



My journey to Salford

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My journey to Salford has not been an easy ride. There have been many challenges I have had to overcome, am yet to overcome and still face in everyday life. As we know, life is tough, and struggles are a part of daily life. Maybe for some more than others.

So, I am a student on the autistic spectrum. Autism, for me, means that some things can bother me, even the littlest of things, that maybe others do not think about often. It can be hard to socialise, particularly when I do not always pick up on body language and facial expressions. This has been tough during online lectures, but I am gaining confidence with getting opportunities to take part in extracurricular activities, such as the Biomed Society. Societies are a great way of socialising and practicing understanding social cues. Sensory processing can also be a challenge for me, such as with loud noises and food textures.

Because of this, my journey to Salford has been a never-ending mountain of obstacles that I have had to tackle. Kind of like when you first learn to ride a bicycle and you fall off and get back up and try again, but continuously. It can be hard, trying to fit in, trying to succeed, trying to get to your destination.

Throughout my school years I found it difficult to make friends and mostly preferred being on my own. I wasn't like everyone else – I didn't use much technology, I didn't do fashion trends, or have an interest in being part of a friendship group. What I did do was have a routine, do extra studying at home and even a paper round job. These things helped me and still do.

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Being on the autistic spectrum can have some advantages too. For me, I am determined, I pay attention to close details, and I am good at identifying patterns. In fact, autistic individuals have great attributes and qualities which can contribute to unique talents, ideas, and innovations. I tend to think outside the box, then outside again, and then further outside; I like to solve a problem when it arises, and I ensure that I am always prepared to.

One thing I do enjoy is learning. However, I process things differently to some of my peers and see the world as something perhaps I do not understand, yet information processing is a part of daily life and vital to academia. I did not think I would get into college, or even get onto the course I am doing at Salford.

Throughout this year, I have had even more challenges throughout the pandemic. Not only with becoming a new student at Salford, but socialising. It can become lonely, stressful and tiring at times. Changes that I am not used to or are not part of my pre-planned routines have been a struggle. What helps is discussing these with my lecturers and support staff and doing my best to plan for any changes that will occur further along in the course.

What I am grateful for is how different my experience at Salford has been: I have been supported throughout my time here so far, have made some great friends who are understanding and patient, and most of all, I feel like I am part of a community.