

You're thrilled to begin your dream course in London. It's a moment you've worked so hard for, with countless hours of studying to top your class and years of dedication working at that architectural studio. When the offer letter arrived, your family back home was overjoyed—it felt like all your efforts had finally paid off.

Excited to learn, meet new people, and share your expertise, you arrive in London, only to find it colder and gloomier than you expected. The people seem distant, the weather grey and wet. Still, you remind yourself of your purpose and prepare to dive in.

Your first project is a collaborative one, you are in a group with three other students. During your first session, one of your tutors addresses you directly. Panic sets in. You can't think of what to say; it feels like solving a complex equation in your head. Before you can respond, a native speaking teammate jumps in, they respond using technical jargon you don't understand and even makes a joke with the tutor. The tutor moves on, leaving you with spiralling thoughts: What happened? Why couldn't I answer? How does this younger student know so much more? Do I belong on this course? I really need to improve!

As the group's discussion continues, you struggle to catch everything they say, but diligently note down what you can on your phone to translate and research later. Your teammates notice you doing this but don't say anything. At the end of the day, your teammates cheerfully head to the student bar, while you return to your accommodation. At 11 p.m., you call your family, lying that your day was great. You don't want to disappoint them—they're the reason you're here.