

Final reflection:

As was mentioned at the Laidlaw conference in London last year, the most important thing you can do is to show up, and you are already halfway there. These past two years have offered me varied opportunities to develop both intellectually and personally.

Before applying to the Laidlaw scholarship, I had yet to speak to a member of the psychology department for fear of “wasting their time”. In preparation for the application, I sent an email to my supervisor, Prof. Rob Jenkins and was met with support and openness to my ideas.

In the first year of the scholarship, I was able to carry out research investigating the general public’s perception of existential risk. This sparked a deep interest in existential risk research, specifically from a psychological perspective. Through the summer, I learnt about the role of teamwork and self-leadership at the same time. Utilising emotional intelligence and independent working skills, I was able to manage my time to allow for the creation of impactful data, leading to the finalisation of the report. Further, it was an amazing experience collaborating within the laboratory at York, enabling me to develop the confidence to express my ideas and thereby allowing for insightful feedback prior to action.

Over the second summer, I had the privilege of conducting similar research at Kyoto University. This international component of the scholarship provided me with invaluable insights into how different cultures perceive and address existential risks. It reinforced the idea that existential risks are global concerns that require collective efforts for mitigation and prevention. My time at Kyoto University was a rich tapestry of learning, both academically and as an effective communicator, as I interacted with people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. I also learnt that even when things do not go exactly to plan, using my resilience allows for positive outcomes despite obstacles.

One of the most impactful aspects of this scholarship was the leadership training I received. Through the programme, I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of leadership in addressing existential risks. This opportunity provided me the ability to make leadership decisions in a safe environment turning ideas into action. I learned that leadership is not confined to a single model but comes in various forms, each suited to different situations and challenges. This insight was a turning point in my personal and professional development, helping me recognise my potential strengths and areas for development as a leader. This provided the tools to make a positive impact in the community.

The Laidlaw scholarship enabled me to make a connection with people I would have never met without taking the chance to apply. I have learnt so much about myself, others and academia through this experience and am incredibly grateful. I have interacted with individuals from all corners of the globe, each with their unique stories, experiences, and perspectives. These interactions broadened my worldview and exposed me to diverse ideas and solutions to existential risks. It was in these interactions that I began to develop my professional voice through the confidence gained from my research.

My two-year scholarship experience has been a transformative journey of self-discovery and global perspective. It deepened my understanding of existential risks, taught me the significance of leadership in addressing these issues, introduced me to people from around the world, and allowed me to develop my voice and confidence. It has reinforced my belief in the power of education, cross-cultural interactions, and personal growth to make a positive impact on our world.

Finally, I would like to thank the Laidlaw team in York, the Laidlaw foundations, Prof. Rob Jenkins, Dr Rana Qarooni and Scarlett Symes. Over the past two years, their unwavering support and openness have been transformative. Their patience and encouragement have fundamentally reshaped my personal and academic growth, instilling in me the belief that I can achieve the once-seemingly impossible; for this, I am incredibly grateful.