I did my Phase 2a Research Attachment SSC at the Department of Infection, Inflammation and Cardiovascular Disease. It was a lab-based project and I was working on potential proteins involved in autoimmunity and I really got a kick from pipetting liquids and looking cells under the microscope. Here are my top tips for a lab-based SSC.

1. Read up on the subject matter
   1. This applies to all types of research but it’s all the more important for a lab-based one. Know the purpose of your experiment(s) and why you are performing certain molecular biology techniques. This will also make your placement more worthwhile. Furthermore, you don’t want to be in a situation where your supervisor grills you and you don’t know what’s going on!
2. Come on time
   1. You will most likely be placed under the supervision of a PhD student and your project is probably their project as well. They can get quite cross if you don’t turn up especially when they’ve booked a hood specifically for their experiment and they are short on time. Being punctual will land you in their good books.
3. Get involved
   1. Lab work can seem quite mundane at times. Imagine watching someone transfer liquid from one bottle to another for hours! Ask to get involved and if you perform well, your supervisor may even let you do the experiment without any supervision. Again, this is up to the discretion of your supervisor – some may be keen to let students do experiments on their own, others may just want them to observe.
4. Practise your craft
   1. Lab-based work requires a few months to get the hang of the techniques before you can even start doing the experiment proper! You don’t have that long so it’s imperative you practise the techniques well. Pipetting is not as easy as it looks!
5. Publications
   1. Lab-based work is in general quite difficult to publish due to the amount of work required to produce results. However, if you’re keen, ask your supervisor if there are opportunities for publication and poster presentations and you could may have a chance to have your name down on a paper! This can give you extra points in your application for Foundation posts. A poster presentation will also look good on your CV. You may even want to consider pursuing a BMedSci with your supervisor in the future and being keen will put you in good stead.

Lab work forms the bedrock of medicine and I sincerely hope you will enjoy your research attachment!

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