

How KSRC has helped me

When I finished college I started a biomedical degree at University of Kent (Canterbury), my aspiration was to be a Microbiologist. I found the degree to be very challenging, because of the sheer amount of people on the same course as me it meant that asking a question in the lectures was intimidating and when it came to completing practical work the equipment was shared between 3 other students. This meant that it was hard to understand the lectures being given and also very difficult to get to grips with the laboratory equipment. I found the Biology side of the course very interesting and it furthered my aspiration towards Microbiology further, sadly I could not understand the Chemistry side of the degree and when it came to the first year examinations, I struggled and failed the course.



I had given up on trying the degree again, because I didn't think that I would be able to cope with the Chemistry modules again. By chance my mother was looking in the local paper and they found an advert for a Foundation Degree in Life Science Technology and Bio-manufacturing and asked if that would be something I would be interested in doing, I phoned up and enquired about the course and was asked if I wanted to take a look around the teaching areas, laboratories and the tea room.

Once I arrived I was pleasantly greeted by Julie and shown around, the different areas within the building amazed me, the equipment was completely up to date and the teaching room and labs were very well presented and so I agreed to enrol on the course.

On the first day I met the other students who were very mixed in both ages and nationality, the two years that followed we all became very good friends and would help each other when we had difficulty understanding anything and we would also have a lot of fun. For example a few lunchtimes we would order a pizza to be delivered to the front gate and collect it, and then eat it up in the tea room.

The lectures were very well taught, the different subjects were aided by practical sessions in the laboratory to explain the lessons and because there was only a few other students it was easy (less intimidating) to ask for the problem to be explained further. It was also very helpful in the laboratory, as the equipment did not have to be shared; we each had our own pieces of apparatus to use.

A lot of the experiments were fun, but very educational. For example, we went out into the site and took soil samples from various locations and cultured organisms which were found in the samples to look for a species of Actinomyces (Streptomyces) which produce antibiotics.

The experiment itself lasted nearly two months as we were culturing pure, isolated colonies and testing each colony for how effective the antibiotic production was against other bacteria.

Once we had found the most suitable species we put the organism into a liquid broth to maximise the growth, this was then put into a small scale fermentation flask which was supplied with a constant flow of fresh media broth.

We used a wide range of equipment which is used in actual workplaces in experiments relevant to actual jobs in the industry.

At the end of the course we had to work at a science based placement for 3 months to complete the final module. My placement was in a Microbiological laboratory testing Pharmaceutical products, raw materials, water samples for production or various active product ingredients/injections and also air samples of the different areas where the drugs are produced and packaged, identifying any organisms which grow beyond a set alert limit and validating new work areas to prove that they conform to set standards before any production can start. This work placement has turned into a full time job and I have been there ever since and have become an integral part of the team.

Without this course I would not be where I am now, I had given up all hope of ever doing another degree again and because of an advert in the local paper showing this course I am now doing the job I have always wanted to do.

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