

Today marks the end of our long and arduous climb on the academic ladder as we reap the bounty of our hard work. We have endured many ordeals, exhausted our abilities and pushed ourselves to the limit. We strived and we prevailed. Each one of us has our own story to tell about how we got here, why we are here and what drove us to stay. I hope you don't mind that I share with you my personal story...

I was working for a multinational company in Dubai before I came to Australia. It was a decent job that pays well, my family and I were living a rather comfortable life, and yet I decided to leave my comfort zone because I felt I was becoming stagnant. For a long time, I felt like I had been working extremely hard, and yet I could not see myself growing. Then I thought I needed to get myself “unstuck” and push myself to the next level.

My husband and I came to Australia in 2014 with all of our life savings so that I could study again – bringing with us only the promise of greater opportunities. It was a big move for me and my family as we had to leave our then-four-year-old daughter to stay with my parents back home. Our first year in Melbourne was the toughest. On my way to the College, I remember, I would sometimes be sitting on a tram with a mother and her child, and I would get that huge lump in my throat while I try to fight back the tears...

I took on all kinds of job, as many of you, my fellow graduates, did. I waited on tables, I cleaned offices and scrubbed dirty toilets, and I take pride in every single type of work that I did because it brought me to where I am standing today – in front of some of the bravest, most resilient people who were bold enough to take a leap of faith just like I did.

At present, I work as an Assistant Accountant in a small-scale firm in Melbourne while enrolled in a Professional Year program in Accounting. More importantly, my daughter is now here with me and a new baby is on the way...

Our diploma symbolises our well-earned victory over what seemed to be an insurmountable task before. We complained and recoiled then at the sight of much school work that lay before us. But with our undying spirit, we succeeded. This is our first major victory; a dream then which is now a reality.

However, this occasion would not be possible without the help of those people whose lives were intertwined with ours. They are the people who have crossed our paths and touched our lives in one way or another. They are our guide whenever we are about to fall apart or go astray. They are our light in dark tunnels. And to them, we are forever indebted.

To our families, whose unconditional love for us fuelled us to persevere in giving them a bright future. Their constant motivation and support encouraged us to make use of our full potential. You are our inspiration; this achievement is for you.

Second, to our dear Alma Mater, who fittingly served us as our second home, embraced us for nearly three years, and nurtured us to become responsible participants of society. We will move forth, armed with the knowledge and wisdom we gained from this formidable institution.

Third, to our dedicated and judicious mentors and instructors, for their undying commitment to prepare us for harder tasks ahead. They unhesitatingly pushed us to the limit to tap into our full abilities... abilities, which we ourselves would never have realised, were within us. Without your guidance, we would have never discovered our potential.

Fellow graduates, every one of us may be in high spirits right now but we are all aware that a longer and tougher road lays ahead before us. We will face a hostile world that will test our endurance and will push our limits even further. The road ahead is long and steep. There are many dark alleys and crossroads that we have to tread. There will be times when our weariness will get the best of us. In those times, we will need to remind ourselves of how far we've come and how much we've grown. Making it to this ceremony today is already a huge step from where we have started. Let us not forget that the **same commitment**, the **same strong sense of self-belief** and the **same passion to succeed** will help us face the bigger challenges that await us **as we carry on with our next steps in this journey called life.**

Kind regards,  
Eloisa