



Total time
1 HOUR
10 min

Introduction

The ability to adjust to university life, being able to balance home, social, study and coping with living away from home with all that this entails are factors frequently given as affecting university success.

The motivation to develop these life skills will come more easily when pupils have a real grasp of what the university experience will involve. 'The key to facilitating an attachment of students to their institution is fulfilled by eliminating unrealistic expectations of life at university' ('Mind the gap: are students prepared for higher education?' Lowe and Cook, 2003)

This session provides a starting point for helping pupils to close the gap between what they are expecting of university and what they actually get. Of course there will still be some surprises – university would not be a life changing experience if you knew exactly what was coming your way! Pupils need to know how they can bridge gaps by using university student support systems. Aside from those students who experience great difficulties adjusting to the academic side of university, the types of students most at risk of dropping out include those with:

- **Low self esteem and lack of confidence**
- **Lack of knowledge of student support systems (eg finance, counselling, personal tutor system)**
- **History of poor attendance**
- **Poor financial management skills**
- **Poor time management skills**
- **Limited strategies for dealing with stress**

It is a tall order to address all of these areas in sixth form PSHE sessions and this session gives a starting point rather than exploring any one area in great detail. It provides a broad base from which you could identify specific needs for further work. Visits from undergraduate ambassadors from local universities are hugely valuable and popular with pupils at this stage.

Materials needed

All pupils will need Copies of the three sheets: Student diary A , Student diary B and Activity 1.

40 MINS

ACTIVITY 1 Diaries

Put pupils into pairs or small groups. Read the two diaries and discuss how these students manage their time, money, health and studies.

Pupils can record their thoughts on the sheet as notes or structure their comments as a light-hearted style of school report.

Student ambassadors could share their experiences at this point.

30 MINS

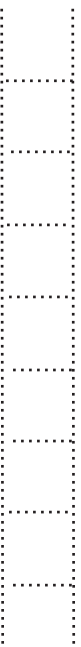
ACTIVITY 1 Student support systems

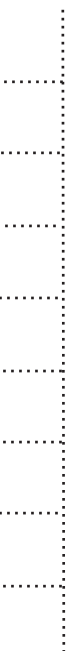
Money

Student advice centre: will have finance advisors and lots of information, leaflets etc to help you with money matters, welfare benefits and housing. Make sure pupils understand loans and access to learning funds, extra grants and bursaries that are available.

Bank manager: be wary of schemes and promotions that lock you in and encourage huge overdrafts.

Student employment service can help you with finding part-time and holiday work as well as with your career when you graduate.





Personal and emotional issues

Student advice centre/student counselling. Free and confidential services offered by universities on drop-in, appointment or workshop basis. Staffed by professional counsellors.

Chaplaincy - Universities are served by representatives of various religious denominations

Older students act as mentors - this may be via your school of study or through the hall of residence or Students' Union

Parents, siblings, friends

Doctors and medical professionals available on the campus.

Accommodation

University housing service: Advice on halls of residence, student flats and private flats to rent.

Student advisory service : Advice on housing benefit, council tax and insurance etc.

Students' Union: Advice and special offers on insurance and use your NUS card when shopping for household items.

Studying

Personal tutor, Assigned by university

Study support centres or academic literacy units. It is increasingly usual for universities to run workshops and short courses to help you improve on critical analysis and essay writing skills.

Summer schools prior to entry are sometimes offered – check prospectus, web sites and ask at open days.

Older students as mentors

Library staff help with finding references and resources

Computer help desk and support systems for establishing free internet access and top up courses on ICT skills

Campus bookshop: Second-hand book schemes

This is by no means an exhaustive list. Ambassadors are a useful resource here as they can share their experiences.

Pupils must be aware that some of these services are not well advertised by universities and they must be proactive in searching them out. University life is a challenge. All students will face problems and the support services are there to be used. If pupils are well versed in what is available then they will be better able to anticipate their own needs and seek help quickly before the small problem gets out of hand.

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10min

Monday

I get up at 8:15 and by 9:15 I have left the house with my house mate to get into uni. I always arrive 30 minutes early, so that I can check my emails to see if I have any offers of part-time work from my employer. (I work as a student ambassador for my university going out to local schools and colleges talking about life as a student.) The money I get from this work pays for all the extras like trips to the cinema and new clothes. In the holidays I work for a holiday play scheme at my old primary school.)

I sit and chat to the other early birds in our studio. Our teachers arrive at 10am and when they have told us what we need to do we just get straight down to our work. I have a tutorial with my teacher so that I know I'm on the right path for my project. I head down to the library to get some books for my research and then back to the studio to work until 1pm.

As I have a lecture at 2pm I use the lunch hour to head to the bank in town to sort out my rent.

After our lecture we are free to leave and some of us head back to the studio to continue working but as I work more productively at home I head off now stopping at the kebab shop to get a takeaway as a late lunch.

The flat is such a mess when I get in that by the time I have cleared up and cooked a meal for me and my house mate to share there is no time to study so I plan to finish the project preparation this evening.

After chatting to my house mate over the meal I shut myself in my room to finish my work.

Several friends ring so it is nearly midnight before I stop working but I haven't yet had time to write up my lecture notes.

Tuesday

I wake up late and as the tubes are running late I miss the appointment I had made with my personal tutor to practice my presentation in front of her. Our 10am session- designing our web sites is great fun and very relaxed. When we have finished we are free to leave so I spend a useful three hours in the library researching for an assignment due in in three weeks time and writing up my lecture notes while they still make sense!

I have ambassador work at 3:30pm in Camden so I head straight for the tube station. By the time I get home at 6pm my house mate has cleaned up and made a meal for us to share. I do some reading and make notes for my assignment. At 10pm I enjoy a bath with bubbles to unwind then climb into bed for an early night.

Wednesday

No university today so I get up late and have breakfast in my garden and read a magazine in the sunshine. I put the washing on, cook, clean, have a shower and pray. Later I head down to the supermarket to buy food and take my list of materials to buy at the stationers for my photography project.

I do some reading and rehearse my presentation to myself before my friends come over to keep me company as my housemate has gone out for the evening. I go to sleep around 12:30am

Thursday

I wake up early and walk to university. It is presentation day so everybody has arrived slightly early, and by 10am the studio is packed. One by one we all stand up and present our work to the class. I hate doing this and no matter how many times I have done it in the past I still get nervous but my friends tell me that I did fine and that I spoke confidently which comes as a surprise to me as I could feel my voice shaking when I spoke and I was seriously regretting missing the dry run with my tutor. We head towards the bar to unwind before we go home. Late I pack my bags for uni the next day before I go to sleep at 11pm.

Friday

My house mate and I leave the house in a good mood, as we're going home to our families for the weekend. It's photography today, so most of my day is spent in the dark room developing my negatives and then printing out my photos. I have a quick lunch then head back to the dark room where I stay until 6pm. It takes me ages to get the correct light exposure and focus right so I end up being the last person left! I am determined to get as much done as possible today so that I don't have to worry about it so much next week when it's due in.

At 6pm, tired but pleased with my progress, I head towards the rail station for the 2 hour journey home to my parents. I spend the evening with my friends from home who I met when we were all at sixth form college together- some of them now work locally and some are at other London universities. We have all arranged to be around this weekend. I get home cooking and tlc from my mum and a chance to catch up with my younger sisters before I go back to university on Sunday evening.

Monday

I stayed at my friend's house last night. There is never any food at their place so arriving at uni at 10.30am I grab a cup of tea and a flapjack from the cafe. My friends are on a different course and need to finish some recording in a music studio if they can find a free one. I have a lecture at 2pm.

At lunchtime as we are still sitting in the bar we have a drink and play a few games of who wants to be a millionaire. My housemate arrives. She is upset due to sudden financial difficulties. She cannot pay her rent. We buy her a drink, share our money worries and discuss possible solutions for her situation. We take her to the student advice centre where a sympathetic advisor helps her to fill in a form to borrow an emergency loan of £100. She will have to pay it back when she gets her next loan cheque but at least she is ok for now. It has been a stressful day and by the time we get back to the bar it is five past two so I decide not to go to my lecture. So I go to the library and check my emails. Later, back our student flat, I watch TV with my housemates and chat until 3am

Tuesday

I wake up just in time to get to university for a 10am personal tutorial to help me plan my dissertation. After this I go swimming with my housemates. Swimming is only £1:50 with a student card and we stay about an hour and a half before going into town to meet the rest of my housemates in a pub for a diet coke and a chicken burger.

In the evening I go to the university library and work on my dissertation from 6pm til 10pm and then write a live music review for another module called Cultural Journalism. I use the Internet to help me remember the dates and what songs had been played at a concert I had been to before. One of my housemates works in the student union bar so I go and have a drink while she finishes her shift and then we catch a bus home at around 12:00.

I decide to do some more reading for my dissertation and take some notes. I write a list of things I have to do the next day. I put a shirt in the wash for work the next day and made a tuna and mayonnaise sandwich. I have a cup of tea while I wait for the washing machine to finish and go to bed at about 2:30.

Wednesday

I wake up at 1:00. I am really annoyed because I had wanted to get up early and go to uni to continue my dissertation research. Some of the books and journals I need are only available as reference and the internet is free at there too. I get dressed and go to the local shop to buy some milk and a chocolate bar for breakfast. I decide that it isn't worth going to the library and do some reading at home instead. At 4pm I cook chicken Kiev for dinner with frozen sweet corn and cauliflower. I have a shower and get ready to walk to the pub I work in at 6:pm. The pub is really quiet but it is still 12.30 before I finished my shift. I have some toast and go to bed leaving one housemate still up working for a deadline on Friday and two watching boxed sets of Friends -apparently until 3am!

Thursday

I wake up at 9:30 and rush to get ready and wake everyone up. We make it to the bus but when I arrive on campus I realise I have forgotten my I.D so I have to walk all the way round to the main reception and then I am rushing to get to the lecture on time. I just make it. There are over 100 people in this lecture and if you arrive late it would not go down at all well.

After a lunch break I have a seminar. I find these very useful but you are expected to do plenty of reading and research before you go. Our seminar is taken by a Phd student so it is a useful place to ask the academics questions and share ideas which you can't really do in lectures.

After a quick cup of tea and a Cornish pasty I head to the library but being a Thursday, the day before lots of assignments are due in it is very busy and I decide to go home to work instead.

When I get home my friends are all sitting around chatting and time seems to disappear! At 9:00 we head off to the students union bar. I have about 4 vodka and cokes and then we go on to the nightclub, which is on campus. It is an 'eighties night' and busy. We dance and chat and drink more vodka and coke until 2am. We are the last to leave! We stop at the chicken and chip shop on the way home. We roll out some sleeping bags for our friends who are staying in the living room.

Friday

I wake up about 11:00, eat a bowl of cereal and go to the uni library to finish some work for one of my modules. It takes a long time to find a computer and print off my work because it is busy. When I have finished I hand my work in at the undergraduate office where we have to sign in all our work.

At 4pm I walk home, stopping off at Sainsbury's on the way to get household essentials like toilet roll and some fresh pasta for dinner. We have a rota for cooking meals and a kitty for household essentials so that the cost is shared. It works quite well but some of the meals get a bit boring towards the end of term when people are low on funds.

I work in the pub on Friday evenings and as it is busy I don't finish til 12.45 but my boss gives me a lift back. My friends and I decided to sit out on the roof. It isn't a proper roof terrace but it is safe and on a clear night you can see for miles.

ACTIVITY 1

Undergraduate students A and B are both living away from home whilst studying media courses at four different London universities. Read their diaries carefully.

Small group discussion

Compare their approach to managing these four areas of their life;

Time

Money

Study

Diet and health

What could they do to improve on the ways they organise themselves?

Activity

Write a concise report to summarise their strengths and weaknesses in the four areas listed above.

Report on _____

Studying for _____



SKILLS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING	COMMENTS
Time management	
Money management	
Study skills	
Diet and health	

ACTIVITY 2

Discuss and make a list of sources of advice and support for the following:

1. Money/Debt/Loans
2. Personal and emotional issues
3. Accommodation
4. Studying