Beth Clark is in the second year of her PhD, researching evidence synthesis methods used for investigating consumer behaviour. She completed her MSc in Food Marketing at Newcastle in 2012 and then went to work for a local food business, marketing their two in house brands.

“A member of the marketing staff pointed me towards that job opportunity and suggested I should apply,” she said. “It was good to get some experience working in a business but I did keep in touch with people at the School and after a year or so I was missing being involved in research. Because they knew I was interested in going back into that kind of environment and they remembered me from my MSc, they let me know when the School was recruiting teaching assistants.”

Beth was interviewed, even managing to persuade some members of the panel to sample insects as part of her presentation on insect protein. Her year in industry also stood her in good stead and she was appointed to a teaching assistant post.

She was keen to get back to serious research but a couple of applications for funded PhD’s were unsuccessful. Then the School’s Professor of Food and Society spotted an opportunity for Beth to be involved in two high profile projects, using her PhD research on consumer methodology as a key element of the work.

“I was in the right place at the right time,” said Beth, “when there was money available from the projects to employ a researcher and it fitted with what I wanted to do. So it all worked out well.” She is investigating how the methodology used in consumer research might be made more robust - how the kinds of quantitative approaches in medicine, such as meta-analyses, can be applied in consumer research and how qualitative and quantitative data can be combined, for example.

She is now on track to complete her PhD by the end of 2017, with plenty of encouragement from her colleagues in the Food and Society Research Group.

“The School has always supported me and made opportunities available – for example, for training,” Beth explained. “Though it has been interesting to compare the different information I received as a member of staff, then as a research student. I noticed that students don’t have the same access to the range of communications. But I’m now in a position to highlight those differences and I’ve found the School very receptive to my comments and positive in their response so I have the sense that things are becoming more inclusive for everyone.”