

Year 13

A Focus on Wellbeing: Dealing with Stress and Thinking About Transitions

Wednesday 29th April 2020

1. * Student Ambassador01: Hi, my name is Alex and I am currently in my third year studying Philosophy and Modern languages. The theme for today's forum is A Focus on Wellbeing: Dealing with Stress and Thinking About Transitions. 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.

2. * Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Everyone, My name is Tamara and I'm in my third year studying English Literature and Modern Languages. I will also be answering your questions today along with Alex.

3. * Student Ambassador01 2: We will start all messages with the name of the person we are replying to just to make the discussion easier to follow and if we are posing a question to the whole group we'll start the message with 'Everyone'.

4. Francesca Giannachi-Kaye: have you been doing online work currently?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Francesca! I was on my year abroad, working in Madrid. My existing deadlines were for coursework pieces completed across the year. The deadline for these two pieces of work is May 1st. As I wasn't based at Exeter this year I have not been doing online work and my modes of assessment and learning remain the same.

5. Francesca Giannachi-Kaye: I am wondering how you have been finding online work at University of Exeter and how it is being managed.

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Francesca, Online work at the university has varied depending on the course that each student is doing. Generally the university has been very proactive and given us a lot of information and resources for online study. We always have access to the online library, and can arrange skype calls with lecturers and professors if needed. Certain seminars are organised through Microsoft Teams, and mitigation has been provided for students that are struggling because of the current circumstances.

6. Beth: How do you apply through UCAS if you are going to take a year out? Do you get in touch with your school? Thanks :)

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Beth, this would depend if you have already secured an offer from a university or not. Often universities will allow you to apply for a course, but then later defer your application if you want to take a gap year before coming to university. If you get the grades for that course anyway, you've secured the offer, and will just start the course a year later. Otherwise, you can just delay your UCAS application until the year after. For more information I would speak to careers advisors at school or sixth form, visit the UCAS website at www.ucas.com, or contact the Exeter Scholars team at exeterscholars@exeter.ac.uk. Hope this helps!

7. Francesca Giannachi-Kaye: That is really great to hear, sounds very efficient. I was wondering if you have any advice for managing university work and any advice for reducing and managing stress

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Francesca! I think the best way I have found for managing university work is organizing my time well and sticking to some sort of routine. It's easy with the new-found liberty of university life to get into habits that make it difficult to complete university work. It's about finding the balance. Attending lectures and seminars is so important, if you miss one or two (for non-valid reasons) you can get left behind, but if you talk with your lecturers and try to keep a high attendance you should keep up to date. For me, the best stress relief at university is participating sport, even just casually, I am part of the swimming club. Getting in the pool takes me away from the work for a while and gives me time to talk to people who aren't on my course. There are many sports clubs available at the university for all levels. Also people join academic societies (linked to their subject or not), there's even a Taylor Swift society. All the societies are listed on the Guild website. Going for a walk is also great!

8. Beth: Yeah, I will do :) I haven't deferred as I was not 100% on the course I wanted to take, but I think I've decided now

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Beth, that sounds like a good idea. If you are unsure about what course to take a gap year can offer you some extra time to reflect, and maybe get some more work experience, volunteering, or travel experience that can then make uni more enjoyable when you do start. Equally, if you have decided on a course, starting uni straight after sixth form is also a great option, and what I did personally.

9. Beth: I was also wondering if a student reached interview next year would it be done electronically, based on the global pandemic? And if so how would this be done?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Beth! Here is a helpful webpage related to COVID-19 www.exeter.ac.uk/coronavirus/prospectivestudents/#a17. With regard to interview: we are cancelling all face to face interviews due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. We have taken this decision with the aim of safeguarding the health and welfare of our visitors, students and staff. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience this may cause, but your safety is our top priority. If you have applied for a programme which requires you to attend an interview you will be contacted with regards to alternative arrangements.

* Student Ambassador01 2: Does anyone have any questions about what it was like to transition to university?

10. * Student Ambassador01: How is everyone feeling about making the transition to university?

11. Francesca Giannachi-Kaye: I am looking forward to it. I will be going next year because I chose to change some A Levels but I live in Exeter too and know the uni quite well. So it doesn't feel like a huge change.

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Francesca, that's great. There are lots of benefits to staying where you are currently living for university, such as already knowing the city, as you've mentioned. If you are living at home, then you will also be saving some money, which can be helpful in the long term. I imagine you will still find you have some changes in lifestyle and I'm sure you will get the opportunity to meet a lot of new people once you start at university.

12. Beth: The thing I am a bit nervous about is the first week of university, in terms of making new friends and joining societies and things like that. How did you find Freshers' Week?

* Student Ambassador01: Hey Beth, I get that can be a daunting sensation- I felt the exact same! All the societies and sports clubs put on plenty of inclusive events to give you a taster and meet some current and prospective members. I used Freshers' Week as a chance to try lots of sports, and from those I met lots of great people, even for clubs I didn't join but I met people on my course during these taster sessions. There's plenty going on around campus and there are people across campus to help you out. It can be difficult, don't worry if it takes you a while to settle in, that's natural. I would recommend just getting involved where you can with your course and clubs and societies, just to see what's out there and meet new people. Naturally some activities are quieter and calmer than others so you can be selective. Don't feel too pressure to join straight away, often you can have time to think about a club or society before officially joining.

13. Francesca Giannachi-Kaye: Yeah I am really looking forward to it. I also have friends going to Exeter uni this year and I will probably get to know people in the uni through them before I am in the uni. I really look forward to meeting new people and the social aspect of uni as well as the course.

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Francesca, you're totally right, the social aspects of university can be a great way to meet new people with similar interests, and to become a lot more confident in yourself - that was definitely the case for me! Once you are at university there are a lot of ways to meet people too- not only through your lectures and classes, but through welcome events during Fresher's week and joining societies for example. It's definitely something to look forward to :)

14. Beth: How many societies do people usually join, I know there are quite a few to choose from? Also a random question, how did you find budgeting food when you first got to Exeter, and are there specific times that supermarkets reduce food?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Beth! This is a really personal choice, and also depends on the club/society and how much time you wish to commit to just one. Clubs such as swimming have training every day of the week, plus intramural netball (fun team netball on Sunday evenings against other groups) and socials. In swimming it isn't compulsory to attend all the sessions so it can take up as much or as little time as you want, it was my only club in first year, there are 50 sports clubs. I joined philosophy society in second year, one of 180. I still gave more time to swimming as I was on the committee but felt I had to split my time more between my interests. I know people with up to 5 societies, whereas others just choose 1. Each store is different, so you will have to investigate- it is often early evening. Remember it may be close to the expiry date so the freezer is your friend. My biggest saver came in the form of food prep, batch cooking and freezing. Some people keep excel sheets for budgeting too.

* Student Ambassador01 2: Beth, I would also advise to make a meal plan for the week (or even two weeks!) so that you know what you will be cooking. That way it is easier to plan ahead and reduce food waste, as you are only buying what you need. I found eating more vegetarian food (although I am not fully vegetarian) helped me to cut down my spending on food, as well as cooking as much as possible rather than eating out or getting take-out food. It can be fun to get together with flatmates to make a group meal, where everyone can chip in too.

15. Francesca Giannachi-Kaye: Is it a good idea to get a job while at uni like in a bar or clothes shop?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Francesca, some students do choose to work while studying, and it is perfectly feasible as long as you organise your time well and do not overburden yourself. Usually working up to 15 hours per week is a manageable amount, and can help with budgeting while at university. The good thing about bar work is that it can provide flexible working hours, though these are often more evening hours than in retail. It also depends on the kind of work you personally prefer or have experience in. Also, on-campus retailers and cafes offer jobs to students, and these are usually quite well paid, so that can be a good thing to look into. Once you start at uni you will have access to 'Careerzone', an online careers portal where these university based jobs, as well as other jobs in Exeter and beyond are advertised. That's a good place to start.

16. Beth: I never thought about doing meal plans and stuff! Sounds like a good idea, do you have freezers in student accommodation? Were there any meals that you found easier to batch cook?

* Student Ambassador01: If you are in self-catered accommodation then yes! There is freezer space. I found meals such as chilli con carne and spaghetti bolognese perfect for freezing. Fajitas, sweet potatoes etc. I would put leftovers in the fridge to heat up the next day. Cous cous, pasta and sandwiches are also great on the go meals that you can prepare the night before or in the morning before leaving the flat if you want to avoid buying on campus, which although lovely and lots of variety, the cost can add up.

17. Francesca Giannachi-Kaye: Thank you for all your help! :) I hope you all stay safe and healthy!

* Student Ambassador01 2: Thank you Francesca! You too, take care.

* Student Ambassador01: You too Francesca- thank you for your questions

18. Beth: Good idea taking pre-prepared food! Thank you both for your help! Hope you both stay happy in isolation :)

* Student Ambassador01: Thank you for your questions Beth. Stay safe and happy too :)

* Student Ambassador01 2: Thanks Beth, good luck with everything!

* Student Ambassador01 2: 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/liveonlineforums/. 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/.