

Biotechnology YES: Dragon's Den for PhD students

For many PhD students, a PhD is a time to train your scientific skills and build a research base in academia. But, as FRONTIER author **Abisola Sanusi** writes, this is also a good time to discover your entrepreneurial skills with a nationwide competition called the Biotechnology Young Entrepreneur Scheme (YES).

Pursuing a career in academia was something that I largely did not consider. Although I possessed a passionate love of science, I had one large question looming over me. 'Do I want to devote my entire life to this area of study?' The simplest answer was no.

Careers insight

Upon deciding that a lifelong career in science was not suitable for me, I began researching the graduate schemes listed in the Times Top 100 Graduate Employers list. I took part in a wide range of extracurricular activities during the course of my PhD, in particular the Biotechnology YES competition offered me an excellent insight into alternative career paths. In addition to further developing my transferable skills and how to apply them in a business type environment, it gave me, someone who came from a background in science, an insight into what a career outside research and academia might be.

Because all the participants in my group came from my department, it was very easy and simple for us to regularly discuss our ideas. The University aided us in simplifying our highly complex idea into a more publicly orientated product idea. The product we designed was a fictional novel strain of yeast that allowed bread produced from traditional wheat strains to be safe for consumption by people who are gluten-sensitive. We prepared our presentation and practiced our sales pitch until we were good to go!

Training up business skills

The three-day Biotechnology YES competition was a fantastic experience. We were given a tour of the Unilever site, observed where ice creams were made, visited greenhouses that housed various teas from across the globe and heard from different employees about their careers in transitioning from an academic background into industry.

What Biotechnology YES did for me went beyond a simple addition to my CV and a short visit to a manufacturing site. In my group, I was the Chief Executive Officer, tasked with the development of a viable financial strategy. This needed to include a balance sheet, a cash flow forecast, and a calculation of the company's Net Present Value. This would enable an equity offer to be made for the company. As the project was unexplored territory, we were presented with a massive challenge.



The competencies I developed included 'teamwork', 'communication', 'leadership', 'problem-solving', and importantly persuading others to go with my idea. Discussing the experience became very natural and it eased the pressure of every interview.

After the interviews, I was offered positions within three companies that I applied to, of which I decided to accept a procurement role within a multinational company that sold some of the ingredients we used in our sales pitch at the competition.

A recommendable time

Reflecting on the experience, I feel that the Biotechnology YES competition played a significant part in the success of my job applications. Whilst certain skills utilised in my new position have been acquired during the years I carried out research, the competition gave me insight into alternative career paths, and also provided me with another set of skills that I hadn't previously had an opportunity to develop.

I would certainly recommend others to take part in the competition, regardless of whether a career in academia is your ideal career path or not, the experience this opportunity provides is invaluable.



If you would like to get involved with
BiotechnologyYES next year please contact
Martin Coffey –mgc5@le.ac.uk.

This experience has proved invaluable, as in every interview I have undergone, there was always a question of my competency asked that linked back to my experience of taking part in Biotechnology YES.

Events

Upcoming events on the Postgraduate Research Scene in Leicester!



3-Minute Thesis Competition

Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) is an academic competition developed by The University of Queensland, Australia. Now used by universities around the world, the University of Leicester is hosting its own 3-Minute Thesis competition for the fourth time in 2017.

Calling research students from ALL disciplines who can deliver a compelling talk on their research and its significance in just three minutes...

When:

Spring 2017.

Where:

TBC

For more information see:

www2.le.ac.uk/research/festival-2016/3mt

Café Research



Formerly known as Café Scientifique, this event isn't just for scientists, but for all postgraduate researchers! The evening will typically feature three or four researchers from across the University, who describe their research in a manner accessible to all research disciplines. Research student spectators can meet, network and share ideas, over a glass of wine or orange juice. This event is always from 6–8pm on the 1st floor restaurant of Charles Wilson building.

When (2016–2017):

November 22nd, February 7th
April 20th and July 20th

Where:

1st Floor Restaurant
of Charles Wilson Building

For More Information:

www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/current/caferesearch/suggestions

Jason Wickham jw646@le.ac.uk
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PubhD Leicester

PubHD

Can you explain your PhD in the pub? Once a month three researchers talk about their work in exchange for a free pint. No PowerPoints allowed; only a whiteboard and pens. Come along to learn about local Leicester research or get in touch to take up the challenge!

When:

October 11th, November 8th
and December 13th

Where:

Duffy's Bar (Leicester city centre).

For more information

please contact Katie and Irene:

Email: pubhd.leicester@gmail.com

Website: <http://pubhdleicester.wix.com/pubhd>

Twitter: @PubhDLeicester

Facebook: PubhDLeicester

Festival of Postgraduate Research

A key event in the University's calendar where 50 of University of Leicester's best research student's display to the world outside the University the impressive and ground-breaking research they have achieved. The festival features a presentation of cutting edge research to academics, employers, and the public through posters.

When:

June 29th 2017 11–2pm

Where:

2nd Floor Charles Wilson Building

**Watch for abstracts
in early 2017**

Thesis Forum

A friendly and welcoming space where doctoral researchers from all disciplines and all stages of the PhD can come together and share their experiences. The forum aims to provide an opportunity for PGRs to troubleshoot and share ideas.

When:

The dates for the next Thesis Forum will be communicated.

For more information:

William Farrell wjbf1@le.ac.uk
or Chantal Biemann cb450@le.ac.uk

PhDepiction-Photography Competition

A photography competition for University of Leicester research students, the competition requires entrants to create an image that communicates their research, their findings, and their passion for their subject.

When:

20th January 2017

Where:

Attenborough Arts Centre.

**A call for participants
will be coming soon!
Watch this space!**

Abisola Sanusi graduated from her PhD in Cardiovascular Sciences in July 2016 from the Department of Cardiovascular Sciences.