcycle and setting up a sustainable library and laboratory with the school keeps me busy.

Further qualifications

Due to the shortage of teachers in many developing countries, especially in the areas of maths and science, VSO has in the past posted volunteers who have a BSc even if they have no additional teaching qualifications. However, a PGCE, BEd or equivalent is now usually required. Prior to departure, VSO provides a range of courses to help you to prepare for change and life in a developing country. For me, this included a science teaching course, which involved visiting and teaching lessons in a UK school.

Why a VSO volunteer teacher?

I have had the benefit of an extensive education and recognise the benefits and also how fortunate I am to have had these opportunities. Becoming a VSO volunteer allowed me to share some of the skills I had obtained and most importantly, to give something back and make a real difference. Living within a poor community has broadened my outlook and given me a unique perspective on development issues.

What do you most enjoy about your job?

Working within a very different environment and culture is a huge challenge and, although difficult at times, is extremely rewarding. The attitude of the students and their desire to learn is inspirational and the challenges involved in coping with a life so different from what I'm used to makes it a huge adventure. I'm never bored!

What other skills do you need?

Adaptability, flexibility, perseverance and a sense of humour are all essential. If you seek adventure, enjoy a challenge and are motivated by the prospect of living and working in a community with a very different outlook and culture, then perhaps VSO is for you.

Why is it useful to study a science subject at university?

To teach a science subject effectively, the experience obtained during a degree course is invaluable. VSO offers a range of maths and science teaching placements and a qualification in science – preferably a degree – is required.

Further information/contacts

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