



Phizzi professionals

Dr Monifa Phillips: Part-qualified patent attorney

School

I enjoyed maths and textiles at GCSE and wanted to become a mathematician. I picked maths, further maths, chemistry and physics as AS-levels, but didn't enjoy maths as much as I'd hoped. Chemistry and physics were cool though! I found the jump from GCSE to AS-level really challenging. I got a C in my physics AS-level, but I stuck with it.



What next?

I got a place studying chemical physics at Sheffield University but changed to physics after my first year. I got my degree and then went on to complete at PhD in materials physics. I was the first black woman to graduate with a PhD in physics from Glasgow University, which feels great and not great.



Why physics?

My interest in science meant I was encouraged to be a medical doctor, but I knew that wasn't for me! I enjoyed chemistry and physics at A-level, so I went for chemical physics at university so I could do a bit of both! Physics is a good for demonstrating skills in analysis, problem-solving and science communication.



And now?

I'm training to become a patent attorney, which involves studying intellectual property law and helping inventors gain legal protection for their inventions. After years of studying physics, I was keen to broaden my skills and learn more about other fields of technology, and to learn more about business and law.



Physics in practice

My job has a huge science communication element to it. Patent applications explain the technical ideas behind an invention, and in order to obtain a patent, patent attorneys engage in written discussion with patent examiners about these technical ideas, as well as patent law.



Advice for young scientists

It's important to have fun with your studies! Be sure to ask questions and take opportunities to develop any skills you'd like to work on. I think those are the most important characteristics – scientists include loads of different types of people with loads of different types of interests. If you're interested, go for it!

