

I was awarded the Doctoral School Research Award (2022) to attend the 18th Annual Conference of the Metabolomics Society in Valencia, Spain. My PhD focussed on characterising new and emerging crop varieties, primarily through metabolomic approaches using LC and GC-MS platforms, so the conference was highly relevant to my research.

As a final year PhD student in the writing stage, this was incredibly valuable to me for a number of reasons. Due to the pandemic, I was not able to present work at conferences prior to this, and felt this was something I had missed out on. Presenting work at the conference not only gave me an opportunity to improve my presentation skills, but also provided feedback on my work prior to my thesis submission.

In addition to this, the conference was a huge learning opportunity, covering the fundamentals of the latest in mass spectrometry technologies, computational metabolomics, and how these can be applied to answer biological questions. These talks allowed me to learn about topics not covered in my PhD programme and provided further material for discussion in my thesis.

One of the most important aspects of the conference for me was the Early Career Members Network Career Evening, in which I was able to speak to scientists from diverse backgrounds about their careers and the differences between working in academia vs industry. These conversations gave me more confidence when applying to jobs outside of academia and highlighted areas of my CV I should focus on in interviews. This also included a networking event where I could meet other early career members (many of whom I only knew from Twitter), and talk about our projects and PhD experience.

Overall, the conference was a great learning opportunity and allowed me to gain a broader understanding of the field of metabolomics, which improved my thesis and aided my job search post submission.

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