

Getting into...laboratory work

What do Bioscientists do?

Bioscientists can be found in a range of laboratory settings including:

- Commercial organisations - e.g. within pharmaceutical, energy, agriculture, medical, food and drink or cosmetics sectors.
- Public sector – research institutes, government, hospital, university laboratories.

As a starting point, find out more about the roles and responsibilities for entry level laboratory workers by reviewing job profiles available on the [Society of Biology website](#) and [Prospects](#).

Work experience

The speculative approach

- There are very few advertised vacancies for laboratory based work experience.
- Convince potential placement hosts of the added value you can bring to their company.
- The [Careers Network Internships website](#) has useful advice for approaching an employer speculatively.

Stay up to date

- Keep up to date with developments in the sector.
- Use the careers pages on society website such as [The Royal Society of Biology](#).
- Check out what's going on at the university via [Biosoc](#) and the Bioscience [May Lab](#).

Work shadowing at the university

- Approach staff in your department for work shadowing or mentoring opportunities.
- Ensure you clearly demonstrate you have a specific area of interest or expertise.
- Identify a project you could pitch to someone in the field.
- Align yourself to those with similar interests as your own - use the [university website](#) to look up staff research areas.

Don't give up!

- If you don't get what you want first time round, don't give up.
- Use knock-backs as a means of identifying the skills you need to acquire before being considered as suitable, some useful skills can be identified below:
 - Knowledge of the standards and quality management systems required in the relevant field
 - Practical analytical skills and experience of instrumentation processes
 - Problem solving
 - Public engagement or science communication
 - Report-writing
 - Team work
 - Bid writing
 - Attention to detail
- Identify roles outside of biosciences that can offer you the opportunity to develop these or similar transferable skills.

Strengthening your CV

Not finding paid work experiences in a lab?

- Consider furthering your experience to help you build a CV that is tailored for scientific opportunities by:
 - Work shadowing a lab-based professional
 - Organising a laboratory visit where you can meet and discuss career routes with scientists
 - Volunteering
 - Project work in your own department or in another university that involves time in the lab
 - Finding a scientist mentor
- Investigate small to medium size enterprises using The United Kingdom Science Park Association (UKSPA) - www.ukspa.org.uk/
- Generic volunteering sites – www.guildofstudents.com/jsv/volunteering/
www.do-it.org.uk and <https://vinspired.com>

- Useful websites for vacancies for placements and funding with professional societies:
 - [Learned societies map](#)
 - Opportunities overseas – [IAESTE](#), [Careers International](#), [European Youth Portal](#), [AIESEC](#)
 - See the handouts available via your school's Careers Network Canvas page:
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careerscanvas

The hidden job market - How to look speculatively for laboratory work

- The '[Resources for Researching employers](#)' document lists the resources available to you on campus and online to help you identify organisations in the relevant sector.
- [LinkedIn](#) can help you to find people working in laboratories to contact - find [University of Birmingham alumni](#) contacts and use LinkedIn's employer database to target organisations.
- [Careers Connect](#) – use Careers Network's employer database to find employers currently advertising and those who have advertised scientific roles in the past.
- Widen your circle of employment connections - join professional institutions, go to conferences, trade and industry events such as the annual [Lab Innovations](#) event, attend careers departmental workshops and fairs
- 'Careers Lab' – this annual event facilitated by Careers Network in February brings a range of science employers onto campus with whom to engage.
- Careers Network intranet pages list all employer events and fairs.
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/events

Funding your work experience

If you source your own summer placement you may be eligible to apply for financial assistance via the University's Work Experience Bursaries Scheme - for more information go to:

www.birmingham.ac.uk/internships/funding

Finding advertised vacancies

- Check [Careers Connect](#) for advertised internship and work experience vacancies either sourced by our internship officers or placed by employers.
- Talk to your College Internship Officer about our 'Pass It On' survey and find out where past students been able to secure laboratory work.
- Check the [destinations data for your college](#) on the Careers Network intranet pages to see where last year's graduates went on to work or study.
- Use the Cogent Skills for science - Life Science placements service for finding you a placement: www.cogentskills.com/careers/
- Graduate careers sites include [Prospects](#), [Targetjobs](#), [Milkround.com](#), [RateMyPlacement](#)
- Online job boards to find laboratory assistant roles include:
 - www.jobs.nhs.uk/
 - www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/
 - <http://jobs.newscientist.com/en-gb/>
 - www.srg.co.uk
 - www.labsupport.co.uk/
 - www.jobsinscience.com/
 - www.labhoo.com/