

Careers Extra: Up Close.

| Zohar
| Finalist
| BSc Molecular Biology
| Neurodivergent.
| Has long-term health conditions.



“I am good enough. And I can do it. And I’m not the only one.”

We’ve been speaking with some of our Careers Extra students to find out a bit more about how they have found studying at UCL and their experiences of gaining work experience and moving forwards in their careers.


We recently spoke with Zohar, a 3rd year BSc Molecular Biology student. Zohar is neurodivergent and has long-term health conditions. Zohar shared with me some of the realities of their journey:

- gaining, enjoying and learning from internships that **shaped their decision** to pursue a Masters.
- learning about what their health condition means for them in the workplace.
- asking for workplace adjustments.
- what they learned from an internship where they **didn’t mention their health condition**.
- emotions involved, including **shame** and growing **confidence**.
- Inspiration and confidence gained through being **part of a network**.
- how UCL Careers Extra supported them in different ways: through appointments, advice and a financial bursary to help with costs.

“I think it’s really worth being able to talk about all this before you start looking for a job... And knowing your legal rights as well: knowing that you don’t have to disclose your disability in advance. And that it’s up to you, what you disclose. And also that once you work somewhere, your employer does have Equalities Act responsibilities towards you”

Learning about employment rights in recruitment, and in the workplace.

Through discussions with the UCL Careers Extra team before applying for an internship, Zohar was able to find out about their legal rights during the application process. They didn’t feel comfortable to share about their health condition at the interview stage and was reassured to hear that timing of disclosure is up to them: they could discuss with their manager once the internship started if they preferred. They could also prepare personally for what impacts there might be for them in the workplace, because professional working can be very different to studying.



“It’s scarier than you think having to disclose [a disability or health condition]. Harder. I never ended up actually talking to my project lead about my disability. I just felt a bit shy. It would have gone better if I had, ‘cause I started dealing with some quite difficult issues towards the end of the internship.”

Feeling too shy to disclose about a health condition during an internship.

Zohar was successful in the application and interview process and was given the internship opportunity. Once working, they didn’t discuss their health condition or any adjustments for it with their employer, as they felt shy and that it was awkward to bring up the topic. Later in the internship, health issues came up for Zohar, and they found they weren’t prepared on how to discuss their needs with an employer. This added an extra layer of challenge to their situation.

“I have an internship coming up this summer and I think what I’m going to do is disclose my disability to them maybe one or two weeks in. I’ll probably email the supervisor or have a meeting with her and be like ‘Here are some impairments that I have, and here are some ideas I have for working around them, and it doesn’t have to be a huge deal, but it’s good for you to know.’”

“Previously I felt like “Oh, I shouldn’t take this funding. I’m not disabled enough” Like I felt a bit ashamed to take this help. But at Careers Extra, it wasn’t treated in a shameful way, but that it’s fine and normal. I think that may now be easier for me to then go and apply for this £30k [Snowdon] Masters funding without feeling like I don’t deserve it or it’s shameful to take it”.

Making use of support: benefits from the Careers Extra Bursary.

Zohar successfully applied for the [Careers Extra Bursary](#). They were awarded £500 to support with taking a work-based experience. Zohar found this helped in a number of ways:

- **Focus:** The money from the bursary made things easier for Zohar to focus more on getting the most out of the internship, by not having to take on part-time work at the same time. Plus not having to worry so much about paying rent and bills.
- **Confidence:** The process of applying gave Zohar confidence and validation that they are deserving of support, and encouraged them to apply for another disabilities funding schemes in future, like the [Snowdon Masters Scholarship](#).
- **Competitive advantage:** Gaining technical computational research skills, plus having written a successful bid for funding from the Bursary helped Zohar gain a second internship the following year.
- **Career Insights:** Through experience in computational genomics research, Zohar gained insights on the differences between lab work and computational work, and this supported them to make an informed decision about what type of roles to apply to next.

“[Getting] the Careers Extra bursary felt very validating. That as a disabled person I can and should receive support for being able to do my best. ‘Cause I can do a lot when I’m properly supported. But it had to come together with meeting other disabled people.”



Making use of networks: taking inspiration and gaining confidence through connecting with others.

Zohar was proactive at UCL and got involved in activities and with relevant groups that had a big positive impact on them. Connecting with others and learning about their experiences and achievements was inspiring, as they met role models with disabilities achieving career success.

"[Getting] the Careers Extra bursary felt very validating. That as a disabled person I can and should receive support for able to do my best. 'Cause I can do a lot when I'm properly supported. But it had to come together with meeting other disabled people. So I've worked a bit with the Disability Equality Steering Group and there are some really amazing disabled professors and staff in that room. You just get to sit in a room full of people who've made it and they have the same problem as you and that's just amazing. Also, the Disabled Students Network where I met a lot of disabled grad students. I saw that "OK. You can do this". You can be a wheelchair user and do this. You can have a chronic illness and do this. And just seeing that people had done it before me [was important]. 'Cause I think it's very easy when you're disabled - you don't see anyone in your Department who looks like you so you think "I'm not ever going to be able to do this". But then you see the people around you through those networks who have been able to do that, and you start to realize "there is no reason I shouldn't be able to do this".

So I think it was important that the Careers Extra stuff came together with the Disabled Students Network. I think both of those together showed me, on the formal side: I can get support and it's OK to ask for it. And on the personal, self-esteem side: I'm good enough. And I can do it. And I'm not the only one.

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UCL Careers is here to support you. You can discuss any of the topics raised here with our team of experienced Career Consultants, by booking a one-to-one appointment through the [myUCLCareers website](#).

UCL Careers support all students with disabilities and long-term health conditions, offering extended appointments, adjustments and relevant information. www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/about-us/who-can-use-our-services/careers-extra/disability.

Careers Extra offers enhanced careers support for UCL undergraduates from under-represented groups, including those with disabilities and long-term health conditions. Find out more and register through our Careers Extra pages on the website. www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/about-us/who-can-use-our-services/careers-extra.

More info:

- [Information about Careers and Employment](#), from UCL Careers Extra.
- [UCL Careers Extra Bursary](#).
- [Snowdon Masters Scholarship](#): Investing in Students with Disabilities.

