

Niamh Mulley – 2020 Alumni

For Sixth Form at SHS I chose to study four A Levels in the subjects of Maths, Further Maths, Physics and Chemistry. I chose to study these subjects as I knew I wanted to go into Engineering so needed to study Physics and Maths at A Level, and wanted to study 4 subjects so chose to also study Further Maths and Chemistry as I enjoyed them at GCSE.

When I was in Year 11, I applied for and was achieved an Arkwright Engineering Scholarship, as I knew I wanted to study Engineering at University. The process involved an application, an aptitude exam and an interview. My interview was carried out at Loughborough University, so I got to visit it and learn a little about the University. Through this Scholarship, I had a number of experiences, including visits to a number of RAF bases, which further increased my interest in aircraft.

When it came to deciding where to applying to university, I looked at which universities were good for Engineering and decided on a list of universities that I wanted to visit on open days. I chose to visit both campus and city universities so I could get a feel as to which was the right sort of university for me, and courses with a variety of entry grade requirements.

Engineering degrees tend to be one of two formats: either general engineering then specialising later into the course, or specialised from day one, there are benefits to either style, so it's important to decide what is best for you.

Personally, for me, I wanted to specialise straight away as I knew which discipline, I wanted to study. I looked at both Mechanical Engineering and Aeronautical Engineering, as they are very similar, although Aeronautical is more specialised.

I then used the open days and my research to decide which 5 universities to apply to on my UCAS application.

I had to attend an interview at one university, which gave me another opportunity to visit. Then once I had received all my offers, I had to decide which to choose as my firm choice and which to choose as my insurance. I knew I wanted to put Mechanical Engineering at Newcastle down as my insurance choice and Aeronautical Engineering at either Loughborough or Southampton as my firm choice. I chose to study Aeronautical Engineering as many aspects overlapped with the Mechanical Engineering course, however it was more specialised and had a focus on Aircraft which is where my interest was so this was the right decision for me.

In the end I chose to put Loughborough University as my firm choice, I believe I would have been happy at either university; however, I had visited Loughborough more and knew I liked the feeling of the campus over a city university.

Results day was a happy day once the UCAS website finally loaded to show me I had received my place to study an integrated Masters in Aeronautical Engineering at Loughborough.

We were very lucky at Loughborough to have about a 50:50 split of online learning and in person teaching in Semester 1, meaning I got to experience sitting in a (whilst somewhat empty) lecture theatre, which is something that many universities did not get to achieve this year.

University this year required good time management, ensuring you were on top of your pre-recorded material ready for your live lectures, then completing tutorial work. Another challenge was doing group coursework, as we had to do it all over teams, which required more coordination than if we had been able to meet up and do it.

I got to take part in several practical sessions during Semester 1, including 2 workshop sessions, a wind tunnel session, and a chance to use the flight sim.

Semester 2 began very differently, with all lectures being online, and more group coursework being carried out over teams. As restrictions eased, we were able to do more, in the end having more labs, a construction week spent in the workshop ending with getting to meet other people from the course when we all tested our planes, and a couple of in person lectures.

This obviously was not a typical year at Loughborough; by the summer it started to feel a lot more alive, with sports occurring again. Loughborough is known for its sports so it is rare to walk around campus without seeing people out running or playing sports on one of the many green spaces or sports pitches around campus.

Coming to Loughborough with the knowledge that it is one of the top ranked universities for sports degrees in the world was slightly concerning as I would not consider myself sporty so I was worried I wouldn't fit in. However, not everyone is sporty there, and there are plenty of opportunities to get involved with sport for beginners, such as IMS (inter-hall sports) and societies, and if you are at a higher level you can try out for AU teams.

Whilst I did not have a complete idea of what I wanted to do when I went to university, when I chose my GCSEs, I did choose subjects that related to engineering because I felt like that was what I wanted to do. To apply for my course I needed Physics and Maths at A Level and I chose my other A Levels to relate to my degree. I was able to use my Chemistry and Further Maths A Levels, as well as my coding skills from Computer Science GCSE and my knowledge from Product Design GCSE, in order to aid with my modules this year and going forward I also plan to revisit my knowledge gained in my German GCSE to do a language module in my 3rd Year.

Having now finished 1st Year, I am now reviewing and updating my CV ready to start applying for placements (for the 2022-23 Academic Year). One thing I like about my course is the broad variety of disciplines that I can apply my knowledge in, although that makes it difficult to decide which industry I want to do my placement year in. I need to do more research to see which companies offer placement years, although some which I am already aware of include Rolls-Royce, BAE Systems, British Airways and Lockheed Martin, although my degree would also be applicable to placements in the motorsport industry, space industry and submarine industry, as well as the aviation industry.

Tips:

- Whether a university is a Russell Group University or not is not the end of the world, Loughborough is not a Russell Group but ranks 7th in many league tables.
- Going to a different university without anyone else you know is stressful but interacting with people on your course will allow you to make plenty of friends in no time. Joining societies and taking part in sports are also a good way of making friends.
- Go to lots of open days – the only real way to get a feel for the university is to visit and speak to lecturers and see their facilities.
- Be yourself – you get a fresh start moving to university, so be true to yourself.
- Look at similar courses, different universities do slightly different variations of the same course, so you may find some have modules that appeal to you more than others.