

Aaron Jay Alcesto

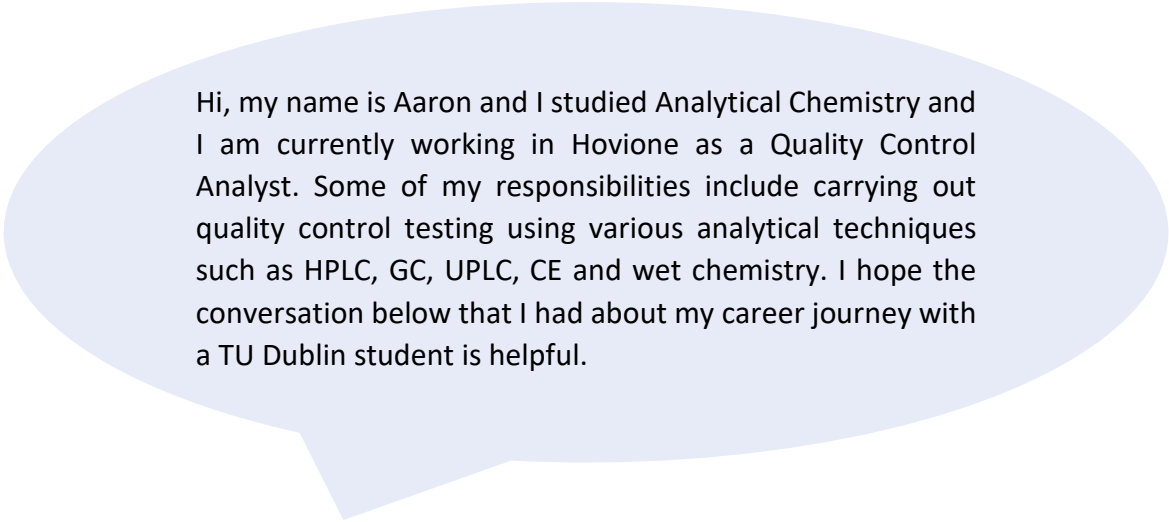
Quality Control Analyst working in Hovione

Have you ever wondered what a typical work day is like for a Quality Control Analyst in a pharmaceutical company?

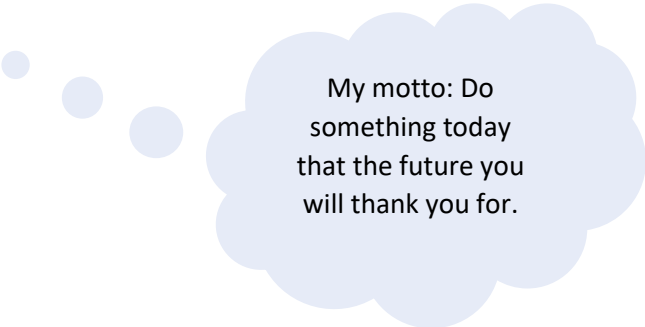
Are you interested in finding out about some interview tips?

Find out more here in Aaron's career profile.

(This is a 4-5 minute read)



Hi, my name is Aaron and I studied Analytical Chemistry and I am currently working in Hovione as a Quality Control Analyst. Some of my responsibilities include carrying out quality control testing using various analytical techniques such as HPLC, GC, UPLC, CE and wet chemistry. I hope the conversation below that I had about my career journey with a TU Dublin student is helpful.



My motto: Do something today that the future you will thank you for.

Can you describe a typical work day?

I usually arrive at work around 8am, then I settle down with a cup of coffee at my desk and check emails. I look over the schedule given to me to check the samples I need to run that day and the technique I'll be using (e.g. GC, HPLC or capillary electrophoresis). I make sure that all the equipment I'm using that day is set up correctly and then I start preparing the solutions and I run the samples and standards for the rest of the day. We have a flexible work arrangement and you can start any time between 7am and 10am as long as you do your 8 hours.

Did you have to move away from home because of your career?

Yes, I am currently living in Cork. It was a big change but I like it here.

What part of your job makes you want to get up in the morning?

The people working in my team as I am lucky enough that I get on well with them. Everyone is willing to give a hand to each other.

How was the transition from college to work?

There were definitely some differences between student life and work life such as some colleagues are quite a bit older than me, therefore communication needed to be more professional than it was with college classmates.

Why did you decide to study chemistry at college?

Most of chemistry applies to everyday life so I always thought that was very interesting. The job opportunities available in Ireland also encouraged me to study chemistry. Once you get your degree, you have financial freedom so it's worth it.

What was the training process like at the company when you first started?

During my training process, I spent the first three months in the office doing e-learning where I read through the documents about lab safety and how to use the various instruments in the lab. There was also a trainer who was there if I had questions.

Do you do shift work? How do you deal with working shifts and leading a balanced lifestyle?

I don't do shift work. Shifts are 12 hours and involve working at night and weekends some of the time so that can be quite stressful. However, you can decide if you want to work shifts or not. You would usually get 25% extra on your salary for working shifts.

Do you have advice about interviews for new graduates?

It can be hard getting your foot in the door. Be prepared. Research the company beforehand and know what they do. Prepare answers to potential questions. Treat the interview as if it's a normal conversation and don't be too stiff. Being able to get along with the people interviewing you is important as you will be working with them in the future. Always be yourself and act confident!

Are there opportunities to work abroad in the company, like transfer to a branch outside of Ireland?

Yes, during my graduate internship year in Hovione, I had the opportunity to work in Portugal for 6 months. I got to learn about cultural differences between Ireland and Portugal. The weather, food and people were amazing. The company have sites in Portugal, Macau and the US so there are opportunities to work in a range of locations. It's very good for your CV too.

Are you required to do presentations, prepare videos, reports, scientific posters etc.?

Only if you sign up for it. I have signed up to be a QC Representative and that involves attending health and safety committee meetings and also giving presentations to students.

Do you need to do training courses to update your knowledge?

I only had to do training courses at the start of my career. After that, the work each day involves getting more experience and learning more.

What steps did you take to bring you to this point in your career journey? Do you have some plans for next steps in this journey?

I focused in college and made sure to stay organised and managed my time wisely. I plan to travel more and I'd also like to be in a managerial position in the future. Getting a masters can be beneficial for a management role. Our company will often support you to do a masters part time.

How inclusive is science today in your opinion and how does this impact the workplace?

I think that science today is inclusive and diverse as there are many people from different parts of the world working in my company, which has allowed me to learn about different cultures and try out new foods. Also, if I travel, there'll be people I know in quite a few countries.

Starting salary range in Hovione company for a chemistry graduate: €35,000 – €55,000
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Interviewer: Christina Zhang, July 2021