Working as a student

We asked Student Ambassador Alfie for his thoughts on what it’s like working whilst studying.

My first piece of advice for any students looking for a job in term-time would be to make sure you read the job advert closely. If you don’t, you may end up like me. Not that that’s a bad thing. I’ll explain.

When it’s all gone a bit hands in the air…

I’d been at Edinburgh for almost a year, and was coming up to the start of my second year. The shock of being at university had finally worn off, and I began to realise that my degree left me with some spare time in the week. Now, spare time is a great way to unwind, but for some of us, too much spare time leaves us feeling aimless, and that’s certainly the way it is with me. So, I took myself onto the University’s MyCareerHub and began to hunt for some part-time work because, hey, everyone needs a hobby, and it hardly hurts if that hobby is paid. There I was, flicking through all kinds of different opportunities – Typist? Too uncoordinated. Childcare? Not quite my speed – when I noticed that the Student’s Association

were looking for… Security? Sure, that doesn’t sound too hard, and the pay seemed good. Bouncer. Stand on the door and scowl. Right?

Eighteen months later, I’m still working that same job. Except it’s not the job I expected. But that’s OK, because it’s a world away from being a bouncer. The advert emphasised customer service and communication, which, while useful for the job is not the purpose. I now know that the role focuses a lot on managing the expectations of customers and doing your best to make sure everyone is looked after and safe. It’s given me a real sense of freedom and skills I know I’ll use elsewhere. Finding employment and managing the schedule it brings alongside full-time study is an impressive achievement – one that future employers will look for, and one that demonstrates a great step into maturity. What’s more, you can get official recognition for it on your HEAR transcript with an Edinburgh Award.

I have a new income stream alongside my studying, and more focus as I spend less time staring aimlessly at the ceiling. I also have a new group of friends from all kinds of backgrounds, as well as experiences and ambitions that I’d never considered before moving to university, to share an entirely new part of my life.

Some people are fortunate enough to never need to work whilst studying, but for the many of us that have to, Edinburgh is full of opportunities whether it’s a Saturday job, something a little more regular, or one of the many full-time positions over the summer. There really is something for everyone, and something to ensure that we can all get a little more money in our pocket.