

Derek A. Couchman

Personal details

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Education

October 2002 - present

University of Edinburgh

Studying for a PhD in Structural Chemistry, expected to finish September 2005. My research concerns the gas-phase structures of simple molecules using both experimental and theoretical techniques.

Simple and concise explanation of PhD for a non-academic audience

October 1997 - June 2002

University of Edinburgh

Received a 2:1 in MChem (Hons) Chemistry, with a year in Europe. Spent one academic year studying at Universitat Stuttgart (2000 - 2001) developing my knowledge of German language and culture whilst carrying out a research project. This work was on the self-assembly of long-chain organic molecules on silicon wafers and I prepared my dissertation in German. In my honours year at Edinburgh, I worked on a topic of research that is closely linked to my PhD.

August 1991 - May 1997

Community School, Kirkcaldy

3 CSYS - Mathematics (A), Chemistry (A), German (C).
5 Highers - English (A), Mathematics (A), Chemistry (A), Physics (A), German (A).

Studying in a foreign language and integrating well into new environments demonstrates a high level of personal flexibility and resilience, as well as strong language skills

Employment

Summer 2004

LEAPS Course Co-ordinator, University of Edinburgh

Assisted with the organisation and administration of a course in chemistry aimed at pupils leaving school, and who might require extra evidence of commitment to study in order to secure a university place. I worked closely with a group of 22 students overseeing their laboratory work and marking their assignments. At the end of the course, I co-authored student reports commenting on their laboratory-based experiences.

October 2002 - present

Demonstrator, University of Edinburgh

- Demonstrated laboratory work to a wide variety of students from first to third year. Some of the students also came from the School of Biology and had little background in chemistry. It was essential to be able to adapt the teaching style to suit the age and ability of the students.
- I also took responsibility for a group of three students who were working on a short research project within our group. I worked very closely with them to teach the techniques that we use routinely in our work and determined the structures of some simple molecules that I hope to be able to publish in the near future.

Summer 2002

Kitchen Porter, Muirfield, Open Golf Championship

Worked for Payne and Gunther in the kitchens of their royal and ancient chalets at the 2002 Open Championships. The job involved controlling hygiene issues in the kitchen, as well as being mindful of health and safety. Prioritising the many tasks that had to be performed was essential to support the catering operation.

Summer 1998 - 2000

Porter, The Edinburgh Residence, Edinburgh

I worked in customer service in a complex of luxury 5-star serviced apartments on a full-time basis during vacations. As part of a small team, the job required great flexibility to suit the needs of the guests. Communication skills were key to ensuring that we presented a flawless face to the public.

Skills

Communication

- Through giving oral presentations both as an undergraduate and postgraduate at Edinburgh and in Stuttgart, I have acquired a confidence in talking in public. I recently presented at the Universities of Scotland Inorganic Conference and have accepted an offer to give a seminar at the University of Graz in Austria in the near future.
- I have a particular interest in communicating science to the general public in a way that dispels common myths. I have been involved with demonstrating science at the Edinburgh Science Festival and have visited local schools to tutor in chemistry classes.

Language

I have a working knowledge of spoken and written German and the ability to comprehend technical papers written in that language.

IT

I am a confident IT user and have a strong working knowledge of many computer programs, languages and applications including Microsoft Office, HTML, UNIX, Fortran, Visual Basic and Gaussian.

Team player

- I was a member of the running club at university and held various posts on the committee including secretary, treasurer and race organiser. All required a great deal of co-operation with others in the committee. Sometimes this would involve taking the lead on an issue that was closely linked with my job; other times I would take a more supporting role, for example, advising whether we had sufficient funds to attend a race.
- In 2003, I was elected as vice-president of the University of Edinburgh Chemical Society. Working as a team was essential as we organised social events, lectures and visits.

Leadership / Project management

- As race organiser on the running club committee, I submitted a successful bid to hold the British Universities Cross Country Championships in Edinburgh. This involved a year of planning and co-ordination in order to set a course suitable for 2,000 runners, providing catering and changing facilities; as well as ensuring that we had the services of sufficient helpers and qualified officials. I negotiated a deal with a local leisure centre that gave us sole use of their facilities. Following discussions with the neighbouring farmer, a course was set on his land.
- I was also instrumental in the organisation of a running club reunion that was held recently. I took charge of the publicity for the event well before it took place and endeavoured to trace as many former members as possible.

Referees

Academic

Prof. Johnson (PhD Supervisor), School of Chemistry, University of Edinburgh EH1 1PQ
Tel: 0131 222 6767

Work/Employment

Dr. Patyal (Schools Liaison), School of Chemistry, University of Edinburgh EH1 1PQ
Tel: 0131 333 6767

Strong skills section based on university, employment and leisure activities highlights key competencies as well as giving a sense of personality to the CV