



WHY IT MATTERS... CHEMISTRY



Loughborough
University

Dr Richard Wilson

Forensic Science Researcher

Your degree subject matters a great deal as it helps shape the career pathways available to you. I think one thing to be aware of though is the wide breadth of career pathways a degree can lead to.



In Chemistry for example a lot of graduates get jobs that are quite maths heavy due to the content within the degree course. I worked in a microbiology lab for a bit. A degree often has a lot of transferable skills so if you do a chemistry degree that does not automatically mean you are fixed into being a 'chemist' for the rest of your life.

In terms of my own career, my undergraduate and postgraduate degree were very relevant as I have stayed within science and always worked in a lab. I also got the job I am in now due to contacts made within my postgraduate study and this is true for quite a lot of people. Undergraduate courses that have a year in industry often lead to a job in the same (or similar) area.

Post 16 Education A Level Chemistry, Biology and History. I also took a sign language qualification once a week to boost my UCAS application. This ended up being really useful as I missed my conditional offer by 1 grade and Loughborough took this into account when they offered me my place.	Higher Education: MChem Chemistry PhD "Lowering levels of heritage crime via novel chemical procedure"
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Why did you choose Chemistry?

I went for a broad Chemistry degree rather than focusing on a specific area within it because other than 'something to do with chemistry' I had little idea what job I wanted to do once I graduated. This ended up being a good decision as even to this day I find out new jobs exist within the scientific world so I would have had no idea 12 years ago!

Richard's advice: Cheesy as it sounds; believe in yourself and try your best. I was predicted lower grades than I ended up with and have ended up becoming a Doctor. If you genuinely give it your all, you will be able to get a lot further than you ever think possible.

With regards to University applications, visit as many different places as possible. You will really know in your gut when you find the one that seems a good fit for you.



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Richard's experience as a student

It was very much a slow burner for me. I really struggled in my first year, as I didn't drink and was very shy so found aspects of Freshers week difficult. However, I stuck it out and ended up meeting like minded people and from my 2nd year onwards moved into a house with friends where I absolutely loved life.

I chose Loughborough originally as the course itself was exactly what I wanted and had aspects that very few places offered (radiochemistry was only available to study at 2 Universities). I also got a good vibe whilst visiting. I went twice and both times everyone was friendly which makes a huge difference when making such a decision. I much preferred Loughborough being a campus University rather than pieced together across a city like many others are. They call Loughborough Uni the 'bubble' as it is like its own environment, and this made for a brilliant atmosphere at events etc.

In my PhD I got a lot of opportunities that I would never have anticipated. As part of some outreach work I did, I ended up demonstrating my work live on BBC's Crimewatch Roadshow to about 1 million people!

Career

I work for a forensic science company called Foster and Freeman, helping develop and research a chemical used to develop latent fingerprints on metals. I also help research new techniques that are in development.

I did very little forensically for my first 2 years of University, however studied it as an option in my 4th year and found it fascinating. I then got offered a PhD that had some aspects of forensic science and as a result collaborated with an old PhD student who had moved onto Foster and Freeman as well.

I graduated from my PhD and worked as a technician at the University of Leicester for a few years, but then some people I had previously worked with mentioned that a lab was being developed on Loughborough University's campus and asked if I would be interested in working there. I knew the company was a good one to work for, and it is a small lab (just 2 of us) and as me and my lab mate knew each other from working together with our PhD's it sounded like a great place to work, and it is!

Loughborough University offers undergraduate degrees (BSc and MChem) in

Chemistry, Medicinal and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Natural Sciences, Chemistry and Computing.