

# #IAmABiologist

## Tom Hagley PhD Student, SWC



### What does your day-to-day look like as a neuroscience PhD student?

It's quite varied. I'm currently wrapping up my third rotation at the moment and completed two different projects before this. There, I learned to use new technology like the Bonsai visual programming language. I also tracked behaviour in mice, including during their sleep, to extract data. I did a lot of coding. In my second rotation, I did hands-on wet lab and mouse work, as well as data analysis and modelling. I enjoy that there are lots of discussions at SWC, like symposiums, courses, and workshops, from which new ideas for experiments are sparked. This is important for not running pointless experiments, especially when it comes to using animal models.

### Could you give us a brief picture of your career trajectory thus far?

My A levels were in Biology, Maths, Chemistry, and AS Physics. I then completed a Master's in Neuroscience here at UCL. I did a second Master's in Computer Science before joining the PhD programme here. You don't need to have specialised in Biology in high school to become a biologist. Biology will be taught in university.

### From the biological sciences, why did you choose to study neuroscience?

My Biology teacher in college was very inspiring, and she happened to have a PhD in neuroscience. She was the 'mum' of the year - very supportive of her students. Looking back, I liked that in college, the classes are smaller and there are more opportunities to interact with teachers one-to-one than in university.

### What are your career aspirations given your expertise and background?

I'm less motivated by asking big scientific questions and more motivated by wanting to keep learning. I like being a PhD student because I can learn many different skills that could be useful down the line - all while applying what I've learned to the areas of neuroscience that interest me. I look forward to keep learning skills that could translate in unexpected way in the future.



### What advice do you have for students who want to become biologists?

My general advice is that there is no need to focus too early. It would be helpful to get a good background in the sciences in general and hone your quantitative skills (like Maths) for Biology or Neuroscience. It's totally fine not to know what you want to do going forward. Keep your options open. I used to feel like a failure not knowing what I wanted to do. But you can figure it out as you go along!

