



## **THE START OF MY JOURNEY**

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This report briefly conveys my reasons for studying law and my passion for the subject.

I was born and raised in Pretoria, South Africa up to the age of 11, when my mother decided to move to England to provide a better education for her two children. Due to the high costs of schooling in South Africa, my mother had to home-school me, which resulted in me not being taught English, as she could not speak the language herself. As a result, I missed over a year's worth of schooling when I arrived in England, which affected my SATs drastically. Due to the language barrier I found it very hard, not only to succeed in my studies but also to make friends. However, in year 10 I was moved to a new English class. The teacher for this class had so much inspiration and passion for the subject that I could not help but look up to her. To have such a strong female role model inspired me to chase my dreams. She spent countless hours helping me with my spoken and written English, which led to me achieving a result above my target grade. Seeing her fulfil her own dream of becoming a headteacher at a new school was a major influence for me to aspire towards a law career. She made me and many other students realise that the world really is our oyster!

Ever since I can remember, I have wanted to be a lawyer. Instead of playing 'teacher' I would play 'courtroom', although Judge Judy may have a part to play in that! My interest in law inspired me to undertake two weeks of work experience at a criminal law firm in year 10. During this time, I realised how exciting but also how much hard work it is to be a solicitor, both physically and emotionally. It enabled me to explore my passion and although I might not go into criminal law, it opened my eyes to the realities and the opportunities of a law career.

My sixth form experience was certainly one to remember. Having to move to online learning in the middle of year 12 due to Covid-19 and receiving limited support from the school in the

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beginning made it hard for students to stay engaged, especially with frequent network disruptions and general confusion regarding the plan for year 13 exams. In addition, we had to deal with the stress of applying to universities. At my school, it was considered essential to apply to Russell Group universities, so most of my friendship circle did so, including me. Applying to a large, high-ranking university was both exciting and terrifying, as the high grades required made me question my abilities. Attending such a university seemed like the only logical choice, as it should provide a high standard of education. However, it's more important to consider all the relevant factors, including the personal ones.

After I was accepted into this large, high-ranking university and started attending the course, I felt out of place and that I didn't truly belong. There were several reasons why I felt this way. Firstly, when I attended my law lectures, the lecture theatre (with over 400 seats) was full, with numerous other students attending the lecture online, which made me feel like I was just a 'number'. Experiencing this as a first-year student was very daunting. In addition, the way in which the course was delivered didn't fit my personal learning style and made me feel disoriented and confused. Furthermore, as I live in Plymouth, travelling up and down to the university was draining and becoming a financial burden.

Having experienced this, I was on the verge of dropping out of studying law, as I felt that I'd lost my passion for the subject and it had started to feel like a chore rather a pleasure. Before making such a drastic decision, I decided to speak to someone close to me about my concerns and was told that it sounded like I had more of an issue with my current university, rather than the actual subject. I therefore decided that I would transfer universities, although many people tried to discourage me from doing this. As soon as I had made this decision, however, it felt as though a heavy weight had been lifted from my shoulders, so that I could finally breathe.

I still remember the first day I arrived at Plymouth University and the overwhelming feeling of being 'at home'. The university made the transfer simple and provided me with support throughout the process. And although I started the course late, my lecturers were even more supportive, providing me with the materials that I had missed and giving me the choice of one-to-one support to help me catch up.

One of the main differences between the two universities is the size of the law cohort. Plymouth University has about 140 first year law students, which means that the course is highly student focused and each individual student can receive the support they require to succeed. Students are fully supported and one of my formative assessments was returned

within 24 hours, showing the level of dedication from lecturers. The standard of teaching is the same, if not higher, and the enthusiasm that the lecturers have for their subject is infectious. They make the law fun to learn, describing it in a real-world context, rather than just theory-based. My entire summative assessment experience so far has also been easier, due to the amount of guidance and support that I and other students have received. As a result, I feel that I will be able to perform to the best of my ability.

Looking ahead, in addition to law I've always had a strong interest in medicine, although I never saw myself as a doctor or nurse. Consequently, I'm now considering a potential career as a barrister specialising in medical negligence. Although it's a very challenging goal, I believe that with the right motivation, hard work and discipline, I can achieve it. In conclusion, I believe that there should be much less emphasis placed in schools and colleges on attending a Russell Group university. Studying at Plymouth University has helped me rediscover my passion for law all over again, and I can't wait to see where my journey will lead.