



## **Thomas Telford Alumni Students - An insight into University Life!**

Name:

Olivia

A Levels / BTEC Courses studied at TTS:

**History, Art & Design, English Lang/Lit**

What course and where are you currently studying:

**(BA Hons) Creative Writing at the Arts University Bournemouth**

1. What is the best part about student life?

**The freedom and flexibility that's allowed and the ability to make new friends and memories surprisingly easily. Realising that everyone that is on that course for one reason or another, wants to *be* there.**

2. Are you happy with the course you have chosen, and what is the best part about it?

**Yes I am - the best part about my course is the creative freedom and unwavering support I've had since starting. I started at a slight disadvantage in the critical writing aspect, but the support I've had from my academic tutor and lecturers has really made a difference.**

3. How much contact time do you have with course staff and lecturers?

**Typically we have about 12-13 contact hours a week with lecturers and course staff, which normally amounts to a little less than 3 days spent on campus a week, the rest is done off-campus.**

4. How have you coped with self-managed learning? How have you found the change from classroom work to more independent learning, such as attending lectures, managing your own workload, taking notes from lectures and writing assignments?

**It has been difficult at times, but the opportunity to schedule and work in a way that best suits me has been a huge help in motivating me to get work done. Because it's still a fairly new course at AUB the academic team are very understanding and helpful when it comes to self-management advice and help.**

5. How much work do you have to do outside lectures? And are your lecturers there to give support. How well do you know your tutor?

**For each unit we undertake, there are only 3 main bodies of work; the creative piece itself (a collection of 6 poems or 2000 words of fiction etc.) a reflective commentary and an authorial study that we are given plenty of time to complete and submit. Our lecturers always respond as soon as they are able to and are always available outside of contact hours for support, learning tutorials or one-on-one feedback, whatever we need, they're very good at accommodating and tailoring the course/teaching material to suit us.**

6. Do you have time to get a part-time job, either on campus or nearby?

**I work at a school as a lone worker and key-holder for a company that leases the school facilities out of hours to community groups such as pilates classes or a gymnastic school, about 15 minutes away by train, three nights a week, typically on Thursday, Friday and Saturday as those are the busiest slots that need covering.**

7. Would you recommend joining as many extra curriculum activities as possible to get the most out of the student experience? What societies do you belong to?

**On the one hand I would definitely recommend joining societies and groups as they are definitely a good way to work collaboratively with other courses on campus, however I am not a part of any and I am still afforded those collaborative opportunities through workshops and mass emails from students who need a specific skillset or a model and such. My honest advice for any first year or prospective first years would be to factor in getting course work done and meeting deadlines, any part-time work they may have secured as trying to manage too much can lead to a lot of unnecessary stress.**

8. What has been the hardest thing about embracing university life?

**Personally, I've found it particularly difficult trying to live completely independently and having things go wrong. I was stranded at work because of train cancellations due to flooding on the lines and I had a breakdown to my mom on the phone because I didn't know what to do or how to get back to my flat. Had I not chosen to go to university so far away, the problem might have been solved a little easier, but I've learnt from the experience and now have a better idea of what to do when things go wrong unexpectedly.**

9. What is living in Halls like? How safe do you feel?

**Halls are absolutely amazing - especially since I spent my first year living with one of my course mates and four other people in their first year on other AUB courses. It was fairly easy to get along with them and we even spent Halloween carving small pumpkins in the kitchen together for a 'bonding activity'. I have experienced a couple of technical faults but the maintenance team work so hard and the problem was fixed within the hour once it was brought to their attention. I felt very safe in knowing that only people with key-cards could get into reception and the flat blocks and that there was security on the front desk all the time.**

10. How often do you travel home? Has it been easy to get home when you have needed to?

**I travel home every 5-6 weeks when we have our reading weeks, although I did come home for a few weekends in the first term because of my birthday celebration and Christmas work rehearsals. Travelling could be easier, as I'm now four hours away by train and almost 5 by car, but I bought a railcard when I knew that it'd make travelling considerably cheaper in the long run. Despite the train station being around the corner from the flats, it's still a difficult walk to make with bulky bags, a carry-on suitcase, rucksack and coat, but ultimately worth it.**

11. How do you manage money, and have you been able to budget well, or has money been tight?

**Money management hasn't been too difficult as I don't go out, frequently or at all in some cases, but that meant that the only thing I had to really budget was weekly shopping, which I feel I was pretty successful in doing as I'd write my list of things I needed as they ran out and then I'd have my list by the end of the week and rarely spent over £25. Once I got my job it became easier, but I still stuck to the same method.**

12. What if you don't get on with people, and you don't want to join a drinking culture? What other clubs and societies are there?

**I asked exactly the same and truthfully there are plenty! You don't have to feel obliged to join the societies or groups that go out and drink - at AUB at least, there's all kinds of writer's societies, debate groups that are completely non-committal and flexible to what their members can manage. I personally found it easier to make friends with people that felt the same and then had nights in together instead, going over to each other's Halls and ordering pizza whilst playing pool and just hanging out - I still don't go out and drink but I still enjoy student life and have since found friends who can understand and appreciate that too.**

13. Are there people you can talk to, who can help with stress and anxiety?

**Always - there's an on-campus GP during the day and student counsellors who run sessions or have open doors and email addresses for whatever is bothering you. I've also found that expressing my concerns/anxieties/stresses to my primary course leader was very helpful as it was over the work we were meant to be completing and they were completely understanding. I'd recommend asking your course leader about counsellors or anyone related to mental health on campus or resources available. If in doubt, chances are the university website has a tab or link to follow on who to contact or how to set up a meeting/appointment.**

14. Is there anything else you wish you had known when researching or selecting Universities? Or any advice you want to pass on to current students:

**My advice to current students looking into what to apply for or where they should go, if they're not sure on what they want to do or which university course looks the best; make a list. Or venn diagrams. Find a way to compare the courses you've chosen. What is it about one university you like more than the other? Be sure to go on open days, take**

**campus tours and ask the questions that nag you. The deciding factor for myself was the tour of campus and asking about the differences of their course to other universities and the fact that AUB is an Arts institute with so many other unique resources and courses available. Be curious, ask questions, even if you think it's not that important because someone else in the group may be wondering the same! And if it doesn't work out it isn't the end of the world.**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire. We appreciate your help!  
Best wishes for the future from all of us at Thomas Telford School.**