



Thomas Telford Alumni Students - An insight into University Life!

Name:

Robert

A Levels / BTEC Courses studied at TTS:

English Literature, Geography, History, BTEC Business

What course and where are you currently studying:

History at Lincoln University

1. What is the best part about student life?

Without a doubt the freedom. Contact hours can be quite small, around 10 hours a week therefore you can approach each day differently and avoid the monotonous slog of a 7 hour day. Instead you can work at your own pace and reward yourself as you see fit, you gotta be responsible though. Also the many societies offer a great many opportunities to make friends and long lasting memories which is essential to me, such as climbing with the mountaineering society and attending gigs with rock society and supporting local bands.

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

I have always loved history so I am well at home in my course. My university offers a huge range of flexibility in optional modules which cater for all time periods and many nations. This allows for a more interesting inspection of other less covered histories. The course allows me to work at my own pace which can also be it's own burden but the majority of the time it's a godsend. To sum up the key aspects for me are flexibility and choice.

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

As said before around 10 hours which can fluctuate depending on content of the module. (Sometimes you can have two lectures a week for a module). And of course lecturers can be contacted and are happy to offer advice where they can such as arranging a small time slot to polish up knowledge on a certain blank spot.

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's certainly strange but by the second month it felt natural. I dived headfirst into it and methodically engrained all bits of information from lectures and seminars into my head

following each lecture and soon found this wasn't such a helpful strategy. A better one was to ensure you take notes in lectures but use them as a pointer for essays rather than sacred texts to be amalgamated with body and mind.

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?

In essence I have four seminars a week where students are expected to participate with their own knowledge and this sometimes counts towards 10% of our module grade. Usually you can access a reading list digitally and most of the time each seminar requires you to read over about 10-20 pages, sometimes less. That's why I'd advise picking a optional module you have a passion for because otherwise reading will feel like a chore rather than a genuinely interesting exploration. Lecturers are more than happy to give support and once a month there is a small meeting with your tutor who gives advice on assessment structure and the likes. Everyone can be accessed via email pretty much. Also I'm quite unorthodox in my note taking since I do it all on my phone partly for easy access. So find what works for you.

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

No. I did try though. For my second year I'm looking to work at a nearby heritage centre and have made efforts to contact them. I've also had help through the careers department who I've found very helpful.

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?

Yes absolutely. Societies come with a fee although that is quite minimal. That's unless it's something like mountaineering although the society does provide pretty much all the equipment you would need. If possible join at least 4 societies if you can. I'm in the society for History which offers advice from prominent lecturers and historians across the country. There are an abundance of social opportunities and we are actively encouraged by our history lecturer to hit the pub after an assessment. But the friends you make purely from participating in society activities and events will be important and you'll find that you need each other because it can get somewhat hectic. Societies I've participated in are History to assist my studies. Mountaineering for sport and to give a rewarding challenge. Rock for my passion for live music and social outings. Music and Jamming for my passion for guitar. Lastly Terrible film society for a good laugh with some friends mostly because its important to have something silly.

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

Well freedom works both ways and it can be difficult to focus especially if your flatmates are set on partying and clubbing which is all good in moderation. You need self control and responsibility to prepare reading on time and start an essay early so there's time for editing. Also cooking can be interesting, especially for someone like me with a nut allergy in a communal living space. It's important to make the extra effort and not fall for the

alluring charm of the mini student Sainsbury's supermarket set on draining lazy students of their funds. It's also good for the fresh air and exercise. Foods a great motivator as well so ensure you've got plenty of food in the flat and some treats to keep you going.

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

At first I was pretty terrified since its a absurdly different experience but even with my own fatal biological flaws I was well settled in by the first day. My flat had four other people so usually there's one person in the main room and then we all join each other later in the evening. Everyone in my flat does a different course which helps keep things interesting and quite often we cook together, celebrate birthdays and generally look out for each other. They are party animals from a different world to mine but they're sensible when they want to be. The site has a fob for the lock so it feels very safe and security is in site ensuring the noise isn't too loud past 12 at night. I've never felt unsafe.

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

Pretty consistently with any time off. So reading weeks and holidays. I've had no issues getting back and the 3 hour train with 3 changes isn't too bad. I'm a 3 hours drive away from home over at Lincoln and fortunately for me I'm pretty adaptable so I don't get too homesick.

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

Fortunately for me, my dad hasn't been working for a while after his long career so I was given a considerable maintenance loan. Ultimately I'm pretty conservative with spending and don't care for brands or labels which puts me at a huge advantage. Although my love of mountaineering and music festivals does balance that. In all seriousness though I've saved a lot of money by religiously shopping at LIDL.

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?

There are many, many societies which never discriminate. There's at least 50 sport societies some so obscure I still contest their existence. Also clubbing is a huge aspect of life for my flatmates but there's so many societies out there just focused on having a chilled out time in a friendly environment with no forced facades just people having fun. Take the film societies for example or the society aptly named 'I'm bored' which organises outings and small events to participate in. Of course you'll want to join your mountaineering society because why wouldn't you? But yeah you can take your social life however seriously or chilled out as you like, there's certainly enough flexibility for it.

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

There's a helpful department focused on student wellbeing who really try to help those struggling with non related work issues. Fortunately I have never had to use them but from what I've heard from friends you can just walk in have a cup of tea relax and have a good talk for whatever catharsis is needed.

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:

It can get pretty hectic at times and the pressure sometimes feels like it wont waver so its important to treat yourself and have fun and not drown yourself in work. Then you'll hopefully approach work with a clearer and more optimistic mind. The first year is a test run and gives you more than enough time to adjust and start constructing routines. Just ensure you do a little bit a day and then put your foot down for assessments. Make all the best memories you can and pursue hobbies you've always thought about taking part in (providing its within a sensible budget although that's only really for travel intensive societies), you wont regret it.

**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.**