

Seventeen has always been my lucky number, and you might wonder why is this relevant? Well, seventeen was the day I started university. I felt like a gladiator entering the Colosseum where thousands of eyes were laid upon me. Never before had I felt intimidated and exhilarated at the very same moment. I could see my own emotions reflected on the faces of the rest of freshers. On the contrary of feeling alone, I felt I belonged.

As part of this new *tribe*, we started getting to know each other, trying to squeeze in a lot of information regarding where we all came from, who we all were and why we had decided to come to CASS. I realised we were trying to explain to one another how we got to be part of that *tribe*.

This first touch point served me a boost to not fear this new experience, in fact, I was mostly excited about living on my own in such a big city full of new opportunities. Having lived in other countries before moving to the UK, and always being surrounded by international students, made me think this life should not be too far from what I was used to.

The first weeks were full of events and welcome parties, but do not be fooled by those situations you see in movies. It was mostly a way to socialize and try to find your place within groups. Fun story, I ended up at the hospital with tonsillitis from that non-stop of the first two weeks in London, also caused by the well-known beautiful weather of the city.

I find it funny when people start talking about how they hate exam period. I believe it is a crucial time for all of us: we not only learn about the dynamics of CASS when assessing students, but also forge friendships when relying on each other for help about studying, when we need moral support to stay one more hour at the library or even when a much chocolate and movie session at a friend's house is needed to relax. When this stage finishes, you can say you have lived the whole university experience and you feel proud of yourself and what you have accomplished, no matter the results.

And while all of the above is true, I am not here to try to hide the fact that there were also difficult moments at Cass and in London overall. In fact, sometimes you even question yourself if the decisions you made were the best. For instance, group projects are a trend right now, not only in schools and universities but also in the professional working environment, and Cass has a lot of them to prepare you for the future; but most of the stressful times came from them. Having conflicts with people in the working groups, not only because of the

different ideas or the own leadership of the teams, but also because of the way of organising or carrying out the work, since this may change from culture to culture and from person to person. And sometimes, even after having worked for weeks, your result does not reflect the effort and time you have put into the task, making you hopeless. As a double edged sword, the enriching outcome of these projects is that you learn to accept that your ideas are not the only ones that matter and that listening is a virtue, that commitments are very important and deadlines are there/exist to be met. You also learn to work in a dynamic and multicultural group which will definitely be of help in any situation of your day to day life from then on.

Another example of difficult times that comes to my mind are those moments when you start having negative thoughts about a lecture, maybe because you do not feel so passionate about the subject or the way it is taught, making you question your course selection decision. however, we all know that “Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're going to get”, and at the end of the day, no chocolate tastes that bad/ not even liqueur chocolates taste bad.

A final example from my personal experience could come from the idealisation of London being “the city of opportunities”, but finding yourself empty-handed. You try to get a part-time job or internship, and you receive nothing but “try again next time”. It seems you do not have enough professional experience, but you are only trying to acquire it, but who came first the chicken or the egg? And again, you feel like going back home where everything seems easier and happier.00

All of these adventures and many more have and still are, shaping me. There is a big difference from who I was before coming to university to who I am now, and I am confident even bigger changes are yet to come until I graduate. All the challenges and obstacles mentioned have helped me become a stronger and more positive person. Now I know I can always find a way to overcome problems, either on my own or with the help of the new people surrounding me, full of different and original ideas on how to solve/surpass them. Because at the end of the day, this is what it is all about: not only growing on your own, but also with growing along with contrasting and remarkable people, in the perfect environment that will allow you to do so.