

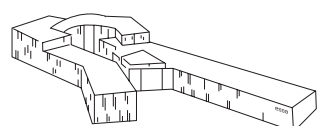
Umayr Zahid is 16, when in Year 11 at Essa Academy he was the Head Boy.

Umayr is proof that **hard work** and a **positive attitude** pay dividends at Essa Academy

Making the most of opportunity

If anyone has made the most of what Essa Academy can offer its students it is Umayr, who readily admits that if it were not for the wealth of opportunities he has been offered he might not be in the strong position he is now. "I feel extremely privileged to have been given so much by my school, which has given me the chance to participate in many activities and experiences not widely available elsewhere," he says. "Not only have I been supported academically but I have developed into a more confident and independent person because of Essa's attitude to students and their learning."

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Encouragement to achieve

From a shy Year 7 pupil, Umayr's elevation to Head Boy has been achieved by accepting the school's strong work ethic which demonstrates that hard work gets results. "We are encouraged to do the best we possibly can and are rewarded for doing so by recognition of our progress and achievements," says Umayr. "I am fortunate that my grades are very good but it is not just results that are celebrated it is effort and attitude, too."

How to stand out from the crowd

The Head Boy and Head Girl are elected in by both teachers and fellow students and, explains Umayr, the title contenders are those who stand out for their commitment to their work both in and out of the classroom, their personal presentation, punctuality and courtesy. With the role comes certain responsibilities such as representing the Academy as Umayr has done on various occasions. "I had the chance to attend a technology conference in Belgium which was really interesting," he says. "Essa is unusual as it utilises equipment such as iPads, tablets and laptops for work and research to a much greater extent than many other schools and as IT is something I'm very interested in it was a fascinating experience."

Life skills

Umayr is also taking part in the National Citizens Service and in World Challenge. Both of which programmes not only help to support local communities here and abroad but provide participants with a range of life skills and often unique experiences. He has also completed his Duke of Edinburgh Scheme Bronze Award. "If it hadn't been for Essa I probably wouldn't have heard about these projects, still less been in a position to take part," he says. "I am very grateful for these opportunities and am sure that they have contributed significantly to my future prospects."



Supportive and approachable

In addition, the Work Experience placement Umayr undertook in Year 10 gave him a valuable insight into the adult world of independence and personal responsibility. "I did my placement within the school and it was a strange feeling finding myself on the 'other side'. It certainly gave me a new respect for my teachers and how they deal with the pressures they face. They have always been very supportive and approachable."

On the road to success

Umayr is considering a future career in some form of medicine and is glad to know that he can rely on his teachers' advice and guidance in terms of college applications. In the meantime, however, he is concentrating on obtaining the top GCSE grades he is expecting. "My predicted grades are good but I'll put everything into these final months to make absolutely sure," he says. "What my time at Essa has taught me above everything is that it pays to work hard. The Academy has given me a belief in myself and made me understand that I have the ability to succeed."

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