

Jie Wang: My name is Jie Wang. I'm originally from North Korea, but I kind of grew up in China since I was six. So I studied in China until my high school. Then I realized I do want to pursue my higher education abroad. So I decided to apply to America or the UK at the same time. Then, because I'm a huge fan of Doctor Who since I grew up, so without questioning, I chose the UK eventually - like I thought I would meet my Doctor in England, but it's not happened yet!

Dave Espley: We're actually talking... did you watch the specials that were on last week?

Jie: I haven't watched it – David just came back, right, for the new episodes?

Dave: Yeah. So at the time of recording, which is the 6th of December, I think the second of the three specials has just been released. And the third one is this Saturday. So, you'll have to catch up.

Jie: I need to finish my thesis first, then I start to catch up!

Dave: That's the beauty of iPlayer. They'll be there for a while, yet. Okay. So how old was this then, when you applied? Is it the same age as it is in the UK – is this about the age of 18?

Jie: No, it's about age 20. And then I had one year foundation in University of Warwick and then after the foundation, I applied to several universities, and eventually I chose Manchester for multiple reasons - the reputation, plus the city, the expense is not that expensive, compared to London, and the variety of the of the city after I visited on the open day. So, I decided to come to Manchester.

Dave: And what course did you apply for?

Jie: Electronic engineering.

Dave: Okay. And that was a three-year full course or was it four years?

Jie: Three years full course.

Dave: Okay. And after that, did you do a masters?

Jie: Yeah, after that I actually, I was applying for a PhD direct and even my third-year project supervisor, was advising me to continue to do the PhD with him. So I was very excited at doing research, continuing my higher education. But unfortunately, during the exam time of my last year undergrad, I got news that my dad passed away. So I have to stop everything of what I was doing, preparing the exam. I had to go back home to handle everything. It was quite a difficult time, but the university, the admin team from EEE was extremely helpful. They were so patient with me, they gave me all the possible help they could at that time. So I finally graduated, with three months postponed. And then after that point, I panicked for what I should do for my PhD study. Because if you miss the deadline, you miss the time of applied funding, you miss the connection. So I was trying a different supervisor at that time and luckily I got my current supervisor to help - Professor Alistair Revell and Doctor Mostafa Nabawy and they both helped me a lot to apply for my PhD. However that wasn't ready for getting enough funding, so they came up with idea that I do a Masters which is an MPhil - a Master of Philosophy - so it's kind of a short-term PhD. So I am doing a completely different subject, different things that I have studied at undergrad, but with enough hard work and guidance, I graduated and after two years I'm strong enough to apply for a PhD full scholarship. So that's how I end up with a current PhD scholarship with full funding.

Dave: Okay, cool. And what is your PhD in? What are you studying - what's your project?

Jie: Right now, I'm doing cardiovascular simulation using computational fluid dynamics so it belongs to the department of aerospace engineering. So you don't think that's quite relevant between the

cardiovascular study and the aerospace engineering study. So what we do is trying to apply flow dynamics into blood vessels, all the haemodynamic behaviour, trying to tackle some engineering, physical challenge that you cannot study by just clinicians from pure observation.

Dave: Yeah, that's cool. So it's a good example of how different disciplines can interact together and come up with a solution, which is interesting because we're speaking just next to the Engineering Building A – it used to be called MECD - which is I suppose... part of the philosophy behind that is collaboration between different engineering disciplines. So it's great to hear a real world example of it. And you say that you're going to be completing your PhD next year. Have you got a date for it, do you know roughly when it'll be?

Jie: That's one of the things - never ask a PhD to be honest, you know, asking when you are going to graduate, you know, yeah, it's never ready. But I aim to submit my thesis, finished everything by summer, so get my viva after summer around September and hopefully, fingers crossed, graduate by graduation ceremony in the winter.

Dave: Great. You'll be a doctor.

Jie: Yeah, hopefully.

Dave: So what will you be doing after that? What does the future hold, do you think, do you have any plans?

Jie: Yeah, I have several options right now because my supervisor and the excellent people I'm collaborating with right now, we all start to build up this community about bio mechanical engineering study of this field. So there's lots of potential funding and research topics I can dive in, and I also do a lot of networking, participate in lots of conferences, trying to find the best future that holds me. So I would like to continue to academia research, but at the same time, I also know there is a possible potential job offer for me, so I might, if it's interesting enough for me, I would also look for an industrial position as well. I also find out there's research (unclear) that's been calling around inside university and UK wide as well. So potentially I could start looking for applying to an innovation start up or company or business idea, trying to apply funding for my own research. So there's multiple things I can look for, but so far I want to just focus on my research.

Dave: Yeah, it sounds exciting, but as you say, get the PhD out of the way first and then maybe assess your options. So I suppose it's not a question that's on here, but I know you mentioned earlier you were apologizing for your English, which you've no need to because it's very, very good. Did you know any English before you came, or did you come with no English at all?

Jie: I came here with not much English in terms of speaking, especially, because as international students from Asian countries, we don't really speak English that much. We're probably good at passing the exam, but we don't really have vocal practice all the time. So it's taken me quite a long time to get where I am now.

Dave: So just asking about Manchester itself, what do you think of, well, both things really – the university and the city - how did you find those when you came? And how do you find them now?

Jie: The city itself is very international in terms of food. I'm like most people who are foodie, I guess, and I can find as much in the city, all the type of food I want. And recently, because I think there's lots of good investors have been driven into Manchester I can see lots of small local businesses have been blooming this year so I really like Manchester and see how Manchester is developing since

eight years I was here till now, and the university is also one of the places that I think you can achieve yourself compare with other universities. I do see Manchester has potential to achieve yourself.

Dave: Yeah, so it brings your own potential out.

Jie: Yeah I don't think you'll regret if you come to this university.

Dave: It's interesting - I've spoken to a few overseas students and a lot of them do mention the food because presumably when you're abroad, you're away from your own home - finding the food that you like is a comfort to you. So that's quite a big thing, as you mentioned before, to eat your national food. Where would you recommend to go in Manchester. Any particular restaurants that you go to, or is it just a general vibe?

Jie: There's many restaurants, I go there often. So one of things I like is a pastry and I mention many times to others - I was telling them go to the bakery called Poland Bakery and it's... they have one in Ancoats and there is a new one just around Piccadilly Gardens and they have the best pastry I can find over here. They also have an amazing cinnamon bun. It's really, really comforting food, and a quick coffee as well. And other than that, I always just hang out around with my friends in Northern Quarter; any small local restaurant you will find by surprise for a year.

Dave: Do you have any hobbies or interests that you're to do while you're here?

Jie: Well, one of things as a PhD you got lots of stress all the time; it's like a stress marathon! So what I like to do, is doing something punchy... exercise, which is boxing, for example, I do want to... well, you really, really get yourself out sometime. So I am picturing my research over the punching bag and just do some punching and kicking, to help me out! Other than that, I also like bakery. So bakery is one of my spiritual, sensational things for me. And during the weekend I just get up and go to the kitchen and do whatever I can think of - just to bake the cake or biscuits, something like that, to give myself peace, like it's kind of a meditation process for me.

Dave: And you mentioned earlier you're a PGR Rep. Can you tell us a bit about that, how you got involved with that and what it means?

Jie: I was PGR rep two years ago, so before we moved to the MECD, we were having lots of PGR activity just based on the MACE department. We had coffee mornings every Friday or Thursday, morning time, and we just gather people together in the office. And we also applied the funding from the departments that we were allowed to buy some nice pastry, free coffee, stuff every week. And people loved to come and join us, just for that one hour coffee morning and just chat about how difficult your life is! And we also had great activities such as paintball. We went to paintball together, and we also had bowling ball night, a ping pong night. We also went out for drink, pizza, etc. And the great thing is it was all partially funded by the university to support PGR life.

Dave: I suppose it's quite different; you were here as an undergraduate, and you've been here for eight years, but quite a lot of PGR students come to us after doing their undergraduate degree elsewhere. So they need to be able to adopt to Manchester in the same way as you did as an undergraduate.

Jie: Yeah, because I feel myself I belong to the University of Manchester, so I feel there's a part responsibility on me to show the welcome to other new people over here. I'm also going to host a house party in two weeks to just celebrate the pre-Christmas before everybody flies away back to home.

Dave: So the main reason for speaking to you is that you've been selected to go for the GYSS summit, which stands for Global Young Scientists... Summit. Okay, this is like "PIN number!" It's too many S's! So GYSS, which is the Global Young Scientist Summit. Could you tell us about that, how you were selected? Did you have to apply, for example, what does it involve?

Jie: Yeah, a couple of emails had been calling around about this GYSS summit and I didn't pay much attention, but one day I was in a podcast about something, which encouraged you to try any opportunities that just come to you, even if you panic or are nervous. So on that day I just feel like, oh, there is an application form, I need to apply it. Why not? So I took an hour to just open the email and fill up the application, and yeah, I didn't expect I would be selected because it was a very low chance, as I saw at that time, because they only pick two people out of the entire University of Manchester and then they hand over these two people to the summit and the board of that summit will also need to make a secondary decision about if you are coming or not. So I saw it was quite a rough journey, but luckily I got in.

Dave: And is that based on your research that you've done so far?

Jie: Yeah.

Dave: Is anything else taken into account such as, you know, your work you've done with PGRs as an ambassador?

Jie: I do think so, because since I was ambassador for PGR, I put my face out of the university as one PGR representative, so I guess that helps when they select the PGR, they could think, oh I know this person, I have seen this person before, so why not chose her? So yeah, I guess that's just pure luck again.

Dave: Congratulations. It's really something to be proud of. So what does it involve, then? Because I think it's taking place in Singapore in January. Is that right?

Jie: Yeah, it's in Singapore. And the university will help you with £1,000 for the travelling, and the summit will offer you the food and accommodation as well. And this is a free conference, so you don't need to pay for anything extra. So it's quite a generous conference

Dave: When you're there, is it just a question of listening to all the presentations or do you have to present yourself?

Jie: Yes. So there's an option that you need to apply, either doing presentation or a poster. So I applied for the presentation; I haven't heard anything back. I upload my 30 seconds video - you have to fight for the presentation, actually. So I practice for like two days for that 30 seconds video and hopefully I will get in, but I'm not sure - if you can't, they will put you into a poster candidate.

Dave: So would that be on your research with the cardiovascular fluid dynamics research?

Jie: Yeah. There is a couple of Nobel Prize winners over there. And also I will share you the people list later, but you can see there's a quite big, big guy over there. And they're all named "sir" and "madam," and it's surprising to see those people usually on the BBC News, and then instead, seeing them in person!

Dave: Are these people from all around the world then, I guess?

Jie: Yeah. And there's a few people from Manchester, by the way, like the Nobel Prize winner from the graphene institution. And I would definitely go and take a picture with them!

Dave: I know this is a science summit, so what does that encompass - is it all aspects of science? Is there a theme for this summit or is it "everything"?

Jie: I think they didn't have the theme in the beginning, but by looking at the keynote speaker, they're kind of very biomedical engineering, diverse. But of course, they have other aspects of engineering, like green energy, stuff like that. But yeah, I think it's a very broad range spectrum of the field. But what they're trying to do is just to collect the most frontier in the research, stick them together and come across different ideas or discussion, maybe trying to formalize a future of collaboration and possible teamwork, I guess. And of course, it's going to be a benefit to Singapore as well. And I think that's the purpose of the summit.

Dave: Have you ever been to Singapore before?

Jie: No, this is my first time.

Dave: Will you get chance to do any sightseeing when you're there?

Jie: Yeah. So just the summit themselves, they have actually organized several activities during the night, and I have checked the website - they actually offer us to visit the different universities in Singapore and the science institution. And I think they also might have a few dinner parties as well for networking.

Dave: So I guess networking is going to be quite important if you're hoping to move into that career and, you know, you might meet people you can help you with your career or you can collaborate with in future, potentially.

Jie: Yeah. And also it's going to be a help to myself to boost my confidence and also to give myself a chance to know what I'm doing, why we're doing this. You know, you have to put yourself in the larger scale. You can really understand why you're struggling with your research in a daily basis, actually to achieve something bigger in the future.

Dave: If you want to tell us something about what you'd say to anyone thinking of applying to Manchester..?

Jie: I think I've mentioned that you won't regret if you come to Manchester eventually, and this is the place that will give you the opportunity to achieve yourself, if you work hard and there's tons of help you can find in this place, and this can be the platform to deliver you to somewhere even bigger in the future. So, I want to encourage people, just do what you can do, try your best, and don't be afraid. Maybe you are the lucky one.