

FIND *your* FUTURE

Name: Shan LU

Job title: Formulation Scientist

Most recent employer: Wuxi Apptec Co., Ltd (currently unemployed)

Course studied at UCL: Pharmaceutical science

What is the core purpose of your role (and typical activities)?

I joined the formulation research team of Wuxi Apptec in 2018. The main role of this team is to find the appropriate prescription and preparation techniques of new drugs, including original and genetic drugs. To be detailed, we focus on the late stage of formulation research. It contains the period from lab scale, pilot scale, and large scale to NDA batches.

My main role, in this team, is:

- Integrate the opinions on the experimental design of a project from my leader and the clients, write the experiment proposal (20%)
- Finish the experiments with my colleagues, such as wet granulation, tablet pressing and capsule filling with my colleagues (65%)
- Write the research report (10%)
- Cooperate with cross departments on the experiments, teleconferencing, etc. (5%)

What kind of person would this role suit?

Personally I think this role suits people who:

- Really enjoy doing experiments
- Emphasize the sense of fulfilment from R&D
- Look forward to a simple working atmosphere

What are the best aspects of your work and what are the most challenging?

The best aspect of this job is that I can get great sense of fulfilment when a new drug was finally developed successfully after a long run.

The most challenging things are:

- The formulation research could take 1-3 years so it requires patience

- It has narrower designing space and lower fault tolerance on the projects in a company than that in the university

What kind of people and clients do you work with?

I used to work with two clients. The first one is an American company called Akebia, the other one is a local Chinese company named Aolida. As for my colleagues, most of them graduated from Chinese universities, some used to study abroad such as King`s University. They hold bachelor, master and doctor degrees.

How did you get to where you are now? Are there typical ‘entry’ routes into your profession for new graduates? Are additional qualifications desirable or required?

I got this job through the internal referral by my friend who worked in this company. Also, there are some special websites for job-hunting. In China, the main websites are ‘51job’, ‘LinkedIn’ etc.

The common qualifications for a job are educational background, working experience and personal abilities etc. As for new graduated from UCL (MSc), it’s easy meet the first requirement, which is the educational background, for lots of pharmaceutical companies. Meanwhile, it’s better to get a doctor degree if you are looking for a research position in a top 10 pharmaceutical company such as Pfizer. Also, the proficient English is a bonus for lots of positions, such as formulation research, project management, consultant etc.

On reflection, what aspects of your UCL degree do you feel were of particular benefit in securing graduate work and in carrying out your current responsibilities?

First of all, the UCL degree helped me pass the entry threshold of lots of companies. Lots of positions requires a master degree from worldwide top universities. Secondly, the various dosage forms and new medical instruments I have seen during the lectures in UCL make me feel like it’s worth it to do formulation research. This feeling can pacify me when facing the failure or doing boring, repetitive tasks during the work.

How should current students go about getting the necessary skills and practical experience to help them with their future applications to your sector (e.g. internships, training courses)?

It would be good if they are shown the possible positions of this field (such as formulation research, project management, drug registration, drug sale etc.) and of cross field (such as industry analysis, consulting, finance etc.). This would help them figure out what kind of work they would like to do in the future.

Do you have any final advice for current students?

No procrastination!

Use the platform (UCL) to explore whatever you like. Cherish the period that you are free to fail.