

Pavan

BSc Psychology



Hey,

Pavan here! I'm a BSc Psychology student at Royal Holloway. Everyone starts their journey to university differently – we all come from different walks of life. I'd like to share my journey into university, and some of my conclusions and thoughts.



My journey to university

My journey was nothing overly-special or out of the ordinary, but that didn't mean it was easy or straightforward. Just having to apply for university alongside doing my A-Levels was hard enough, and I'm sure a lot of people can relate to that sentiment. I didn't decide what to study at university until I started year 13. At that point, I was studying Psychology, French and Chemistry. I decided to just choose my favourite subject and roll with it, and I can't fault that logic because I'm pretty happy with where it's gotten me. My parents didn't go to university – my mother moved here from India and my father was born here, but later moved to India and then returned to England a number of years later. Although they are smart, capable people, the university application process was a foreign concept to them. This meant that I had to be quite independent and proactive in applying. They supported me the whole way, but not in the same way that someone who has been through the process can.

Fortunately, my sixth form were able to support me where my parents were slightly less able to. I changed schools following my GCSEs because I wanted a 'fresh start'. The sixth form I went to was in Newham, East London, and it was actually opened to raise the educational standard in Newham to get more pupils into university. It was very encouraging to be in that kind of supportive, inclusive environment. The region you live in should never mean you get a lower standard of education, and I feel privileged to have been part of an institute that challenged that.

Visiting universities

When I applied to university, I really wasn't sure which of my university options was the one for me. Choosing where to spend three years of your life is no easy feat. Nothing painted the picture of how my life would be at a particular university more than visiting that university. So, I urge you to visit universities wherever you can. As I mentioned earlier, my parents didn't go to university. Although they really supported me and wanted me to go to university, they didn't get overly-excited about visiting universities in the same way that someone who went to university would. When I visited Royal Holloway for my applicant visit day, I went with a friend from my sixth form who was in the exact same boat as me in terms of having parents who didn't attend university. Do try to go with someone, be it a friend, partner, parent, family member, dog – just someone to share the experience with. Like pretty much every single person who steps onto the Royal Holloway campus, I was astounded at the beauty of the campus, especially Founders building. I uttered comments about it looking like Hogwarts, and I have since then heard those same comments countless times during open days and applicant visit days that I take part in as a Student Ambassador.

Ask questions

During an open day or applicant visitor day, ask the Student Ambassadors as many questions as you can, they're there to help you! If you're concerned about anything, there will be someone there that day to answer your question. The Student Ambassadors actually played quite a pivotal role in why I chose Royal Holloway. You can tell if they enjoy being at their university, and I saw that so much more at Royal Holloway than the other universities I visited. They're also a 'snapshot' of the people who attend the university. Being raised in East London, I come from a diverse background and that wasn't something I wanted to sacrifice, but I got the feel that Royal Holloway is a diverse place. If I had to answer why it is I chose Royal Holloway, I'd put it down to 5 things: the Student Ambassadors, the friendliness of everyone there, the excitement of the Psychology department, the beauty and nature of the campus, and the emphasis everyone made of how much support was available.

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ROYAL
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Moving away from home

Moving from East London to a quiet town in Surrey was quite a change in pace. The environment was different, the people were different, it was just all different. But different isn't bad. I lived on campus in first year and thoroughly enjoyed being surrounded by nature. The view out of my bedroom window and kitchen windows was nothing but trees – it was very relaxing.

Make the most of your introductory weeks to meet people, decide what societies you want to join, and just immerse yourself in the new environment.

Make sure you're settled in – unpack everything and give everything its place in your new home. You want to feel like you're coming home at the end of your day, and not to your temporary accommodation. Transitioning to university life isn't easy, make use of the services around you. I began using the university counselling service at the beginning of my first year. It's not shameful to admit, and can be really beneficial for helping you cope. The counselling service, alongside other mental health services, are for anybody. They are just safe environments for students to express their worries or concerns, and their use should definitely be normalised when you're adjusting to a whole new way of living.



My advice...

If you're still deciding on where you want to go to university, ask questions. Email the university. Don't be scared to put yourself out there because it will enable you to make the most informed decision that you can make. When you arrive, convert your accommodation into your home. Dive head first into all of the opportunities available. Look out for yourself. The journey to university is quite the transition, so make sure you keep yourself the top priority. The support is available – use it wherever you can. You have spent your whole educational life essentially dwindling down the subjects you study to be left with one final subject that you are pursuing at degree level. You'll be surrounded by experts in that field. **Make the most of it.**