



## **Taffy Lesley Mutizira**

*Bioprocessing Operations Support Specialist at Pfizer*

Hi, my name is Taffy and I studied Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmaceutical Sciences (TU762/level 7). I went on to pursue an Analytical Chemistry degree (TU851) as my level 8 qualification. I have worked with West Pharmaceutical Services and Pfizer. I hope the conversation below that I had about my career journey with Beatrice, a TU Dublin student, will be useful to you.

### **Can you describe a typical workday?**

I work as a Bioprocessing Operations Support Specialist. My responsibilities include supporting shift operations through issue resolution and attendance at daily operations and investigation meetings. I execute validation campaigns with regard to documentation; training, availability of equipment and materials; and training materials in support of process and schedule changes. In addition, I identify and execute continuous improvement (CI) projects in support of the team goals. I am responsible for the periodic review of GMP (good manufacturing practice) documentation and implementing, maintaining and improving Standard Work (schedule) for all processes.

As the Editor of our large team, I'm responsible for gathering updates for our Quarterly updates video and therefore soft skills are essential in my role.

### **How was the transition from college to working life?**

Personally, I didn't see much difference because I was working during weekends and taking up night shifts during the week whilst a student. This was a tough schedule and made me fall behind in my academic work. Now I just work so, with a little time management, I don't

regularly face difficulties. I live in Dublin so I didn't have to move since there are a lot of pharmaceutical companies here.

### **Why did you study chemistry at college?**

I chose to study chemistry as a degree because I've always liked helping people and want to see people happy and healthy. So I chose a career path that affects the lives of people positively. In the pharma industry, you can continuously help so many people by just going to work. I support the manufacturing team that produce vaccines. I am happy with this career path since the company's products save and sustain lives.

### **What was your first professional / degree related job interview like?**

Because I had a tough time in college as I had to work part time as well as study, when I got my degree, I felt, 'now I can do this' when I was applying for jobs. I was very motivated and, for my first interview, I researched the company and the role I was applying for. The interview wasn't too difficult possibly because that was my first industry job. The panel asked me to take them through my CV and why I wanted to work with them and I made sure that I could show that I knew about, the role, the company and its values.

### **What interview advice would you give to a new graduate?**

My advice is to learn more about the company and know what they do. In addition, prepare your CV well and make sure that you have read the job description and that you understand it because you should convince them why you are the most suitable amongst the applicants for the position. The [STAR technique](#) is very useful if you are asked competency-based questions. Most importantly, be confident but don't be over-confident.

### **What is the approximate starting salary range in your company for a chemistry graduate?**

The starting salary ranges from €26,000 to €30,000 per annum but it varies between companies.

### **Were there any specific requirements that you needed to get into this career?**

Just having the chemistry degree but there are also job opportunities in other departments for people with other qualifications such as engineering, accounting and IT specialists within the pharmaceutical industry.

### **What is the training process like once you joined the company you are working with now?**

The training process starts the first week on the job. You are trained on GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) and health and safety as well as on the role you applied for. In addition,

you work as part of a team so you get to learn on the job. As there are ongoing changes, training will continue. Also, specific training can be requested.

### **Are aspects of what you learned during your undergraduate degree still useful in your current position?**

GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) is the only aspect that I use in my current position as a support specialist. My degree was useful in my previous position as a production specialist since chemistry, biology, biochemistry and maths were required. Also, it could be useful if you want to do further studies/research.

### **Is there something that has helped motivate you on your career journey?**

My motto was and will always be 'never give up'. It was not easy for me during my college days. As I mentioned earlier, I worked and studied at the same time. This meant that I sometimes had to repeat exams over the summer. At one point, I left the course but I returned after a couple of years and even continued to a one year top up to get a level 8 (honours) degree. Hence when I got my first job, I really worked hard and I got promoted to a new position in the company within 8 months. I am still working hard to attain more success.

### **Do you do shift work? How do you deal with working shifts and living a balanced lifestyle?**

In my current role, I don't do shift work but I have done shift work before and it was very difficult because my sleeping pattern changed and my body couldn't adjust to it. For a balanced lifestyle, I always made plans for my days off and I made sure I stuck to them.

### **How inclusive is science today in your opinion and how does this impact the workplace?**

This is a work in progress and there is still a long way to go in general. In my company, things are good. There are themes each month such as Pride or Diversity and Inclusion. The company is open and discussions are encouraged. I don't feel different when I'm in work.

### **Interviewer: Beatrice Donkor**



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