

Hi, I'm Sophie! I joined Ormiston Forge Academy as a year 7 student back in 2012. After 5 years of studying at Forge and completing my GCSE's, it was finally time to decide - college or sixth form? However, I had no intention of going to college; I knew that I would not only receive a top-notch education at Forge, but I'd also get individualised support in a comfortable, familiar setting. I would be taught by teachers who knew me and the unique way that I learn, making for a more personal learning journey. Having a lot of 1-2-1 time with the teachers was very important to me - you don't always get that individual support at college, so staying at sixth form was undoubtedly the best decision for me. At A-Level, I studied Graphic Design, Fine Art, and Geography, along with an EPQ, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I was also part of the Access Project, which provided me with weekly geography tutoring from a qualified academic mentor. Although I didn't go on to study geography at university, that support helped to ensure that I got the UCAS points needed to progress to higher education and my preferred degree course.

When I reached year 13, it was time to make a crucial decision about applying for university. Being the first in my family to consider this path, the idea of completely uprooting my life and venturing into the unknown was undeniably intimidating. I doubted if I'd have what it takes, after all, people 'like me' didn't go to university. Despite this, I decided to go for it! Each week we had a dedicated session where we worked on our university applications, and all our questions regarding university were answered with honesty and openness, whether that be about crafting your personal statement, securing funding, or moving away from home. Whatever concerns you had, you could trust that they'd be there to offer support.

I already had my heart set on becoming a graphic designer, but art and design aren't viable career options, right? That's what everyone says. Needless to say, I was very apprehensive. Yet, the sixth form team at Forge reassured me that I should follow my heart and pursue my passion for design, and they were right!

Fast forward 3 years to 2022, and I graduated with a First Class BA (Hons) Graphic Design degree. There were many ups and downs throughout my studies, however it was all worth it in the end! I've done things I never thought I'd do, been to places I never thought I'd go, and received multiple design awards along the way! I even got commissioned by Michelin to design a mural for their UK Headquarters! In the final semester, I was nominated to do the student speech at our graduation ceremony. I was a very nervous person prior to attending university, and although my confidence has grown over the years, this huge responsibility still terrified me, however it was one of the most rewarding things I've ever done.

After finishing my degree, I was offered graphic design internships, at the world-renowned advertising agency VCCP and their design studio Girl&Bear, in London. I worked on design briefs for some of the UK's biggest brands, including O2, Cadbury, Transport for London, and Canon. These opportunities were absolutely amazing, and I cannot wait to become fully immersed in the industry.

After working on these design briefs, I decided to apply to study for a master's degree. Luckily, I was accepted onto the course, and have been studying graphic design and typography for the past year, and I'm loving it!. Looking back, it's hard to believe how far I've come. Never did I imagine that I would have a bachelor's degree, let alone be studying for a MA! As a youngster I always believed that university was only for those studying academic subjects, but I was wrong. I am eternally grateful to my teachers and the sixth form team for showing me what is possible, and for supporting and believing in me along the way, as I'm not sure I would've taken the leap without them.



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