

Student Story

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Hello, my name is Aki and I have been at Bath Spa for 4 years, that is, 3 years for the degree and 1 year for Foundation Course which took place before my degree. I have learnt a number of things during my time here. They are not only related to academics, but also things to do with British culture and strategies which make living in other country more meaningful and enjoyable. Here are some tips I would like to offer to those who are starting a new stage of life here.

The first piece of advice to you is to use English all the time. It may appear to be obvious, but it is not necessarily as easy as you think. When I first came to Bath, that was first time for me to use English on a daily basis. I learnt English language for six years at school in Japan, but I still think learning about the language and using it are different things. I understand that it can be frustrating to use English all the time because you may not always be able to say what you want to say and express yourself fully. However, this is a part of learning process; I think that it is necessary to go through this stage in order to improve English. No one expects you to speak such good English in the first place, because if you can do it, what is the point in being here? If you would like to improve your writing skills, please write something in English such as writing a diary. If you would like to make your speaking better, please speak. Improving English in general?- Use it all the time! I also recommend you to do the same to people who share the same mother tongue with you. I imagine you would find it awkward to do so knowing both of you can speak the same language. However, this tiny bit of constant effort makes such a big difference in your English at the end of your course here.

The other advantage of doing this is it can expand your human network. If you do not use English, no one can join in your conversation unless he speaks the same language. You may only be enjoying having a chat with somebody, but not being able to join in the conversation easily, purely because of the language barrier, does not create such a nice atmosphere. Also, when British students notice that you can speak English, they can join in your conversation, can't they? Then, if you get on well with them, you may decide to go out for a meal or anything. Making friends with British is particularly good for your English. The reason is while you are talking to them, you unconsciously pick up a pattern of their speech including vocabulary, grammar and rhythm of the speech. The other thing is getting together with British people is the quickest way to learn about British culture.

When I came to Bath, that was the first time for me to leave my home. I used to become homesick often, particularly during the first couple of months. As time progressed, I gradually stopped becoming homesick, but it does not mean that my life here became easy, I had to face to a number of things. I still think, however, I have been having a part of the best moment in my life. The reason is that I know there is always someone who I can talk to. I, as an individual, tend to hold all my feeling inside me. At one point, I suddenly thought I wanted to throw everything away- stop everything I have been doing and become 'nothing'. When I was in this situation, what helped me was to talk to someone. I do not think I talked to anyone about what had been bothering me, but I was just chatting about ordinary things such as what I did on the previous day or what I learnt in a class or what I saw on TV etc. After all those chats I realised that my feeling was incredibly light. The situation I was in was probably the same as what it had been, but having a chat with people cheered me up so much.

Starting a new stage of life is worrying and may make you feel nervous. However, please remember that everyone feels the same. I am about to step into another new stage of my life now, I am going to do a Master's degree in Scotland. When I started studying here, I could not imagine that I would do a Master's degree- however, here I am. Having been here for four years has given me power and has opened up so many possibilities in my life. Once again, I would not have been able to do this without support from people surrounding me (my parents, tutors and friends). Having said that, I suppose what we gain at the end of the course depends on each individual. I hope you realise this: you are given an opportunity to empower yourself, but it is up to you whether or not to make it work. I wish you have such a wonderful time here. I also wish what you have done by the end of the course results in empowering you in a variety of ways opening up a number of paths in your life.