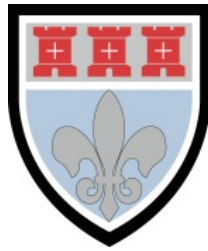


St Mary's Catholic School



Preparing for University

Summer 2020

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Preparing to Study at University

- Whilst university will undoubtedly be a rounded experience for you, you are ultimately going there to study.
- It is likely that you will be expected to be more independent in your learning, than perhaps you have ever been before, and the rate at which you will work and learn, is likely to be much pacier than you've been used to at school.
- Using some of the time available to you this summer to prepare to study at a higher level, will be helpful. So here are some tips, to help you prepare.

Tips for Preparing to Study

- Re-read the course outline either on the university website, or in any additional information the university has shared with you. Remind yourself of the key units and areas of study in the first year and semester.
- Read any material you can from reading lists that might be available on the university website. If reading lists are not available, contact your first and insurance choice universities to request advice about the best ways to prepare for starting university, and request reading material. When emailing the department, you might want to use the following wording:
- Select and prioritise any reading material so that you read first what you are likely to study in the first semester. Make your reading active, so make notes and review them regularly.
- Read widely around your chosen subject. This might help to enrich your understanding of the subject you have chosen to study. This might involve regularly reading subject specific journals and publications, like the BMJ, National Geographic, Private Eye, The Times Literary Supplement and so on. Podcasts are also a very useful way of staying engaged with your subject. See the suggested resources at the end of this booklet that will help direct you to an appropriate platform for podcasts.
- Complete the subject specific work that teachers have set specifically for Year 13. Complete the work in the subject you are studying at university, or in a related field. This work will include reading, activities to complete and a number of other resources that you can use to help you prepare.
- Working little and often will help keep some of the momentum that was created in the weeks before school finished. It is worth trying to keep this momentum. Don't do nothing!

Practical Preparations

- Whilst the above outlines some of the academic ways to prepare for studying, there are other practical preparations to make too.
- Take time to make a list of all the equipment, resources and stationery you will need in your first semester so you can begin to gather this over the summer.

Preparing for the Change

Obviously, university is going to be very different from school in nearly every way, but you can prepare for the change. Read the following article, which outlines some of the key differences between school and university. It comes from the Times Higher Education website. In reading this article, hopefully it will help you anticipate what the difference will be, so that you can be prepared for it.

You might also find it helpful to consider some of the questions that follow, to reflect on the content of the article.

What to expect at university? By Noorin Malik

University can be a big jump from high school, and for many it is an overwhelming change. The close-knit relationship students may have had with subject teachers at school; those many role models, who appeared to focus on your educational career alone, are replaced by a personal tutor who you might see once or twice in a semester unless you make the effort to seek them out yourself. The school atmosphere of familiarity and recognition disappears at university, and you suddenly bump into someone who has been studying on your course for the past two years and who you have never seen before.

While these things are not inherently negative in nature, they can lead to students feeling isolated on campus. The building housing your personal tutor is at the other end of campus and meeting strangers at regular intervals can be intimidating. It takes time and courage to get used to such changes; there is no quick way of getting around all the things that can startle you when you begin university. To make sure that you don't receive a university culture shock as I did, here are some tips on what to expect and insight from a student who took a year to adapt to what academics term "independent study".

1. You'll have to be more responsible

Lecturers and seminar leaders don't come looking for you. They are most likely to be far too busy because many lecturers engage in research alongside their teaching. Or maybe it's because chasing students is not necessarily their job.

They will make themselves available to you during their academic hours, but the responsibility to seek help is yours. That's the difference: help doesn't find you when you have an accident on the highway; you have to take that accident to the help desk.

Going to find someone with the knowledge that you're after is what makes the whole university experience one of independence. That experience is not just confined to getting on with your reading list. This was a big burden for me and it left me struggling.

There are many resources, but you need to learn to navigate the available facilities and options for yourself. It may feel overwhelming, but adaptation is not impossible. It just takes time. The comfort, however, is that many first-year courses at university do not count towards your degree. Cherish that, and not just in terms of grades: use your first year to explore all the available help.

Ask yourself: "What kind of person am I? Do I need someone who will throw a list of articles and books at me so that I can chase up everything I think I need? Or do I need someone who will sit down with me and help me to figure out what it is that's bothering me?"

Often the root of the problem is not that you don't know how to revise, although you might think that you do. Instead, a feeling of isolation might be the cause of your distress. It is as though you are holding a map that has no route marked on it. Many times in a situation like this it might be best to seek an older peer, usually in the form of a mentor, rather than a personal tutor for the simple reason that the peer will be able to relate to you on a more personal level. It differs from person to person.

Don't give up on yourself and definitely don't think that you have to suffer in silence. I can tell you from experience that there is always someone out there whose job it is to address your specific problem; you may just take some time locating that person.

2. Get used to being on your own

You will likely be on your own a lot. The quicker you get used to this fact, the better. Whether you live on or off campus, in student accommodation or at home, getting from one lecture in building A to another lecture in building Z can be a walk of isolation.

The lecture halls are big, seats are not allocated, you have lost your friend in the crowd and neither of you wants to be late for the second lecture so you set off by yourself. This phenomenon of losing your friends in a crowd can repeat itself not just day by day but lecture by lecture if you aren't part of a group or, like me, you don't want to be because you prefer the quieter friends who respect your introverted nature.

What's more, you don't get to pick your seminar group, so chances are that none of your newly-won friends will be there. That means that you will make your journey to your seminar by yourself, sit through it by yourself,

occasionally engage in a class debate with people who you might not even recognise, and return home by yourself.

I am not saying this to make you feel as though you will end up being a loner (you won't!). It's just that it was a reality I was unfamiliar with. There will be plenty of opportunities to hang out with your friends during your free time, at the end of a university day, on common days off during the week and at weekends.

3. Finding like-minded people takes effort

Friendship-building is a different process from what you may have been familiar with in school. Don't confine your search for friends to the people on your course. Chances are that the course you are enrolled on will not be the most dominant common thing between you and everyone else because diversity on a course, especially at universities that pride themselves on their international character, brings with it diversity in interests.

These interests can range so vastly that being on the same course as someone else becomes the equivalent of having caught the same bus in the morning. And this is why there are societies at universities. Make use of them. Societies will not just give you a break from your studies and help you to find friends, they will help you to find the friends that you were looking for and help you to bridge that initial overwhelming culture shock and/or isolation.

Prompt questions

- What was the article about? Pick out 1-2 key points which particularly interested you.
- Were there any new concepts or terms which you were unfamiliar with? If so, can you research a term on the internet and report it in one or two sentences.
- If you have some experience of the topic already, how did the article challenge any of your views or ideas?
- Did the article have any important potential impacts?
- How did the article change or alter your view of the subject you are looking to study - were you surprised or intrigued by anything in particular?
- Did the topic open up any new questions which you would like to research in greater detail?

Preparing to Study at University – Various Support Services

In order to help you settle into university life, it might be helpful to spend some time reviewing the different support services that will be available to you. Research your firm and insurance universities, and fill in the detail in the table that follows. Having this information to hand when you go to university, might be very useful.

| | Firm Choice | Insurance Choice |
|--|-------------|------------------|
| What study spaces are available to you? Where are they? When can you access them? | | |
| Where is the Library located? What times is it open to students? | | |
| What personal/ pastoral support is offered to students? What are they key contacts for pastoral support? Contact details? | | |
| What academic support is available to you? Look closely at your chosen department, is there a contact / specific guidance on how to get further academic support if you need it. | | |
| What are the contact details for accommodation services, in case you need to contact them? | | |
| What Chaplaincy services are available? Is there a key contact at the university you can make, if this is a service that interests you? | | |
| Other support services that you might be interested in at your university. | | |

Preparing to go to University

Are you ready for higher education?

Last week, you were working on your study skills to help you with higher education study. This week, we're going to guide you through preparing to go to university. Lots of this will be common sense, and you may have already started thinking about these things, but we think preparation is key, for a great start to university life. So, if you haven't started thinking about university, hopefully this guide will help.

Universities often hold applicant open days, and many are finding creative ways to continue this, despite the current restrictions. Check whether any events or activities that you have signed-up for are happening online – it is likely that universities will be offering online workshops and schemes this summer. Many institutions are offering virtual applicant days, accommodation tours, campus tours and more.

Here's a quick general guide to making the most out of virtual tours and virtual applicant events.

Virtual Tours

What should I do before the event?

Ask yourself the following, to help you prepare for any online tours held by the university you have applied to.

1. Why have I chosen to attend this session? What do I want to get out of it?
2. Are there any specific questions I have that I want the answer to?
3. Are there any questions I could prepare to get this information?

It would be worth having a notebook and pen to hand throughout the tour. No doubt there will be a lot of information shared with you, so making notes as you go will be helpful afterwards, when you are reflecting on what you've been told.

What should I do after the event?

You might find it useful to complete the activities below to help you think about each session you participated in.

Questions

1. What specifically did you find interesting about this activity, and why was it interesting to you?

2. Did the activity make you think differently about your subject? In what way did the activity broaden/change your perspective?

3. Has the tour left you with questions that have arisen since, or were unanswered? What are those questions?

Once you have attended your chosen university events and activities, it might be useful to reflect on what you learnt. What elements of the events and activities should you reflect on?

- What you specifically found interesting about this activity/event
- How attending the university activity/event made you excited for university social life
- Did the activity broaden or change your perspective on your subject?

Preparing Financially

If you have a student loan or funding, make sure you have applied, and that all of the details in your application are accurate. Before you can be paid your first loan/grant instalment make sure:

- you've submitted your application and all the correct supporting evidence
- your bank details are correct on your application – check your online account
- you've signed and returned your declaration form
- you've registered at your course provider
- your course provider has confirmed your attendance to the Student Loans Company (SLC)
- you've allowed a few working days for the funds to be paid into your bank account

Many students choose to open a student account with a bank or building society – these are tailored to your needs, and sometimes come with useful student-friendly freebies.

Student Banking

- Spend some time researching the different high-street banks, to see which bank might be most useful to you as a student.
- It is worth discussing this aspect of your preparations with your parents and carers. Different banks will offer different incentives, and so which bank to use as a student will depend on your individual circumstances.
- To help weigh up the bank account that might be most relevant to you, complete the following table, using detail that you will be able to find on the website of each bank. Then, when you have completed it, weigh up which bank might be best for you, and discuss this with your parents.

| Bank | Interest rates associated with the student account? | Is there an overdraft facility? What happens if you exceed limit? | Does this account offer a railcard or travel discount? | Other freebies offered by the bank? | What will happen to my account when I graduate? |
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Finance Quiz

Finance is often a source of anxiety before going to university. Hopefully the following information and tasks will help to alleviate any such worries.

Read the information below, then answer the questions

Student Finance

Important information pertaining to COVID-19 (coronavirus): If you will be starting a full-time, undergraduate course in Autumn 2020, you can apply for student finance as normal. As the situation is evolving, please refer to the specific guidance provided by Student Loans Company.

Understanding Student Loans

A lot has been written about “student debt”.

Before delving into the details, it is important to understand **three key points**.

- Firstly, **you do not pay anything up front**. You don't need any cash or savings to go to university.
- Secondly, **you only start paying back any loans when you earn over a minimum limit**. Currently, the limit is set at £25,725.
- Thirdly, **after 30 years, any remaining debt is wiped out**. You might have £5,000 or £40,000 left to pay. Whatever the sum, it is fully cleared after 30 years. The vast majority of people will never pay back their student loan fully – and this is how the system is intended to work.

Repayments

If you earn less than £25,725 in any year, **you do not pay anything**.

If you do earn more than this, you pay **9% of the amount over £25,725**. This is usually taken directly from your salary.

So, if you earned £29,725 in the year after you graduated, you would pay 9% of £4,000 (£29,725 - £25,725 = £4,000) in monthly instalments. 9% of £4000 is £360 a year and this would be broken into monthly instalments of £30.

It does not matter if your total debt is £10,000 or £50,000 – you always pay back 9% of the amount you earn over £25,725. **After 30 years, any remaining debt is wiped out**. You might have £500, £5,000 or £50,000 remaining, but whatever the sum, it is fully cleared after this time. Your student loan does not affect your credit rating or your ability to get a mortgage. It might be helpful to think of your student loan as a "graduate tax" or "graduate contribution" rather than a debt.

Questions

1. Which ONE of these following statements is correct about student loans?
 a) Once you are working, you pay back 9% a year on anything you earn over £25,725.
 b) Once you are working, you pay back 9% on everything you earn, once you earn £25,725.
2. The year after graduating from university, you are earning £27,725 as a teacher. How much does this mean you will pay back per month?
 a) £15
 b) £180
 c) £202.50
3. Two friends – Adam and Amir – go to the same university. Amir studies Engineering for 4 years and has a total debt of £40,000. Adam studies English for 3 years and has a total debt of £20,000. Which of the following statements is true?

- a) Amir repays twice as much per month as Adam
- b) Adam and Amir pay at the same rate: 9% of earnings more than £25,725.

Tuition Fees and Maintenance Loans

There are **two** main loans which you can take out to meet the cost of going to university.

1. Tuition fee loan

This is a loan which covers your tuition fees in full. It goes straight to the university; it does not go into your bank account. The vast majority of universities currently charge the maximum: £9250. This loan does **not** depend on your household income.

2. Maintenance loan

This loan is given to cover all your living expenses while at university: accommodation, food, leisure etc. The exact amount of the maintenance loan you can receive is linked to your household income.

The maximum amount for which you can apply is given in the table below:

| Full-time student | Loan for the 2020-2021 academic year |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Living at home | Up to £7,747 |
| Living away from home, outside London | Up to £9,203 |
| Living away from home, in London | Up to £12,010 |

You might not know your household income at this stage. **You do not need to worry as right now the most important thing is to understand the difference between tuition fees and maintenance loans.**

If you are interested you can find out more [here](#)

Questions

1. Does the tuition fee loan depend on your household income?
 - Yes
 - No
2. Does living inside or outside London affect your tuition fee loan?
 - Yes
 - No
3. If you start university in October 2020, what is the maximum amount available to you for maintenance if you are planning to live in London away from your parents?
 - a) £12,010
 - b) £9,203
 - c) £7,747

Scholarships and Bursaries

Many universities offer generous scholarships and bursaries to students. Although they have different names, there is not a great deal of difference between scholarship and bursaries. Sometimes a bursary relates to your circumstances and a scholarship relates to your achievements, such as achieving a certain set of grades. Scholarships and bursaries are handled differently by different universities and there are different criteria. For example, you could be eligible to receive a bursary if your household income (i.e. the amount your parents, carers or partner earns) is below a certain amount, or if you live in a certain area and attend a particular university. Scholarships might be linked to your academic grades achieved in Y13 and the subject which you intend to study.

These sorts of awards might also be in the form of “fee waivers” (where you pay a lower tuition fee so don’t need to borrow as much as a tuition fee loan) or “grants”.

The most important point about all of these is that they are free and do not need to be paid back.

You can find out about the range of different sources of income by going to the Scholarship Hub website (<http://www.thescholarshiphub.org.uk/>), registering for free and clicking on "Find a Scholarship", or by registering for free with Grant Fairy (<https://www.grantfairy.com/>), a mobile and web app where you can search for available scholarships or bursaries. You can also look at the websites of the universities you are interested in, or search online for the name of the university plus “scholarships” or “bursaries”.

Questions

1. Which of the following do you have to pay back?
 - a) Scholarships
 - b) Bursaries Fee-waivers
 - c) Grants
 - d) All of the above
 - e) None of the above
2. What is the total value of the Undergraduate Academic Merit Scholarship at Southampton Solent University for a student with 2 x ‘A’ in A-levels or Distinction at equivalent BTEC? Use an internet search to find the answer.
 - a) £500
 - b) £1000
 - c) £2000

Answers

Section A: 1a, 2a, 3b

Section B: 1 No, 2 No, 3a

Section C: 1e, 2b

Preparing to Socialise

The overwhelming majority of universities have a vibrant and varied social scene. You will want to find 'your kind of people' and you can do this actively, by going out to find them! To build a social network of potential friends, and people with similar interests to you, it's a good idea to look up the societies on offer at the students' union. Take some time to look up the following:

- What societies are there at your firm and insurance choice universities?
- What societies appeal to your interests most?
- What sort of time commitment is there, to being a part of this society? Is this time that you think you can / want to give?
- What is involved? What will you do as a member of this society?
- What are the logistics involved? When does the society meet? Where? How far is this from your preferred accommodation?

It might help to read [blogs](#) from other students as well – they might have useful tips for you.

Read the TIMES Ed article below that outlines what you might need to know about student societies. Then, visit the society page of your first choice and insurance universities and make a note of any societies that might interest you.

Everything you need to know about student societies at university *By Ben Mock* **August 27 2019**

I often tell people to consider joining university societies (or student clubs) in order to take a break from academia and to do something in their spare time other than drink and party. Societies and clubs at university are a diverse collection of groups and organisations ranging from sports teams to hobby organisations to political and liberation groups.

If this is something that you are considering joining when you get to university, take my virtual hand and let me guide you through the minefield that the world of societies can be.

Choosing your society

It can be daunting to decide which club or society to join when you first get to university. The options are endless but unfortunately your time is not. So first take a moment to think about what it is that you want to get out of your society. Do you want to join a sports team to continue playing a sport you already love, or is it time to start playing the sport you always wanted to? Are there any hobbies that you have been interested in picking up, but have never found the time? Or are you just looking to meet more people that have similar interests to you? Or you could use this opportunity to try something completely different, something that you would never usually have the opportunity to do. Once you've decided on this, it is then worth looking through the list of clubs or societies that your university offers (you can usually find this on the university website or when you first arrive at university) and having a couple that you want to know more about. Then most societies will offer a taste session so you can join in and try it out, without the commitment and then continue if you end up loving the club that you have chosen.

Consider commitment and expenditure

Sorry kids, but life ain't free most of the time. Quite often you may have to pay a membership or annual fee to join. As a member of a society executive committee, I can tell you that this goes towards funding events and equipment for the society. This fee can range from less than £5 to more than £100 depending on how technical a club you decide to join.

At this point, consider how willing you are to commit to the society. In terms of a sports society, are you looking to stay healthy, learn a new sport or just be active during the week, or are you looking to be the cream of the crop and represent your university? This decision will affect how much time and money you will need to put aside for that particular society.

Furthermore, while the wakeboarding society sounds awesome, will you actually have the time to justify the £50 membership fee? Even low-priced societies should factor into this equation.

There is no point joining a society if you aren't going to show up half the time. So how do you deal with this? Well, most societies will host an introductory session, and I would encourage you to attend these to see if the society is for you. It will also give you a chance to meet current members and ask about issues such as amount of commitment and potential future expenditures.

Or if you are looking for just some light relief, that doesn't require too much of a commitment, there will also be a selection of free clubs that you can join that won't require too much time or money commitment.

Societies may not do what they say on the tin

Let's say that politics or social justice or a liberation movement is your kind of thing. It is likely that many of the groups that fall into these categories (specific political parties, feminist societies and the like) will hold a particular viewpoint. Many of these organisations will have a discussion format for their meetings, and so you may feel that it is not worth your time to attend, especially if you hold an opposing viewpoint. There is nothing worse than attending a society meeting where you feel alone and isolated because everyone else holds "the society's opinion". If you do decide to stick it out, be warned that this may work against you if you choose to run for positions on the exec committee, as people may feel that you would be a detriment to the society's image. Just remember that while everyone is entitled to their opinion, others may forget that when everyone else around them shares the same opinion.

Do what you are comfortable with doing

Again, this applies mainly to activist groups and political organisations. Just because you are a member that does not mean that you are automatically obliged to participate in all the society's events. Imagine that you are a member of the environmental society and the exec announces that they are organising a protest at a local refinery, where they will be chaining themselves to the gates of the complex. You do not have to go anywhere near that if you don't feel comfortable. Keep yourself safe and happy, both physically and mentally. If people think less of you because you don't participate in some events, that is not a society you want to be part of. Important to include here, a society should never ask you to do anything explicitly illegal or legally dubious.

Try new things

Your university experience will depend heavily on what you make of it. There is no point joining a society in third year, finding out that it's awesome and wishing you had joined in first year. Equally, it's OK to try things you never go back to. But the important thing to do is not be afraid to take a leap and try something new. Take me for example: I mentioned that I joined the role-play society when I joined university. I had never done role-play before and I thought it might be seen as "uncool". However, I very quickly came to love it, and I have made some of my closest friends from the experience.

So try new things because at the end of the day, that's what university is all about.

Preparing to be a Resident

Many of you will be choosing a university that means moving away from home. For many of you it means becoming a resident in a new town or city. But how much do you know about the place that you will potentially be calling home for the next few years?

Why not make some time to learn a little bit about the place you're moving to? Having an understanding of the place, its heritage, key sites and attractions might help make the place a little more familiar to you, and therefore it might help you to settle in a little quicker.

Thinking about the places where your firm and insurances choices are, complete a mind map of key information that includes some, or all, of the following:

- What are they key places / sites that you might be interested in visiting?
- Are there any local customs or traditions associated with the place?
- Geographically, where do you anticipate living, in relation to town or city centre?
- Where is the university in relation to the city or town centre? What transport routes are there between university and the town / where you expect your accommodation to be?
- Are there any renowned or esteemed figures who are from the place where you intend to study? Who are they? What are they known for?
- What appear to be the most popular, or highly rated or student-friendly restaurants and bars?
- Geographically, where are you in relation to your friends at other universities? How long will it take you to get there if you decide to visit? How much will it cost?

Preparing to Live Independently

Your days of someone else providing your daily nutritional intake are over! Many of you, no doubt, already cook, bake and know your way around the kitchen. However, you need to figure out how you are going to eat multiple meals every day on your new budget. It can be a bit challenging at first, especially figuring out how to eat healthy on your own, but in time it will get easier.

Some Top Tips

- Don't live exclusively on frozen dinner and Ramen noodles. When you lack the nutrition your body needs, you can get sick, lose concentration and not have the energy you need to take care of yourself.
- Learn to cook. There are many recipes online you can refer to in order to help you figure out what you can make with what you have. There are also meal plans and quick meal ideas that you may want to check out. Throw together a bag of rice, some cooked chicken and spinach and you have a fairly healthy, quick, inexpensive meal.
- Make enough for leftovers. When you do cook a meal, make enough to last more than one day. Since there is likely to be only you and possibly another person or two, this shouldn't be too difficult. Double or triple the ingredients. Refrigerate or freeze extra for later.
- Avoid spending money on fast food or going out to eat too often. While eating out is usually quicker than making food at home, it costs a lot more. These expenses can really add up.
- Take advantage of invitations. When a friend or family member invites you out or over to eat, take it! It's a chance for a good, free meal.

TASK: Start practising your cooking skills, and start a recipe scrapbook. You can find budget recipe ideas [here](#)

Further Resources

| Area of Preparation | Useful Resource |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing to Study at University | <p>A link to a Future Learning MOOC focusing on developing critical thinking skills and developing an argument can be found by clicking on the following link: Preparing for University</p> <p>A link to a MOOC focusing on what to expect from university, and what to expect from being part of an academic community can be found by clicking on the following link: Live smart</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing to Study | <p>Subject specific podcasts on a range of subjects and topics can be found at: https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/</p> <p>A comprehensive library of wider reading on a huge range of academic subjects can be found here: https://causeway.education/wider-reading</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money Management | <p>UCAS offers some very helpful advice on managing a budget as a student. You can find this information at the following website: UCAS Money Management</p> |