The Ogden Trust
making physics matter

Phizzi professionals

Ashar Aslam he/him/they/them: PhD student in Tropical Meteorology

School

I was obsessed with physics, maths and geography and took all three at A-level. My geography teacher, who I had for six out of my seven years at secondary school, suggested I look into geoscience courses at university. Low and behold, I found a subject which encompassed all of my academic interests!

What next?

I have had issues understanding and balancing the various aspects of my identity, such as my culture, sexual orientation and neurodivergence. However, I'm grateful that people around me, from friends to lecturers, were there to provide support to enable me to thrive. I graduated with an integrated Master's degree in Earth Sciences from the University of Oxford.

Why physics?

Scientific method has always intrigued me; it's as if there is a special formula to understand the processes around us. You can apply physics to understand raw mechanisms but then use knowledge from humanities/social sciences to put them into context and make them understandable to a wider audience.

And now?

I'm now a PhD student at the University of Leeds, specialising in tropical meteorology. I loved watching science documentaries growing up, especially those covering extreme weather events. Being able to find the bridge between the physical sciences and implications on society through the detrimental impacts of severe weather, was a key driver in going down this path.

Physics in practice

I am researching how extreme rainfall in Southeast Asia is regulated by interactions between the tropics and higher latitudes. To understand the physics of the environment, I use a mixture of satellite, radar and observational datasets. It involves a lot of coding but has the potential to incorporate fieldwork – think releasing weather balloons and getting to fly aboard meteorological aircraft!

Advice for young scientists

The best characteristic for a young scientist I think is to be able to ask questions – there truly is no such thing as a stupid question! This can be about something you don't understand, or even a way of expressing your ambition to find new wonders in the science around you. Be curious and you'll go far!

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