

TAKE YOUR PLACE

Take Your Place Alumni Q&A series

Hannah's university experience

Hannah went to Alde Valley Academy in Suffolk and is now in her final year at the University of Warwick, studying a joint honours degree in French and History.

What A-levels did you choose and why?

I chose Art, French and History plus an AS in Psychology. I chose Art and History because they had always been my favourite subjects throughout school, and I knew I would enjoy them. Psychology was a new subject but after some research, I thought that it sounded very interesting (which it was). French was a bit of a risk; it was initially my teacher who encouraged me to choose it. However, I loved the idea of speaking a second language so took the risk.

How did you choose your university course and how did you find the application process?

I chose French and History because I loved both of the subjects at university and could not decide on just one of them to continue; I thought that they would compliment one another and provide me with a range of skills. I initially chose Warwick by looking at the league tables. It's a top ten university, and it wasn't too close or too far from home. After visiting the campus, I decided that I would love to study there – and I did!

What do you enjoy most about your studies and further education?

I love the variety that is on offer within my studies. My university offers history modules on an incredible range of topics, opening my eyes to areas of history that I had never before considered. I also enjoy being able to pick my own essay titles and focus on the areas of my modules that interest me the most; university offers a lot of freedom in this way.

I also loved spending a year abroad in France as part of my degree. It gave me a chance to immerse myself in French language and culture and live daily life like a French native.

What is a typical day/week like on your course?

My course is mainly seminar based. I have around six/seven seminars a week which I have to prepare for, eg. a piece of translation, grammar work, or reading for a history seminar. We will then discuss this work in small-group seminars. I also have three or four lectures a week which consist of sitting in a large lecture theatre taking notes while an academic talks you through a subject.

I also take part in societies, so my evenings will involve attending events such as a French film night for Warwick French society, or writing an article for my university newspaper. If not, I still have time to socialise with my friends and flatmates.

How has the pandemic affected your studies?

The pandemic meant that all university teaching was online. This was quite difficult to get used to, but after a full year, it felt normal.

The pandemic did also take away the social aspect of university, although there were online society social events, they were not quite the same.

What challenges if any, have you faced in your education journey so far?

I've definitely struggled with a lot of imposter syndrome at university. There have been times where I have felt as if I do not belong at Warwick, especially surrounded by students from private schools and grammar schools. However, I constantly remind myself that I achieved the grades to study at Warwick, and I will soon be graduating with a high-2:1, proving that I did belong at my university.

I also did struggle with the university workload at times; it can be a stressful experience, especially in exams. Yet, I always managed to pull through and organised my time well to ensure all my work was completed.

What advice would you give your younger self?

I would tell my younger self not to worry so much when things don't go as planned. Over my years at university, not everything has gone exactly as I'd wanted it to; I did not get my first choice of accommodation or in my modules this year and I didn't get my first choice year abroad placement. Yet, all of these things worked out well in the end! I met fantastic friends in my accommodation, loved my modules and my year abroad went really well. If you keep a positive mind-set, things can still turn out just as well, if not better – so stop stressing!

Do you have any top tips for students applying to university?

When deciding on a university, students should look at exactly what each university has to offer. For example, if you want to study history, take a look at the history modules that different universities offer and see which are the most interesting.

I also think that students should think carefully when deciding what to study. Career prospects are important, but ultimately, if you don't find the subject interesting or enjoyable, you will probably struggle with it at university.

