

Transitioning to university as a mature student...

Seth is from Belgium and has recently completed his first year of studying History and Scottish History.

Starting university is always daunting but doing so as a 'Mature Student' can be even more so. Of course, even in this case one size does not fit all, as the term 'Mature Student' covers anyone starting university that is 22 or older and that covers a lot of ground and experiences. For this blog post, I'll mention that I am nearer to 40 than to 22 and that I just finished my 1st year of undergraduate study.

Before Starting

There are some things that you need to keep in mind when starting university, as a mature student, that you might not have thought about. More specifically, you need to pay attention to how your finances will change.

Something I learned on the fly, is that, as a student, you may not be eligible for most benefits – unless you also have a disability. This can be a nightmare if, like me, your situation changes, and you find yourself with a safety net missing as you are no longer eligible... So be aware of this caveat and plan accordingly.

On a lighter note, stop worrying about being older than your classmates or not 'deserving' of your place at the University of Edinburgh. There is quite a big and friendly community of mature students at Edinburgh, so you won't stand out like a sore thumb and the University wouldn't have given you a space if you didn't deserve it. So, take a deep breath and enjoy the free time you have before you must worry about essay deadlines and tutorial readings.

Welcome Week

Welcome Week is a great time to familiarise yourself with the University, meet people, discover societies and meet with your Personal Tutor (or Student Advisor).

You should meet with your PT at some point during that week and that is when they will register you for your chosen courses. Make sure you have your list ready, with backups as some courses are popular and fill up fast, before you meet with them!

This is the time to have fun and explore university life. Welcome Week is when societies and clubs offer taster sessions and city walks without having to commit to a membership, so it's the time to test anything that tickles your fancy.

Bear in mind that your School will also organise introduction sessions that are often mandatory, so make yourself a schedule around those.

Lastly, don't let FOMO get to you. Let yourself breathe, take your time, have fun but don't make yourself sick with trying to do too much. Don't forget that classes start the following week and you want to start on the right foot!

First Semester

The first semester is always stressful. I don't think there's really any way around it. But in hindsight, it'd give myself this piece of advice:

As soon as you have your assessment due dates, mark them down then schedule in advance when you are going to do the reading, the planning, the writing and the editing for your essays, etc. This is especially useful if you end up with assessments that have close by due dates. I did this too late and ended up more stressed than what was necessary and that always tends to impact the quality of your work.

Finally, use this semester as your 'test' semester. Try different things out for how to study or take notes, see how full you can make your schedule without it being too much. Keep what works and drop what doesn't. That way when next semester starts, you've got a solid foundation and your work can only improve.

Update from Student Stories: The University has created a new student support model to deliver more consistent support for students, to read more go to:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life/personal-tutor-and-student-support>

This blog was originally published on the 'Student Stories' blog site. To read more blogs from our students you can visit the site here: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/studentstories/>