

MEET HOLLY ARCHER

FIRST-YEAR P&O STUDENT | UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE



Day in the life as a first year P&O student at Strathclyde

Something I love about my course that is everyday looks completely different. Our range of modules keep things interesting and refreshing.

A PRACTICAL DAY

A practical day we are usually in 9am-4pm especially if its modifications or technical work in the workshops. For me the most exciting days on the course is when we get to see volunteer patients! Real people with real stories.

- 8:35am- Leave my flat (I stay in student halls; it's just across the road from the P&O department- so handy!)
- 8:40 am- Arrive to the P&O department and head to changing rooms, get changed into scrubs and grab tool kit to start the day ready.
- 8:50 am-Head to which ever clinic room you have been assigned to and get your station ready: look out all equipment, clean it, sanitise area.
- 9:30 am -Finally, when you are ready go out to the waiting area and invite in your volunteer patient.
- 9:35 am - First carry out a full verbal assessment involving taking a social, medical and in this scenario a prosthesis history.
- 10 am- Once complete, carry out a full physical assessment testing muscle strengths and ranges of motion of the joints.
- 10:30 am- Then move onto casting, starting with marking up the patient's anatomy we did both TSB and PTB this year.
- 11:00 am- Once complete see your patient out, clean the area and fill the cast.
- 11:30 am- Wait for everyone to be ready for a debrief with the class on your session.
- 12:00 pm- Get changed and head back to halls for lunch.

Earlier on in the course you would be in a group pair for this activity, so after lunch I would come back in and help my partner complete their session.

THE REST OF THE DAY

Practical sessions usually take up full days, but we can have multiple different lectures in a day for our other non-practical modules.

A lecture day could start in the P&O department learning about different types of prosthetic feet, then a break where my course mates and I sit in the reception area chatting sometimes even playing card games- you get to know each other well and do a lot of group/ partner work!

In the afternoon we could have human biological sciences learning and gaining a more in depth understanding of the human body, this really helps when marking up anatomy on patients.

There could possibly another class after teaching us about the physics behind prosthetics that helps us understand how important it is to the reasoning behind why the prosthesis we are building at the time works to replicate and coordinate with the human body.

What I was most surprised at

How intricate and complex prosthetic alignment is, and how one tiny change can alter someone's gait and balance to such a massive extent. It really surprised me and emphasised the importance of taking the time to get it exactly right.

What I find most interesting

We are lucky enough to have volunteer patients in at my university, and we have the privilege to make them a prosthesis, start to finish. What I find most interesting is hearing how varied the experiences are of one prosthesis device and its specific features whether that's the suspension, socket etc are between patients from all walks of life depending on their individual wants and needs- as what can cause someone years of pain can give someone else relief and freedom.

What also really intrigued me was how massive and instant an effect a seemingly simple orthosis can have on someone's gait and seeing the before and after is unbelievable.



HOLLY ARCHER | CONTINUED

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• My favourite part

When volunteer patients come in, I enjoy hearing them tell their story from the beginning and learning how many steps and trial and errors it took for them to come to the prosthesis they have today, and also hearing about not so pleasant P&O service experiences they've had in the past that I can learn from. I also love taking a cast of a patient, specifically the removal and hopefully the relief that you have done a good job and have something to show for your hard work that you've made with your own hands.

• Proudest achievement

Building a transtibial prosthesis from taking a patient assessment, to fitting it with an appropriate well-made socket, and successfully carrying out the alignment so I could see the patient walk well with it was amazing!

• How I balance the course

I allow myself to be present during lectures to take in what is being taught and take down short notes, to then go into greater detail later in the day. This allows me to take in the information well so when it comes to exam time it doesn't feel brand new, making self-study less time consuming. Additionally, after long practical sessions instead of diving straight into self-study, I allow myself to relax so I don't get burnt out and give myself a minute to reflect on the session. We also get a lot of group assignments to work on and occasionally have hour gaps between lectures. Usually, my group and I will use this time to work on our presentation etc. This means I can free up the rest of my day to make time for my more personal priorities such as going to the gym and seeing my friends.

• Skills I have acquired

How to multi-task very well: remembering many different things while maintaining an appropriate balance of friendly and professional chat to get the information you need while keeping the session enjoyable and comfortable for the patient.

Using power tools and working with metal and all kinds of materials I never thought I would!

Maintaining resilience in stressful situations that aren't going your way, being able to stay calm and focus on the task in hand. Also to be more precise, always putting 100% in and always giving attention to small details as they can determine the course of bigger issues down the line- for example getting your modifications correct.

In saying that another skill I've learnt is how to work with and manipulate plaster- once you have done it a few times- it's satisfying getting the hang of it.

• Most rewarding learning experience

Was from a fitting and alignment session that didn't go so well. During dynamic alignment I was trying a million things to fix a problem and therefore making it worse and stressing myself out. This was a situation tough to stay calm and composed in, having never been under that pressure in front of a patient before. Afterwards I was told to just reset my static alignment and take a step back. This reassured me that all my effort and knowledge wasn't wrong but just had to be applied once I had a clean slate. Although this was frustrating and upsetting at the time, it was a great learning experience and was rewarding because it gave me a sense of back plan when things aren't going the way I expected them to.

