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The University of Manchester

School of
Biological
Sciences

EMPLOYABILITY

employability.biosciences@manchester.ac.uk

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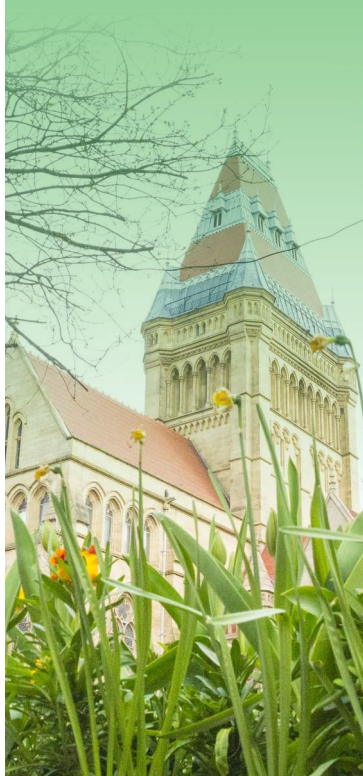
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Employability Newsletter.

This is the first edition of the Employability Newsletter for the 2018/19 academic year. It is produced by the Employability, Careers & Alumni intern (me). This newsletter will serve to advertise upcoming events that are all about enhancing your employability, as almost 50% of young people go on to higher education, meaning big competition for jobs. Hopefully you can find some answers about post-university life.

You need to be thinking about how employable you are right now. Your time at university will go quickly and you'll be entering the job market along with many others in the same position with the same qualifications. What will make you stand out from other graduates?

In this issue we will explore summer research experience placements which allow students to work in a laboratory over summer. It will also feature an interview with Jenn, a student who completed a placement year while studying Zoology here at UoM. This will give you some insight into what it's like to go on placement and what you can get out of it. It goes without saying that this is a great way to enhance your employability!

Also in this issue, I visited The Big Careers Fair. Careers fairs are a great way to understand what's on offer for graduates and help you figure out what you want to do post-university. They give you a great opportunity to speak to graduate employers. We have our own School of Biological Sciences careers fair coming up in February which is specifically

focussed on employers for bioscientists – make sure that you don't miss out! Further details will be circulated nearer the time.

Coming up at the end of November is the Meet the Professionals networking event. This is further explained in the newsletter. It gives you a chance to network which is invaluable for ensuring employability and allows you to make connections to people in industry.

Be sure to get involved in extracurricular activities at university. Joining sports clubs and societies is a great way to show you're sociable and have interests outside of academia. You could also strive to become a committee member for a society, a great example of your level of commitment and leadership qualities.

Furthermore, the School of Biological Sciences is running CV surgeries for Year 2 and final year students throughout the year that occur on Mondays and Wednesdays. I can speak from personal experience when I say these are very helpful for perfecting your CV or covering letter. Keep an eye out for the emails with booking information!

Remember to make the most out of your time at university! Have fun and work hard on your studies, but also start considering what happens when you graduate.

Harry Lord-Moulding

Employability, Careers & Alumni Intern



“ An excellent selling point to enhance your appeal to employers. ”

Summer Research Experience Placements.

It is becoming more and more difficult to stand out in the jobs market; a degree alone is no longer enough. Year-long placements are clearly a great way to boost your CV and your employability skills. However, you should also consider how you can use your summer break to the same effect. A good option may be a summer research experience placement. Whilst especially useful if you are considering a career in research, even if you decide that you don't want to work in a lab, it is an excellent selling point to enhance your appeal to employers. It exhibits how proactive you are and will help to make you stand out from the crowd.

There are two main routes you can gain this experience: through a specific programme run by a biosciences company that will take place at a partner university, or by self-arranging it in a university lab. For self-arranged projects, it may also be possible to secure funding! The company-run programmes will

usually cover all expenses, but will likely be more competitive. They include the Amgen Scholars programme which takes place at five top universities across Europe including Cambridge.

Self-arranged lab placements rely on you finding an academic supervisor from this university (or any UK university) and coming up with a project proposal, along with your supervisor. Societies such as the Biochemical Society, the British Pharmacological Society, and more specific groups such as the British Dragonfly Society offer various levels of funding for a related project. This can include a stipend for living costs and expenses for consumables in the lab. Usually, the funding requires your supervisor to be a member of the society and may also specify which year of study the student should be in.

To see a list of summer studentships and other funding options that are available, visit the [***School intranet.***](#) Here you can find

lots of company programmes and funding opportunities for self-arranged laboratory projects. It is not too early to begin arranging a studentship for summer 2019 and, in fact, many of the deadlines will be coming up shortly! If you're interested in something like this, then you should visit the intranet now and see what is on offer. There may be other opportunities not listed, and you can do some of your own research to find out where the funding lies. Also keep an eye on the [***Student Experience Internship***](#) page run by the Careers Service, which will advertise Research Internships in the university later in the year – along with many other, non-lab (PAID!) opportunities.

So, try to make the most of your summer to enhance your employability. And remember, if you wish to complete a lab-based project, there may well be funding out there for you to do it!

Meet the Professionals.

Networking is a huge part of making yourself employable. It involves meeting people in industry or academia who can become contacts and forming professional relationships with them. They can then offer advice and insight, as well as potentially recommending you for positions.

Meet the Professionals is an event put on by the School of Biological Sciences where you can try out your networking skills! The next one will take place on the 29 November 2018 (look out for the email). This will be a great opportunity to form connections with UoM alumni who work in an industry you are interested in. It works like speed-dating, initially spending ten minutes with each professional, followed by more networking over drinks and snacks. It gives you the opportunity to ask questions and find out more about how graduates progress after university.

I attended one of these events as a student last year, and it was very valuable for making professional connections. One piece of advice I would give is to make sure you have a LinkedIn account, so that you can easily contact the professionals after the event. Make sure to register in advance! Further details about the event will be sent to you via email nearer the time.

Career Hacks.

This year, the Careers Service are putting on some short events to help you get ahead. They are 30 minute sessions that are focussed around various aspects of your future and post-university life. These are especially focussed towards final year students but Year 2 students are also welcome to attend.

The next Career Hacks event is occurring on the 20th November and will ask the question: how do we use LinkedIn to generate career ideas. It's focussed on how you can use LinkedIn to network with other professionals and students. This is a valuable skill for when you're entering the world of work and you could even use your new-found LinkedIn knowledge at our Meet the Professionals event!

Furthermore, on the 27th November, there will be a Career Hacks event focussed on that terrifying interview question: "tell me about yourself?". A classic question that can trip you up if you haven't had time to think about it and practise your answer.

These events are short and concise; they are focussed on specific aspects of employability. The calendar in this newsletter will give you the full list of Career Hacks events and you can decide which are most appropriate for you.



The Big Careers Fair.

This month I attended The Big Careers Fair. It was put on by the Careers Service and featured over 80 graduate employers. It occurred over two days at the Central Convention Centre in the city centre which will give you an idea as to how big it really was!

I visited the fair on day 2, which was particularly targeted at STEM students and graduates. Companies such as GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca were advertising their graduate programmes which were especially appropriate for biological sciences students. They have science based roles and opportunities in other areas such as operations and business, which are open to everyone.

As well as science and pharmaceutical companies, there were banks and professional services firms such as EY. Many science students I speak to want to pursue a career outside of the lab, so it is important not to forget that many professional careers are open to scientists. Firms such as these offer great graduate programmes for anyone with a degree but told me they actively seek out science graduates because of the great transferable skills you have gained over the course of your degree.

FUJIFILM

You may associate FUJIFILM with cameras (like I did), but they have many different branches

of business. Diosynth Biotechnologies deal with cell culture technologies and recombinant protein production. This includes things like antibodies. I chose them to feature here because I had not heard of them, despite their line of work. They are based in the North East of England near Middlesbrough but also have bases in Cambridge and sites in Texas and North Carolina, US. Very worth a look into if you're interested in this field!

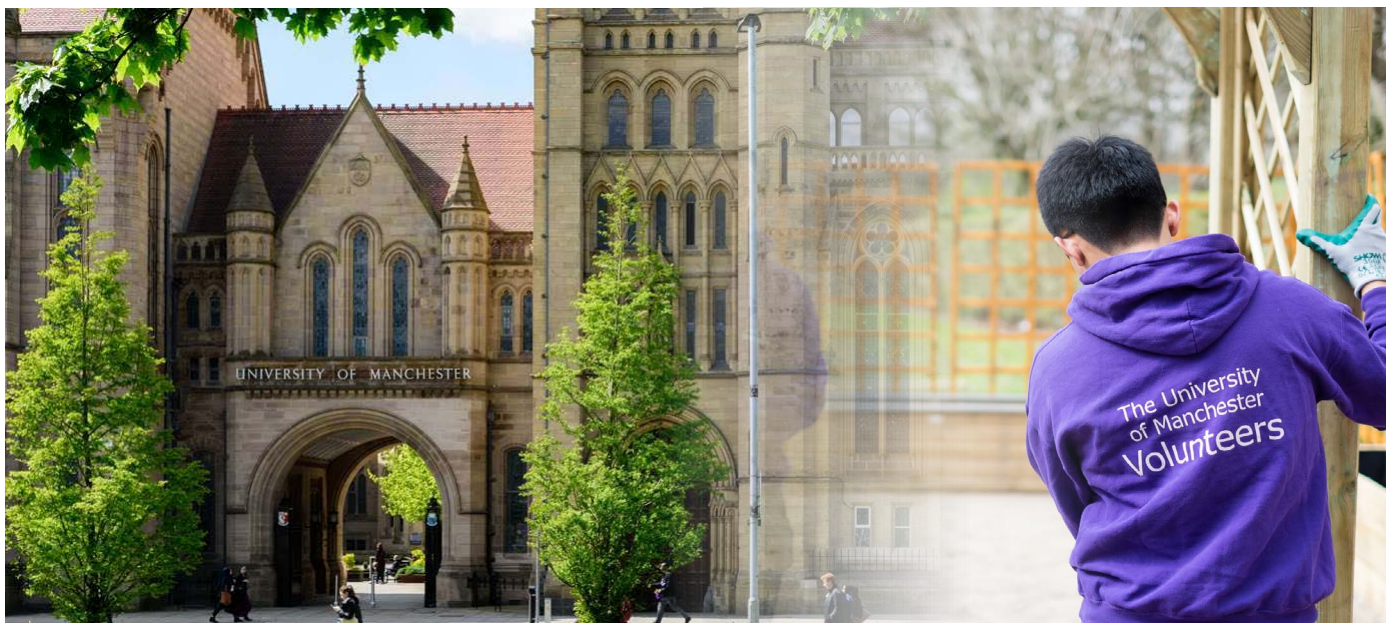
Diosynth
biotechnologies

They also want to recruit people with different knowledge bases and mind-sets.

It is worth noting that many of these graduate programmes are open for application now, and the positions often begin in September 2019.



Volunteering & Social Justice Fair



Studying at university is not only a time for developing your knowledge and academic prowess, it is a valuable time for personal development and an opportunity to expand your mind and interests.

Whilst volunteering is a great addition to any CV and will be highly respected by employers, you shouldn't only be doing it for this reason. If you are, then you probably won't get the most out of it. Furthermore, if you're only getting involved in volunteering for the employability benefits, this will likely come across when you're invariably asked about your experience in job interviews so make sure when you are looking at opportunities, you pick something that you are passionate about and can commit to! Volunteering should be about broadening your mind, your interests and giving back to the community in some way.

I visited the Volunteering and Social Justice Fair in October to get an idea of how a student (or anyone) can give back. There were a huge number of students attending who were keen to find out about volunteering opportunities around Manchester. They ranged from the likes of nuclear disarmament to LGBT issues and to the preservation of The Monastery in East Manchester. There were real opportunities to contribute to a cause that may be your burning passion. As well as the charities I mentioned already, there were others related to conservation and healthcare that may be of particular interest

to bioscientists. These included the RSPB, which is a conservation charity that works throughout the UK and internationally to protect habitats and save endangered birds and wildlife. Also attending were Cancer Research UK, the Alzheimer's society and the British Heart Foundation. If you have a passion for these charities or are interested in the illnesses they combat, you could really contribute by becoming a volunteer. If you missed the fair, don't worry; these organisations will be more than happy to take volunteers at all times of the year, and you could contact their Manchester branch.

You can find more general information about volunteering [here](#).

“ Pick something you are passionate about! ”

Interview

Jenn is a Zoologist who has recently completed her placement year.



Hi Jenn, so where did you spend your placement?

I spent my placement year at the Succulent Karoo Research Station (SKRS). This research station is situated in the Northern Cape of South Africa, in the middle of a protected area called Goegap Nature Reserve, in Namaqualand.

And what was the focus of your placement?

This area of Namaqualand is part of a wider region called the Succulent Karoo which is a renowned conservation hotspot due to its high biodiversity. However, global warming is changing this fragile ecosystem.

At SKRS we investigated how several small mammal species are being affected. Our main aim was to study how they adapt to extreme environments.

As a Zoology student, this project really appealed to me, as we studied everything from social flexibility in behaviour, to hormonal compositions using blood analyses.

Since 2001, the focus of SKRS concerned the striped mouse (*Rhabdomys pumilio*) – in the biggest monitoring study of a mouse-like rodent worldwide! As a field assistant, I contributed to this study. I learnt how to conduct behavioural observations, trapping

and tracking as well as to take blood samples. I also conducted a piece of original research, and wrote a report on my findings.

I was lucky enough to establish my very own long-term monitoring study and field site from scratch. I worked with the bush Karoo rat (*Otomys unisulcatus*) to discover their social organisation for the first time!

What did you enjoy the most about your placement?

Like many Zoology students, I was keen to not spend my entire year in a lab, and wanted to travel to a 'cool' place like an extreme jungle or Arctic environment! SKRS not only satisfied this, but also gave me many valuable transferable skills.

This included experience of wild animal handling, working with large data sets, and I learned to survive without daily Facebook updates! This experience is invaluable to get competitive graduate jobs, especially as many ask for fieldwork in challenging environments.

The thing I enjoyed the most was living and working in such a unique environment which very few people will get to experience.

Did you do any travelling while on your placement year?

The isolation meant that I could not leave the reserve for nine months except for the two daytrips we went on (to Augrabies National Park on the border of Namibia.)

Continued....

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This definitely was an extreme world to be stuck in – but an amazing one! Our free time was spent hiking and climbing mountains, taking pictures of the Milky Way, or watching the various inhabitants of the reserve pay a visit to the station (including jackals and aardvarks)!

After my placement I embarked on a solo travelling spree to Cape Town, and then across Southern Africa through Namibia and Botswana to Victoria Falls. This trip was amazing. I abseiled down Table Mountain, bungee-jumped off Victoria Falls and got chased by a bull elephant in Zambia. I also volunteered at several wildlife initiatives all over Namibia. Here, I ran up and down the highest sand dunes in the world, faced off cheetahs, and saw wild dogs in their natural habitat. A truly amazing experience!

Do you have any advice for students going on or considering going on a placement year?

Be open to new ideas and experiences on your placement year, and don't be afraid to apply for something outside your comfort zone. One email can go a long way; it never hurts to send one. Something amazing can come from self-arranging your own placement! Use the placement to decide if you want to specialise in that area. If you decide it's not for you, don't worry! You still gain all the great transferable skills. Make sure you talk to other students who have been on placement already and find out how they got on!

Do you have an idea of what you would like to do after you graduate?

Goodness, no idea! I definitely want to travel and continue doing fieldwork. I am leaning towards



marine physiology instead of desert ecology. Indeed, my final year project examines the ventricular histology of the Greenland shark to study ageing diseases and polar adaptations. In the future, I wish to use my knowledge of extreme environments for work in microgravity and aquatic habitats: ESA and NASA environmental analogues for future space explorations (yes, I want to be an astronaut - pipe dream!).

How do you think your placement year developed your skills and developed you personally?

There were so few people at the research station so everyone had to help out in whatever way they could. I was fortunate enough to participate in the data collection for several scientific projects in order to support other researchers. For example, I helped a master's student to examine specific physiological parameters of the bush Karoo rat. Together, we conducted Open Field Tests, measuring sprint speeds, and recording their resting metabolic rates which will hopefully culminate in a co-authored research paper!

Also, the chance to conduct my entire research project by myself was so rewarding in terms of learning how to be an

independent scientist!

This placement further developed my interpersonal and practical skills. SKRS was a long way from the nearest town, meaning the station had to be self-sustaining. Therefore, I have helped service solar panels and wind turbines as well as fix water pipes and sewage systems when broken by baboons (bucket showers were actually ok!).

I survived in an isolated and extreme environment, and worked in temperatures that ranged from minus figures to 40°C. Factors such as: few modern conveniences, a small social group (as low as 2 individuals), sleep-deprivation (a 5am to 9pm work schedule), and a lack of Internet were frustrating. But, it was a fantastic personal challenge.

Working on an international project with a mix of other cultures and languages was also an important stepping-stone for future scientific research in what is an increasingly globalised industry. Plus I made lots of friends all over the world!

With more amazing photos and information about her placement, Jenn's blog can be found [here](#).