

# HOW TO... ...MAKE THE MOST OF UNIVERSITY

Final-year biomedical science student at De Montfort University, **James Cooper**, provides an insight for prospective and current biomedical science students on how to maximise opportunities at university.

**S**tudying at university is a time of both enjoyment and enlightenment. This new environment provides a unique platform to embrace independence, meet new people, and continually develop yourself as a professional and an individual. If you are passionate about biomedical science, there is no doubt you will enjoy the experience, but to make the most of university you must be prepared to make sacrifices, work hard, and persevere through adversity.

Although it may seem a lifetime away upon starting the course, graduation is just around the corner, and for those looking to achieve their true potential, the question is, how do I maximise this opportunity?

## Be engaged

● **Failing to plan is planning to fail** Be organised and plan your time from the

outset. Acknowledge assignment deadlines, note key dates of practicals and dedicate time for revision.

● **Get involved** Find out what extra-curricular activities are available for students on your course. Is there opportunity to be a student representative? Could you join a society related to your course? If the answer is no, what is to stop you from creating this opportunity? It is important to partake in activities other than those expected of a biomedical science student, to exhibit what makes you exceptional.

● **Be enthusiastic** If a lecturer has presented, or conducts research on a topic you are interested in, now is the time to speak up. If you are genuine in your approach, there may be an opportunity to volunteer in their laboratory, or to give a related speech to your cohort. These are great experiences to showcase on your CV for employment or further study.

● **Don't be afraid to ask** Approach staff for advice if you are stuck on a topic. They

are there to be utilised and help you achieve. There is no such thing as a dumb question and if you have none to ask, are you sure you understand the content?

● **Attend trips or events** If your university has a scheme to travel abroad, take part in an exchange programme or attend an event related to biomedical science, grasp this chance while you can.

Expenditure can be a deterrent for some students, but partaking in a scheme or event highlights those who are devoted to the course. If some of the cost can be subsidised by an organisation or your university while you are a student, why not commence this feat before graduation?

● **Never give up** Not everything will go to plan. For one reason or another, you may be constrained for time when revising or writing an assignment. The best advice here is not to panic, remember – pressure makes diamonds, you can still achieve a brilliant grade if you work up until the deadline.

## If opportunity doesn't come knocking, build a door

This saying is more than appropriate for university students. Maybe you are lucky and opportunities to gain experience or enhance your CV are thrown at your feet; but often this is not the case and considerable effort is required to define your own career path. So where do you look first?

## Networking

● It is important to hit the ground running from the get-go at university and one of the top priorities should be to establish a good network among your peers.

Selecting a group of friends to study with will help to motivate you, offer a platform to discuss assignments, and support you throughout your studies.

● The next step is to regularly converse with your personal tutor. Arrange a meeting and get to know them. What may they have on offer? Are they part of a research group? Have they published an article you are interested in? Do they have external links within the NHS or in industry?

Any of these questions offer a potential gateway towards your future career. Founding a good relationship with your tutor is imperative to maximising your opportunity at university, as they write your reference and are your first port of call for assistance.

## How do you expand from the network offered at university?

● **Online** Create a professional Twitter account, using a suitable name and an appropriate photo to promote yourself as a biomedical science student.

Ideally, this should outline your aspirations for a future career, and could include photos of study-related trips, experiences and practicals for recognition by companies and universities.

● **Join a society outside of university** Joining a society as a student member expresses a passion for your chosen subject. Student membership fees are a minuscule investment

for the potential they offer from specific news within the community and conference-related information.

● **Attend a conference** Whether you travel alone or with friends, attending a conference demonstrates initiative. This does not just mean attending talks. Research who is presenting at the conference, prepare some questions to ask them, or act on your feet by engaging with people there. However you decide to approach this, the goal is to establish new




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connections that can provide future opportunities for jobs, work experience or further study.

## Work experience

It is competitive to attain a placement, but it is not impossible. Whether it be over the summer, or for a full year, gaining experience is crucial to enhance your career prospects. Prepare your CV and accompanying documents well beforehand and search for vacancies through your university, funded schemes, or via direct contact with a department or a company.

However, keep in mind that not all work experience will be paid. Like most things in life, you get out what you put in and volunteering for a short time in your early career will give you the edge over other students upon graduation. The more experience you gain, the more your CV will stand out from the crowd and more likely you are to achieve a foot in the door of your chosen career. 

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