

University is my ticket to a better life - this is what my father always tells me. After hearing the stories of other students, you might agree with him. My name is Ashraf and I would like to tell you what university means to me.

When I first arrived in Adelaide two years ago, all I could think was how much I wished that I was born here. If you're like me, you probably like the stunning scenery and friendly faces, but being here also means so much more.

I was born and raised in Afghanistan - a beautiful country but an incredibly dangerous place to live. Growing up, conflict and violence were rife and access to education was restricted. Our family fled to Pakistan but eventually the same turmoil followed us there. It felt like there was no escape.

As the protector of our family, my father recognised that we couldn't safely live in Pakistan any longer. He found his way to Australia with the intention that one day we would be reunited. You have no idea how much we missed him, but we knew that he had to make this sacrifice so we could continue to be a family.

Three years later my mother sadly passed away and I was left in Pakistan without a mother or a father. Thankfully my father was granted refuge in Australia and I was able to come here to live

with him. I cannot express to you how great it felt to see each other again after six long years.

Last year I enrolled in Foundation Studies with the University of South Australia. It is a one year program for students, like me, with no previous qualifications to be able to learn the skills required to study at university. I was so grateful when I found out that I received a scholarship because it meant I could buy the books for my course. You see, my father is the sole income earner for our family, working every day at a factory, so we don't have a lot of money to spare.

It wasn't only the financial help which kept me going, but knowing that someone believed in me. Living in this country, you are so lucky to have kind people who help others, like me, get an education for the first time and change their path for the future.

When I become a medical sonographer I hope to visit Afghanistan - if it is safe to do so - to use my new medical knowledge to help those who have not been as fortunate as me.

I have learned that if you put in the hard work, education can open up so many doors for the future, and I will never take it for granted.

Best wishes,

Ashraf