

Laura Faulds

Senior Assistant Scientist, Charles River Laboratories, UK.

Laura is a queer woman who grew up in an area with a high poverty rate, and openly discouraged from going to University – she did it anyway.

Why did you decide on a career in science?

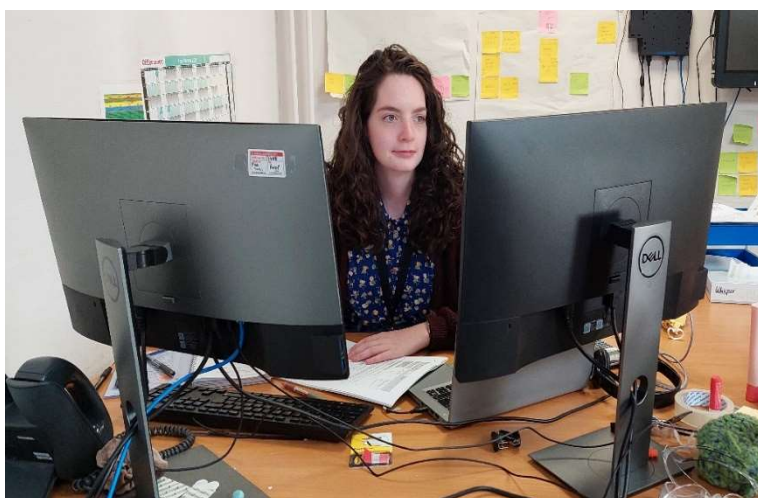
Chemistry was really the only subject in school I liked and found challenging in a good way. It was something that I knew could be used to help people and be involved in things that had an impact on everyday life.

When did you decide on a career in science?

I decided I wanted to go onto a career in science in S4 in school. This was after carrying out my work experience placement in the Biomedical Labs at the University of Strathclyde, where my Auntie worked. I found the lab environment very exciting and to be able to put what I was learning at school into practical use just felt right.

Do you work mostly on your own or as part of team?

On a whole, we work as a team but most of the time the work we are doing is on your own and you are responsible for your own work. But there are opportunities to get involved with people from different departments too. For example, I'm part of the sustainability committee and I am very passionate about all things eco! I lead a team called 'The Green Police' which involves a member from each department across our site and coming up with new initiatives and ways we can make CRL more sustainable. We are currently trying to implement a process for having bee hives on site to help save the bees.



What is it like socially where you work?

The work place is very social, we have lots of group chats and games lunches. We also have a social event outside of work at least once a month.

What does your typical day involve?

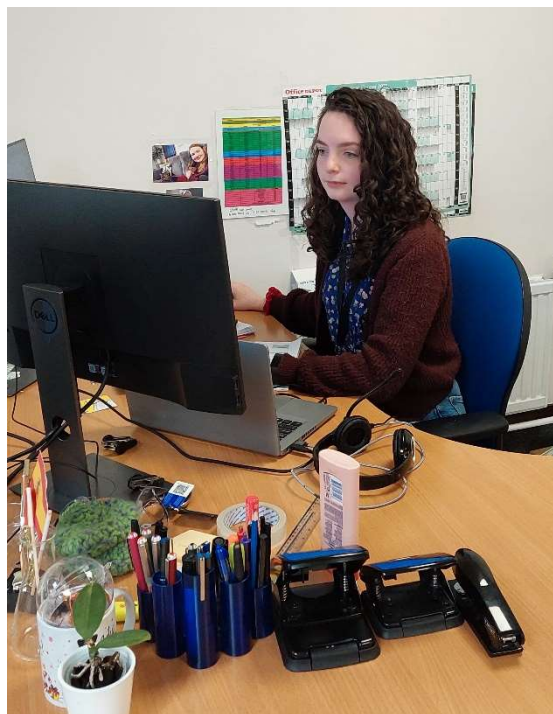
I start my day by writing up the previous day's analysis and then passing on the results to our team and other departments that may be involved.

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Then I complete another analysis, which involves sample preparation and then using UPLC (Ultra Performance Liquid Chromatography). I also get involved with the quality control of our work, by either writing a quality control report or quality controlling someone else's data.

What challenges have you faced to get to where you are now?

I come from a part of Glasgow that has quite a high poverty rate and Throughout school I was openly discouraged from going to university due to not many people achieving the required grades. Career advisors were always pushing for us to look into apprenticeships etc. and not follow the higher education path. However, I really wanted to go to University. And I did, but found it quite a challenge. Through my willingness to learn and motivation to try and achieve my goals, I graduated with a BSc which allowed me to get the job I'm in now.



What possibilities are there for your career in the future?



There are many opportunities for promotion where I am, and to experience different roles. For example, there is the possibility to progress onto a 'Study Director' or a 'Lab Scientist' position, which is more lab-based. How has your career developed since you started working? I have progressed up to a Senior Assistant Scientist position within 2 years of joining the company, and I now help the study directors organise and structure a number of important studies that we are running. I'm also now mentoring a junior member of staff. What one piece of advice would you give to someone seeking a career in chemistry?

I would say get experience in a lab, if possible. Learning the theory and doing practical work is good for preparing you to know the basics for going into the working world of chemistry. However, each industry will have different standards they work to so it is difficult to get fully prepared and most places will train you to their standard. Having some lab experience will always give you more of an advantage.