Dené Fraser (FRSDEN005)

Honours Reflection 2026

You Can Do Hard Things!

My university path was never a conventional one. I started university during Covid and spent my entire first year online. From then, I ended up having to extend my degree, and the next three years tested me in ways I could never have imagined. By the end of undergrad, I didn't really have a clue what I wanted to do for honours, but I knew I wanted to be somewhere in the health sciences. Unfortunately, the universe had other plans for me, and I was not accepted into any of my honours choices at UCT. I wasn't ready to give up my goal of working in the health sciences field, and so I began an internship in the Medical Virology department after undergrad.

My year as an intern helped me realise a lot of things about myself. One, I never wanted to do wet lab work again, and two, there were many other fields in the health sciences that I had never even thought to consider. That led me to bioinformatics. I applied once again to UCT for honours, this time for bioinformatics, and I got accepted!

At the start of my honours year, everyone around me warned me how difficult it would be, and so, going into this year, I prepared myself - or at least I thought I did. Honours is unlike anything I have ever experienced. It has taught me that my time is truly my most precious resource, and I had to learn the best ways to juggle my academic life with my social life, because it is very easy to get burnt out during this year.

Going into a field like bioinformatics from an entirely non-coding background has really pushed me in new ways, but I am so grateful that I am getting the opportunity to learn so many new skills. This year has been tough, but I will never regret taking the chance and trying something new.