

Rose speaks to Abeer, an occupational therapy student about her first experience of studying in the UK as an overseas student from Oman.

Have a comment on the show? Please email us at [yourfirstofeverythingpodcast@gmail.com](mailto:yourfirstofeverythingpodcast@gmail.com)

Presented by: Rose James  
Produced by: Ben Capper

Your First of Everything is a Production of Grey Fox Communications and Marketing Ltd, in partnership with the University of Chester and Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

**Rose** [01:00:03]

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to another episode of your First of Everything. Today I have got Abeer with me. Who's going to talk to me about her first experience of studying occupational therapy in the UK. Hello, Abeer. How are you?

**Abeer** [01:00:16]

I'm fine, thank you. How are you from?

**Rose** [01:00:19]

I'm good, thank you. So this is. It's amazing. So tell me, let's start from the very, very beginning. Where are you.

**Abeer** [01:00:27]

So I'm from the Sultanate of Oman. So. And I've come over from Oman to the UK to study occupational therapy. And this was because I had like a scholarship from the country to study here. So I came over from Amman to the UK to study occupational therapy.

**Rose** [01:00:45]

That's amazing. So have you got any family members that are here at all?

**Abeer** [01:00:49]

No. No.

**Rose** [01:00:50]

So you've moved from a different country to a different culture with nobody here and then started a course that was like, Let's go.

**Abeer** [01:00:56]

Exactly. That's what I've. Done.

**Rose** [01:00:58]

Yeah, right. In the defence. So hats off to you. And you're now qualified.

**Abeer** [01:01:04]

I am.

**Rose** [01:01:04]

I am. How long.

**Abeer** [01:01:05]

For? I am less than a month.

**Rose** [01:01:07]

Amazing. Congratulations. Thank you. You done absolutely amazing to to really put yourself in that situation, to go through everything and come out the other side. You know where you are and you've now got a job, which is fantastic. So. Exactly. Tell me then, how would you what would you recommend to anybody who's thinking about relocating to another country to do a degree? What would you say to them? What advice would you give?

**Abeer** [01:01:34]

I think if it's if it's something you know you're passionate about, then go for it. And I think it's about just trusting your guts and just going with the flow. Yeah, to be honest, I think that's what I've done. And it could be maybe overwhelming at first, but once you're there, you're there and you can just go go with the flow and you're just going to, I think, adjust with it. Yeah. And I think my advice would be just go with the flow trust your guts and just believe in yourself. Yeah. And because that's what I've done. Exactly.

**Rose** [01:02:10]

And look at where you are. So it's clearly served you very well. So in relation to your first experience, then, what is, what is your experience of moving here, of training and then coming out the other side? Tell me about it.

**Abeer** [01:02:22]

I think my experience overall was amazing. I think for me and personally, first it was overwhelming, transitioning from a different country and then a different culture and learning different things such as the simplest thing is the the accent. Yeah. So for me that was like one of the biggest challenges. But and for us and working in healthcare, we have to have that communication skills. So I was trying my best with the accent to understand it, get it and, and be able to practice it. And, and but other than that, I feel it was a very good experience. I've learned a lot. I've learned about the culture here in the UK. People were friendly and awesome and I think I've got a lot of experience now because again, I've came back, I've came from another country, another culture. So because I've learned like had exposure to different cultures here, I feel like I've got that in my like toolkit kind of thing. Yeah. And which is again, which is a transformative skill that I could take away anywhere I go in the world, of course. So I think for me it was a very positive experience. The other thing is that I'm at the University of Liverpool. I think I've got a bit like great support from my lecturers as well as my peers. I felt welcomed from the day I was from the first day starting my degree, very supportive lecturers and faculty members. So I think for me very positive experience.

**Rose** [01:04:05]

That's lovely. It's lovely that you've had such a positive experience and that you felt so supported and that you know, you've learnt so much while you've been here as well. And I think you're 100% right saying that, you know, you've got two cultures now that you've got in your toolkit that you can utilise. And I think certainly from your point of view of being an occupational therapist, that is massive. You know, it gives you such an insight into other people's lives. Exactly, Exactly. So I think that's amazing. I do think it's funny. Definitely getting used to the accent. Exactly. Because not, you know, where we are here. North west. You've got so many different accents, dialects, all kinds that are happening. So yeah, I think that definitely is difficult. Yeah.

**Abeer** [01:04:48]

Yeah. But I mean, I'm here, here, so I've managed well. I think.

**Rose** [01:04:53]

That's good. I still struggle. I'm 27 and still struggle at times. So. So did you face any challenges along the way? Was there anything that was challenging that you've overcome?

**Abeer** [01:05:05]

for me, because English is not my first language, it's Arabic, actually. So I think in assignments I've struggled a bit and this is because I had to write in a different language and had to think in a different language. So I had to process what was in the lectures and the presentations and all of that, and then write my assignments and critically think in different language. So I think that that was, for me, it was very kind of challenging. Yeah, because sometimes I was like, Oh, what's the right word? What should I write now? How should I phrase this in like a correct English grammatical form and what vocabulary is appropriate here and those kind of things? I think that was kind of my biggest challenges. I remember going to the library at times and just crying because I was like, I'm stuck here, what should I write? But then I think because I've realised that, Oh, this is not my strongest point, I had to like face it. And I've asked for support from my lectures and academic advisors at the university and said that can you help me please with this and what should I do? What's your advice? And then I got advice about reading more, exposing myself to a different journal, articles and all of that to just get my head around what what vocabulary and grammar they use in those articles. Because I was writing like a academic assignment, which was quite scientific at times, most of the times. And so. And then I was also advised to go to the library and use the resources available there. So that's what I've done. But I think because I've realised what was like kind of much what I was like, what was challenging for me and got support, I think that's how I kind of overcome that challenge.

**Rose** [01:07:01]

Yeah, I think that's also a really unique perspective in saying that, you know, your first language is Arabic. You think in Arabic that you write, you know, you speak Arabic, and then having to again move country, start a new job, you know, do your training and everything, and then having to write those assignments in English, that must have been a massive challenge for you. It was so I mean, I think obviously anybody who does a degree, it's absolutely amazing. But in your particular circumstance, that is absolutely phenomenal. The work that you've done and put in to get to where you are very, very proud. He should feel very, very proud. Yeah,

that's that's absolutely amazing. So what advice then would you give to somebody in that unique position?

**Abeer** [01:07:45]

I think it's again, seeking support because sometimes we get stuck in our thoughts and like, Oh, what am I doing now? How could I overcome this? This is so challenging. And you get stuck in this dilemma of thoughts that you don't know where to go, what to do. So it's because I think the first step is realising that being able to realise it and like think about it, think. Okay, so I know this is like what I'm, what I'm getting stuck in. This is challenging for me. What should I do now? And it's again seeking support from the available resources because the support is there. You're just going to you're just going to have to reach out for it. And I think that's the first step to to overcome any challenge.

**Rose** [01:08:32]

So what are your aspirations and dreams for the future? What is it that you'd like to do?

**Abeer** [01:08:37]

I think for me it's to walk. And as I said, I've got the job at the trust of had placement in before, which is amazing. And I think I find myself passionate about the field of occupational therapy in the paediatric world as well as the field of occupational therapy and the sensory integration ward, which is quite new field here. And and I think for me, and I want to be more involved in evidence based practice, maybe research in the future, I don't know. Very good. But I think now I got the job. So that's where I'm at now. But for the future, I might be involved in some research maybe. But yeah.

**Rose** [01:09:18]

So when you just said then about the did you say sensory.

**Abeer** [01:09:22]

Integration.

**Rose** [01:09:23]

Sensory sensory integration. Ward What, what is that? What's, what's that about? I've never heard of that before.

**Abeer** [01:09:28]

So it's sensory integration is about using senses. So, so we all know our five senses. But in addition to that, there's like vestibular and proprioceptive senses. It's a big word. I don't understand it that much, but I got to know it in my last placement and it's about using that. So how do you regulate yourself? And I'm not good at phrasing it, but how do you regulate yourself? And through those senses kind of thing. And it's a new field and I've only used it for a few, like in my, as I said, in my placement. But when I, when I like, when I knew about that, I was so interested in it. So I went to reading about it, very, very passionate about it. So I want to go learn more about that, to be honest.

**Rose** [01:10:23]

Yeah, that sounds amazing. It sounds extremely innovative as well. You know, it's as you've said, it's an entirely new field. Yeah. So you can really passionate about it. You know, you can see I see a big smile on your face gleaming. You love it. So I think, you know, I love that you've got kind of an idea of where you want to go and from where you've come from to where you are now. That journey that must have been life changing.

**Abeer** [01:10:48]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think I was lucky to have different clinical placements and discovering what I want from those placements. I think because I had a variety of placements working with adults, with children, yeah. And when I got to that placement, I was like, Yeah, this is what I want to do. I knew I was passionate about this. So yeah, I was lucky to have that placement and.

**Rose** [01:11:12]

That doesn't always happen, you know, for for anybody who's a health care professional, they don't always stumble across somewhere and say, yes, this is this is me, this is what I want to do. And so I think for you, that's that's fantastic. You know that you found that for you. So thank you. Oh, thank you so much for sharing your experience with us very much. And I really do wish you all the best.

**Abeer** [01:11:33]

Oh, thank you. Thank you very much for having me today.

**Rose** [01:11:36]

Thank you. You're welcome.

**Abeer** [01:11:37]

Thank you.

**Rose** [01:11:40]

Thank you for listening to your first of everything. If you enjoyed this episode, don't forget to subscribe and leave us a review wherever you get your podcasts from.