

The LEAPS Student View.

Current university students share their experiences.



Image alternative text: The LEAPS logo which reads LEAPS promoting access to higher education since 1996. There are three linked speech bubbles beside it which are blue and yellow.

This resource gives an insight into university life - from the perspective of current (or recently graduated) university students. Scroll down to find out more about the student perspective of:

- Choosing courses
- Living at home, or living in student accommodation while at college or university
- Social opportunities
- Managing finances
- Teaching and learning at university
- Examples of weekly student timetables
- And support available to students

Thank you to the LEAPS university student volunteers for sharing their experiences!

Choosing courses

There is a lot for you to consider when comparing and choosing courses. There is a video in which two of our student volunteers, Rosie and Frederik, share their experiences of deciding what to study. They discuss the importance of course research, attending open days, reflecting on their favourite subjects and also being open minded to new courses which might be a possibility at university.

A subtitled version of this video can be found [here](#). If you require this information in an alternative format, please contact leaps@ed.ac.uk or call 07774 336 265.

Accommodation

Some students choose to stay at home while they study at university or college. Others might choose to move into university accommodation, or private accommodation. You can read more about their experiences below.

Living at home while at university:

"So for myself, I spent my first year in university accommodation. After the first year it was a bit easier for me to live at home again so I've tried both ways basically, both from university and from home. While on campus you do feel that you have a bit more independence. But apart from that, there's not much of a change. I still had the same sort of social surroundings. I could still go to societies and everything like that. There wasn't much of a change. The only difference was maybe a little bit of a longer journey to university from going from say, Edinburgh to Stirling. But even on top of that, it gives you a little bit of time to just do some work, and it was always quite nice in its own way. "

- **Scott - Heritage & Tourism, University of Stirling**

Living in student accommodation (or student halls)

"In the first year of university I moved into [student] halls. The halls I was in were self-catered and it was more like a dorm, so you had the corridor of rooms and your own bedroom which was ensuite, and you had a kitchen. You shared that kitchen with other people... I enjoyed that because that style of halls is very sociable... that's where I made a lot of my friends in first year. But it is quite noisy. So if you did want a more quieter time at university then you might prefer the halls that are more flat-like, so you've got an individual flat with 5 people."

- **Rosie - Mechanical Engineering, Heriot Watt University**

"There is also a lot of support in your accommodation, all student flats have a Resident Assistant (RA) who are also students that are there to support you, if you're missing home, you're not getting well with your flatmates or are feeling lonely, they are there to help. Getting to know your flatmates is crucial, I would recommend keeping your door propped open for the first few days or making an effort to hang out in your shared space; kitchen, living room, common room etc... very quickly you'll get to know everyone."

- **Alice - International Relations and International Law, University of Edinburgh**

You can learn more about types of student accommodation on our [LEAPS blog post, here](#).

Social opportunities

There are many ways to make friends and find fun social opportunities at college or university. Whether that is through sports, accommodation, or clubs and societies, there is something for everyone!

"I've always loved YouTube and beauty, so decided the Makeup and SFX Society would be the best place to make like-minded friends. I attended their Halloween tutorial and as soon as I walked into the room I thought, "why didn't you do this sooner?!" The atmosphere was so warm and friendly, and I had instantly made bonds with others over our shared love of makeup. From here, I began going to the society's weekly socials where our friendships became even stronger as we got to know each other better by having a boogie, a gossip and a pizza on the way home. I became so confident within this group that I even joined the committee and helped run the society during my final year!"

- **Morgan - History, University of Edinburgh**

"With 100+ societies it can be overwhelming on which one to choose? It may be something you've done before or something totally new. By the end of the 'Freshers Fair', you'll no doubt have signed up for 67 societies and nabbed a couple of slices of free pizza. You don't need to feel bad about not going to them all, but make sure to check your emails and look up the society's social media accounts for details about their free trial sessions and Freshers events. The next step is to attend the free trial sessions to see which ones are really for you. If you feel nervous about going alone, bring along a buddy."

- **Rosie - Mechanical Engineering, Heriot Watt University**

"I was actually quite worried when I first went to uni because I'm a non-drinker and I assumed it would all just be like crazy parties but there was actually lots of different types of events that were put on."

- **Beth - History, University of Edinburgh**

Managing finances

Below are some top tips from our student volunteer, Cameron, on finance and budgeting:

"1. Get a student bank-account. Firstly, most student bank accounts are free – you won't have to pay a monthly fee for using them. You should try to get one of these set up by the end of freshers' week (it's easy!).... Some new online banks come with apps that help you break down what you spend your money on. This makes budgeting pretty easy.

2. Always ask for a student discount. Not everywhere advertises that they do student discounts and you don't lose anything for asking – you might be surprised. Speaking of student discounts; look into getting student cards and student travel cards.

3. Cook your own food. You really don't have to be a chef to do this. You might find that shopping is waaayyyy more fun when you're buying your own food and you can get a pretty balanced diet from cheap frozen food, bags of veg (better yet; fresh veg you chop yourself), jars of curry sauce, packets of stir-fry mix (stir-frys are a student's best mate). ... And cooking dinner for your flatmates or other halls residents is a great way to make friends."

- **Cameron - Psychology and Sociology, Queen Margaret University**

We have additional guidance on student finance on our [S6 Blog post, here](#).

There is also a video in which LEAPS volunteer Olivia speaks about the different types of classes at university, independent study and the importance of managing her time and workload. A subtitled version of this video is currently being created, and will be linked here. If in the meantime you require a transcript of the video, please contact leaps@ed.ac.uk or call 07774 336 265.

Weekly student timetables

Depending on the degree you are interesting in studying, there may also be practical classes to participate in. For example, these might involve laboratory time, studio work for creative arts subjects, practice clinics for health, or work in gyms for sports related courses. You can find out more about the course content on university websites.

You will have much more autonomy over your time once you start at college or university. Because of this, we would encourage you to think about your weekly timetable or schedule to ensure you can balance studies alongside family or social commitments, part-time work and other hobbies.

You can see examples of a first year schedule, on our [student blog post here](#).

Support for students

There is a lot of support once you start at college and university. However, it is usually up to you to seek out this support yourself, whether it is an agreed plan for any disability or learning needs, finding academic assistance or other support services such as counselling and careers guidance. Below some of our university students share their experiences of accessing support:

"I would advise browsing the university website – particularly the ‘student services’ page – so you can see what services are available to you. If you have a specific query, search for the contact details for Student Services (a department dedicated to you!). Don’t be afraid to fire across an email or make a phone call; that’s what they are there for. They might be able to help with your query outright, and if not, they will point you to exactly where you need to go. These services usually include everything from counselling, healthcare, financial aid/advise, assisted learning; and more besides."

- **Cameron - Psychology and Sociology, Queen Margaret University**

"Yes, I just wanted to talk about the careers service. In my experience, it’s been really really helpful. I’ve recently done like a week online programme about finding out about different types of jobs, learning all the sort of jargon about what particular sectors are and the different roles. And there’s always like careers events and careers fairs on so it just really helps you to sort of like think about what you are doing with your future."

- **Beth - History, University of Edinburgh**

There is a video in which LEAPS volunteer Ellis shares their experience of accessing help from the university support services. Ellis shares how they were eligible for additional support and considerations during their studies because of their dyslexia.

A subtitled version of this video can be found [here](#). Or if you require this information in an alternative format, please contact leaps@ed.ac.uk or call 07774 336 265.

We have additional information on our student blog posts about support services for [Student Wellbeing](#) and [Support for Disabled students](#).

Remember, LEAPS are here to support you as you consider and apply to college or university. You can get in touch with us on the details here: <https://www.leapsonline.org/contact-us>