

Leeds Laidlaw Blog Post

What to expect from your first summer as a Laidlaw Scholar!

1) Don't worry!

First and foremost, I think that it may sometimes be assumed that before starting a Laidlaw research project, all scholars must have a high level of knowledge about conducting academic research and undertaking tasks for the chosen piece of research such as a literature review or a research report. However, I am pleased to tell you that this is not the case! It is expected that scholars will have little prior knowledge before embarking on their research placement; a passion for the project and the willingness to build on academic writing experience from your first year will ensure you get the most out of the research period. Aim to be proactive and demonstrate initiative with your project by doing a bit of reading around the research brief beforehand. The Academic Leads for your research will be there to support you, introduce weekly tasks, and answer any questions and queries that you might have. The research project is a great learning opportunity, especially because it will help you establish the skills for the rest of your time at university and prepare you for the next stages of the Laidlaw scholarship.

2) Endless opportunity.

For my Laidlaw project, I had the opportunity to develop a wider variety of skills such as qualitative data analysis. Since the end of my research project, I have been able to use the skills I learnt in Excel throughout my second year. The research project also provides you with a key insight into what post-graduate study would be like through collaborating with leading academics. My advice is to use this part of the scholarship as a chance to fully explore whether a potential career in research might suit you. You will also gain an understanding of the research process to provide you with the foundational knowledge of how to write and conduct the research for your dissertation.

One of the main things that my research project strengthened is my adaptability and resilience. My research was conducted virtually because of the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions at the time. However, I now know how to communicate effectively and collaboratively with other people on a piece of research in an online environment. I would suggest that you identify ways that your research can develop a variety of transferable skills for example, if you encounter any uncertainty as I did due to the pandemic, embrace these challenges to build on your flexibility as a leader and researcher.

3) Leadership development.

Outside of the research project, you will also hone your leadership skills in your first summer as a Laidlaw scholar. During the leadership residential in the Yorkshire Dales, you will meet other scholars and complete team building tasks such as orienteering, climbing, and caving. This exercise is aimed at highlighting your strengths and areas for improvement as a leader and team member. Furthermore, the three-day leadership event for scholars based in Leeds is another opportunity to network with Laidlaw scholars, take part in training for the Education Outreach Day with the previous cohort of Laidlaw scholars, and receive feedback on the way you conduct yourself in group tasks. There is so much to look forward to!

Finally, if you are interested in talking to current Laidlaw scholars at the University of Leeds about their first-hand experiences of the Laidlaw scholarship, you are welcome to join the LUU Laidlaw Society which is open for all students, regardless of whether you are a Laidlaw Scholar or not. If you are reading this and you have been accepted as a scholar, I wish you all the best with your first summer as a Laidlaw scholar. If you have any questions, feel free to message me on LinkedIn:

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