

## Personal reflections and Scholarship Impact report / Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in no more than 400 words per question.

1. *What have been the highlights of the project work you have done?*

My Laidlaw Scholarship provided me with the invaluable opportunity of conducting a large-scale research project as an undergraduate. One of my least favourite things about university education is the limited interaction — both time- and depth-wise — with the topics we are covering. Most essays will be capped around 2000 to 2500 words, which allows for little in-depth exploration of any given topic. However, with my Laidlaw research project, I was able to read extensively and explore a wide range of sub-topics, conduct fieldwork and interviews, and delve deep into my research topic. Working with a supervisor was also a most valuable experience, which, along with the research itself, was an excellent preparation for writing my dissertation.

I was fortunate to conduct research on a topic that has been important to me for a long time. I have been working with tea — predominantly Chinese — for more than five years and it has come to be an integral part of my everyday life. Having the opportunity to revisit my hobby and, to some extent, profession from an academic point of view was an incredibly rewarding experience. While I could rely on my experience to identify key areas and concepts within the broader topic, I was constantly supplementing my existing knowledge with diverse information on tea-related history, language, culture, and economics.

2. *How would you summarise the future impact of your research?*

While, due to the pandemic, I had to resort to a contingency plan and therefore was not able to carry out my original research on Chinese tradition invention, I think that my research still has valuable contribution to the field. The focus of my project shifted greatly and no longer centres around cultural nationalism, soft power, politics, and economics. However, with my new project — new-wave tea culture in Hungary —, I moved into a very under researched field, which, I believe, has great potential to it. Not only is tea under researched in general, but there is also extremely limited academic literature on Hungarian tea culture and virtually nothing on its most recent changes and developments. Opening up the field to this domain might lead to new papers and research following suit in the future.

3. *How has this scholarship enhanced your knowledge and research skills?*

During my research, I acquired a vast amount of knowledge on tea culture, gastronomy, history and also explored fields that were hitherto unknown to me, such as economics. In addition, I gained experience with long-term planning, time management, independent learning, handling substantial amounts of data, conducting and analysing interviews. As a result, I feel more confident with such projects as writing my dissertation or applying to master's courses.

4. *What have been the highlights of your Leadership in Action experience?*

Testing myself in an unknown, radically new situation was exciting. Contributing to an important cause and delivering meaningful change was most rewarding. But the absolute highlight of my Leadership in Action project (hereafter LiA) was of a much more personal nature. During my internship, I was working with a small, tight-knit group of four — three people who, within 6 short weeks, became friends and dependable colleagues. It was refreshing to get to know new, like-minded people, to be challenged, advised, and helped by them. It was also fantastic to discover our ability to work effectively without prior acquaintance or common academic backgrounds (our team consisting of a historian, a biologist, an economist, and a language student). My LiA experience really did reflect the ethos of Laidlaw and showed the universal aspect of responsible leadership, grounded firmly in academic achievements.

5. *How would you summarise the future impact of your Leadership in Action experience?*

My LiA project — a readily-implementable zero-waste delivery system for Fiji, coupled with an extensive training scheme that focuses on economically empowering women and also seeks to involve local communities — had two kinds of impact: one on the wider community of Fiji and another on myself. As for Fiji, the proposal addresses several important issues — plastic waste, gender inequity, and the alienation and gradual deterioration of local communities — and offers a solution that will have positive impact on the wider Fijian community's life and future prospects. On a more personal level, this experience has greatly shaped my future career plans by prompting me to delve deeper into sustainability-related fields, such as urban planning and environmental management.

6. *How has this scholarship enhanced your leadership skills?*

The scholarship's effect on my leadership skills is twofold. First, it provided me with a solid theoretical foundation on which I can build and continue to reflect whenever the need arises. Thanks to my training, I came to understand the importance and criteria of ethical leadership, learnt about common mistakes, weaknesses, and blind spots, and also explored techniques whereby these can be effectively remedied. Second, I had the opportunity to put this theoretical knowledge into practice and, through my LiA project, gain real life experience. Reflecting upon my LiA internship — both during and upon its completion — I was able to identify my own shortcomings and consciously work towards bettering myself as a responsible leader. Through this project, I also learnt more about group management — with teams both smaller and larger in size — as well as self-management; understood the importance of empathy and the ability to see the potential in people and ideas, and facilitate their realisation. I also had the chance to practice more practical skills, such as report and feedback writing, scheduling, or meeting coordination, all of which I have been actively using ever since.

7. *How has this scholarship contributed to your employability skills and career plans?*

I feel that having been selected and completed a prestigious scholarship, such as the one offered by the Laidlaw Foundation, is in itself a great achievement worthy of showcasing on one's CV. However, this only accounts for a fraction of the benefits of the experience. In addition to the aforementioned "reorientative" influence of my LiA project, whereby I found a career path both compelling to me and, I believe, beneficial to the wider public, I also gained experience, developed skills, and understood concepts of incredible diversity — regardless of the exact domain of my future aspirations, these will most certainly be indispensable tools in achieving my goals. Finally, having demonstrated my ability to work independently on a larger-scale project over an extended period of time is a particularly valuable asset when applying for master's courses, which happens to be one of my current endeavours.