QUEENWOOD GRADUATE, ROSIE LAZAR, IS REVELLING IN HER STUDIES AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY IN ENGLAND.

WHAT ARE YOU STUDYING AT OXFORD?

I read French and Linguistics at Christ Church in Oxford, which is a Bachelor of Arts in Modern Languages. People always ask what subjects I’m taking, but unlike Australia, an arts degree here is not as broad; we only study the subjects specified in our degree, and individual classes are subcategories of that subject. For example, French is composed of grammar classes, translations, oral practice and literature, and Linguistics ranges from the more humanities-based sociolinguistics and historical linguistics to the more scientific such as phonetics and psycholinguistics.

HOW ARE YOU FINDING THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDYING OVERSEAS?

I absolutely love studying overseas. I’ve gained a lot of independence from studying far from home with virtually no prior contacts in England, and I’ve made lifelong friends from all over the globe with similar interests to myself. The experience of studying at an institution that is entirely different to any other has been both daunting and exciting, and the various traditions, regulations and even vocabulary of Oxford make it a very unique education – fantastic memories, but almost impossible to explain to friends back home. What attracted me most about studying overseas was the ability to focus my studies on the area that interested me the most – languages.
CAN YOU EXPLAIN ABOUT YOUR RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS IN FRENCH? WHAT DID THIS INVOLVE?

In my second week of our first term this year I discovered I had been awarded a Scholarship for my results in my exams at the end of last year. Although our progress is charted by our tutors in small tutorials of two or three students each week, Oxford has no formal assessments until the Preliminary Examinations at the end of first year. For French, this meant five exams (two three hour literature-based papers, one three hour grammar paper, and two 90 minute translation papers into and out of French) and for Linguistics, three exams of three hours each (General Linguistics, Phonetics and Phonology and Grammatical Analysis).

The grades are calculated according to a ‘Class’ system; First Class for marks above 70%, Second Class divided into 2:1 – above 60% - and 2:2 – above 50% - and Third Class for marks above 40%. An Oxford fail is below 40%. In order to achieve a ‘Scholarship’, you need an average of a First in all your exams. Generally this is enough to guarantee your award, but it can be declined if the college decides the marks are not deserved. Your results are therefore reviewed by the Governing Body and your tutors in a special meeting in the first week of term, and then if the outcome is positive you receive a letter from the Senior Censor of the college. As well as receiving a small ‘scholarship’ in the sense we know it in Australia, you are required to purchase a Scholar’s Gown (luckily refunded!), which replaces the Commoner’s Gown that you wear to formal dinners and exams.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER UNIVERSITY?

I’m still keeping my options wide open, but I have some thoughts of working in the diplomatic corps or in translation and foreign correspondence. Next year I will be spending a year abroad in France, where I am hoping to complete an internship or attend a semester of university.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT STUDENTS CONSIDERING STUDYING ABROAD?

I would definitely advise closely looking into the style of teaching and accommodation of the university. The tutor system used by Oxford and Cambridge doesn’t appeal to everyone, and neither does the concept of college itself. Also look into the college options, because they are all extremely different in terms of size and character and do have the greatest impact on your university experience. Think about whether you do want to complete a very specific degree like those offered in the UK or if you’d rather start with a more general course like those offered in Australia and the US. But by far the most important thing to remember is to get involved! My best memories so far have definitely been the balls, college events, bops (don’t ask), team sports and debates at the Oxford Union – not so much the essay crises or exams!

HOW DO YOU FEEL YOUR SCHOOLING PREPARED YOU FOR YOUR CURRENT STUDIES?

Although adapting to the Oxford system is a shock to everyone at first, no matter their schooling, I definitely benefited from the work of my French teachers Mrs Wardell and Madame Dhillon, who encouraged us to always do extra reading and research rather than just completing the minimum required for any given task (which was not always appreciated at the time!). In Oxford a wide range of readings before any essay is absolutely essential, and it is always painfully obvious to any tutor when a student hasn’t put in enough effort.