

What is burnout and what does it feel like?

In this blog post, Tessa Warinner, wellbeing adviser at the School of History, Classics, and Archaeology, discusses 'Burnout' – a rising concern in academia. Tessa discusses what it feels like, its prevalence, impact, and signposts helpful resources for managing it. This post belongs to the **Hot Topic theme: Critical insights into contemporary issues in Higher Education.**

I'm sure you've come across the term 'burnout' while scrolling through your social media and news feeds. I've personally noticed an increase in public conversation about it since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Like many psychological terms, the actual meaning of it can get lost in the chatter. The World Health Organisation (WHO) characterises burnout as 'an occupational phenomenon'. They define it as

"a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."

They said that the three main dimensions are as follows:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- reduced professional efficacy.

In my experience as a wellbeing adviser, I've frequently had both students and staff tell me they're feeling burnt out. They usually tell me about experiencing symptoms that closely resemble the Maslach Burnout Inventory, which is the go-to questionnaire for measuring if a person is experiencing this phenomenon. Some of the symptoms are:

- **Exhaustion:** feeling emotionally drained, frequently

frustrated with your work, feeling at the end of your rope, and feeling like it's too much effort to directly interact with people at work.

- **Depersonalisation (or a loss of empathy for others):** feeling afraid that your job has made you more callous towards others, you are out of patience by the end of the work day, and you feel like you are too tired to get up to face another day at work.
- **Personal achievement:** feeling like you haven't accomplished anything worthwhile, you don't feel you're positively influencing others, and you struggle to create a relaxed work environment for yourself and others.

If any of these resonate with your personal experience, you are far from alone. Mental Health UK released a 2024 report about the YouGov poll they ran about burnout. They found that 91% of workers reported feeling extremely stressed out in the past year. One in five workers reported needing to take time off work for burnout symptoms in the past year. It's safe to say that at least one person in your inner circle has felt burned out at some point in their lives. I guess that means you're in good company, right?

Can students experience burnout?

The current definitions of burnout are worded for people working in jobs. In my experience, I have found that students frequently report burnout symptoms while completing their degree. Going to lectures, working on assessments, and attending exams can involve as much energy as someone working a full-time job. Coupled with the rigorous academic expectations that come with attending the University of Edinburgh, it's natural to feel worn down by it. Academic burnout appears to be under-studied, but a 2023 study found that out of the 22,983 students they included in the sample, over half of them were currently experiencing it. They also found that certain factors such as being male, having higher

marks than the class average, and smoking cigarettes led to higher levels of academic burnout.

This study highlights the importance of understanding how burnout does not occur in a vacuum. I tell students (and my co-workers) that it is a very stressful time to work and study. We're collectively doing our best to cope with trying to see our friends and family, exercise, do chores, drink enough water, get eight hours of sleep, keep our screen times low, not get Covid-19, manage our money while we deal with the cost-of-living crisis, and watch our government deal with global geopolitical instability. In my professional opinion, experiencing at least some burnout symptoms is a normal response to these abnormal circumstances.

What can be done if you feel burnt out?

If anything from this post resonates with your experience, it's worth taking this burnout quiz by HealthCentral. This is not a diagnostic tool, but it can help you organise your thoughts around how you're feeling. It can help structure further conversations with medical and mental health professionals. There is also a great book called *Burnout: Solve Your Stress Cycle* by Emily and Amelia Nagoski, which does a deep dive into the phenomenon and has practical tips to help you feel better.

If you are a current University of Edinburgh student and don't know where to start addressing burnout, it's worth referring into Student Wellbeing Services using our referral form. A wellbeing adviser can meet with you to discuss your situation and come up with a bespoke support plan for you. Personally, I usually recommend taking time to rest and getting clinical help to help alleviate burnout. I would put them in touch with their student adviser to discuss the logistics around taking a leave of absence or an authorised interruption of studies, if this is what the student would like. I'm very mindful that students are typically reluctant to take any significant time

off as they would like to graduate within four years, so I would usually find ways to build in more time for rest in their busy schedules. I would also help them find ways they can access therapy to talk more about their feelings. This can be through the University Student Counselling Service or external services located around the city.

If you are a staff member, time and clinical help are also the way to go. I would recommend speaking with your line manager first to discuss your current workload and obligations. There is also the University Occupational Health Service if you don't feel comfortable speaking with them. They will be able to point you in the direction of appropriate services.

All in all, burnout is a very common phenomenon that at least one person in your inner circle has experienced. Having it is no reflection on your character, or your ability to withstand stressful circumstances. No matter what, you're going to get through it. You're going to be okay.



Tessa Warinner


Tessa Warinner is a wellbeing adviser aligned with the University of Edinburgh's School of History, Classics, and Archaeology.

How to get stuff done when you have a disability...

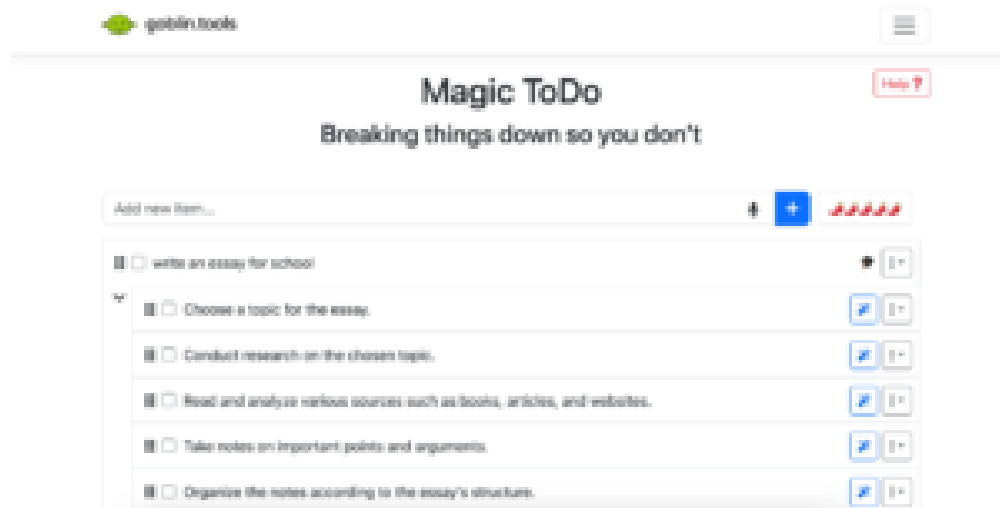
...by Kit / from Belgium / studying History (MA) / 3rd year All Posts

Being at university, there's always a time when we struggle to get work done. As a disabled student, this can be doubly true. Whether that's due to ADHD goblin brain or bad health days, the tips and tricks below can help you stay on track.

Getting a schedule of adjustments

First things first. If you have a disability, get in touch with the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) as soon as possible to talk about how they can support you. This could potentially be assistive software, proofreading services, a study skill tutor, additional time to complete assignments, etc. This is all individually based on your needs and the list above is just a few examples of what help I personally have gotten. 

Break down tasks into smaller tasks

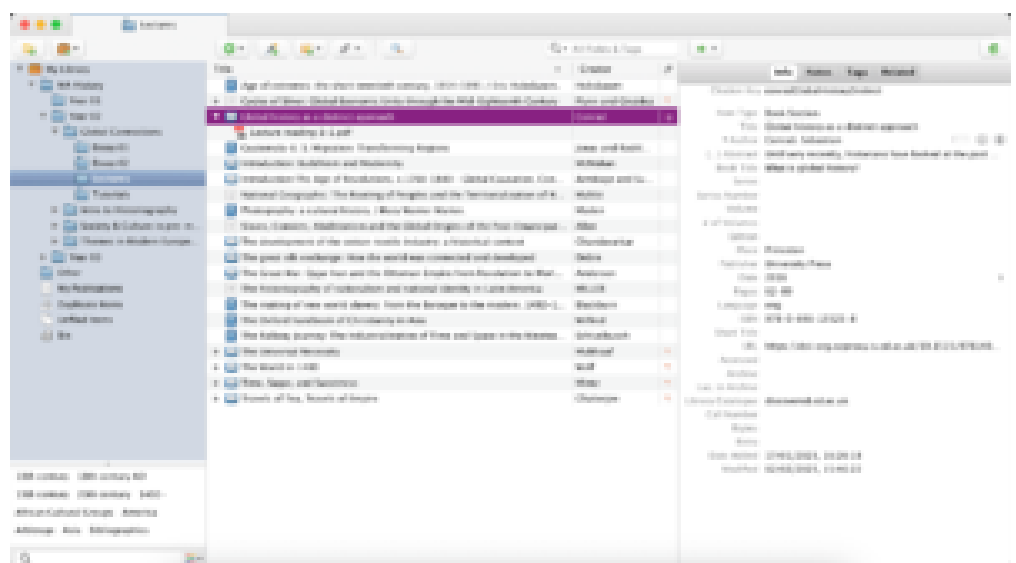


Seeing the list of assignments pile up at the beginning of each semester can be overwhelming. 'Write 2000 word essay' is a very vague

task and it'll be multiplied by however many assignments you have. Where do you even start? My advice? Break. It. Down. And be as precise as is useful for you. For example:

1. chose a topic/question
2. look for sources
3. read the sources (break it down by individual source)
4. take notes on sources
5. ...

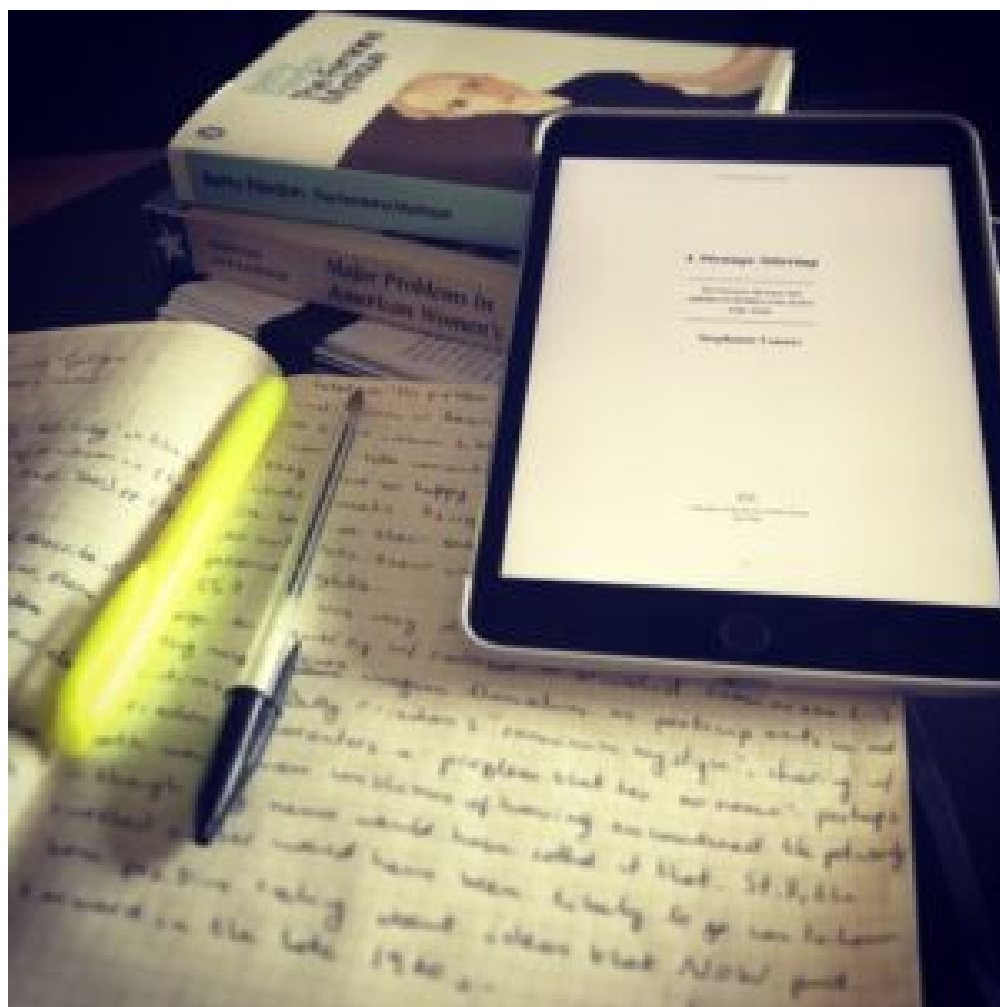
I recently discovered a free online tool that does that for you and you can even choose how in detail it'll break the tasks down and even break down subtasks afterwards. It's called goblin.tools and is an absolute life saver, especially when you're just starting out and are not sure what steps you need to complete your tasks.



Use all the tools at your disposal to make your life easier

When you tend to get easily distracted or only have that much energy to spare in a day or have to account for bad days where you can't do anything, it means you need to use your time wisely and as such any tool that saves you time will be welcome.

At uni, you'll spend the majority of your time reading sources and referencing back to them. A great time saver is Zotero. It's a free research tool that helps you organise your sources. To get the most out of it, combine it with its browser extension and Word plugin. With these, it'll let you automatically add a source to your Zotero database directly for any library catalogue or archive and then cite them back in the proper format in your Word document, saving you a great amount of time on doing this manually. You can also add PDFs of your sources directly into Zotero and use its great annotation function and potentially link it to note taking apps like Obsidian.md or Notion.io to collate your notes when it's time to write that essay.



Read with purpose

Similarly to the above, to use your time wisely you need to read with a specific purpose. You'll be tempted to read all of it and read it in depth. Don't. Generally, for tutorials and

seminars you'll have guided questions. Use those to first skim the readings and find relevant passage to answer those questions, look for key words you think you add to those, and if you already know your essay question look for anything that might stand out as useful. For essay readings or anythings where you'll need to do more reading and/or more in depth start by reading the introduction & conclusion of the book/chapter/article. If it doesn't mention things that are relevant then discard it. If it does, then continue by reading the first and last paragraph and so forth. It's a great way to weed out irrelevant sources and to only read in depth what you'll actually use/find useful, thus saving you a lot of time.

Don't forget self-care and to manage your expectations

Finally, it's really important that you don't forget to look after yourself. It can be tempting to do as much as you can when you can, but if you over do it, it'll just potentially push you back and leave you less time to do the work at a manageable pace. Do your best, within your capabilities and ask for help when you need it. Your Student Adviser and the DLSS are there to help and will point you in the correct direction if they aren't the ones that can help in your particular case.

Want to find out more?

Chat with Kit

How to prevent burnout as a postgraduate student

Embarking on a postgraduate journey is undoubtedly an exciting and intellectually rewarding endeavour, but it does require a significant amount of time, effort and dedication. How can you get the most out of your studies, without experiencing burnout? MSc Intellectual History student Lena offers her thoughts.

Taking the decision to study at a postgraduate level is a big decision so it's normal to feel overwhelmed and stressed out at times, but in the worst-case scenario – when academia takes over your life a little bit too much, and you cannot seem to catch a breath – it can lead to burnout, adversely affecting your mental and physical wellbeing. To prevent getting to a state like that, I've put together a – hopefully – helpful guide with some simple and practical strategies which have helped me safeguard my mental and physical health throughout my academic journey. You should truly enjoy your time at University, rather than just constantly wishing for all the deadlines and stress to finally disappear.

Understanding Burnout



Before delving into the advice on how to prevent burnout, it may be helpful to briefly cover what the phrase 'burnout' actually refers to. It's commonly understood as a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, often accompanied by feelings of cynicism and detachment from work or, in the case of students, from studies. Often, burnout is not the result of a brief stressful period but rather a consequence of prolonged exposure to stressors, overwhelming workloads, and a lack of adequate coping mechanisms. A few common signs that are usually understood to indicate burnout (although these can vary from person to person) include persistent fatigue, decreased productivity, increased irritability, diminished enthusiasm, and withdrawal from social activities.

Managing your Studies

The first area to be tackled when attempting to create a sustainable framework for avoiding burnout during your

postgraduate career is probably the most obvious and intuitive – your studies. I'll will begin this section with something that we've all probably heard time and time again in a University and work context – time management. There is a reason why people talk about it so much. Ultimately, it is the tool that will help you stay calm in the first place, no matter how massive the workload may seem.

While an undergraduate degree may have allowed you to be more flexible and do assignments at the last minute, a postgraduate degree is often far more time-consuming. Additionally, you are usually expected to engage far more deeply with the topics you are working on. Frequently your lecturers want to see you really delve into a topic for an essay, which is considerably more difficult to do if you only started looking at the question the night before. So, although it may be a tedious task to do, and you might not want to hear it because you have already heard it a thousand times, before you think about anything else sit yourself down and develop a realistic and efficient time schedule that includes your academic work as well as other personal commitments.

A schedule has helped me to prioritise tasks based on their deadlines and importance and to structure my work days based on three main components – readings for upcoming classes, research for assignments, and writing for assignments – and your schedule may look very different, depending on which programme you do and how your classes and assignments are structured. However, the most important thing is that you create a time management system for yourself. Having a system in place means that you do not have to wake up each morning stressed and panicked at the prospect of all the things you need to do.



One crucial aspect to consider when setting up your daily, weekly, or even monthly schedule is to be honest with yourself regarding whether your short- and long-term goals are realistically achievable. It is probably not ideal to simply put down, 'Write your essay on Friday'. Seeing this when you first open your physical or digital planner will very likely leave you overwhelmed with trying to figure out what to exactly do that day. When proactively planning your day or week, it may be much more helpful to break down all your larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps and, most importantly, celebrate your accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem, along the way. Did you write one page today? That is already one page closer than yesterday and one step closer to finishing your essay altogether! Please don't forget to give yourself credit for all the work you do on a daily basis since it is often much more than you think. Being proud of yourself for all the tasks you do, no matter how big or small, will not only make you feel better each day but also help you stay motivated in the long run.

Establishing clear boundaries is another important element when attempting to create an achievable and realistic time schedule. Saying no to things you may not have the time for and would not enjoy enough to warrant compromising other aspects of your academic and personal life is crucial. As much

as it may be tempting to 'do it all,' it is essential to recognise that attempting to juggle too many things at once can lead to exhaustion and will ultimately compromise not only the quality of academic work you put out, but also the quality of time spent with friends and family outside of your University life.

Lastly, I would like to remind you that during your time in Edinburgh, you should not hesitate to utilise the available support systems. You don't have to go through everything alone. Making an effort to connect with academic advisors, the student support team at the School of History, Classics, and Archaeology (also known as HCA), and other students can be beneficial for you in many ways. Regular communication with HCA staff and students can provide you with valuable insights and guidance for your academic work, as well as a sense of belonging. It can also help reduce potential feelings of isolation that may be especially strong if you have just recently moved to Edinburgh and have not met many people yet.

Making Self-Care a Priority

As a postgraduate student, it can be quite easy to become completely absorbed in your studies. After all, pursuing a postgraduate degree is expected to push you to your academic limits so that you can potentially join the ranks of those researchers whose work you have always admired. When I first started, I found myself quickly setting aside everything in my life that was not related to my studies so that I could make enough time for reading, researching, and writing. This is only natural, you likely chose to pursue a postgraduate degree because you are incredibly passionate about your field of study, so it is to be expected to want to dedicate all your time and energy to it.

However, if the basics of taking care of yourself physically and mentally start to disappear from your daily routine, your body and your mind will eventually find it increasingly

difficult to deal with the workload and the stress postgraduate degrees can bring. On the other hand, if you get the basics right, you will be able to sit at your desk energised and ready to do your best rather than constantly feeling tired and sluggish.

Simple Steps

Firstly and most obviously, get enough sleep. Sleeping well and enough is essential for your cognitive function (concentration, memory and resilience against



stress) and improves your overall wellbeing. Attempt to establish a consistent sleep routine that works for you personally. If you have never been a morning person, there is no reason (other than a 9am class) for you to force yourself to be up at dawn every day to be productive. If you work better in the evenings, prioritise the evenings as your study time and leave the rest of the day for lighter tasks. The critical thing in this instance is consistency. Find a sleeping routine that works for you and your body and leaves you feeling energised throughout the week.

Eat well and regularly. Cooking may not be the first thing on your agenda, especially during deadline season, but putting a little effort into your nutrition and limiting the takeaways will make you feel much better physically, positively impacting your ability to focus on work. Also, consider

finding a way of moving your body every once in a while, even if it is just a short walk through the Meadows to break up those long library days. If you need an incentive, grab a coffee or a hot chocolate with a friend to get you outside. Even though Edinburgh is not always blessed with the sunniest weather, when the sun does come through, your body will be thanking you for getting some fresh air and a bit of Vitamin D.

Consider trying out some form of mindfulness/relaxation techniques to slow you down during a hectic university day. I will be the first to admit that I have always struggled to understand how people could sit still when the to-do list seemed endless. I was convinced that even sparing 10 minutes for meditation or some light yoga would rob me of valuable time that I could spend being productive. However, over time, I have started to recognise that when you feel overwhelmed with work, it is not always the most helpful to just keep going but rather to stop for a second to breathe and gather yourself again. It ended up helping me immensely to take control over the feelings of panic and stress that often felt not controllable at all. Give a mindfulness activity of your choice a go and see how you feel after. It never hurts to try new things, and it may help you to ground yourself a bit on those days when it all becomes a little bit too overwhelming.

Lastly and most importantly, don't forget to have fun! You are obviously in Edinburgh to study and challenge yourself academically, but don't completely neglect your hobbies and those activities that you know bring you joy and relaxation. Ultimately, engaging in non-academic activities, whether as part of a society or individually, will undoubtedly provide you with a necessary break from the demands of postgraduate life and ultimately help you achieve a better work-life balance. And it can be anything! Maybe try doing something that you loved to do as a child, such as painting and crafting, or try something entirely new to challenge yourself.

Whatever it is, please do not let postgraduate studies keep you from pursuing your hobbies; if anything, it will help your academic performance if you are well-balanced and happy with what you do every day.

There are some of the strategies which have helped me personally with my wellbeing throughout my studies thus far. However, don't forget that if you feel you need help you can reach out to the student support team, who can help you and direct you to appropriate support services if necessary.

Tips for disabled students at the University of Edinburgh – Part 2

In their previous post, Seth gave some advice on what to do before you start university, so this next blog will touch on what to do AFTER you start your studies, and help you get the most out of them.

When meeting your Cohort Lead talk about your disability and how it might impact your studies (if you are comfortable doing so)

Your Cohort Lead will be your point of contact for any questions you have that is not related to a specific course,

as such it would be a good idea to let them know about your disability or health condition so that they can help you to the best of their abilities.

After matriculation, set a meeting with the Student Disability Service ASAP to activate your schedule of adjustments

The Student Disability Service (SDS) needs you to be fully matriculated to be able to make your schedule of adjustments live and share it with the appropriate staff. The beginning of the year is always busy, so be prepared to not be able to have an appointment for at least a couple of weeks, so the earlier you are able to book an appointment, the better.

If you aren't provided one from the get-go, ask your PT to put you in touch with someone from your School's Student Support Office

Your School's Student Support Office (SSO) is there to help as the intermediary between you and others if you need anything specifically linked to the school. For example, room access or adjustments that are only approved at the discretion of a course organiser.

Fill a 'Group Change Request Form' with the Timetabling team as soon as possible if your assigned tutorial isn't going to work for you

The form is the only way to request a change in tutorial groups for all students. If the time you were assigned doesn't fit for any reason due to your disability or health condition, you should make sure to request a change ASAP.

If the rooms assigned to your lectures and or tutorials aren't fully accessible for you, get in touch with your School's SSO

Your contact within the School's SSO will be able to contact

the Timetabling team with your accessibility requirements to have your tutorial group or lecture slot changed to a more accessible room. Make sure to be clear about what your needs are. You can find more information on accessible areas within the University on the AccessAble website.

Make sure you have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan set up as soon as possible if you have a physical disability that might affect your ability to use the usual emergency plan

Once your rooms are set, get in touch with your School's SS0 to get a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) set up. It makes sure that in case of emergencies you can be evacuated quickly and securely. This should be done at the start of each semester.

If your circumstances change, let your PT, SS0 and the SDS know ASAP

Though we always hope they don't, sometimes our conditions worsen or something else comes up. If this happens let everyone know as soon as possible, especially if you need new adjustments set up.

Your course tutors are the people you'll have the most contact with – talk to them

You don't have to mention your disability or health condition if you don't want to, but it might be a good idea to at least make them aware, especially if it affects your ability to come to tutorials or need a bit more support from them.

Don't let FOMO push you to the point of exhaustion

You don't have to make lots of friends, become a member of five societies or go out every other night. Being limited due to a disability or health condition is never fun, but you shouldn't push yourself to the detriment of your health just

because you want to be like any other student.

I hope you find this and my previous blog useful and that it will encourage you to give University a go with confidence.

Tips for disabled students at the University of Edinburgh – Part 1

Starting university is usually cause for anxiety in and of itself. It can be even more so when you have a disability, health condition or learning difference to consider. Student Ambassador Seth offers some advice on what to do before you start your studies which will, hopefully, make the process less stressful for you.

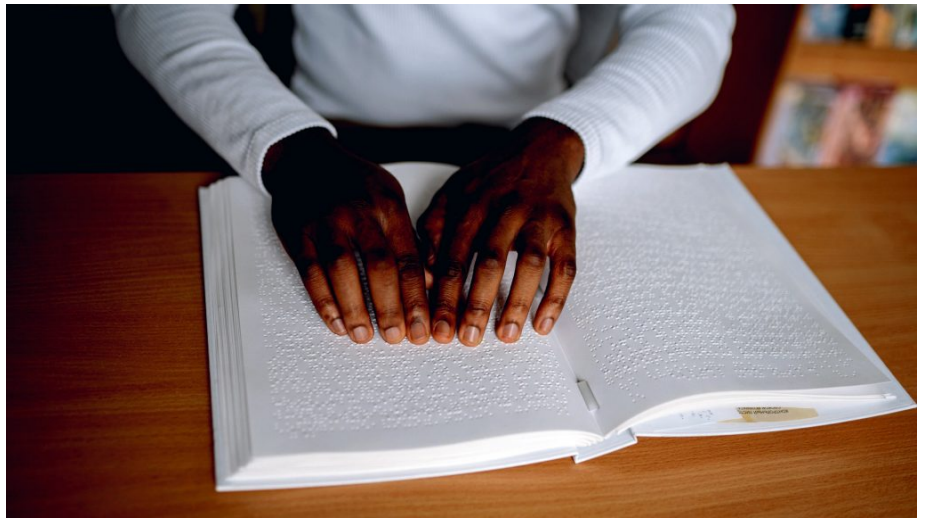
Get in touch with the university's Student Disability Service (SDS) ASAP

It should come as no surprise that this is my first tip. Whether or not you've mentioned your disability in your UCAS application, get in touch with the SDS once you've accepted your offer. Don't wait until the start of the semester, as that is always a busy time and there might not be available appointments until the end of October when classes have already started. The sooner you contact them, the sooner they can work with you to create a schedule of adjustment, get a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) form filled and sent if you need financial support for some of it. It also means that the

appointment you'll need to have once you've matriculated will be only to double check that nothing was forgotten or has changed before the schedule agreed on earlier can be 'activated'.

University of Edinburgh Student Disability Service

Get in touch with them even if you haven't been formally diagnosed yet



They will be able to let you know what can be done and possibly offer screening appointments or advice on how to get a diagnosis once you've arrived if that's needed. They'll also let you know what type of documents are needed as proof for them to be able to provide adequate support.

Provide your supporting documents as soon as possible

The SDS website has a page explaining what type of documents are needed depending on what the issue is, read it carefully and when in doubt ask them. Usually, it might be a letter from your doctor confirming diagnosis or the completion of a form by your doctor explaining how the disability or health condition impacts your day-to-day life and as such your studies. This means it might take some time for your doctor to get back to you with these documents, so take that into consideration. The sooner you get the documents back to the

SDS, the sooner they can put help in place for you.

When offered help, even if you think you might not use it, take it

It's easier to have help in place, just in case, and not having to use it, instead of having to wait for it to be put in place later when you need it. And if you think something might help, but it wasn't mentioned, say so. They might not be able to put it in place straight away or at all, but they will do their best to at least find a work around to make it work for you.

If using university accommodations, get in touch with them ASAP

If you are going to be in student accommodations and have specific needs due to your disability or health condition, say so as soon as possible. I don't have personal experience with this as I live in a privately rented accommodation, but the university's accommodation team should be able to help.

More from the accommodation service

If from outside Scotland, be prepared for some 'transition' hiccups

What I mean by that is that even if you come from the rest of the UK, things might not be as streamlined as we'd want them to be regarding continuing your current medical treatments, etc. Have letters from your GP and/or specialist explaining your condition and any treatment you need to give to your term-time GP. And if you take medication, have a big enough supply that if there is a hiccup you don't find yourself short.

Hopefully the above tips will help make things go smoothly before you arrive to study in Edinburgh. Stay tuned for part 2

which will deal with tips and tricks for once you've started your studies.

Give a little, get a lot

Fitting in, finding friends, 'the student experience'. There is no one way to be a student, but 4th year History (MA Hons) student Georgia-Taygeti shares her experience and how volunteering made the difference for her.

In my first year I didn't really feel like I was doing the student thing right. I made my closest friends during a Film Soc screening but they were not studying History and so when I would attend lectures and tutorials, I felt pretty lonely. Every afternoon, I would head off to my part-time job so couldn't attend most Society events. And while it was a great first year, I wanted to make an effort to feel more at home within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA).



When I came back for my 2nd year I joined the Peer Support Group for History and Classics as a volunteer. I hoped that by supporting 1st year students with their own transition into university life, I would find ways to also feel more integrated into the HCA community. And it worked! I still had a part-time job but most of our meetings were during lunch at the Rosalind Mitchison Room, the undergraduate 'common room', so this was finally something I could attend! I got to know the other volunteers – mostly 3rd and 4th years – most of whom

I wouldn't have had the chance to meet if I hadn't joined the group and I was able to learn from their own experiences within HCA. So, in a way, I was the one being peer-supported without realising it but I also made close friends who then made me feel more at home within HCA.

I continued volunteering with Peer Support in my 3rd and 4th year. Now, I get to work with mentees from the years below me, but also spend time with other 4th years that I don't necessarily share seminars with. When I look back on my 1st year, I remember how uncertain I was about the choices I was making, how overwhelming it felt at times to have to balance work, study, adjusting to a new city, making new friends, cooking for myself. When I decided to join Peer Support in my second year I felt that maybe it was 'too late'. It was definitely not. We all come here with different expectations and different responsibilities. I was only able to join Peer Support because it is so flexible in the times we met and I was only able to stay because I was surrounded by people who understood that sometimes I couldn't be there for our events or meetings because I had to be at work.

I'm not at the end of my student experience in Edinburgh and it did not look like what I thought it would when I was a teenager applying to University! I have loved my time here, though, but did it look like a coming-of-age film filled with wild nights out, heartbreak, and fancy balls? Not as much as I expected it to. My university experience has been more about potlucks, Sunday visits to the Stockbridge market, trying to figure out how to budget and pay for gas and electricity, and always missing the family Skype calls (and then getting yelled at by my mum for missing the family skype calls!), but because I volunteer for Peer Support, I feel like I belong to HCA. I recognize faces when I walk to class, I have people to chat to before the seminar starts. I didn't expect this to be such a big part of my student experience in Edinburgh, but it has! And I am really, really glad I joined up.

Find out more about peer support within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology

Summer in Edinburgh: What can I do?

Many students stay in Edinburgh over the summer break – why wouldn't you? – but what do they do all day? Student Ambassador Tess has some suggestions.

Find yourself in Edinburgh for the summer? Have no fear! It's not uncommon for students to stay up in Edinburgh as the sun starts to peek through all the clouds around May. However, you may be a bit stuck or unsure of what you can fill your days with. Here are a few suggestions of what you could do over the summer in Edinburgh and Scotland in general.

Road trip to the Highlands or Bus Tours



Tobermory on the island of Mull.

Road trips are a fun way of exploring the different national parks and the Highlands in Scotland, especially if you're interested in hiking and camping. There are loads of campsites and affordable hostels along the way. You can also customise your trip to hit all the major spots, like Loch Ness, Loch Lomond, the Isle of Mull, the Isle of Skye and the Cairngorms. You could even drive up as far as John O'Groats, which is the northernmost point of the British Isles. If you're not super sure about where you should go, there are pre-planned routes like the West Coast 500. The possibilities are endless; all you really need is a good group of friends, a few experienced drivers and a map!

If you're not super comfortable with driving or you don't have a designated driver friend, there is also the option of hopping on a bus tour. There are loads that take you to places like Skye, or to the crannog on Loch Tay, or to a number of other locations across Scotland. These tend to be cheaper than a road trip, as you don't need to hire a vehicle, however your schedule isn't as flexible. These are great for day trips and

weekend breaks, which may be better suited for people with summer internships or jobs.

Beaches

I know it seems a bit surreal to suggest going to beach in Scotland, but you'd be surprised with how beautiful and sunny Scottish beaches can be. I suggest checking out places like North Berwick, which is a quick train or bus rides away, or even going to Portobello beach here in Edinburgh. The water can be a bit cold but when the sun's out, it's actually a great way to get some vitamin D. There are loads of nice waterside restaurants as well as decent fish and chips shops to get a takeaway. If it's a particularly sunny day, I suggest you jump on the bus or your bike and get down to Portobello via Arthur's Seat!

Bookstores

This one seems a little bit weird, but if you're like me and really love the smell of new books, there are loads of bookstores to check out in Edinburgh. Places like Topping and Co. in Leith are multiple stories with a vast number of titles to peruse; you can even get a cup of tea and read a book at Topping! Other great bookstores include Portobello Bookstore (you could hit the books and the beach in the same day), Lighthouse Books, Armchair Books, Golden Hare Books and Tills Bookstore. They often have really interesting editions of books, as well as some signed copies! Edinburgh was the world's first UNESCO City of Literature so you're sure to find a bookshop to your taste.

The Seven Hills of Edinburgh

It's no secret that Edinburgh has often tried to model itself after Classical models. Calton Hill, which hosts the National

Monument of Scotland – sometimes called ‘Scotland’s Folly’ or ‘Edinburgh’s Disgrace’ – is a prime example of how many of its inhabitants deemed the city as the ‘Athens of the North’. This is not where the Classical resonances end. The Seven Hills of Edinburgh draw parallels with the Seven Hills of Rome



Designed by William Playfair the National Monument of Scotland was intended to be another Parthenon to commemorate Scottish soldiers killed in the Napoleonic wars but construction was halted in 1829 due to lack of

and are a fantastic way of getting to know the city. Many people do all seven in one day, but I think there’s no shame in spacing it out if you’re not a keen hiker. If you do want to try it out, the hills are: Calton Hill, Castle Rock, Corstorphine Hill, Craiglockhart Hill, Blackford Hill, Arthur’s Seat and Braid Hill. There are loads of guides to follow; make sure you bring ample water supplies and lots of snacks! I speak from experience.

Museums

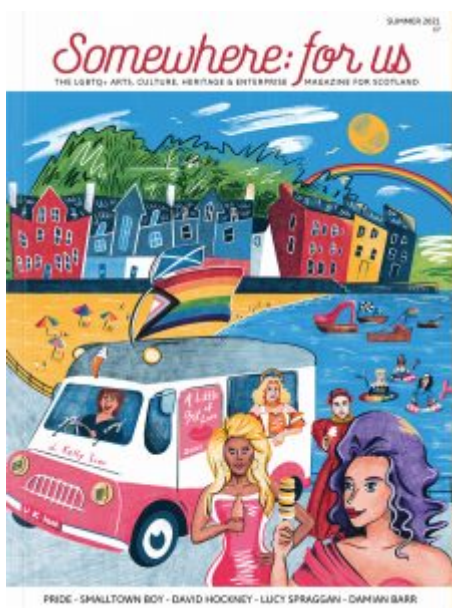
On top of the National Museum of Scotland, which is the home of the first cloned sheep, there are a number of museums littered across Edinburgh. If you're interested in music and musical history, you could check out St Cecilia's Hall. Run by the University's Centre for Research Collections, this museum has a wide array of interesting instruments in their exhibits. For any fans of Zelda, there are a large number of ocarinas you can admire. Other interesting museums to check out are the National Portrait Gallery at Princes Street, Surgeons Hall, the Museum of Edinburgh, the Writer's Museum and the Scottish National Gallery.

The Fringe

Last, but certainly not least, is the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This is just one of several festivals which take place in Edinburgh during the summer but it's been the birthplace of productions like *Fleabag* and the musical *Six*. It's a fantastic way to spend your summer immersed in the arts during August and consists of both paid and free shows. It is an 'unjuried' festival, which means there is no selection committee when it comes to what productions run during the month, which makes for some very interesting performances. These are often not limited to just black box spaces and theatres, there are over three hundred performance spaces and many outdoor pieces as well. On top of the huge variety of shows put on every day, the food stalls are unbelievably good! The Fringe is definitely the highlight of a summer in Edinburgh.

No matter what you choose – and there's plenty of choice – your summer in Edinburgh is sure to fly by!

Life as an LGBTQ+ student in Edinburgh



As part of Pride Month, Tristan (Ancient and Medieval History, MA Hons) shares his experience as an LGBTQ+ student at the University of Edinburgh.

Navigating your first year at university can feel both intimidating and exciting as you get to grips with higher education, exploring a new city and meeting new people. This experience can seem even more daunting as an LGBTQ+ student, particularly when tolerance can vary so widely between countries. Fortunately, Scotland has strong governmental policy supporting the rights of LGBTQ+ people and the United Kingdom as a whole has consistently ranked highly on the Rainbow Europe Index. But what does this mean for LGBTQ+ students at Edinburgh, and what is life in this city really like for those of us who identify as such?

LGBTQ+ Life on Campus

As an openly transgender and queer man, I did have some anxieties about adjusting to student life and whether I would find my place in Edinburgh. Despite being an Edinburgh native, beginning undergraduate



studies is a big step for anyone. Thankfully, my time here has been overwhelming positive and I've had the opportunity to engage in a number of LGBTQ+ centred events. I currently sit on the School of History, Classics and Archaeology's Equality and Diversity Committee and, as part of that, helped organise an LGBTQ+ History Month event in February 2021. Despite being forced online by the COVID-19 pandemic, this meant we were able to invite a speaker from the US to discuss their work with Queer Britain. EUSA, the University of Edinburgh's Student Association, also run events to commemorate this month, so you're sure to find lots to get involved with.

Likewise, there is both a student-led PrideSoc, which you can join, and the Staff Pride Network who hosts events and networking opportunities. LGBTQ+ support is very visible on campus, and I've felt confident being open about my sexuality and gender identity.

Finding Support

As well as the groups on campus, there are various charities and community organisations which can support you as an LGBTQ+ person. LGBT Health and Wellbeing, based in Edinburgh, host a variety of services, including several social groups, so you needn't feel worried about being isolated during your time here. You can also find support through the likes of the Scottish Trans Alliance, LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland.

In 2020, Somewhere: For Us, a magazine celebrating LGBTQ+ people in Scotland, was launched here in Edinburgh which is

not only a fantastic resource but highlights the importance of visibility in the city.



Bars, Cafes and Eateries

Edinburgh also boasts several venues either owned by or active allies towards LGBTQ+ folk, including sober spaces such as the Greenwood Cafe, and bars and clubs like Cafe Habana and CC Blooms. There is also a fantastic queer-friendly venue opposite the central campus, Paradise Palms, if you want to grab some food (all of which is vegetarian/vegan) or a drink after your studies. Whether you're looking for somewhere to eat or want to experience the night life, there are lots of options within the city.

Edinburgh as a city is vibrant and beautiful, and LGBTQ+ life here is no exception. If I can offer any advice to you as a prospective student, it's OK to be yourself and don't hesitate to reach out for support.

Navigating undergraduate academia as a mature student

Much of university recruitment is aimed at school-leavers, but what if you are older or have been out of education for some time? Tristan – MA (Hons) Ancient and Medieval History – told us his story.

In 2018, the University of Edinburgh launched its Access Programme as part of its Widening Participating Initiative. As a 26-year-old who had been out of education for four consecutive years, having previously studied Acting and Performance, and later Art and Design, I was eligible to apply. My previous study had ignited a fervent interest in History of Art, and it was with the intention of undertaking undergraduate study in this discipline that I enrolled on the Access course. What it revealed to me, through exploring a wide range of subjects within Humanities and the Social Sciences, was that it was history – particularly of the ancient world – that really engaged me and so, the following year, I began my MA (Hons) in Ancient and Medieval History.

By now a 27-year-old student, it would be fair to say that I was incredibly anxious as to what my experience would be like. Would I find my place in an institution filled primarily with students ten years younger than myself? Would I get as much out of the ‘university experience’ than I would have done had I enrolled immediately after high school? Now, coming to the end of the second year of my degree, I’m confident to answer with a resounding yes to both questions, and I feel that my experience has been testament to the need to engage adult learners.

I write all of this as a 29-year-old, well aware of the fact that there are students in my cohort who have been outside of institutional education for far longer, but I think any

significant gap in study can fill one with a great deal of self-doubt. There's an expectation upon young learners that those who are capable go on to higher education immediately after education, and the six years I spent at high school felt as though I was expected to follow that trajectory. I chose a different path and whilst I have absolutely no regrets for studying the performing and visual arts, I realised that neither really engaged in the way that study ought to. Had I not followed those routes, however, I don't think I would be where I am today (cliché notwithstanding).

On 6 April 2021, I was invited to participate in the Classical Association Annual Conference on a panel entitled, *'Inclusive Classics and pedagogy: teachers, academics and students in conversation'*. What the discussion revealed is the dichotomy between 'the institution' and the individuals within it. Classics has been thrown into the spotlight recently, both in academic terms for the 'dead white men' narrative that pervades it, as well as in news stories surrounding the appropriation of ancient iconography by alt-right groups. Much discussion has been had as to how Classics as a discipline can survive when it seemingly perpetrates elitist ideology, owing to the fact that very few high school students have the opportunity to study it. In fact, I had no idea what 'Classics' even meant until enrolling on the Access Programme in 2018. But I don't feel that has disadvantaged me in any way, nor has my status as a 'mature student'; rather, I feel that it has allowed me to approach the discipline with eyes that seek interdisciplinary study, that see the Graeco-Roman world as one aspect of a rich and diverse ancient world, and that appreciate the diversity of the student experience.



Recently, I launched an article series, 'Classics in Conversation', through my work with *Retrospect Journal* (for those of you who don't know, *Retrospect* is the School of History, Classics and Archaeology's student-led journal). This series poses questions to students both to encourage critical thinking and to provide a space to consider some of the most pertinent issues in the discipline today. I'm delighted with the response we've had thus far, and I feel as though it has highlighted the need to engage students in wider issues through a platform that elevates their voices. Ultimately, it's my hope that Classics continues to thrive as a discipline, and it is also my hope that more students like myself will feel confident to pursue their ambition.

Read 'Classics in Conversation' on the Retrospect website

Find out more about the University of Edinburgh's Access Programme

The website of the Classical Association

Being an international student in Edinburgh

Leaving home to go to University is daunting enough, but what's it like if you're travelling across the world to do it? Scarlett is from the US so she can tell you.

At times as an international student, it can be difficult to be so far away from home. But trust me when I say it's worth it! Now, as a third-year student I can say I've found a home

in Edinburgh.



Members of the History Society in Prague.

When I first started university, I didn't experience too much homesickness. The first few weeks are packed with classes and social activities. I was so busy meeting new people and going to class I barely even noticed how far away I was! My accommodation was really social, and a few of us would go to the Welcome Week stalls and then go to society events in the evenings. When classes started, my tutorial group would grab coffee or drinks afterward. It was also so much fun to learn more about Scottish culture and history. Although I struggled to adjust to the accent, Scots are so welcoming, and I loved exploring the city.

It wasn't until around late November and Thanksgiving was coming up that I started to feel homesick. Most of my friends from home were on break from their own universities and hanging out with each other. It was also my first time missing out on the holiday and the longest I had spent away from my family. It's not easy to be so far away from home especially since my friends around me could do weekend trips to see their families.

Coming back from the winter break, I felt rejuvenated but still fearful that the feeling would return. Thankfully, by then I had built up a solid group of friends and I started attending more society events, getting closely involved with the History Society. With them, I attended social events like the Annual Winter Ball and Burns Night as well as going on a trip to Prague in the February Reading week. This gave me a group of people to turn to if I was ever missing home, and last year my friends and I put on our own Thanksgiving meal together.

I still get homesick, but it's so much less frequent now and I absolutely love being an international student in Edinburgh. The city offers so much to do from outdoor climbs up Arthur's seat or a fun spooky tour of Mary King's Close to just popping into different restaurants and pubs in the New Town. I'm so happy I made the choice to study abroad!

Approaching the dissertation

Dissertation. A big word, and often a scary one. Alfie, a Student Ambassador, looks at ways to make it slightly less intimidating.

Perhaps the culmination of your time at university and exceptional (circumstances notwithstanding), also the longest piece of academic writing you will have created to date. Sounds like a lot – and let's not mince words, it is a big task and not one to be taken lightly. However, with the right preparation, forethought, and enthusiasm, it is as enjoyable a

project as any other. It should represent the sum of your passions and interests that you have cultivated over your time studying, or perhaps afford you a chance to further explore areas you have not yet had the chance to investigate. Simply put, it is a fantastic opportunity to hit your stride as an aspiring academic, or to cap off your university experience.

When it comes to the dissertation, it is never too early to start planning. I'm not suggesting that you should be coming out of your first year lectures and taking an abundance of notes on potential topics and sources to use, rather if something grabs you early on, maybe it could be something worth considering for the future. If a particular topic, method, or concept catches your eye, take notes! Remember it for later, and by the time that third year rolls around and the question is being asked, you'll have some ideas for what you've got planned.

It is worth bearing in mind that third year is an optimal time to start your planning, especially over the summer break. At this point in your studies you will have likely covered a great deal of content and – hopefully – will have found something you enjoy writing about. If this is the case, take notes from any courses you have around the subject area and try to explore them. Consolidate reading lists, discuss material with suitable academics, and read around the subject if you have time. Naturally, this isn't something that you need to have done by the first day of fourth year, but it's something worth preparing if you have the time to spare. In addition, try to identify an appropriate member of academic staff to act as your dissertation supervisor – someone who is ideally familiar with the topic, so that you can discuss ideas accordingly.

Writing the dissertation is a separate beast and surprisingly manageable if you like to break things down into sections. A dissertation will often have a literature review that examines contemporary academic thought on a topic and is not too

dissimilar from discussions of readings done for seminars. This is often a large portion of your dissertation, so be sure you're comfortable doing the reading to follow through. Other key chapters are your introduction where you'll outline your subject, structure, and points for consideration, and your discussion, where you can make a deep dive into the content, highlighting your own ideas and opinions, as supported by or in opposition to existing thought. Be sure to give ample time for the writing of all this, as it can seem quite demanding, but rest assured that you'll be able to intersperse this with meetings with your supervisor who can discuss your progress.

When it comes down to it, the dissertation is quite a big process, but one to (hopefully) be enjoyed. The freedom to pursue your own academic interests and supplement your own research with the aid of university professionals is a great opportunity to develop your own researching capability, perseverance, and self-motivation, all desirable and transferable skills for postgraduate study and beyond. While it is a big challenge, it is one that you're not undertaking alone, as all other undergraduates will be in the same boat as you. So don't worry, do your best, and remember to engage with the stuff you're passionate about – it's all plain sailing from there.

Managing your money at university

One of HCA's Student Ambassadors, Juliet, looks at ways to manage your money as a student.

Going to university might be the first time many people have

to manage their money, and the excitement of seeing your first student loan in the bank account is accompanied by the worry of not knowing how to budget it, but there are ways to make managing your money easier.

Firstly, it's important to try to keep track of your spending from the beginning. This might be through money tracking apps or banks like Monzo, which lets you keep tabs on how much you're spending on various necessities and activities, or Splitwise, which makes splitting bills and expenses with your flat mates easier. Simply keeping a spreadsheet or notebook of expenses that you review regularly can also be helpful to divide your expenses into categories, calculate how much to set aside for necessities, and set monthly limits on non-essential spending.

Setting up a student bank account with a pre-agreed overdraft is also a good idea – do some research about which banks offer the best options for students and for your personal needs. As long as you are not in your overdraft at the time you graduate from university, you can borrow interest-free if you do find your loan running out during your time at university.

Edinburgh is home to some of the highest rent prices in the UK, and it's fair to assume that rent will be your biggest expense at uni. Consider joining a tenants' union like Living Rent to get to know your rights as a tenant and make sure you're not paying extra expenses that you shouldn't be, especially when the time comes to move out.

Statistically, over 30% of students will experience stress related to financial difficulty at some point in their university career – it's not a personal failure and it's nothing to be ashamed of. Managing your money can be extremely stressful, especially in the current climate, and if you are struggling to make ends meet there are several places you can go for advice and support.

If you're looking for employment, The Careers Service, which can offer advice on job-hunting and balancing student life and employment, is a great place to start, and many jobs are advertised on MyCareerHub. Citizens Advice Scotland, which operates online, over the phone or in person across Edinburgh, and The Advice Place, which is university-based and currently open for phone and email service during the pandemic, can both offer student specific advice on a range of issues including budgeting, emergency loans and funding.

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.

Top tips for exams

One of our students, Sarah, gives us the lowdown on surviving exams.

As a student, exams are inevitable: some courses only require in-term coursework, but most have a final exam to test your learning through the semester. As a fourth year I've gone through many exams and have developed my ideal system for dealing with them. This is my list of top tips for exams, based on what has helped me through these four years.

Revision

There is no denying that revision is stressful, especially when exams are early or come closely together. What comes first is figuring out where you can revise best. I personally like to find a good café where there is some background noise and lots of coffee and snacks, however, others might prefer the library, various other university buildings, revising in accommodation, or revising from home. Even if you prefer to move around to revise, I'd recommend finding some reliable spaces where you can work well and sticking with them.

Once you've found your revision space, the work itself is the next step. Over the years, most of my courses have been composed of a number of different and distinct topics, with exam questions relating to these individual topics. It's usually best to revise a few of these topics rather than the entire course, to build greater depth of knowledge in particular areas. Always make sure to ask your lecturer for advice on how to best revise, and how many topics you should learn for the exam.

Relaxation

Revision is important, but you should also allow time to relax and wind down. I have a bad habit of overworking and getting very stressed, particularly with essays and exams, and have had to force myself to stop working after I've done a certain amount or if it's getting too late in the evening. In exam time you have to take care of yourself – eat well, don't overdo the coffee, make sure to get enough sleep (I've found apps like Sleep Stories and Slumber are good for distracting me from overthinking), and try not to overdo it. Make time to talk to your friends and flatmates, as they'll all be feeling the stress too. It's important to get work done, but it's just as important to keep yourself feeling OK, relieve some stress, and remember, especially, to take a break after an exam if you have another soon after. It's good to do well but not if you're sacrificing your physical or mental health to do so.

In the exam

The next step is the exam itself. Always remember to take plenty of pens, a highlighter can be useful, and definitely remember a watch in case your seat doesn't have a clock nearby. Take your time and read the questions carefully (everyone tells you to do this but it's definitely important!), and try to decide on both essay questions early so when you go back to the second your brain has had a chance to come up with an answer. Before writing, it is always useful

to sketch out a plan – even just a basic structure for the answer – that you can go back to when you are writing, to help yourself out later. With two hours for two essays, I take five minutes for each essay to plan its structure, then around ten minutes per paragraph, and any spare time to reread my answers. This may not work for some, but it has done well for me so far!

Living in Edinburgh

It's only now that I'm in my last semester of my final year, and I'm having to contemplate moving to a new city, do I realise quite how much I love Edinburgh and the people in it. Having lived here for four years now, and I can honestly say that there is no other place quite like it. It's become my home away from home.

But if you are moving here for the first time it can be daunting, so I've compiled a list of things about living in Edinburgh which might help. Some are things that I wish I'd known before I came here, while others are simply things that I love about the city.

The Weather



At the Botanic Gardens during their Christmas Lights show, wearing the cosy coat my family bought me!

As a naïve 18-year-old from South Wales, I was blissfully unaware of how cold Edinburgh (and Scotland more generally) gets in winter. Little did I know that snow in February is par for the course and how much a biting cold wind can cut you to the bone! From November through to February of that first year, a scarf was permanently attached to me and I had a hot water bottle in bed every night, in a vain attempt to stay warm. Thankfully that Christmas, my family gave me a huge duvet-style coat that has kept me warm every winter since!

The Variety of Things to Do

The city is always full of things to do, so if you're looking for something you can definitely find it! I love going to the theatre as a treat, and the wealth of performance spaces that Edinburgh has makes this really easy. It's also quite straightforward to find tickets for a good price, as most places offer student rates or sell last-minute tickets at a discounted rate.

Green Spaces



The view of the city and Arthur's Seat from Blackford Hill.

As a country girl, I really appreciate the amount of easily accessible green space there is in the city. First and foremost, there is Arthur's Seat, the ex-volcano in Holyrood Park. However, there's also the Royal Botanic Gardens, Blackford Hill and the Pentland Hills. Indeed, I'd argue that you get a better view of the city (especially at sunset) from Blackford Hill than Arthur's Seat (controversial, I know). If I ever feel homesick, or just want to clear my head, I know I can go for a walk and be surrounded by nature within 30 minutes. This has definitely made city living much easier for me.

A Compact City

Despite there being so much to see and do, Edinburgh is actually a relatively compact city. You can get to most places in both Old and New Town on foot. Because of this, it didn't take long for me to feel comfortable and familiar with the city. However, if you want to go further afield, say to Newhaven or Portobello, Lothian Buses are great.



Carys Flew

What I wish I'd known before starting university

Student Ambassador Scarlett looks back at the things she wished she'd know before starting her studies.

With 2 years of university completed, I've had a bit of time to reflect on my experience so far. As a History and Politics student I've gained several writing, studying, and analytical skills, but there is so much more to coming to university than just lectures and learning.

Take advantage of the City you're in



You're at university to study, of course, but you just moved to a new city as well! Edinburgh as a city has so much to

offer outside of George Square and the immediate Old Town that surrounds it. It's so easy to get caught up travelling around the Nicolson Street area but you do not want to miss seeing the Castle, Holyrood Palace, Botanic Gardens and more. The rest of Scotland is easily accessible and it can be really helpful, some days, to travel out of the city and see the beautiful views available. You don't want to go all four years not taking advantage of what an amazing city Edinburgh is.

Don't beat yourself up if it's not amazing all the time

University is some of the best times of your life! But don't worry if it's not like that all the time. It can be easy to feel lonely and hard to be away from your parents sometimes, it also can be really difficult to go from school into university. You're making the transition from just focusing on your academic and personal life to having to constantly juggle academics, cooking, personal life, health, etc. all at once. It's exciting in the beginning but as the term progresses and you get more of a workload it can be difficult to balance. It's a big change so don't worry if you find it difficult. Also, don't worry if your friends you find in freshers' week aren't the same later on. Everyone is still trying to find their group of people and you won't always end your year with the same people you started with. Take everything at your own pace!

Take care of your physical and mental health

Your health is super important so make sure that you take care of yourself! One of the hardest parts in the first year of university is adjusting to living by yourself. You don't have someone there to remind you to eat properly or take a break. Try to keep on top of things and learn how to deal with stress and time management. In my first year I struggled to balance cooking, gym, classes, personal life, breaks, and seeing family. Now I've realised it helps me to make a list of goals

at the beginning of each week and think on it. It's helped me keep my balance and work ethic sustained! And if you need any help, it's okay to ask for it.

It's okay to have alone time

In my first year I felt like I always had to be around people and always had to have plans on the weekends. It is important to take a breather, though! There's nothing wrong with having a night in to recharge. It's okay to say no to going out sometimes and just spend time with yourself. You have four years here and those club nights, parties and plans aren't going anywhere! Take everything one step at a time. Not everything needs to be done in the first semester of the first year.

First year does count

Yes, there is the safety net that first year technically does not count towards your degree, but because of this there are always some students who may not show up to every class. However, first year is incredibly important in giving you the tools you need to get you through second, third, and fourth year. Get into the habit of doing regular work, making relationships with your tutors and spending time studying. Just because it doesn't count doesn't mean it's not important! Trust me on this one.

The library is your BFF

Going along with number 5, take first year seriously and learn how to utilise the library and use the time there wisely. Edinburgh has an amazing library with every single book on the reading list. Some classes even make use of the research collections on the 6th floor.



Learn how to use the systems and online journals and save yourself a lot of time. I promise this will come in handy! Nothing like a fourth-floor library session to crack out the final bits of your essay.

Join societies and make connections



You have nothing to lose, so join as many societies that interest you! This is the perfect time to try something new. On the activity side Edinburgh has cheer-leading, horse riding, and dancing as well as academic ones like Model UN, History Society, Classics

Society and so many more. Edinburgh has an abundance of societies and you're bound to find one you like! Even if you're nervous and you've never done it before, I promise there are a thousand other new students in exactly the same position. Try new things and take some risks! I've met some of my closest friends through joining these societies and have just got back from a fun trip to Prague with the History Society. It's a great way to get involved and create a community in your School and you never know what fun experiences you'll get! Also, making sure to network and take advantage of the cool events the School and these societies offer. When opportunities come to meet professionals or graduate scheme recruiters, take advantage of them. You never know when it can come in handy!

You don't have to do what everyone else is doing

Take everything at your own pace. Everyone learns differently, everyone has different preferences, etc. Don't let the student stereotype of stress culture pressure you into acting a certain way.

Don't over pack

Your room in your halls does not have the capacity for your entire wardrobe. You can leave a couple shoes or random bits and pieces behind. The top you haven't worn in 5 years can stay behind. Please learn from my mistake.

Enjoy every moment

Everyone is in the same boat, navigating this roller coaster of a time. There's so many opportunities to take advantage of, new friends, and new experiences to enjoy! Just relax and don't overthink things. You'll be great.