

Samantha Willington

“You can’t do it” are the common words I used to hear from family and friends. Coming from a working class, non-academic background, the academic benchmark was set low and so it was deemed university was not made for me, or people like me. But I made it. The first open day at Cass was an eye opener and has forever impacted my future from the moment I stepped in the door. Being bombarded with information about graduation statistics, multiculturalism percentages and employability figures, I decided to focus on the atmosphere and feelings of the place I was in. It was at that moment I decided not only to go to university, but that Cass was the right university for me.



I travelled into Cass alone for the first time on my induction (and only just recently found a faster, easier route!). It was a very different experience joining office workers on the train, compared to the usual weekend shoppers. My first day was filled with numerous, small ‘networking’ activities, whereby I bonded with my fellow classmates and made friends. This was a nerving process having to communicate with people from far and near, but we have all managed to come through the other side.

Having grown up in the UK I thought I would be somewhat at an advantage to my peers whom were not so familiar with the UK education system. How wrong I was. Having to come to terms with the university jargon took some time getting used to, as well some synonyms for this jargon that people from other cultures would also commonly use.

Even though my first year was full of friendship making, Cass gave the opportunity to study abroad. So I did, in Australia – this was a different cultural experience altogether and has really changed my outlook on life back here in London. Before I had left, I personally felt quite immune to all of my cultural surroundings. However, being removed from the London environment for six months, coming back into my home environment was a complete eye opener.

I found myself always comparing what we do in London at Cass to what we did in Melbourne at RMIT (and vice-versa now I have returned). Being able to experience not one, but two culturally diverse locations allowed me to critically analyse situations taking all diverse options into account, yet become more open to different suggestions and solutions to the problem at hand.

Samantha Willington 170011778 BSc Management Stage 2 Moving back towards my first paragraph; I was not meant to go to university. Nor was I meant to go to Australia, and nor was this whole experience supposed to completely shape me as an individual, allowing me to break the common societal norm of needing an academic background to succeed that I used to strongly feel on a day to day basis.

Before coming to Cass, I had never considered a professional career. I did not understand or comprehend how multi-cultural the business world is. Being a part of Cass and the enormous range of cultures to integrate with, has allowed me to further my personal development and career pathway, as well as have a valuable insight and input into others work in the business context.

The culture at Cass has allowed me to develop and enhance a range of communication, presentation, team working, leadership and problem solving skills. This has happened by being a part of Cass in the classroom, socials, studying abroad and online cultural intelligence (CQ) modules. In turn, this has equipped me with the strong skills and confidence to apply and be offered placement positions from multiple multinational corporations requiring cultural awareness and intelligence in the workplace environment.

Moving outside of the classroom, cultural development has allowed me to make friends with and interact with people from many different cultures, that I wouldn't have otherwise. From understanding how principles and procedures work in their country, to finding out about their native wildlife. For example, my best friend during my study abroad term in Australia was Australian born but had a mother from China and Vietnam and a father from Malaysia. She not only had a huge scale of cultural awareness, but by being fortunate enough and being well equipped to put myself in this situation I learnt a lot from her, in regards to her culture and life experiences, as did she benefit from my shared stories and knowledge about the UK too.

Overall, having lived in the UK my whole life, I did not ever think Cass would be the one thing that had the ability to change and shape so strongly my cultural awareness and integration and therefore, me as a person. I can say with huge confidence that I would not be the person I am today had I not attended Cass Business School. Being part of Cass and its surrounding culture makes me proud, and keeps me motivated as it is a constant reminder that I can do it. I can do it.