

The Deborah Rowland Scholarship: Paige's Story

Beauty therapy to facilities management (FM) might seem like an unusual career path, but for Paige Watts, this move opened a world of opportunities. We sat down with Paige, one of the first recipients of the [Deborah Rowland Scholarship](#), to learn about her journey and how the scholarship is helping shape her future in FM.

Finding FM

Before discovering her passion for FM, Paige spent more than 10 years as a beauty therapist. In this line of work, she developed valuable skills in customer service and team management as an assistant manager. However, Paige had an itch to scratch – she still wanted to engage with people but was looking for something more practical.

Paige's entry into FM will sound very familiar. It came somewhat by chance when she took on a reception role at BUUK. When an opportunity arose to transition into facilities, Paige decided to give it a try. Quickly, she found facilities one of her favourite parts of the role.

"I'm a practical person," says Paige. "I hate sitting at a desk for too long, but I really liked the office environment. What I love most about FM is that no two days are the same – I'm not tied to my desk, I can walk around and help people. It's like the beauty industry, but also much more."

Transferable skills

Despite the career change, Paige found she could apply many skills from her previous work to her new role. "Being able to talk to people is essential in both roles," she explains. "In the beauty industry, you have to be sociable, which made me much more confident. Coming into facilities, I can approach people easily. I don't mind calling contractors or asking staff what their issues are – it doesn't bother me at all."

This confidence has proven invaluable in her new role, where communication is key to successful FM.

Finding the scholarship

When Paige's facilities manager, James, suggested she apply for the Deborah Rowland Scholarship, she jumped at the opportunity. Despite having worked in facilities for only about a year, Paige had shown great potential.

The application process itself was collaborative, with colleagues helping Paige showcase her talents. James helped refine her written application, highlighting her strengths and areas where she could elaborate on her experience. Another colleague who had completed a filming course helped record and edit her video submission.

"Our business is really supportive here," says Paige. "James helped me reword part of my application where he thought I could elaborate. I'm not very good at talking about myself, so having that support from my manager was incredibly helpful."

Learning the industry

Since beginning the scholarship programme in January, Paige has been discovering that FM encompasses far more than she initially realised.

"I didn't realise facilities was such a wide-ranging job with so many different specialisations," she admits. "Through the scholarship materials, I've become particularly interested in business continuity planning. I've been reading about it and gaining confidence in this area."

One of the most valuable aspects of the scholarship for Paige has been the mentorship. She meets regularly with her mentor, Liz Kentish, who has been arranging work experience opportunities for Paige to explore different FM environments.

"Liz is helping me see different places and buildings in Cambridge where you could work in FM. That's something you wouldn't get from many online courses – having a mentor come and sit with you, chat with you, and visit your company. I've been very lucky with that. It's probably the best part of it all."

Looking to the future

The scholarship has expanded Paige's horizons regarding her career trajectory in FM. While she's happy in her current role, she's excited to explore the breadth of opportunities available in the field.

"I'd like to stay at BUUK for as long as I can because James has a huge background in FM, and we work well together. But I would like to try out different FM areas in the future," she explains.

"A hospital environment appeals to me the most right now because I like the idea of being able to help people in a different way. But I'm open to experiencing what it would be like to work in various settings – that's what makes this scholarship so exciting."

Advice for applicants

For those considering applying for the 2025 Deborah Rowland Scholarship, Paige offers some practical advice:

"The scholarship is great, but it does require self-discipline as there's a lot of reading and self-learning involved. I would always say to people: just do an hour at a time, don't rush it. We have two years to complete it, so pace yourself. But it's definitely worth it."

Paige emphasises that even if you don't have a traditional background in FM, you shouldn't hesitate to apply. Many skills are transferable, and the scholarship is designed to help those with potential to thrive in the industry.

A message of gratitude

Deborah Rowland, a workplace and facilities management leader, founded the scholarship in 2024 to help find and nurture the next generation of FM professionals after sadly being diagnosed with advanced cancer. When asked what she would say to Deborah, Paige is quick to answer: "I would just say thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to do this and for all the knowledge. What she's done is incredible, and her involving so many knowledgeable people from FM has helped me so much."

Apply for the 2025 scholarship

The Deborah Rowland Scholarship is now open for 2025 applications, with four spaces available thanks to generous support from Xenon Group, which is providing two regulated qualifications and four annual subscriptions to its online training portal XenZone.

The scholarship is open to those starting in FM or wanting to join the industry, providing the opportunity to obtain an IWFM-regulated qualification along with valuable mentoring and networking opportunities.

Whether you're looking to make a career change like Paige or just starting out in FM, the Deborah Rowland Scholarship could be your stepping stone to a rewarding and diverse career.

Applications close on Monday 30 June 2025. To find out more about the eligibility criteria and how to apply, [click here](#).