

Case Study

Student: Yasmeen Ahmad

Advanced Highers: Maths, Physics, Computing and Information Systems

Home Town: Dundee

University: Dundee — Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Degree: BSc Applied Computing and Maths



Yasmeen left Morgan Academy in Dundee aged 17 having achieved four Advanced Highers all at ‘A’ grade. A year later she is sitting second year exams at university. Her initial application to university was on the basis of first year entry, but after speaking to university lecturers at a local careers fair and at university open days, she decided to apply for second year entry. Neither Yasmeen nor her parents had known anyone who had done this, but Yasmeen tracked down some students who had experienced second year entry and spoke with them. Information from her Maths teachers that able pupils who had gone for first year entry were finding the work repetitive and consequently boring convinced Yasmeen that second year entry was right for her. She had also found that she could have gained entry to first year on the basis of her Higher results, therefore she felt she would have wasted her sixth year if she did not grasp the opportunity of second year entry.

Having decided she wanted to live at home, Yasmeen applied for three universities within daily commuting distance. The final decision to accept a place at the University of Dundee was influenced by Yasmeen’s experience of a local initiative that allowed her to study an *Introduction to Software Development* module at the university whilst in her sixth year at school. Thus she had knowledge of the campus, had met some lecturers and had a taste of what it might be like to study at Dundee.

Although sure she had made the right decision, Yasmeen was apprehensive — she was concerned that she would be joining a class where everyone else had been in first year together and also that the jump from sixth year school to second year university might be too great. However her fears were unfounded. She enjoyed freshers week, meeting others who were new to the university, and she found that her second year class was smaller and more stable than others had experienced in year one. She also found that she was not the only direct entrant to second year, so didn’t feel isolated. She was reassured to be told that if the jump did prove too much it would be possible to slip back into first year. Yasmeen has found the university staff very supportive if she e-mailed or spoke to them and, once lecturers realised she was a direct entrant to

second year, they have regularly asked how she was finding the Course and have offered encouragement. The match between her Advanced Highers and the first year syllabus for her degree course is very good so Yasmeen has had few problems with gaps in her knowledge. She has even found that some second year work had been covered at school allowing her to concentrate work that was new to her.

Yasmeen's advice to senior school pupils thinking about second year entry is not to be scared: 'If you've got the grades, take the opportunity'. She knows that parents will be concerned because direct second year entry is still not that common, but she has had excellent support from her parents and her message to other parents is that their support is very important. She suggests that parents also attend university open days, careers fairs, etc and speak to lecturers and students. Her teachers had little experience of pupils who had been granted and accepted second year entry so Yasmeen is returning to her school periodically to relate her experience.

Yasmeen admits to being well organised and, whereas she would encourage those qualified to seek second year entry, she warns they will need to be willing to work hard. Avoiding repeating work, completing her Course a year early and the financial advantage of a year less at university and entering employment a year earlier were identified by Yasmeen as benefits of direct second year entry. The only possible disadvantage she feels is not having so much time to settle into and adjusting to university life, although this hasn't been a problem for her.