

# Finding out about research

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO LIKE UNTIL YOU DO IT. **SMART START** CHATS TO PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCHER EMERALD QUINN ABOUT WHERE SHE IS AND HOW SHE GOT THERE.

**E**merald grew up in Port Douglas in tropical Queensland and spent a lot of time in and on the water (her dad was a research diver and her mum worked on a tourist boat).

Emi was an excellent student – particularly in maths and the sciences – and enjoyed studying, so university seemed like the right way to go. But exactly what to do?

“I had no idea what I wanted to do,” says Emi, 23. “I liked everything. It was hard coming down to it and choosing a topic.”

Her Year 12 marks were top-notch, which was one of the reasons she headed to Brisbane and started a law degree at the University of Queensland.

All was going swimmingly, except for the fact she found out she wasn't actually terribly keen on the law stuff.

“I just didn't love law, and I didn't want to do it if I didn't love it. So I decided to try a few other things.”

It's not as if she wasn't sure. She'd had a thorough taste of what law offered – including travelling to the US and working for a congressman in Washington DC, and even doing an internship at the Smithsonian!

But meanwhile, a first-year psychology paper she took during her law studies suddenly opened a big door.

“I don't know how anyone could not love studying psychology.”

Psychology was such a perfect fit for Emi that she finished a bachelor in science (psychology) then finished an honours in psychology – along the way picking up three ‘Emi Awards’: the APS award (top mark in psychology), the McBride Award (best social psychology thesis), and the Henry Law (statistics) Prize.

During her degree, Emi did volunteer work for the Silver Cord Service (a telephone support service for the elderly).

Now she's enjoying working as a psychology researcher at UQ. In particular, she loves starting with a question and then designing a study. She likes dealing with people, and because psychology is the science that deals with mental processes and behaviour, she's found a great match.

Emi's got a number of career options open to her: doing a PhD overseas, perhaps in the UK, and either working in clinical psychology (where she might talk to people about their issues) or in organisational psychology (where she might work with a business on HR or marketing or a raft of other things).

Her advice for those not sure what to study at uni? She says you should just study something and sample as many things as possible: “Study for a general degree – and then you can try a few things and get credit for them (in another degree) later.” ●

## WHAT SORT OF THINGS MIGHT SOMEONE LIKE EMI DO?

Emi has been helping out a UQ research team test how human memory is influenced by sponsorships. The idea for the research came about because there seemed to be unexplained sponsor-product pairings, such as cereal-makers sponsoring car racing.

The project was a unique marketing/psychology project to examine the effectiveness of sponsorships while also testing ideas about memory. The study concluded that advertisers don't need an obvious link to a product or brand – like a sports drink sponsoring football – to be successful. Consumers will remember sponsors if the link is explained and a good feeling is generated. In some sponsorships, customers don't even have to remember the company or brand, there just needs to be a ‘good feeling’ generated around the brand.

## EMI'S KEY CAREER STEPS

- Started a law degree but realised she didn't like it
- Uni revealed a new love – psychology.
- Transferred studies and refocused.
- Has turned her love of psychology into a career.



## WHAT SORT OF THESIS MIGHT SOMEONE LIKE EMI WRITE?

When you are pushing on for a post-graduate degree (honours, masters, PhD etc), you may well need to write a thesis (a really long, research-based essay).

Emi's honours thesis dealt with how Indigenous Australians view and respond to their social disadvantage. It looked at all sorts of (frankly, complicated) things dealing with group affiliation and how this might affect the way the sample group of Indigenous Australians views past atrocities, how they might rally for social change, how they might assign guilt, and how they view their own ‘groupings’.

When you finish your thesis – if it's a good one like Emi's was – it might be ‘presented’ at a conference. In this case, Emi's thesis was presented to the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology.