

Andrea Elser, GSK



'All in all, it was a very positive experience and it solidified my interest in pursuing a career in industry.'

During the second year of my PhD (out of four), I undertook my professional internship for PhD Students (PIPS) placement with GSK (GlaxoSmithKline) a global healthcare company. More specifically, I was within the Discovery Partnerships with Academia (DPAc) team, in the alternative drug discovery department of GSK at Stevenage, UK. The DPAc team collaborates with researchers in academia in order to undertake early drug discovery and translate early-stage research into medicines that will benefit patients.

The main objective of my placement was to identify universities and research groups in new geographical areas with the appropriate research activities that DPAc could then visit, with the aim of identifying novel collaboration opportunities. During my placement, I investigated various target academic institutions; identified academic partners publishing in translational science by reviewing relevant recent literature and grant funding data available; and lastly I carried out an extensive analysis and summarised open innovation models being run by competitors. In all instances, the work that I undertook directly contributed to the work of the team and I am pleased that part of my work was presented during a global team meeting in preparation for a business strategy meeting.

My personal aim was to use the placement as an opportunity to get work experience in industry, but also to find out more about the type of roles available in the pharmaceutical industry that require a science background. Throughout my placement I was able to talk to several people about their various roles, gained an understanding of the structure of the company and found out how a business operates. Through this desk-based research project and through the meetings that I was able to attend, I also developed an understanding of translational research and the drug discovery process needed to develop a medicine.

The placement solidified my interest in pursuing a career in industry.

If you want to know more, please request contact details: jess.barber@ucl.ac.uk

Top Tips for other PhD students?

- Have a rough idea where you would like to undertake your placement, but be flexible on the exact type of role.
- Start early with the placement search. It takes longer than you would expect to find a possible placement role, especially if you are sourcing the placement yourself.