



Name: Pippa Wade
 Year of leaving: 2012
 Course studied: Biological Sciences

How did you choose your course and university? *E.g. was it location, course content, external expectations?*

I chose to study Biological Sciences at the University of Leicester, partly due to its subject broadness, but also the universities location and size. Coming off A-Levels, I enjoyed multiple aspects of biology, from human physiology to plant science and this course encompassed it all. It also allowed me to tailor my degree to a specialism by allowing me to select modules that interested me – I ended up specialising in Physiology & Pharmacology!

Leicester city itself was a good distance from home, I knew I would want to go back and visit during term time and the 2h trip back gave me the option to return on weekends. I visited a few universities before making my choice, and overall I preferred the feel of a ‘smaller’ university, the campus was compact and being a part of a society meant that I would bump into a familiar face on campus most days.

What was your favourite part of university?

My favourite memories from university are from times spent with friends who I met through my course and societies, such as sports. University is a great way to take up a new sport or revisit an old one, get your competitive hat on during BUCS Wednesday (university match days) and celebrate your wins/losses during sports night. I rode horses throughout my time at BVC but gave the sport up when I began A-Levels. I picked it up again during my last 2 years of university and have met some amazing people who are some of my best friends. Joining a sports society definitely contributed massively to my time at university!

What was the transition like between studying at school and university?

I remember finding it quite tough. Not only was I moving school and leaving my friends, I was also leaving home and all of that together was quite a daunting experience. Fortunately, everybody starting university is in the same boat, and my university and school made the transition very smooth and easy by sending through timetables, maps etc in advance! One of the biggest differences was the teaching because you aren’t continuously taught by the same person. Lecture sizes can contain up to 300 people so there isn’t much of a student-teacher relationship and you are required to work much more independently, relying seminars/tutorials and textbooks a lot more to gain an understanding.

What have you done since leaving university?

Since completing my undergraduate degree in Biological Sciences, I decided to stay on at the University of Leicester and complete a Masters (MSc) degree in Immunology. After my MSc I moved back home and got a job at a biotechnology company in Cambridge, working as a Research Associate. The company specialises in providing protein research tools to life scientists. I worked here for around a year before leaving in September 2019 to begin a PhD at the University of Nottingham where my project looks at drug-resistance in children's brain cancer.

Which, if any, societies were you involved with while studying?

I was a member of the university Mixed Hockey team and Equestrian and Polo team (Club captain during my final year). I met some of my best friends through these societies and learnt so many life-skills (time management, people management, communication etc) that have helped in my career since.

How did you find the workload?

The workload was manageable; you are rarely in lectures 9-5 so there's a lot of 'free time' to go to the library and catch up on lecture notes, prepare for tutorials and write assignment essays etc. At the beginning of the module you generally get told what assessments you'll have to do along with submission dates, so you can easily plan your time accordingly. Some degree courses also get given study weeks (a week of no taught lectures/tutorials) and you always get a few weeks before exams to revise. Exams usually come off the back of holidays too, so you should never feel like you are cramming!

How did you financially support yourself while studying?

(One of the biggest concerns of young people is the amount of debt and expense of uni)

I obtained a student loan from Student Finance England (SFE) and that paid for my university fees and living costs. For my MSc, I got a postgraduate loan that covered my tuition fee and I got a part-time job to help fund the rest (such as rent, food etc).

There are lots of opportunities at university to take up a part-time job. Student unions are always looking for student ambassadors, union shop workers etc and because they are student jobs they have incredibly flexible work hours. I worked as a sports ambassador for the Let's Do Leicester scheme where I worked a few hours a week and I was able to make sure the hours I worked fit round my academic timetable and other sports/society commitments.

Additionally, universities often offer bursaries and scholarships to students that meet certain requirements. There's always financial help available if you ever need it, so don't let it put you off applying if university is the route you want to go down!