

## **M.Sc. in Work and Organisational Psychology/Behaviour**

**Name:** Clodagh Dwan O'Reilly

**Course:** M.Sc. in Work & Organisational Psychology

**Year Graduated:** January 2014, graduation ceremony.

**Full-time or Part-time:** Full-Time

**Current role (and organization)** Safety Psychologist with the ESB.

### **Motivation for starting this course**

After completing my undergraduate degree in Psychology, I was unsure about my next steps – what division of Psychology I was interested in, what was best suited to me or how to go about getting involved in the area. It was during my role working in the private sector as an Executive Recruiter that I saw the value of using my background in Psychology to benefit the business and how it gave me an edge in my corporate role. I was keen to add to these skills and the M.Sc. in W&OP programme outcomes offered the blend I was looking for so after some research I took the leap into the full time masters programme.

### **Most enjoyable aspects**

The more enjoyable aspects for me were the application of psychological concepts and research methodologies to business. For me, it showed the value of approaching your business strategy from this perspective.

I enjoyed re-engaging with the academic world, and up skilling myself through the assignments and projects. These not only re-enforced my confidence in my own ability since my bachelor's degree several years previous, but also tested my comfort zones. Support was always there from all the staff and students – you can really feel that they want you to learn and succeed in the course so that you can apply this learning to the world of work in a very practical and hands-on manner.

A huge amount of learning over the course came from other students who were working at the time or had come from an established career already. The knowledge that these students brought with them further helped to bridge the gap between course modules and their relevance to work, be it in entrepreneurship, SMEs or global companies.

### **Most beneficial components**

- The programme places emphasis on effective teamwork, group work, strong skills and the presentation of information that is meaningful to the audience – all directly applicable to the type of role I have held since completion.
- Incorporating psychological concepts and theory with that of business best practice, and making this meaningful to management

- Confidence to fully design and deliver training/workshops to large groups
- Research skills: I currently gather data from across the organization to support the work of my team in the overall business strategy (including diagnosing organizational culture, behavioral observation, focus groups, workshops etc.)
- Change management theory and tools have proven key to my current role, along with organizational culture diagnosis and behavioral analysis theories.

### **How it helped in securing a job?**

Successfully completing this masters was fundamental in securing my current role as a Safety Psychologist with the ESB.

To be shortlisted for the role, applicants needed an academic background in either Organisational Psychology or behavioral analysis in a corporate setting and work experience in the field. I secured an interview on the merit of my qualifications, as at that stage I only had 3 months of work experience in this space.

The interview itself was in two parts: the first was a workshop that you had to design and deliver on a safety related topic to a group including future team members and members of the management team from across the business. Following that there was a panel interview based around 4 key competences.

The confidence and skills to research, design and deliver the workshop on a new topic was due in large part to the master's programme. It not only gave weight and respect to my candidate profile, it gave me the tangible skills they were looking for in a successful candidate. On securing the role, my manager was open about how it was the success of my interview workshop that secured me the role over other candidates, and the trust that my qualifications meant I could tackle the challenges of the role in the months ahead.

My role is primarily focused on driving and implementing a behavioral safety programme across the ESB business. To support this I design and deliver leadership skills training to managers. I engage with the staff on the front line directly on how to use learning from psychology to control risks in their environment. As a team we work at ensuring this behavioral approach is incorporated in the business' strategies and that the organization as a whole is supporting this approach to work. Although my role is varied, I have come back to my notes and readings from the masters several times to compliment the work that I am doing here.

Prior to the ESB I worked as the Teaching Assistant for Psychology, HR, HRM and Organisational Psychology in DCU. I was awarded this position before my thesis and final grades were released, so again on the merit of the course itself and from demonstrating my knowledge and ability to teach students on the core principals of the subject during the interview process.