

## ALUMNI

Liz Goodman left Kenilworth School in 2011 with 4 excellent A levels - As in English Literature, French and Psychology and a B in Biology - she is now enjoying working in her chosen field as a physio!

Lots of Kenilworth students are interested in this field and Liz has kindly shared her ideas on how to get accepted at university.

### How I Became a Physiotherapist

#### Step 1: A-levels

First of all, Biology as an A-level is a highly desirable requirement for any physiotherapy candidate, if not an essential one. It depends on which University you are applying to, but some Universities will want you to go on an access course if you have not already done Biology A-level, to ensure that you have the basic knowledge required to do the course.

Other A-level subjects which are relevant, though not essential: P.E, psychology, chemistry  
However, variety is impressive too, so a few humanities or languages thrown in there shows you are a well-rounded candidate.

#### Step 2: Work experience

The main thing that Universities want to see is dedication to this career choice and that you have done your research/experienced what physiotherapy entails. In fact, if you haven't listed any work experience on your UCAS application, this is one of the easiest ways for the University to veto your application. Universities have hundreds of applications to filter through, so if you don't have any relevant work experience then don't expect an offer.

Any relevant work experience is valuable such as volunteering in a care home or volunteer work at your local hospital. However, you should also try to get some experience shadowing a physiotherapist, preferably an NHS one. You're unlikely to get more than a day's shadowing in the NHS because, as you can imagine, they are very busy.

#### Step 3: Personal Statement

Your personal statement is the bread and butter of your application. You should get it checked and re-checked by somebody else to ensure it is clear, well written, flowing and has accurate spelling and punctuation! Remember, your University doesn't expect you to know everything there is to know about Physiotherapy, but they do want you to show your enthusiasm and promote yourself as their ideal candidate. Talk about what skills you can bring to the course and what your work experience has taught you.

#### Step 4: Interviews

These days, majority of physiotherapy courses will interview all of their candidates. They need to ensure that you don't just look good on paper but that you have the ability to interact with people and can keep calm in stressful situations.

The interviews are not too difficult, as I said already; they don't expect you to know everything there is to know about Physiotherapy. A good knowledge of the NHS and a physiotherapist's role in it is a good start. My advice is to also do some research into the role of other therapists- occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. Often there will be a service user on the interview panel- so someone who would potentially be one of your patients. You must therefore promote yourself as a caring person and ensure you emphasise the patient's control over their own care.

#### Step 5: University

You've made it! But unfortunately, the hard work doesn't end there. Your course will be a mixture of practical exams, essays, oral exams and placements. A lot of Physiotherapy courses will also make you do a Dissertation in your third year, this is usually research based. So it's pretty gruelling. Your friends will probably have about 5-6 hours of contact time per week, you will have 9-5 lectures/practicals most days. You will also do several 6-8 week placements throughout your 3 year degree- these are probably the most important and valuable part of your degree. These placements will prepare you for life as a qualified physio, so you shouldn't treat them lightly. Your clinical educator will be a fully qualified Physiotherapist and they will be assessing your performance the entire time. Don't let this put you off, placements can be very enjoyable- after all you're learning to do what you've always wanted to do!  
Towards the end of your third year of University they will start prepping you for your future interviews.

#### Final Step: Band 5 Interviews

So you've finished your degree, and now you need to apply for your Band 5 (junior physio) job. These are pretty terrifying, I won't deny that, but if you're properly prepared then you're bound to be successful. Use your university lecturers- majority of them were physiotherapists at some point and they can pass on their wisdom on interview technique to you.

The important thing to remember is interviews are very structured in the NHS, private practice interviews are quite different. The questions are usually scored out of 3- 0 being not answered, 1 partially answered, 2 majority answered, 3 fully answered. So it goes without saying that the highest scoring candidate gets the job.

Practice interviews are great, because interview technique is everything. You want to know all the buzz-words and the common questions you could get asked- there are lots of internet forums for this. There are even websites which give you mock interview questions and will grade your answers.

Another tip- research the trust/company you are applying to. They want to think that you really want to work there. Research the hospital's values, the various rotations they offer and make sure you talk about it in your interview. If you work in the NHS you will rotate as a band 5. So apply to a hospital that offers rotations you think you will enjoy. There are so many out there- musculoskeletal outpatients, surgical rehab, orthopaedics, neuro rehab, community rehab, paediatrics, sports rehab, burns and plastics, women's health and more!

I landed in a job at a hospital I love. 2<sup>nd</sup> interview I ever did (preparation is key), and I have now been here for 2 ½ years, I'm a Band 6 (senior physio) and absolutely love my job. If you want any more advice or tips you can e-mail me: [Elizabeth.goodman@homerton.nhs.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.goodman@homerton.nhs.uk)

