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Features

Student interview – Alexander Langley



Alexander Langley

Alexander is in his first year of a BSc degree course in Mathematics at Sheffield Hallam University. It is a four year course and he will have a work placement in the third year.

School days

Alexander did A-levels in Maths, Physics and Psychology at Wellsway School, Keynsham, Bristol. He was going to do Business Studies as "I wanted to get away from just doing maths". He found it was running at the same time as Physics, so did Psychology instead where he enjoyed using Statistics. "At the time I decided a Physics A-level would carry more weight than a Business Studies A-level, so I kept the Physics on for that reason. In retrospect, that's a hard A-level!"

He was planning to do a Business Studies degree and, at the end of his first year of A-levels, went on a school-organised trip to a university fair at Bath University, where he picked up lots of prospectuses and sent off for more. He had several interviews at different universities and eventually made Sheffield Hallam his first choice when he attended an Open Day "that was for Business Studies and when I came here the city itself seemed friendly and from the presentation given by the Business School, the university too seemed quite well presented".

When he got his A-level results "I got a B in Maths and thought if I'm sort of all right at Maths maybe I should do a Maths degree". I'd already enrolled here doing a Business Studies course and it was in that last week before I came here that I changed."

Studies at university

Alexander is enjoying university. It was a bit confusing on the first day the course started "I actually missed the first session with the Maths Department because there was a bit of a mess–up when I enrolled, the timetable for the first week was missing. That morning I was running round thinking "well everyone else is doing something, so why aren't I?" I eventually came to the Department and saw one of the lecturers, Neil Challis, and he spent about an hour going through what he had done in the morning. It actually settled me because I learnt a lot about the course."



Sheffield Hallam University

Two semesters in and Alexander highlights the university's emphasis on using new technology with Maths. "I think that's useful and relevant. The lecture I had this morning was Maths and Technology which is effectively looking at new technologies and how they can be related to Maths. I mean we are doing both ways here, actually working through the Maths with the pen and paper and learning it by using computers with calculators. In fact this part of the course won an award." (The 1997 ICTCM Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Use of Technology in Collegiate Mathematics.)

"The first semester was more of a Science core, we did a small piece of Maths but the the Science and Maths School wanted everyone in the School to have a common core, so that you could interchange after the first semester. This semester we are doing more Maths, like Number and Structure, Statistics and Change and Transformation."



Main concourse at Sheffield Hallam University

Social life at university

Alexander confirms his first impressions that Sheffield is a friendly place. For example, he says "the student unions here and at Sheffield University are friendly with each other, so we can use the bars and the night clubs on each other's campuses".

"I spent a lot of money in my first semester, possibly as a whole I overspent. I would say it was a bad thing on finance but it was more of an investment towards making new friends, because you able to make a lot of new friends in that first couple of weeks. If you just sit in your room night after night it's not so good."

He also goes climbing with the Hallam Climbing Club. "I've definitely improved since I've been here because before I was climbing mainly on an indoor climbing wall. We do that here too but most weekends you'll end climbing in Derbyshire which is just a few miles away. I have been away on trips with the club, to North Wales and The Lake District. We have been around Llanberis twice. There'll be another trip soon, but I don't know where to yet."

Looking to the future

Alexander has an open mind about what career path he will take. He intends to use his third year, the placement year, to decide what he might want to do. "At the start of next year we are given lists of people who are offering places and we have to apply to them. If I enjoy the placement then I might go into that field. But if not then I'll know that's not for me."



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