



FRESHER 2025/2026 HANDBOOK

Your guide to settling in, finding your way, and thriving
at the University of Chichester.





THE WHO THRIVES? PROJECT

The 'Who Thrives?' Project is an investigation into the transition to university with a particular focus on the personal factors that can help aid success across the first year.

We know that starting university is a big step for students that comes with lots of change. We want to make sure we are supporting students within this crucial transition and set them up to have the best chance at succeeding and thriving within university life.

This project is being run by Psychologists within the School of Law, Business, and Psychology at the University of Chichester. It is part of a PhD research project being completed by Isabelle Ball, supervised by Dr Ian Tyndall, Dr Moitree Banerjee, and Dr Andrew Holliman (based at University College London).

We'd like to thank all the members of the University of Chichester community who gave up their time to contribute to this project.

All the quotes in this booklet come from University of Chichester students collected in December 2024

This handbook is part of a pilot trial. We would love to hear your thoughts about it. Please scan the QR code below to share your views



If you'd like to learn more about the 'Who Thrives?' project, please scan the QR code below or visit bit.ly/m/whothrives



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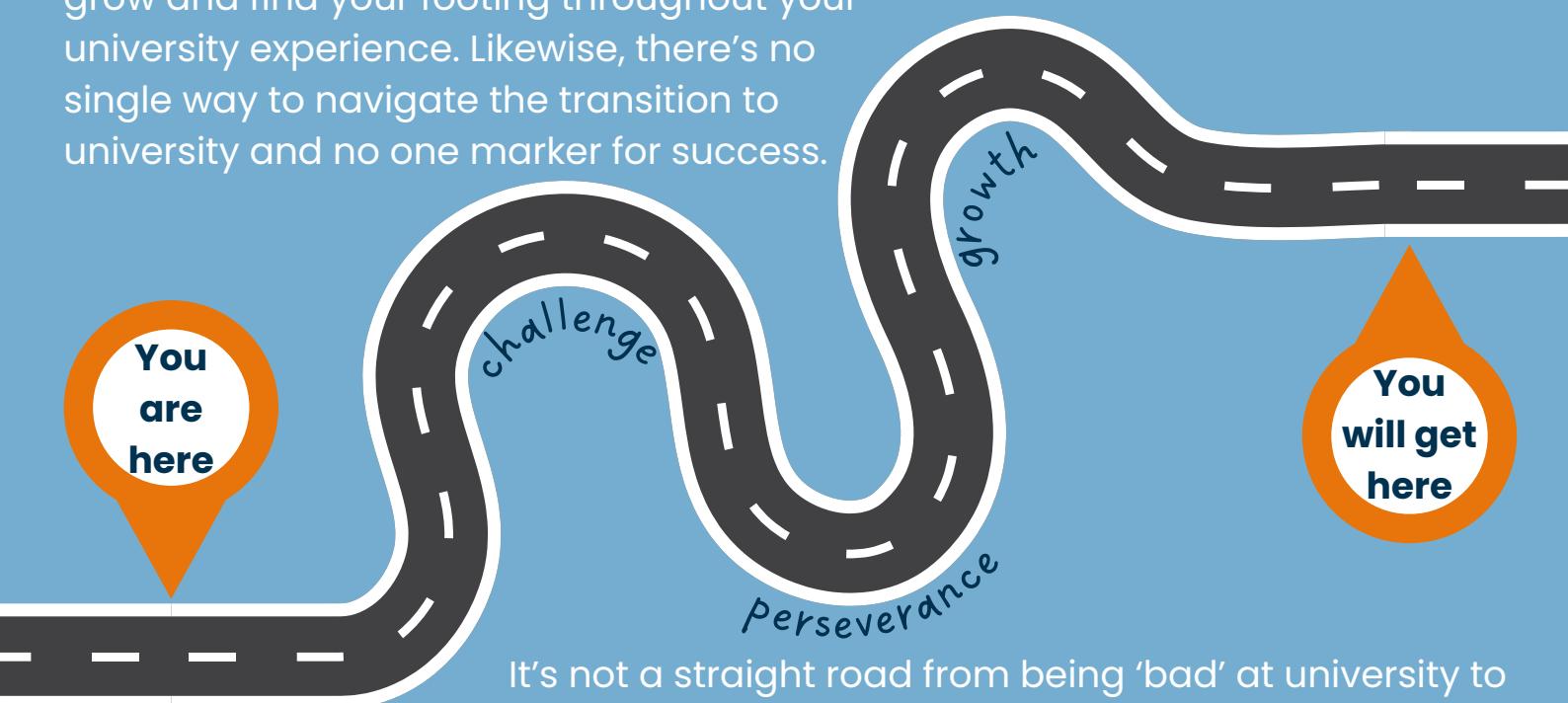
“I know that even if I’m doing the wrong thing, I’m doing the right thing by talking to them”

For more helpful resources visit Student Space: studentspace.org.uk



TRANSITIONING TO UNIVERSITY

Contrary to popular belief, the transition to university doesn't happen in a single day, and it certainly isn't complete after just one week (though Freshers Week is great fun!). It's a journey that unfolds over time, continuing as you grow and find your footing throughout your university experience. Likewise, there's no single way to navigate the transition to university and no one marker for success.



It's not a straight road from being 'bad' at university to 'good' at it. The experience is more like a winding path, with ups, downs, twists, and turns. Some days you'll feel like you've got it all under control; other days, it might feel like everything's gone off track. That's completely normal. What matters is knowing you are not on this journey alone.

"I think I must have been nervous at first but I was very excited to do something different and to have the new experience"



How are you feeling about the transition?

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

It's just a bit a lot

"I'm just throwing myself at things and hoping for the best"



Starting university is a big step and it won't always be easy. It's a huge life change, and you'll be learning a lot, both academically and personally. From managing your time to navigating new social situations, you'll develop skills that help you grow in confidence and independence. Along the way, it's completely normal to feel challenged, homesick, overwhelmed, or all of the above.

Whatever you're feeling, it's valid, and you're not alone in it.

You'll be encouraged to become more independent, but that doesn't mean you have to do everything by yourself (unless you want to!). This transition is your opportunity to explore, stretch yourself, and build the kind of experience that works for you.

Try to approach it with curiosity and an open mind. You don't need to have all the answers right away, just give yourself permission to ask questions and learn as you go.

What are your main fears, worries, or anxieties?

"A SMOOTH SEA NEVER MADE A SKILLED SAILOR."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

“

”

Try sharing them with a friend

We asked university staff and students what key skills they thought were helpful in the transition...



TAKING OWNERSHIP

As we've said before, there's no single 'right' way to navigate the transition to university. There are however skills and mindsets that can help you make the most of the opportunity, and one of the most important is taking ownership of this experience. University (and life in general!) is not something that happens to you, but is an opportunity, one that you have the power to shape. It is up to you to make the most of it.

As you explore your independence, remember it doesn't mean having to go it alone. Interdependence (knowing when to lean on others, ask for help, or share the load) is just as important. It's not a weakness; it's a strength, and another valuable skill.

"Be able to go to another student and be like 'okay I did this wrong, what did you do?'"

WHAT'S IN YOUR TOOLKIT?

Looking at the word cloud (or come up with your own), pick three skills you feel confident in, and three you'd like to develop further.

You don't need to master everything right away, this is about recognising what's already in your toolkit, and where you might grow next.

"Giving yourself the benefit of the doubt, being a bit positive that actually you're way more capable than you think you are"

I feel confident in...

I'd like to work on...

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND EXPLORE

Use these prompts to help you reflect on your strengths and how you might use them to support your journey.

What's a skill or strength you're proud of, and how has it helped you in the past?

What would 'taking ownership' look like for you this year?

Think about your studies, your wellbeing, and/or your relationships

STUDENT ADVICE

We asked our current students what advice they had for their first-year selves and other students...

“You are on your own unique journey and actually to compare yourself with someone else on the course or around you is almost exactly the same as comparing yourself to an alien”

“Try not to compare what other people online or in person have been through because your journey will look very unique to you”

“You’re going to meet a lot of people and it’s okay if you don’t get along with them but you just have to deal with them”

SOCIAL

“Be in the moment, enjoy being a student because it will pass so fast”

“Don’t put too much pressure on yourself... you’re gonna do fine”

“Take it easy, don’t overwhelm yourself, everything gonna be okay”

“It’s going to work out and you’re going to be fine”

“Fake it till you make it”

“It’s okay to not be 100% all the time”

“Worrying about things are natural and it is sort of something that you can’t necessarily control”

“Try and enjoy it as much as possible because the years that you have now you won’t get back”

BELONGING

OPENNESS

“Open mindedness when they go in, don't think like everything's all going to be set in one way before you experience it like just be open to the whole thing”

“The more open you are academically and the more excited you get about things you are excited about the better off you'll end up being”

“Try and push yourself out of your comfort zone a little bit, not too much, but just try something new”

“I would say be open and open to everything and open mindset to everything and don't judge people by the way they look”

“I would say courage is the top one for me. I would say just having that like the initial determination to take that first step, to ask the questions, to like try something, I think that is the best thing that you can do”

“Have good time management and don't procrastinate at the start of the degree...get a good routine set up straight away”

“Be on time. Organise the time, is really important”

“I'd say resilience because I think if you go into the mindset of you can give up or you can sort of take a step back from it then you're more likely to whereas if you sort of think well I've got to go into lectures and I've got to carry on doing things you're more likely to successfully make it through”

“Engaging with the course that they're on as much as possible and really diving in”

ENGAGEMENT

What advice might you give?



GETTING SUPPORT

Everyone's needs are different, and there's no one "right" way to feel or cope. What matters is knowing you're not alone and you don't have to figure everything out by yourself. Whether you're settling in, facing a challenge, or just having a tough day, reaching out is a strength.

Don't wait until things feel overwhelming, asking for help early is one of the best ways to take care of yourself.

Support doesn't have to be formal. A chat with a flatmate, a walk with a friend, a quick message to someone who *gets it*, these everyday moments can make a real difference. Look around you: friends, course mates, family, mentors, your wider community. Talking things through can bring comfort and clarity. You're never as alone as you might feel, and chances are, someone nearby has been through it too.

"Accessing support doesn't mean anything or doesn't define anything about you. It's more that you're just using the service that is there"



Think about who you might go to for support

ACADEMIC ADVISOR

Every student gets assigned an academic advisor. They are a member of staff from your department who is there to support you. You can find their details on your Chiview page.

LECTURERS

Your lecturers are here to support and guide you. You'll find their details on your timetable and on your module Moodle pages. You can email them and also book to see them in their Feedback and Consultation time.

DISABILITIES TEAM

You have access to comprehensive support services to help with a wide range of disability, learning differences and medical conditions. Email them at disabilities@chi.ac.uk

WELLBEING

The dedicated wellbeing team host a range of services offering friendly, confidential support and guidance you can access throughout your studies. Visit their website to find out more: wellbeing.chi.ac.uk

STUDENT UNION

The University of Chichester Students' Union (AKA 'UCSU' or just 'the SU') is more than just a bar, they are the voice of the student body and are there to support you with anything and everything. Find out more at ucsu.org

STUDY SKILLS

There are a range of resources available to you to support your academic skills, including the ability to book a one-to-one tutorial. Find them on Moodle.

LIBRARY | CAREERS | HEALTH | STUDENT MONEY



Scan the QR code to find links to all these services and more. You might find it helpful to bookmark or save the link

QUICK LINKS

"If you don't know what you're doing, go to SIZ"

SIZ

The Support and Information Zone (AKA SIZ) is a one-stop-shop for information and guidance. They can be accessed in-person on both campuses or online or by phone.



HOW AM I DOING?

You may have got this far and be thinking, I'm doing fine, I don't need any of this information right now. That's okay, but don't be too hasty to throw this booklet away!

As we said at the start, this journey is not a straight line. How you are feeling and dealing with the transition will change over time. It can be helpful to check in with yourself and see how you are feeling as time goes on. Come back to the next pages as you progress through first year and see how your responses change.

MAKING A PLAN

Sometimes when we have big feelings they can be overwhelming and you can find it hard to think of things that would be helpful. Making a plan, or setting out some good intentions, while you're not feeling overwhelmed can make it easier to navigate things when they become more challenging.

If I feel stressed Then I will go for a walk

AT THE START

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

WHAT'S BEEN A CHALLENGE?



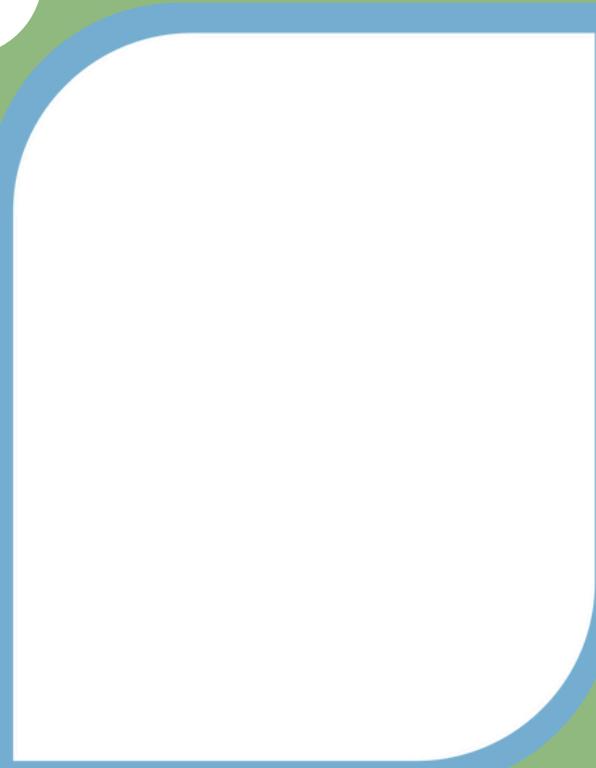
WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE?

WHAT WOULD HELP?

TWO MONTHS IN

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

WHAT'S BEEN A CHALLENGE?



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE?

WHAT WOULD HELP?

SIX MONTHS IN

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

WHAT'S BEEN A CHALLENGE?



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE?

WHAT WOULD HELP?



UNIVERSITY OF
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OWN YOUR JOURNEY.
FEEL SUPPORTED.
THRIVE.