

This is a story of a very pregnant, already a mother to a 3-year-old toddler, deciding to relocate her family to the UK during the once in the lifetime global pandemic to pursue her long-lasting dream – studying at a master’s programme in London.

It is funny to recall all those amazed glances from my classmates seeing my bump for the first time and the library worker recognizing me from afar when she would check university IDs. So, I feel it might be an interesting kind of exercise to summon my thoughts around the people who've been with me through this roller-coaster journey and appreciate what I have gained so far with a few survived brain cells through all the sleepless nights since the baby was born (with as little whining as possible) couple of hours after term 1 exams... As a bonus, I am from Georgia, which is an ancient country located at the border of Europe and Asia in the South Caucasus with only up to 4 million of people. Bayes/Cass has had around 20 Georgian students so far within the last 30 years.

Let's start from the beginning - after taking GMAT and TOEFL exams two years ago, I applied to four universities. At Bayes, my first communication happened with an Algerian professor, who interviewed me (I don't think many universities practice actual teaching professor screening potential students) and it was already an amazing experience. He had a wonderful sense of humor and was very friendly what turned out to be a key feature of the school faculty members down the road. I hardly believe any other school would be so friendly and supportive to its students. So, choosing Bayes Business School was a no brainer for me.

Then there was COVID-19, so I had to delay my studies for one year and then despite my not-so-expected pregnancy, I decided to keep up with my plans.

My family and I arrived in London in the middle of COVID pandemics. This meant, we had to survive a 10-day prison called a “hotel quarantine” in London with a 3-year-old toddler. We were “lucky” to be allocated to a shabby hotel with a terrible food that our son refused to eat, and we ate a bare minimum so that we were happy discover to have lost a few pounds’ weight upon release. We were forced to isolate in a 12 sqm room with only 10 minutes walking allowed in an enclosed open-sky area. However, we met a lovely security guard from Nigeria, who allowed 6-month pregnant me to stay up to one hour out with my son. This made our captivity period bearable.

Eventually, I started face-to-face studies determined to show that a soon mom-of-two can be a good student without any unfair advantage to other students. 🤔 I cannot recount how many times I smiled at myself having remembered a phrase "all work and no play make Jack a dull boy" when

I saw other students talking about Netflix series and evening gatherings at various venues while I had to rush home. Nevertheless, I have had enough “fun” at home raising our kids. I realise that my time management skills have been improving, although often at the expense of my sleep time.

My class has over 30 nationalities dominated by Italian, Norwegian and Chinese students. I was happy to discover that Chinese were good team players when it comes to doing coursework with them. Yet, I learnt a bitter lesson to have trusted an unreliable person from another Asian country – she never responded to emails and chat messages on one coursework, so I should not have thought that she would contribute anything of value on another assignment.

Initially, I was randomly allocated to a 4-person group for a team project with Italians and a Greek guy. I was determined to do my best for our team to succeed and I did it, but alas, to our amazement, the lecturer graded our submission at only 60-65%. I felt embarrassed that I failed my team, but we were relieved to have learnt that the best score was in the range of 80%. So, the lesson learnt was, even if you do your best, some people will never like your work or appreciate your efforts.

On the other hand, on another coursework a great girl from Somali and I did the majority share of the assigned project and have earned our team 90% and a lot of praise. It was an example of value of collaboration as the workload was better balanced and all opinions were considered. The same Somalian girl kindly offered her help with my kids if needed.

I agree with an idea that knowledge and happiness have to be shared. That is why, I always welcome questions from peers, and I find that most of the students are happy to share their perspectives too. This country and Bayes Business School taught me that it is okay to ask for help if you need it – people in general are kind and want to assist, you should just let them know.

Hereby, I must mention that how professional and remarkable the Spanish, Italian and Serbian lecturers have been. The Chilean and British professors are the ones I would love to be friends with. I also learned a lot from Italian, British, Ukrainian and Indian students – all of them brilliant in their own ways. I have definitely become more open-minded, having more awareness and respect for different cultures and appreciation of different perspectives that they bring to the table.

Hopefully, I will not get too overwhelmed by juggling between my kids, my husband, studies and my Georgian job that I still do remotely. I am grateful for the opportunity to live in this country, to meet wonderful people and to get closer to my goals every day.