

Senior Director in Clinical Development: Pharmaceutical Product Development (<https://www.ppd.com/>)

Kellie MacLeod

BSc Applied Biosciences and Chemistry at RGU

Postgraduate diploma in Laboratory Technology and Data Management

MSc by research in Medical Genetics at Aberdeen University



I began looking at employment options in my 3rd year of university as well as for placement opportunities. The career service at university provided me with an opportunity to apply for a Shell STEP project where I gained work experience in a laboratory over the summer. This was a paid placement and provided a lot of skills for the workplace as well as a reference. The career service also supported me with a placement for my honours project at the Rowett.

We were encouraged to take up a work placement for our honours project if possible. For this the university supported me by checking my CV and pointed me to template application letters and advice. This was my first 'proper' job interview as well, so they gave me advice on this including how to dress appropriately, expected question format etc. I also accessed some practice interview questions. The whole experience of a work placement gave me a lot more confidence to approach employers and more of an idea of what day to day skills were needed in the workplace – I realised early on my academic qualifications alone may not have been enough.

Initially, I wanted to be a Pharmacist or work in Forensic science. I didn't know clinical research careers existed. I picked the course based on the content and my love for Chemistry and Biology. Looking back I should have researched my options before then.

After university I worked as a sales rep selling laboratory equipment. I needed to start paying off my student debt (I applied because it had a company car option which was nice!). I did not enjoy the job at all though, sales were not my strength. It also felt as though I was not using my degree at all. I didn't perform well and was made redundant as a result. That was actually really good for me as I then decided to go back for further study and look at becoming more specialised.

I was not afraid to apply for roles, even if I didn't have 100% of the skills listed in the job description. By demonstrating a track record of being able to learn on the job and self-motivate, employers have been willing to offer me training in exchange for my willingness to learn - sometimes in my own time! In my first role at LifeScan I really lacked key experience and knowledge. But I showed in my application and interview that I had written up my thesis while working part time as a laboratory technician, and I was prepared to work hard to learn on the job. I also did a lot of research about the job before the interview, so I could show I

knew in depth what it entailed even though I had no practical hands on experience. I have consistently found that companies are willing to train up people if they have attributes in self-development, motivation and ~ 60% of the other requirements.

In my current role a sound technical knowledge in clinical research, self-motivation and high organisation skills are critical especially as I work from a home office. I am technical, with a logical mind. I enjoy organising and structuring ideas; clinical trials are highly technical and very regulated. I excel at applying regulations to our practical work.

There are so many wonderful places to explore in Aberdeenshire, yet you are always close enough to the city/ airport for everything you need. It's a great place for family life with the beach and our dog. We are well placed here to access a network of professionals globally, especially within science and research fields. Aberdeen and the surrounding countryside is a beautiful space and there is plenty to see, and experience here.