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“How does the experience of your course compare with any expectations you may have had?”

I had become accustomed to the look of horror that crossed people's faces as they asked that age-old question of the Sixth Form, “What course are you going to do at University?” My reply, “Biochemistry” apparently signalled an open invitation for a straight jacket. Perhaps it was this negative attitude towards the study of Biosciences that planted the seeds of doubt as I prepared for three years at university. I began to fear the other students would be the stereotypical “scientist”, locked in a laboratory, and only released to BBC news for their token science features. I was beginning to question my choice of a future in Biosciences.

On being presented with a timetable bearing a twenty-hour academic week, I felt cheated. I had been under the impression university was 90% recreation and 10% academia, (at least that's what friends already at university had told me). Now the second year rolls around, and the overdraft is beginning to feel the strain, I have come to conclude that rather than being an injustice, I am in fact getting the one thing every student searches for... the best value for money from tuition fees!

My first lecture remains a lasting memory, how one man could lecture, seemingly forever, on the intricacies of photosynthesis I did not understand. Seconds passed agonisingly slowly, and I was left wondering if the next three years of my life would be spent in similarly suspended time. I couldn't have been more wrong. Time has flown past, at seemingly exponentially increasing speed. While the first week lasted a year, my second year has flashed past faster than you can say mitochondria.

My discovery of other “normal” people studying biochemistry was a relief, and due to the small course size, it wasn't long before we were all well acquainted (over a few drinks, of course!). I had thought that being one in such a small class would be a detriment to my social life, but instead it has been a key factor in the formation of lasting friendships among a very diverse group of people.

This is evident no more than in the laboratories. As a biochemist, a seven-hour laboratory session is commonplace. Far from being the boredom instilling, laborious process I had envisaged, I find time does not pass quicker than when confronted with a sample of yeast lysate, and an affinity purification gel. My best experiences have been gained within the laboratory, especially when experiments don't go quite to plan, which is more frequently perhaps than the supervisors would like. Such circumstances have showed me what Biosciences are really about, the dynamics of life, and the living organism. It is this practical investigation into the processes that support our own lives, which have provided some of the most rewarding lessons so far. Not to mention the support that being within the laboratory, and able to put theory into practice for ourselves provides our lecture based modules, something your average Politics or History student will never experience. Principles such as gene cloning are infinitely easier to fathom when you have been able to get your hands dirty, and try it for yourself. It's also a refreshing way to spend a day on campus, as there are fewer places more laid back than an undergraduate Biosciences laboratory. The graffiti on my lab coat (science related or otherwise) is a small memento of this.

The span of a Biosciences degree into the biomedical sciences, chemistry and biology faculties has allowed me to experience the best of many disciplines. Having the choice of modules from any of these specialities has prevented the stagnation factor that I had been led to expect by the somewhat repetitive teaching of sciences in the national curriculum. No two lectures are ever the same, and being able to go from a lecture in organic synthesis, straight into one about sequencing the human genome is not only intellectually liberating, but also keeps you on your toes. There is no time to catch up on sleep in lectures! The downside of this however, is the time spent trekking the length and breadth of campus in order to find the next lecture, though even this can have its bonuses, namely the “scenery” on the way to lectures in the Engineering building, there is not one of those lectures I have missed this year!

Although the workload is often heavy, Biosciences degrees are both relevant, and stimulating. For this I have my lecturers' passion for their subject to thank. Their ability to make even the most complicated of topics interesting, with an intelligent use of PowerPoint, engaging dialogue and lecture handouts, have made my academic life easier than I had been led to believe it would be. Namely there are no instances of frantic attempts to take notes from a somewhat dodgy OHP projection, whilst listening to your lecturer at the same time.

In my time as a Biochemist, all my initial fears have been dispelled. Rather than being a breeding ground for the type of man your mother would warn you about (white coat, ankle skimming trousers and a library fetish), biomedical scientists are in their element both in and out of the laboratory (Biochemistry society socials are renowned to be some of the most riotous to grace the science faculty). Queue the look of jealousy on the faces of those who predicted a life, eye to the microscope, admiring the inherent grace of *E.Coli*.

Biosciences can be one of the best jumping off points for almost any walk of life. Careers span into medicine, medical research, law, and even journalism. Gone are the days when the biologist is tethered to the microscope, in fact today some of the most dynamic jobs available belong to the Bioscientist. All things considered, I find biosciences to be both rewarding and stimulating, a far cry from the monotonous and sanity breaking experience I had been led to expect.