



Student Case Study

Name:

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Age: 23

Institution:

University of Surrey

Studying:

BSc (Hons) in Nutrition & Dietetics



I didn't exactly get onto a degree at university the traditional way! I wasn't even sure that I would continue after my GCSEs as although I'd done well in languages and wanted to do French and Spanish A Levels, my parents weren't sure what benefit that would give me, and they were very keen for me to get to work and have a career. No one on either side of my parents' families have ever been, or even know the first thing about university, so although I wasn't ready to leave education, I didn't know what I should do. As a bit of a compromise I did an AVCE in Travel and Tourism at a local college (equivalent to 2 A Levels, with vocational elements) and looked into a career in Hospitality.

I worked for a couple of years in various hotels, but became quite disillusioned with the industry and began questioning what I really wanted to do. At this time I began temping in offices, and things were also reaching a real turning point in my personal life as I had had to move out of my parents' house into a hostel. It was hostel staff who helped me to get onto a Fitness Instructor course, which I did part-time in the evenings, and from there I became interested in nutrition. I enrolled myself onto an Open University Course in nutrition, again studying part-time. It was this, and also speaking to dietetics and nutritionists, that made me think about doing a university degree to go into this career myself. I have to say that my boyfriend at the time also inspired me as he had been to university and was very supportive of my plans and dreams to go myself.

As a bit of a perfectionist, I wasn't sure that I would be able to get onto the degree course with the qualifications I had, so I then did a year's Access Course at college to prepare myself for the rigours of higher level study. It was really hard work, and the money side of things were tight, but I really enjoyed it and was always inspired by the dream of getting to university and reaching my goals. During that year I applied through UCAS and gained places on all the courses I applied to. I was interviewed for the place I eventually took up here at Surrey, and had to answer a question on why they should choose to accept me over A Level students – I remember my answer was quite passionate! I spoke about the drive and

motivation I had needed just to get to that point, and that I now really knew what I want to do and am determined to get there.

Things have been difficult financially, but I now have the prospect of a good career and a good salary at the end of it. Support from home hasn't always come easily either, and it has been hard to explain to my family why I want to carry on studying. However, I recently found an unexpected source of inspiration and support when I traced my brother and sister who I had never known, having been adopted myself. I was excited to discover they were also both now working in biosciences industries and are very encouraging of my decision to go to university.

I would advise anyone who is unsure of applying to university to take a good look at what really motivates you, then get experience in that field, talk to professionals and do any courses you can to take you in that direction. I had a real turning point in my life which led to a dream of going to university, and I've achieved it. It's not the end of the road yet, there are the trials of doing my assignments and getting my degree, but when I look back I've come a long way!