

Amelia Hiller – 2016 Alumni

I left Spalding High School in 2016 after studying A Levels in English Literature, History and Sociology. I then studied at the University of Birmingham, where I graduated with a BA (Hons) in History with English Literature in Summer 2019.

As you can imagine, my course involved a lot of reading! My first year offered a broad introduction to both subjects, and from second year onwards I was able to 'weigh' my module choices either evenly, or in favour of a particular subject.

I chose to major in History and over the next two years studied modules on the Reformation and Rebellion in Tudor England, Religion in England during the Reign of Elizabeth I, and Conservative Activism in Postwar Britain. As well as this, I was part of a Group Research project on Facism and Communism in Interwar Britain, and took a Research Methods module which was aimed at preparing both a literature review and a presentation on a dissertation topic. My final dissertation explored Margaret Thatcher's relationship with feminism across her political career, discussed whether ultimately Thatcher could be perceived as 'anti-feminist', and also drew parallels between other women in the Conservative Party, particularly Theresa May.

For the English Literature aspect of my degree, I studied modules on The Canterbury Tales, writing and recovery after the First World War, 'New World Orders' which explored literature post-1945, and lastly spent a semester studying George Orwell's works. English Literature students also had access to the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford upon Avon, with a residential trip arranged in second year to take part in workshops, talks, and attend a selection of plays at the Royal Shakespeare Company, which was a great additional experience.

Alongside my degree, the extra-curricular experiences I had at university increased my confidence and offered so many additional opportunities, so much so that I feel these experiences were just as important in establishing my career path today. I joined Redbrick, the university's student newspaper, as a first year and became Digital Editor for the Comment Section, followed by Print Editor in my final year. I was also involved in Carnival RAG (a charity fundraising society) for two years, firstly completing a charity skydive, followed by a student cycle from London to Paris. In my second year, I was a Communications Recruit for the society, and was also a member of the organising committee for a National Fundraising Conference just before I graduated. Additionally, I was lucky enough to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Guild of Students in my final year, where I made contributions to key decisions about how the Union was run. I also worked part-time in the Student Groups department at the Student Union,

which introduced me to lots of new people, was a great addition to my CV, and helped to fund quite a few socials too!

I didn't have a particular career path in mind when applying to university, which was something I was a little worried about at the time, though looking back I'm so glad I chose to study the two subjects I enjoyed most at school. My three years at university helped to build my confidence, threw me outside of my comfort zone, and despite there being a lot of writing, even more reading, and a long time spent trying to get to grips with academic referencing, I graduated having studied a broad range of literature and history, made lifelong friendships and developed many transferable skills.

After graduating, I moved to London and joined the team at N Family Club, a start-up company building a group of progressive and design-led nurseries across the city. I began as a Customer Service Associate when N had two nurseries, and over my time in the role I worked on sales for a further six nurseries in various locations, streamlining the customer joining process, and gradually took ownership of additional projects such as organising the customer welcome pack process.

In early 2021, I began a new role as Strategic Projects Associate, working across the business and with the company's leadership team to help drive N's key strategic initiatives as the company scales. At the moment, I am starting to coordinate with each department on the progress of strategic projects, and will begin to take on direct responsibility for my own strategic projects, which will vary as the business develops. I will shortly be starting a Project Management qualification to equip me with the skills needed in the role moving forwards.

Overall, I think it's so important to choose a subject you are genuinely passionate about when applying to university, as you're going to be spending a lot of time and effort on this. I feel it's equally as important to explore new opportunities whilst studying your degree. The three or four years you're at university are the perfect time to take up a new sport, join a new society, and add a little something extra to your CV to help you stand out against other applicants when it comes to starting out in your career. The people you'll meet and the transferrable skills you'll gain from these experiences may end up being just as valuable as your grades. I'm on a completely different career path to what I envisaged when I finished my A Levels, and I feel that's partly down to the extra-curricular experiences I got involved with during my undergraduate degree, which have enabled me to progress to the exciting and varied role I have at N.