

## Student Profile

Hi! My name is Josephine, I am a second year Classical Studies and Drama Student at Royal Holloway.

Before I attended university I went to Esher College in Surrey and took four A-Levels: Classical Civilisation, Psychology, Film Studies, and English Literature.

After college I decided to take a gap year, as I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to do and whether University would be worth it for me. I spent the year working and volunteering, and during that time I decided that I wanted to eventually go into teaching either Classics or Drama, as I loved the subjects, and that is what led me to my degree course.

I chose Royal Holloway because it was one of the few universities that offered a course that combined Classics and Drama, and also because both departments in which I would be studying were highly regarded in their respective fields.

Another contributory factor for attending Royal Holloway was the fact that it was not too far away from my home, so I knew I could get home if needed – as the prospect of leaving home was quite unnerving for me!

My advice for someone considering Royal Holloway would be to find out as much information as you can about the department you will be studying in, as it will be the staff within this department that you spend a lot of academic time with. I knew my department had many great professors in so I felt assured that I would be well supported when it came to getting my work done. Don't be afraid to get in contact to ask any questions that come to mind, as you want to feel like you've made an informed decision when it comes to choosing a university, as it is a big investment (time and money-wise!)



*Me looking unusually glam at the 2018 performing arts ball!*

## The First Week of University

I have a love/hate relationship with the first week of university. Personally, it was one of the most stressful and emotional weeks I can remember. I did not even sleep at university for the first three nights, I went home! I don't actually recommend this, but at the time it felt like the right thing for me.

On the other hand, I will never forget how much fun I had during the first week. I met so many people (a number of which I am still friends with today), I learned so much about the university and how my course works, and really enjoyed having the freedom of doing what I wanted (apart from the odd introductory meeting with my departments!).

The first week can be whatever you make of it. It can be overwhelming at times as everything around you is so new, however, if you feel that you are struggling there will be help around you – you are never alone at university. Also, it is important to remember that every fresher is in the same boat, I can't think of one person that has said to me that their first week didn't feature some level of homesickness. But it definitely gets easier – by the end of the first week I was out with my friends at the fresher's ball, not even thinking about home.

## The First Year of University

As I said, the process of going to university gets easier the more time you spend there. It is pretty remarkable how quickly you can get into a routine with classes, socialising, and anything else you fill your time with.

My schedule was mainly filled with trying to complete every bit of work I had way before the deadline (probably over-eager), whilst trying to balance seeing my friends and going to the gym. But there is so much more to the first year than getting all your work done (even though it is, of course, important to do so).

Clubs and societies are integral parts of any university experience – whether you get involved with them or not! I tried to try out a little bit of everything, as there were just so many to choose from! From sports teams to performance societies, there will be something for everyone at most universities. They are great ways to get to know people as well, so you can complete socialising and hobbies in one go, how convenient!



*Founders building looking gorgeous in the Autumn*



*On my way to a lecture!*

My advice for the first year of university would be to just enjoy it. For many people, this is the first time away from home and you have so much freedom! Go out and visit all the cafes on campus, explore the local area, and figure out what parts of your course that you like the most. Also, don't be too hard on yourself if university isn't what you expected at first, it takes some getting used to but once you're in the swing of things you'll be fine!

### **Student Accommodation**

When choosing where I wanted to live at university, there was quite a variety of options! I ended up living in the Founders building (picture on the previous page), an immense castle-like building which housed 500 mixed students.

I was so excited to move into my room, I probably took far too much stuff with me, but I was glad I did so, as I was able to really make my room feel like home!

Here are some of my top tips for moving into student accommodation:

1. Packing in suitcases is great when it comes to transportation, but some massive cheap bags are the way to go – you can fit so much more in them!
2. Bring a strong team – I brought my mum, dad, and brother and that was perfect for getting all my heavy bags up to the top floor. Or if you can't find a strong team, there will most likely be people who can help you on the day!
3. Bring some photos – as you can see from the two pictures here, I brought quite a few photographs of my family and friends with me. I am so glad I did this as it made me feel more comfortable in this new space, especially during the first few days.
4. Learn to boil pasta in a microwave – trust me on this. I didn't have a stove as I lived in catered accommodation, and once I realised I could boil pasta in the microwave it change dinner plans forever. I wish somebody told me sooner.
5. Don't worry about what other people will bring. I know some people that didn't bring a few items from home for fear of embarrassment (think a cuddly toy or something else sentimental), but don't worry about the other people. Bring whatever you want to make you feel happy and comfortable.



*My room in the Founders building.*



## The Library

I think it is fair to say I have spent an embarrassing amount of time at the library over the past two years at university. I now know every nook and cranny of the place and have chosen my favourite spot where I like to sit and attempt to learn Latin (before giving up and venturing down to the café to get a coffee).

I think the library is the hub of any university, and they're usually the best place to sit and get all your work done, so here are my top tips for the library!



*The Emily Wilding Davison Building, Royal Holloway's library*

1. Come prepared – sometimes you can spend a long time in the library, and you do not want to be going back and forth between your spot and your accommodation because you forgot your re-usable mug. Make sure you bring provisions! Snacks, books, paper, something to hold hot drinks.
2. Speaking of hot drinks – I am a cheapskate, I'll admit it, but I am pretty proud of this tip. Most libraries have little cafes in them, but sometimes the drinks can be expensive when you're on a budget. Instead, grab a box of coffee sachets from the nearby shop and ask the barista in the café for hot water, then bam! Cheap coffee is yours to enjoy. I save the expensive drinks for when I've had a particularly successful day.
3. Get to know the layout – usually libraries are pretty sprawling places, and you can spend a long time trying to find book CEL 830.098, but if you know where to look, you won't spend too much time walking around trying to find that darn book, even if the walking is good exercise.
4. Know when to stop – something I have definitely learned over the past two years is when to give myself a break. It is pointless trying to hammer away at an essay when you've been stuck on one sentence for half an hour. Leave the essay, go get some fresh air, and come back once you've had a break, you'll be way more productive in the long run.
5. Separate work and play – this is more of a general tip. Make sure that you don't work too much where you sleep, because then you'll never be physically leaving your work behind and relaxing, as it is all in one space. That is why the library is so



*Honestly, it is a home away from home now*

great, when you exit the building after your work is done, you are also leaving any stress of that work behind too.

### **Advice I'd give to myself at the beginning of university**

I would say I have grown a lot since I started university (not height-wise though), and I have learned a lot. If I were able to speak to little ol' me at the start of university, I'd say this:

University can be exciting, exhausting, interesting, emotional, and at times strange. But it is really what you make of it. If you just want to get your degree and then move on without taking part in the social side of the university experience, fine! But there is just so much available for you to do that I implore you to explore and discover what you like to do – that is not just studying.

Know that it is okay to say no sometimes and give yourself a break, and don't put too much pressure on yourself, as it will only bring you down in the long run.

Talk to everyone! For the majority of freshers university is a new experience and everyone is looking for other people to experience it with. Step out of your comfort zone and try new things with new people!

Remember that there will always be someone to help you if you are struggling. Whether it be people from home, staff members at the university, or even someone from a confidential hotline. If you have an issue, speak up, and don't let it take you over.

I have loved my university experience so far, and I have really missed being on campus throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. I can't wait to get back to the library, and to see my friends, even to start my dissertation!



*A particularly wet Summer Ball in 2019*



*Founders at night*

I hope that at least some of this information has been useful, and I wish good luck to anybody thinking of going to university this year – and if you've decided to come to Royal Holloway, we can't wait to see you!