

# My first year experience

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3rd year Comparative Literature and Culture



Imagine leaving your home country in the midst of a pandemic, to live in a country you have never been to before and to study in a university in another language and with a completely different school system.

Imagine having to pack all of your life in 2 suitcases and a backpack. But you cannot take your family or your friends in any other format than a 10x15cm photo.

Imagine not even being so sure about the course you chose, because let's face it: who knows what to do when you are just 17?????

I knew a few things for sure: that I needed an umbrella because it was going to rain a lot and that 'essay' was a word I was going to fear. Fun fact: none of the two things became true!! Now I know that an umbrella is of no good because the UK is too windy and essays are parts of my day-to-day life like my morning porridge and my cup of tea (oh Gosh, when have I become so British??)



I will always remember that cute old couple who was seating next to me on the plane. They saw me bursting into tears (I was even wearing a face mask, what a disgusting image!) and they kindly asked me: 'Are you okay, dear?' I did not know how to feel, I was so lost... was I going to make friends?? What if I did not like the course? What if I failed my exams? What if I could not handle the house, cleaning, cooking, doing the laundry... I knew I was a complete failure when I had to do the laundry!

Therefore, I will never stress enough one thing when I talk to perspective students: it is OKAY to feel scared before starting university and EVERYONE feels exactly the same. Everyone is leaving their comfortable bubble. Everyone feels thrown into the stream of life. No one has a single clue about what is going on. Everyone feels the social pressure of making the best of the university years because we all have that middle-aged uncle, unsatisfied with his life, who scrolls his head, sighs and says 'Aaah enjoy these years! They are the best years of your life'.

**What made me and my friends bond:  
COOKING & EATING!**



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Surprisingly, everyone in the university, lecturers, staff and older students, knew how I was feeling and were ready to take me by hand into this new adventure. This is one of the things I will always remember: I have always felt that someone was taking care of me and gently introducing me to the mature version of myself. I did not expect my department to organise afternoons with tea and biscuits, just to enjoy a homely feeling. I did not expect that my lecturers did not want me to be a sponge to absorb facts. Instead, they valued my perspective and stimulated me to bring it to the fore. I did not expect to see one of my professors taking notes about what me and my course mates were saying because he was genuinely interested in our comments. I did not expect to have an actual preparation towards assessments and essays to help my learning and teach me how enjoyable it is to explore my interests, do my own research and argue my ideas. Besides, at the end of the year, I decided to change from a joint honour to a single honour. It was a hard decision but when I opened myself with my personal tutor, sharing my troubles, she was very caring and lovely. She guided me, and she clearly told me that it was completely normal to do some changes. Sometimes one just needs to taste what university is like to take more conscious choices.

And because all first-year students are excited to make friends, I have never felt truly alone. At times it was hard, of course, to push me out of my comfort zone and my overthinking that was telling me that no one wanted to be friends with me. If you just take one step out of that lie in your head, you can already feel the warmth of all the people who surround you. Despite the pandemic, the Student Union and the societies did everything they could to be active. I am still amazed if I think that during a lockdown and with online classes only I became so close with the same people who are going to graduate with me this summer. I hope you can realise that you are so talented and so full of gifts that it would be a shame for others if you do not open yourself. Believe me, the other students cannot wait to make friends!



I am still not great when it comes to doing the laundry, but that's okay. My house is not perfectly clean when I have many essays to write, but that's okay (I have a specific corner in my room that I call 'the corner of shame' where I throw everything...). Sometimes I do not have the time to do my grocery and I eat something quick, but that's okay. There are still plenty of things that I do not know how to do, but that's okay. Sometimes one feels incomplete, but you are just young...