

## Interview with Paul Atigbire about his binational doctoral studies

Paul, you are currently a doctoral student at the University of Oldenburg and Groningen. **Please briefly introduce yourself and your research project.** #00:00:08-2#

Paul Atigbire: My name is Paul Atigbire, I come from Ghana, a lovely country along the coast of West Africa. I was born and raised in a family of five - so my parents and 5 children, so myself and 4 siblings. I started my education in Ghana. So, I completed my basic and secondary education and my bachelor's degree in Biochemistry in Ghana. Afterwards, I came to Germany to study a master's degree in Biochemistry as well and following this I applied for and got the opportunity to do a PhD at the University of Oldenburg. My PhD work is like a cross between human genetics and metabolic signalling. We have been looking at synopathis in general, but at the moment we work mostly on retinitis pigmentosa and we try to understand signalling pathways that are dysregulated when the person suffers from imitation that causes retinitis pigmentosa. #00:01:25-9#

**Why did you choose this binational doctoral project?** #00:01:30-5#

Paul Atigbire: The opportunity to do this project was too good to turn down. When I read the advertisement for it and I looked at the prospects and what it offered it was really enticing. First of all, the fact that there'll be collaboration between the Universities of Oldenburg and Groningen so you get an experience in two countries and a joint degree. That was quite unique, the first time I heard of such a programme. This was very influential in me choosing such a programme. #00:02:18-7#

You told us about the opportunities about the binational programme. **Are there any challenges?** #00:02:26-5#

Paul Atigbire: Yes. So far, from the interaction with my colleagues and my own experiences the main challenge has been in situations when it is not immediately clear to the student, which university is responsible for what which I would call burocratical barriers. Secondly the logistics of it in terms of moving from one city to the next. It can be difficult to find accommodation in a student city. If you are not lucky you end up losing a lot of time settling down and getting yourself going, even before you start the work itself. So these are the two main challenges. #00:03:21-0#

I: I see. We give our best to improve the situation. That can be assured. #00:03:25-1#

Paul Atigbire: I can already say, that from the time I started a lot of things have already improved. It's looking good. #00:03:32-2#

Okay, thank you. And Paul, **what career move would you like to do next, after you PhD?** #00:03:36-7#

Paul Atigbire: At the moment I am keeping my options open. What I know is that I'd like to remain in research. Whether I'd do this in academia in the university or at a research institution that is more aligned to the university. I would also like to work in industry in research and development. I am keeping the options open and see what opportunities come up in the next year. #00:04:03-7#

Okay. I see. **Do you have any advice for future PhD students?** #00:04:09-4#

Paul Atigbire: I would say from my experience, the first thing is to get a solid ground in your topic and in this way, you earn the respect of your PIs (Principal Investigators). After that you just need to enjoy what you do and have fun doing it because it can be challenging sometimes in terms of the research work. Additionally, make as many connections as possible in this period. It's very important for developing one's PhD itself and also opens opportunities following your graduation. So whatever career moves you would like to make, it is very good to have people in various places that you can connect with and learn from their experiences and get some tips from them. #00:05:03-5#