



ORMISTON **FORGE**
ACADEMY

SIXTH FORM

Hey! My name's Sehrish, and I joined Ormiston Forge Academy way back in 2012 as a year 7 student. After what felt like a very quick 5 years, I had to decide between going off to college or staying at Forge to join the sixth form.

I applied and received an offer to study my A levels at a well-respected college in Stourbridge. So I had a decision to make. A new college which I had heard great things about? Or staying on at Forge, the school which had helped me excel in my GCSEs and had become familiar and comforting over the past 5 years.

Ultimately, I decided to stay on in sixth form to study Law, Psychology and English Literature at A level. And with the benefit of hindsight, I can confidently say I made the right choice.

When Year 13 rolled around, and I had to apply for university, to be honest, I was pretty intimidated by the whole process. I didn't know what everyone was talking about when they kept going on about UCAS, I was worried I'd miss deadlines, and I had no idea where to even begin with my personal statement. This was a crucial point in my journey as a student and felt like make-or-break.

Saying that, the process was made a whole lot easier being in a space where I knew my teachers valued me as an individual and took the time to understand my needs as a student.

Within a few weeks of application season, many of my concerns began to fade as I realised the support I needed was right in front of me. Every Wednesday afternoon, we were given a time-tabled hour dedicated to supporting us with our university applications. So whether you needed someone to check your personal statement or were worried about anything from funding to commuting to university, there was always someone ready to help.

The Academy's partnership with a social mobility organisation called The Access Project was the most impactful for me. I knew I had done well in my GCSEs, but I still lacked confidence and wasn't even considering applying to a 'top' university. I remember Tracey (then TAP coordinator) calling me into her office and asking whether I would consider applying to Cambridge. I'm pretty sure I laughed at her. However, after quite a bit of back and forth, she convinced me to go to a summer school, and if I hated it, she wouldn't make me apply. While I didn't want to admit it at the time, I enjoyed summer school. But I was still scared. Cambridge felt a world away from anything I knew growing up in Cradley Heath and the fear of rejection or not 'fitting in' was enough to put me off.

Through the Access Project, I attended open days, visited Cambridge, and had regular 1-1 support from a tutor for my English Literature A Level and personal statement. The cumulation of these experiences built my confidence and gave me that final push to hand in my application in mid-October 2018. Fast forward to July 2022, I graduated with a BA in Law from the University of Cambridge. I'm spending the next few months travelling and working as a paralegal. I'm also volunteering for two amazing social mobility organisations (in2_Law and Team UPSide) to support students from underrepresented backgrounds, as The Access Project supported me. Next year, I hope to go back to studying (for a final time, I think!) and complete a Masters in Law.

I'm excited to see what the future holds and when I think back, I will always remember Forge as the starting point; the dedicated staff, wholesome environment and continual support meant I was able to achieve more than I ever thought I was capable of.

Sehrish Mahmood
Ormiston Forge Academy student 2012-2019