



## **THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A THIRD YEAR LAW STUDENT**

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Whenever you tell someone that you are studying a law degree, you are met with stunned expressions and comments about how hard it must be and how intelligent you are. What they do not realise is the amount of commitment a law student must have in order to excel in the subject and the career itself. After three years, I am now fully immersed in my course and my future and because of the commitment I have given, have been able to be a part of some amazing opportunities.

For first year students, university is a shock. No matter how much people tell you that A Levels are a stepping stone, they are not. At university, your motivation and your commitment are completely in your own hands, as now you are largely independent in your work. There are no longer detentions and punishments if you do not do the work. The only person that suffers is yourself and your grades and feedback will reflect this.

In my first year, I was wary of committing myself to too many things, and then struggling to manage everything. I started slowly and only participated in the Negotiations competition. It was something I had never done before and was extremely nervous about failing. I was lucky enough to proceed to the quarter finals before being knocked out of the competition, but my willingness to compete and my personal desire to succeed meant that I gained a new skill that I would not have otherwise gained if I had been only halfway focused on my commitment. By joining the University of Plymouth Law Society (UPLS) and getting involved in extra-curricular activities, I proved to myself that I was not just invested in succeeding in my degree, but I was determined to make my CV and my university experience the best it could be.

Commitment wavers and I have had my fair share of unmotivated months. After my grandfather died before Christmas in my first year, I was unmotivated. I was fortunate that my deadlines were not until January, but this did not stop me from bingeing on Netflix instead of working. For me, pressure has always motivated me. The pressure to finish a project, or win a competition has a positive effect on my efforts and commitment, so as my deadlines came

closer, I was able to become more motivated, despite the grief I had suffered. My advice to any first year student, studying law or not, is that you need to find your motivation as soon as you can, because motivation and commitment work hand in hand; the more motivated you are towards your studies and your hobbies, the more committed you will become.

Going into my second year, I committed to the negotiation competition as well as the debating competition, and my hard work proved worthwhile. For me, commitment is made easier being part of a team, as if I do not put in enough work then I let my teammate down, as well as myself. I had already experienced this competition as mentioned above, so already had feedback which I could draw upon. My partner Ayesha Faraj Al-Nuaimi and I made it to the semi-finals and were given the opportunity to take part in the external negotiation competition run by CEDR. This was a rewarding experience that I could not have had, unless we had worked upon our feedback from each round and strived for success. The encouragement from the judges to take part in the externals was also helpful but that is what you find within UPLS if you are actively involved.

The external competition was hard and a different experience, as you are negotiating against people you do not know and are judged by professionals, making it generally more intense like what you expect in professional life. My partner and I ended up placed third in the whole of the South West, which was a real accomplishment, especially as there was only one mark between us and those who were placed second. Although we did not proceed to the final round of the national competition, we are incredibly proud of our work and commitment that day and it proved to us that we were better negotiators than we thought.



When it came to the debating competition, I was nervous. Public speaking has never been a strong skill of mine. With all the competitions in UPLS, everyone progresses from the first round, in order to give those competitors who have never taken part before, the opportunity to experience how the competition works and gain feedback before teams begin to be eliminated. In my first round, I felt as though I was dreadful. I had taken on the role as lead speaker and so had to talk twice, in both the opening speech and the closing speech. My partner Emma Mumford and I had worked together for the week given to prepare and had come up with a strong argument to the motion, but still I found myself completely baffled. My opening speech went better than expected but my closing speech was short and dull and was worth next to no marks. After this, we swapped roles and I became junior speaker, yet still every round I felt nauseous at the thought of competing because I was so bad. It wasn't until the quarterfinals when Jason Lowther was the guest judge lecturer, that I began to feel as though I was better at what I was doing. He made some positive comments about our debate and challenged us in rebuttals, which I found that I could answer. I knew more than I gave myself credit for, and we eventually proceeded onto the finals of the competition. We came second overall, but for me it was a personal achievement to have made it to the finals, even though I dreaded every second competing.



This year I have been elected as one of the Debating Officers for UPLS. I believe that without my commitment to the society in previous years, I would not have been voted to be debating officer now. Along with my partner, Lauryn Thurlow, we dedicate our time to organising and judging internal and external debates for members of the society to participate in. Without our

commitment to the role, it would not run. I find that because our efforts directly affect the law society's reputation and membership, I want to do well and improve on the previous years to ensure that the debating competition continues to be successful. The motivation of debating officers to improve upon the competition from last year and create interesting and relevant motions to challenge the competitors is what makes the competition successful. So far, we have given two motions: 'This house believes that the legalisation of medical cannabis is a movement towards the acceptance of cannabis as a recreational drug' and 'this house believes that the monarchy has become redundant in today's society and should be abolished.' We have found as participants, that being given interesting and relevant motions, that you don't always think directly relate to law, motivates you to research and come up with a compelling argument.

In most events, you have competitors that do not show up and do not put the effort in. Lack of commitment can affect others, and it is something that people do not consider, but although annoying, you cannot motivate someone to do something if they don't want to. Committing to something is personal and cannot be forced by someone else.

Abraham Lincoln said that 'commitment is what transforms a promise into a reality'. You can only ever do your best but motivating yourself and committing to new challenges will always pay off. You are the only person that can make yourself commit to something, and there is no harm in finding your degree challenging at times because it is meant to be - but not giving up gives you an outcome that is so much greater than just a degree. This year as well as being a debating officer, I am again participating in the negotiation competition for my final year.