

Title of presentation

BioSci Pathway Opportunity Programme

Presenters

Jeanette Robertson & Kieran Higgins

Abstract

The Pathway Opportunity Programme (POP) is a QUB widening participation initiative aimed at supporting students from backgrounds that are less likely to participate in higher education. The School of Biological Sciences BioSci pathway was one of the pilot POP pathways introduced into QUB in 2017. Since its inception a total of 22 BioSci students have gone to study degree programmes within the School of Biological Sciences. There is a wide range of degree programmes within the School that BioSci students can go on to study. These are Microbiology, Biological Sciences, Marine Biology, Zoology, Food Quality, Safety and Nutrition and Environmental Management. The challenge with the BioSci pathway was creating a programme of study that would bring in aspects of each of these different disciplines. The topic “Food Loss and Waste” was chosen as the area of study for the BioSci pathway. This multidisciplinary topic enables students to sample aspects of all of the Schools programmes but it also offers them the opportunity to study a very topical subject of huge global importance. The BioSci programme is delivered throughout the academic year using a blended learning approach and culminates in a university residential week in June. During this week students get to experience university life from both academic and social perspectives. They are exposed to a range of learning experiences in a wide range of learning environments and they get to undertake a wide range of assessment strategies. The BioSci pathway aims to prepare students for the academic and social aspects of university life. Feedback from students after completion of the programme indicates that on the whole, this goal is achieved, furthermore comparison of performance of students who have entered School degree programmes via the BioSci pathway show that this it is comparable with that of

their peers. Another very important goal of the pathway is to give students confidence in their own ability to undertake and complete a degree. Again feedback from students indicates that the BioSci pathway achieves this. A particularly pleasing outcome and evidence of achievement of both of these goals is the fact that former BioSci students have now taken on the role of Academic Guide to current BioSci pathway students. In this role they assist and guide students with their academic activities and are in the unique position of being able to use their own personal experiences on the pathway to both support and inspire these students.