

## Maria’s perspective on the MPA programme

“What are we feeling, guys?” I asked while scrolling through the options. “Tired, emotional, hungry...” My group had just walked out of the **Bank of England**, having successfully delivered our final **MPA Capstone Project** presentation after a week of late nights, Co-Op dinners and making friends with the Sardinia House security guards. We were in the process of posting a celebratory photo on Facebook, and having a hard time settling on a mood to accompany the post. “Accomplished?” We all looked at each other, smiling and nodding. “That’s it! Accomplished.” Six months of gruelling research, countless phone calls and interviews, hours-long debates and endless meetings had just culminated in a killer presentation and Q&A session. I’d say that yes, we were feeling pretty darn accomplished. And maybe a little hungry.

One of the other options had struck a chord with me as well: **nostalgic**. While it felt great to have reached such an important milestone, it made me realize just how close we are to being done. And it felt like just the other day that I was fighting to get two suitcases into my shoebox of a room at **Sidney Webb**, nervously shaking the hands of people with whom I’d come to cry over sequential games in a multidimensional policy space, receiving what I initially thought was my first ever failing mark but being told that, no it’s okay, in the British system that’s a Merit grade.



This got me thinking about the past 18 months and how they have been some of the most challenging of my life – academically, emotionally, spiritually... But they have also been the most special and rewarding. What is it about the LSE MPA program that could have such an impact? Looking back, I’d say it has something to do with a few of my favorite things:

### The academics

This has definitely been a demanding program – **and that’s a great thing**. After a few years on the job, I had forgotten how to be a student, and the rigor of the MPA was a wake-up call. I remember being almost through the first term and still having out-of-body experiences in lectures. But I eventually figured it out, started managing my time better and eventually making econometrics jokes. It’s been hard work, but extremely fulfilling. #accomplished 😊

### The MPA staff and faculty

While I came to find that there is a lot less hand holding in the UK educational system (in comparison to the US), the MPA staff and faculty never cease to amaze me. **They really go above and beyond**, taking student feedback seriously and often implementing recommendations from one year to the next. **The faculty is very engaged**, always ready and willing to field questions during lecture, as well as during breaks and after class.

### Being at LSE and living in London

In addition to all that the MPA has to offer, I’m always surprised by all of the other exciting things happening at LSE. In recent weeks, there have been incredible speakers from Germany, Panama, and beyond, covering topics as diverse as Greek austerity and Darwinism. And living in London is great! **The city is European in feel, while just as cosmopolitan as New York**. There’s always something going on, from festivals to concerts, plays and musicals to art exhibits. There are great gardens and markets, and the pub life is fabulous. Even the weather has become endearing – but you do need to run your personal budget carefully.



## MPA Student Association (MPASA)

I was in love with it, even before chairing the “official student association of the MPA program.” A group of my peers planning events and activities to build a community that will last well beyond our time in London – what’s not to love? Some of my favorite MPA moments took place at an MPASA event, **from boat parties to bake sales, alumni and career panels to food crawls**. And being Chair was also one of the most rewarding roles I’ve had to date. I had the opportunity of working with and learning from an amazing team of individuals, and getting to know my fellow MPAers in a way that wouldn’t have been possible otherwise. Which brings me to my final and most important favorite thing...

## My fellow MPAers

It still blows my mind how you can take nearly 200 people from all over the world and end up with such a **united student body**. **Everyone has incredible backgrounds and experience, and I have learned as much from them as I have in my classes**. And I have made amazing friends without whom I don’t think I would have made it – from helping with STATA commands to accompanying me to Fleet River for an emergency sugar fix, pushing shopping carts full of lunch bags to road trips and weekend getaways. I’m truly blessed to have met them, and only regret not having the time to get to know each and every one of them better.

“Okay, I’ll post it now.” The very public announcement of our accomplishment, and the pings from friends “liking” that accomplishment and sharing their congratulations, brought me back from my reverie. I looked at each of my group members in turn, heart full of love and pride for them, and sighed heavily. “Oh guys...” They all looked back at me with the same expression, and time seemed to stand still for a few moments. “Drinks?” we all asked in unison. “Let’s go!”

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This blog post was written by [Maria Rodrigues](#), a second year MPA student.

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