

Shannon Grove

Third year University of Salford student studying Prosthetics and Orthotics



Shannon has complex mental health issues along with physical health issues which include osteogenesis imperfecta (OI) type 1 which has caused long standing fractures in their vertebrae and feet, along with hearing loss and hyper mobility.

What attracted you to P&O?

Due to my health and the environment I grew up in, I never thought I would be able to study at University. However, I set myself the goal to use my experiences (both negative and positive) of a wide range of NHS services to do some good for the future of the management of my condition (OI). I chose to do this through P&O as it allows me to focus on the functional aspects of an individual, which are the ones which have the most significant daily impact.

Further to this, I always knew I would end up in a healthcare job just not which discipline or role. In school I developed an interest in engineering and wanted to go into product design. P&O is the perfect combination of engineering and healthcare, making a genuine difference in peoples lives while also having room for creativity and innovation – I love how this industry is not static, rather constantly changing and evolving.

What advice would you have for other Disabled learners?

Ultimately whatever information you disclose is up to you and one can go into as much or little detail as wanted.

Personally, I laid everything regarding my health for the past couple years out on the table as I started so that should I have a problem nothing comes as a surprise. It's much harder to explain your health situation in a flare/crisis than it is when you're at your base line.

Another aspect which encouraged me to be open with staff and students about my health issues is that I have a rare metabolic disorder and if students are familiar with it then they are in a better position, should they encounter anyone with similar issues once qualified.

I do not think disabled students are reminded enough of the impact they can have in the field. They are needed in the industry and will (or at least should) always have a place here in P&O. The experiences of our service users are crucial in improving the quality of care provided. Some of those service users will also be clinicians and that is okay. Clinicians who have the experience of being a patient have insights into what services are like, while also being in a position to change them, which is so incredibly important.

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Often throughout our lives we are told by medical professionals what we should and should not be doing, what our condition(s) mean for the rest of our lives and other pieces of information which essentially control how we live. I have found that disclosing medical information to educational institutions allows the reversal of that role. You have the opportunity to tell people exactly what you can and cannot do along with any adaptations which may be required for you to carry out tasks. As daunting as this is there is so much power and strength to be found in that experience. I personally have found it to be quite healing to be able to disclose my capabilities, on my terms, to inform the thing which I want to do.

Being a student is essentially the only time you are allowed to have two addresses. Students should remind health providers in your home area of this as some may try and discharge you to services provided by the area of your university. If this is what you want that is absolutely fine however, I know I was waiting for treatment and had been for a while hence wanted to retain my place on the waiting list.

Being disabled in and of itself is a full time job and it can be very challenging to manage such a specialised degree alongside having complex health. I have sought help with finances, housing, practical adjustments, and emotional support but have only really been successful with the practical adjustments and informal emotional support from lecturers.

You will likely have to complete a manual handling course, do have a look at this prior to the session and have a think about any adaptations to be made. Any key adaptations may help to inform adjustments that might be needed on placement.

You need to push for opportunities, put your name forward for things and just see what happens. I have done a residential placement and gone to a conference only because I put my name forward. With the placement it was thought I wouldn't be up for it, so if I hadn't have voiced my interest I would have missed out on what was possibly my most valuable first year experience.

You are the only one who knows your limitations, let nobody tell you any different than what you know of yourself.