

Year 13

Advice & Tips for Starting at University

Wednesday 25th March 2020

1. * Student Ambassador02: Hi, my name is Harry and I am currently in my third and final year studying law. The theme for today's forum is 'Advice & Tips for Starting At University'. For those of you who are new to the forums, you are welcome to ask me questions either directly related to the theme or about any other aspect of university life. Anything I can't answer I will refer on and someone from the Exeter Scholars team will get back to you with a response in the next few days. For those of you that have logged on before, welcome back!

Before we start I just want to give you a quick overview of how the session itself works in case you've not used one before.

When you post a message it will be sent to me to reply to and will show on your wall as awaiting reply. When I reply to your message it will then post to the public wall for you and everyone else to see. Until I have replied, no-one else will see your message. Bear with me, as when it gets busy it will take me a few moments to reply – but don't worry, you won't have been forgotten.

11. Student Ambassador01: Hi everyone! I'm Bianca. I'm in third year, studying Law. I'm also here to answer your questions. I will start all messages with the name of the person I am replying to just to make the discussion easier to follow and if I'm posing a question to the whole group I'll start the message with 'Everyone'.

2. Beth Hughes: I'm preparing to take a gap year before I start university, will this affect my application or me being able to use Exeter Scholars? Thanks :)

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Beth, that is great - I took a gap year as well and found it was a really great opportunity. In regard to how it effects your application and Exeter Scholars, I would recommend getting in contact with the Exeter Scholars team at www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/contact/currentparticipants/. They will be best placed to help advise you on that.

* Student Ambassador02: Do you have anything in particular planned for your gap year?

3. Beth Hughes: Thank you very much! Do you have any advice on how to make sure that my gap year helps to build up my university application? I'm planning on working in the NHS as a Health Care Assistant, to make sure I know exactly what I want to do for my degree

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Beth, I think that sounds like a great idea! It is really useful taking a bit of time at this stage to have a think about ideas of what you may like to do in the future. In mine, I worked in a corporate events company for a few months to get some work and business experience and then travelled

for a bit. Depending on what you decide to do, a gap year can be great for saving up a little bit too before starting uni.

* Student Ambassador01: Also, regardless of what you do, it is possible to tailor your experience towards your application. Universities would love to see that you are proactive during your gap year and being able to demonstrate sustained commitment is attractive too!

4. Beth Hughes: Thank you very much, that's really helpful, thank you for your advice! In terms of starting at University, how did you manage the transition of living away from home and keeping in contact with family and friends?

* Student Ambassador01: I'm an International student, and I live 8 hours away so transitioning was challenging at first but university is a great place to make new friends and meet different kinds of people. Once you make new friends, and join societies (a great way to feel less alone!), it gets a lot easier to handle. You also always have the opportunity to visit and video call your family and friends so they're always there, but not physically.

* Student Ambassador02: I fully agree with Bianca, university is great for meeting new people and making new friends. Whilst the transition can be difficult for some people, there is a lot of support provided and roles such as residence life mentor who comes to check on how you are doing every week. Also, everyone is in the same boat which makes it easier to adapt.

5. Beth Hughes: Thank you! Video calls is a great idea! How did you manage budgeting and finances after moving to university?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Beth, for me I worked out before each term how much I would have from my student loan and savings and then had to be strict with myself to keep to a budget. There are also a lot of good apps for budgeting which can help. In regards to financing, there are a number of opportunities to get work as a student, including within the university itself.

* Student Ambassador01: I agree with Harry. With budgeting, the majority of it boils down to saving.

In the university and city, there are a lot of shops and restaurants which offer student discounts so it's always good to utilise that. Also, having a part-time job would help you earn extra money (For instance, I work as a Student Ambassador). If you do struggle, there are Student Finance help desks available for all students and they could give valuable advice for budgeting and all finance-related issues.

6. Beth Hughes: Are the job roles advertised while you're at university (in terms of opportunities for work at university?)

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Beth, there are! At Exeter, for example, there is a Career Zone which is a platform that enables students to come in contact with job opportunities with the university (internally) or

externally (with other companies). This is accessible to all students, and is updated regularly so you are aware of any new work opportunities.

7. Zuzia: Hi. I was just wondering if there's any possibility to request a different offer from a university? For example, I chose a certain course, however the university recommended another one which I don't want to do. I'm quite decided on my own choice and I was wondering how I could present that to the university. Could I send an email explaining why I'd prefer to do the original course or could I just ask why they haven't accepted me into the course I chose? I have all the points I need and I'm predicted with higher grades than I would need to get in.

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Zuzia, I think if you would like to request to change your offer to another course you would be best off emailing the admissions team explaining the situation and why you would like to change. Unfortunately I cannot guarantee they will be able to change it for you, but there is no harm in asking!

8. Beth Hughes: thanks! What are the most important essential items to take with you to uni (other than a laptop or bedding)?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Beth, there are a number of useful websites and forums that discuss this (I would recommend having a bit of a browse as some people have some good ideas!). In terms of other essentials, you will need pots/pans and cutlery and crockery. Also towels and toiletries are important!

9. Zuzia: Also, when is the deadline for applying for student loans?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Zuzia, the deadline for applying is usually around May but this would depend on the particular university. If you referred to the UCAS website or the university's Finance page, you would be better informed on it :)

* Student Ambassador01: Thank you for taking part in the forum!

15. Zuzia: Thank you very much!

10. Beth Hughes: In terms of taking a gap year, how did you make sure that you kept up with deadlines for applications etc.. And how did you keep up your motivation when some of your peers were at university, or doing apprenticeships etc.?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Beth, I actually applied initially to UCAS with a deferred entry as I knew I really wanted a gap year but a number of my friends did apply during the year. I think it is really important to be ahead of the game and make sure you work out a way of setting yourself deadlines for getting things in. This will also be a useful skill for coming to uni where you will be expected to complete assignments without being chased up.

In regard to motivation, I did a little bit of casual reading in areas of law I found interesting but I think once you know you are in, that in itself is great for motivation.

17. Beth Hughes: Thank you very much both of you for all of your help! Wishing you all the best with your degrees :)

* Student Ambassador01: Thanks very much for taking part in today's online forum; I hope you've found it useful! Details of the next session can be found at

www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/currentparticipants/liveonlineqaforums/. If you have questions in the meantime, please contact the Exeter Scholars team, who will be happy to help:

www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/contact/currentparticipants/.