Name: **Elle McMaster**

Job Title: **Research assistant**

Organisation: **Frontier Science Scotland**

Qualifications: **6 Scottish Highers**
BSc (Hons) biochemistry

Salary: **£20,000 - £25,000**

Registers: **Registered Science Technician (RSciTech)**

About me and my job:

I work as a research assistant for a company that specialises in the management of clinical trials, particularly breast cancer-related trials. I work on different aspects of a clinical trial process from the case report form design, to the data management and data analysis. I am currently involved in managing the data for two phase III clinical trials and I collaborate with various global study team members to facilitate the resolution of data discrepancies to ensure that the data reported is of the highest quality. A major part of my job is working to 'Good Clinical Practice' (GCP) guidelines, a regulatory requirement of all clinical research. I also travel abroad regularly to attend conferences about the latest methods in clinical trials.

I have always enjoyed science from a young age but my high school biology teacher influenced my decision to pursue a biological career as he taught the subject in a fun and extremely interesting manner. I always enjoyed working in the laboratory at university and after graduating, I was determined to work in a research and development laboratory for a large pharmaceutical organisation. I applied online to several companies and was fortunate to be offered a position with LifeScan Scotland (Johnson & Johnson). I have been most surprised by the cost of running a clinical trial. On average, it costs $400,000,000 to run a global trial in the hope of bringing a new drug to the market. Even after the trial has been completed, there is no guarantee that the results of the trial will be a success and the drug will reach the pharmacy shelf.

Advice about the sector:

A good degree in a life science subject is essential and a post graduate qualification would be beneficial. Try to get experience and if this is not possible then do your homework and be well informed on the clinical research industry. The clinical trials industry is one of the most highly regulated and comes with a great deal of paperwork. Excellent organisational skills and attention to detail are essential. There are good opportunities to become a clinical research associate (CRA) or monitor as they are sometimes known. A CRA supervises the conduct of the trial by visiting study sites, such as hospitals and clinics, and checking the trial paperwork. This is a popular career choice as it can offer flexibility to work in either home-based or office-based roles. There are also opportunities to become a trials project manager, which offers an attractive salary and big responsibility.