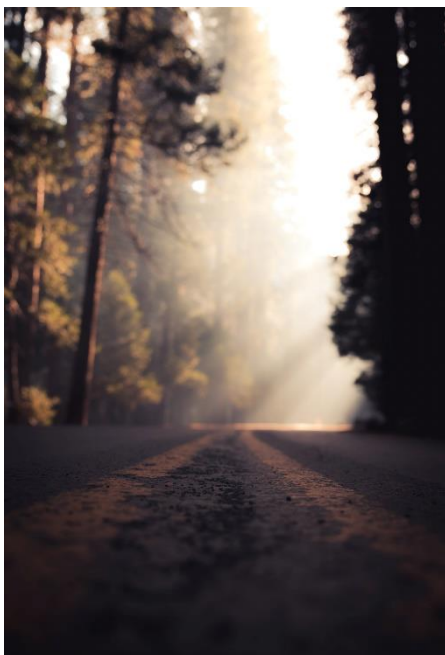


1300 days of university

By Ricarda Senger

"I would never choose to run a study where I have to test participants in the lab. An online questionnaire is just so much easier, less time-intensive, and a thousand times more comfortable."

This is a quote from myself when I contemplated what sort of Maxi project I would want to do. Well, guess who ended up in a tiny lab of the Hillhead Psychology Department nearly every day for about two months. Yes, that was me, testing 160 people. I cannot recall the exact number of hours I spent surrounded by the yellow-stained, windowless walls of the lab. To be honest, I think I am repressing that number on purpose as it would devastate me too much to realise how much time of my life went into breathing sticky lab air. I suppose these are the sacrifices you make for science. Jokes aside though, I genuinely enjoyed my research project, even the sticky lab air. So, the reason why I am telling you this story is not to rant about some coursework. I opened up with this story as an invitation for you to take some time to reflect on how your interests, your attitude, your beliefs, your demeanour, and your general mindset has changed over the last year(s).



Never say never because, to tell you the truth, nobody will ever be able to fully foresee what the future may hold. Times change - circumstances change - life changes. Life leads you onto unexpected paths, which you previously not dared to take (such as testing the equivalent of about ten rugby teams in a lab). I surely did not foresee how my life at university would unfold. The last four years seemingly passed in a heartbeat. I still struggle to comprehend that my degree is ending soon. In some way, the last four years appear surreal to me. At the same time, these four years have been the most wonderful journey of learning new skills, discovering new passions, making new friends, and finding myself.

I remember how I arrived on my very first day at my student accommodation in Glasgow, only to be shocked by the sight of a worn-out mattress which was thrown on top of a cheap bed frame. I had not been aware that the room would come without any blanket or pillow. Even if I had known in advance, I would have been unable to pack any bedding. Arriving from overseas, I had no capacity for bringing more than the bare essentials -

and by bare essentials I mean things like clothes that I ended up never wearing, or shoes that got completely soaked after five minutes of Glaswegian weather. So, during my first night in student halls I got creative and went to bed with three layers of clothing, covered by my only towel.



Thinking about First Year, I also remember how I had my very first lecture in Bute Hall, falling in love with its archaic, ceremonial, and almost sacred atmosphere. There were many other firsts in First Year, for example, my first Irn Bru, my first Burns Night, my first assignment submission, my first frantic runs around campus in search for the correct lecture theatre, my first Moodle confusion, my first Fresher's week, or my first acquaintance with the concept of 'providing a proof of address'. Looking back, First Year has definitely been tougher than expected, more so on a personal level rather than an academic one. This is because the move to a new city brought upon many challenges outside of academia, like establishing a new social network, facing financial burdens, battling episodes of depression, and trying to truly settle down.



In Second Year, I perceived myself as so much more grown-up and mature compared to First Year. I was proud seeing my progress in Psychology, believing that I started to get a better grip on all the mechanisms underlying human behaviour. It was not until later that I realised how illusionary it is to think that anybody could explain human behaviour to its last detail – human behaviour is way too complex, diverse, and weird for that. Psychology just represents an attempted mission of uncovering human oddness.

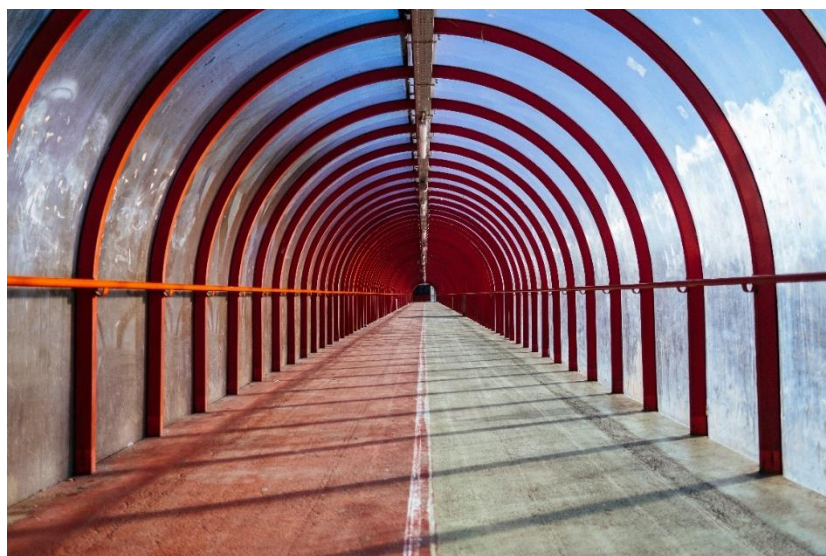
Second Year also lit a passion for statistics in me. After my Statistics classes in high school, I was firmly convinced that my high school statistics knowledge (barely any) would be irrelevant in the future. Boy, I was utterly wrong about that. The longer Second Year of university went on, the more I fell in love with statistics. My newly-discovered passion grew stronger with every new homework in R and was nourished by the weekly lectures on data analysis. Today, statistics is much more than a simple passion of mine. Instead, it holds the key to my future since I am going to do a Postgraduate degree in Applied Statistics.

Apart from that, Second Year was swamped by my constant juggle between finishing assignments and earning money at my part-time job in a customer service centre. Sadly, I did not get much time to savour the authentic student experience during that time. I did not join a sports club or some other random society (like the cheese or chocolate society), and I did not hang out at the university's unions or in Beer Bar, drinking the cheapest pints they serve. The only extracurricular activity I signed up for was a volunteer position with learning disabled adults. But I had to quit this activity mid-term as I had too much work on my plate.

As Third Year came around, I finally felt like I integrated into the community of my Psychology class. I remember the cute 'meet-and-greet' gathering in the Hillhead Psychology Department after our first lecture in Third Year, where you could properly network with some of your course peers. Throughout Third Year, I socialised with my classmates more than I had in both Second and First Year. I welcomed and embraced my new sense of community which thrived thanks to various group projects and especially from my study group. While I had been dreading and avoiding the pain of group work during my first two years of university, I suddenly started to seek the enriching insight of my peers more and more frequently.



Ultimately, I cannot measure the immense value that my study group and other peers have contributed to my degree. They have not only provided constructive criticism and clever comments, they have also reached out a hand in times of need. They have walked by my side, conquering the mountain of assignment stress, and they have lent me an ear to pour my worries into. Over the course of my degree, classmates have turned into friends for life, and I cannot wait to graduate with them soon. Even after graduation, when everyone will head off into their own new adventures, I will still remember how we would sit together in the library studying and procrastinating, or how we would laugh together over a cute dinner and tea, and how we would indulge in our youth for the night.



Speaking of graduation, Fourth Year seemingly passed overnight. Seriously, how did one year pass more quickly than all the others before it? Fourth Year almost left no time for a breather. Only now, I feel the storm of Fourth Year finally calming down. Reflecting upon the journey I have travelled on this road called University of Glasgow, a content smile settles on my lips. I feel grateful for the privilege I had to study here, I feel grateful for all the lessons I have learnt, I feel grateful for all the beautiful and unique people I have encountered, and I feel grateful for all the experiences that painted my days more colourfully. At the same time, I am proud. I am proud of my achievements, proud of my work, and, most importantly, proud of my growth.

I remember the naïve, self-centred, insecure, and biased girl from First Year who knew little about herself and others. It makes me happy to see that she has grown into a more considerate, open, and confident person over the past four years. These same four years are now waiting to be crowned by a worthy graduation. Beside celebrating the successful completion of my bachelor's degree, graduation will mark a milestone of personal growth, as well as the end to a shaping stage in my life. I cannot tell you how excited I am about the next chapter of my life. Of course, I already have a few ideas about what it will look like. Nevertheless, if there is anything that I have learned from my time at university, it is that I can always count on life to surprise me.

