

When students start out at university, they are often asked two key questions by the people around them. The first is: Why did you decide to study at this school? The second is: What are your plans after graduating. It's a major thought, and it takes a lot of mental energy to finalise your career path for life. To make things even more difficult, when pursuing a career in a highly versatile field such as architecture, which you have studied in a different country, it is very difficult to find the perfect place in the professional world. There is a saying by Zaha Hadid, the famous architect, "There are 360 degrees, why stick to one?" It is true that there are multiple ways to create your path and make money after having studied architecture. And yet, all architects like to do something out of the box.

I am Pooja Mehta, a 30-year-old Indian architect with an Indian Master's degree in Urban Design and Development. A spatial expression of society and its culture has a huge impact on urban growth. Architecture and urban design enable me to experience and explore a different culture. I am always eager to find opportunities where I can connect with people to learn new things and explore culture within the field of design and development. This is what I experience here in Deutschland, where I was given the opportunity to broaden my horizon by exploring the international context. SRH University Heidelberg, Germany has welcomed me with open arms. Within a year, I have achieved a lot of milestones in my life, one example being that I was the first person from the new intake of architecture students at the university to receive a Deutschlandstipendium. Other examples include being an Ambassador for my programme, being the first person from the School of Architecture to start working at the International office, and being the first person to obtain an HAW. International research scholarship for my thesis in my second Master's degree. To many of you, it may feel normal to be the first everywhere in your academic career. But to me, it's an achievement. After all, when I initially applied to SRH University Heidelberg, my application was rejected on the grounds that I had only got a second in my Bachelor's degree. But I then sent an email to the representative, explaining that I have professional experience, including in industry and academia, as well as a distinction in my Master's degree. As a result, my application was accepted on a conditional basis. Now I am the first person to break the ice in many places.

Here on campus, I have met a lot of new students and helped them upon arrival, showing them around the city, sharing food, and exploring new cultures as part of my student assistant job at the International Office. My colleagues have allowed me to lead most of the events, enabling me to brush up my leadership skills in small tasks from start to finish. This opportunity to work on campus as a student assistant has helped me to develop more skills, also for my studies, and has also given me the financial ability to live life here to the fullest. Now I feel I am ready to enter the world of work with this set of skills, enabling me to achieve my future goals.

My future goal is to work in academia. I am good at teaching and working with new minds. I would love to explore being at the other side of the desk in the future. While perusing the Career Centre, I initially noticed that we are given insufficient knowledge in the studio to explore this website, which is accessible to students. In the future, I would like to embark on a Ph.D. as the start of my permanent research and academic career. I am also interested in setting up a research lab at the SRH School of Architecture. This is how I see my life after graduation. My present mindset is to take one day at a time to achieve this goal.

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