



***So Aideen, what are you studying at university?".....***

***I'm not sure that most people are prepared for the can of worms they've just opened, or in fact the very long winded conversation they have just sparked with me when asking that question!***

Whether it be my neighbours wondering why I bring home what looks like parts of the bionic man, my GP who wants to know how I'm so familiar with my anatomy and physiology, or my daughters kinder teacher who wants to know why I have plaster all over my jeans when I come to pick her up. The question triggers something inside me that fuels an overwhelming urge to talk all day and tell them everything about my course. I truly love it.

My name is Aideen Curran and I'm a 26 year old student studying Prosthetics and Orthotics (P&O) at La Trobe University, Bundoora. Each year approximately 30 students are accepted into the 3 ½ year course, and with La Trobe being the only University in Australia to offer P&O, it's a very small number compared to most other degrees. For me, the course perfectly balances my interests with my talents and qualities and this is what triggered my curiosity towards P&O. It encompasses 3 diverse areas that stimulate me more than any other course could offer; learning about the human body as I've always had a keen interest in medicine and health; interacting with patients which is the true Piscean in me; and finally fabricating the prosthesis which ignites my creative streak.

I'd be lying if I said the course isn't challenging. Compared to most degrees we have a big course load which means we have a lot of contact hours at university, especially for our practical subjects where we spend up to 12 hours a week in the lab making a prosthesis or orthosis, and of course our endless homework.

For me the biggest challenge has come in the way of my beautiful 5 year old daughter, Alana. It's hard enough to study P&O with the amount of hours and assignments, but I have the additional challenge of raising my daughter alone, having no family in Victoria to call on to babysit, and

working part time to make ends meet. So sometimes my university work suffers when she gets sick or we just have one of those days where everything goes wrong! Full time university student, part time waitress, and full time mum means I have to be a full time superwoman which is a hard act to follow!

However, the highlights of studying Prosthetics are what drive me to fulfill my dream in becoming a skilled and knowledgeable Prosthetist/ Orthotist. My favourite day of the week is when our volunteer amputees come in to our clinic. Some of our volunteers have been coming in for so many years they know more about casting than we do, and can often give us little tips when we seem to have plaster bandages upside down or we forget a little step in the process. I can't stress how thankful we students are for our volunteers as we learn so much from these classes and I love getting to know the patients. Another highlight this year was our study trip to Cambodia. We were privileged enough to visit many Prosthetic clinics and hospitals in Cambodia to see how they made legs from limited available materials and skills. It was such an eye opener, and very confronting at times, but the experience is something that I'll hold very close and inspires me every day even when I lose a toe off my cast and want to cry.

Ideally when I graduate in a year and a half, I'd like to work in a facility that offers both prosthetics and orthotics so that I can use both skill sets that I've learned and work to my full potential, and know that going to work each day will be both rewarding and challenging. My particular year level has been said to be one of the most studious, intelligent and enthusiastic years to go through La Trobe so the future of Prosthetics is in good hands! In a couple of years I might be your Prosthetist or colleague, and you'll know I've succeeded in achieving my goal. Until then I anxiously look forward to that day.



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