

Quick Freshers Guide

Welcome To The University Of Bolton Students' Union - UBSU

You've chosen well. We are one of the friendliest Universities in the North West.

We hope the tips below will help you to settle in to your new life as a student at The University of Bolton.

Away from your familiar surroundings, family and friends, perhaps it's your first time away from home, you are bound to feel slightly daunted as well as excited and nervous. It's not unusual to feel homesick and a bit lonely. After all, starting University is a huge life change.

Things To Do

Council Tax

You must obtain a Council Tax Exemption Certificate if you live in private rented accommodation. After you have enrolled, visit Student Services who will produce a Council Tax Exemption Certificate for you.

Insurance

Insuring your possessions is strongly recommended. We advise you against bringing or purchasing expensive items, but if you do we advise you to insure these items.

Television Licence

You must obtain a Television Licence if you have a television set. Failure to do so can lead to possible court action and a fine of up to £1000.

If you have come to Bolton from a different area, you will need to register with a Doctor's surgery

To do so, you'll need an NHS medical card. If you don't have one, the surgery's receptionist should give you a GMS1 form to fill in, which will be forwarded to the local primary care trust, who will transfer your medical records to your new GP and post a new card to you. When joining an NHS dentist or optician, you'll need to register and give your NHS number, which is on your medical card.

As a student, you may be eligible for low cost medical help:

- If you are under 19 and in full-time education, prescriptions, eye tests and dental treatments are free. You can also get money off contact lenses and glasses.
- If you are 19 or over and in full-time education, you may be entitled to financial help with prescription costs, dental treatment and eye care. Fill in a **HC1 Form** (Get one from your GP). If you are eligible, you will receive a **HC2** certificate detailing your entitlements.

Students' Union Advice Unit

The Advice Unit here at the Students' Union is a friendly, confidential, independent, one-stop advice shop!

We offer a free, impartial and confidential advice and assistance service to all students of The University of Bolton.

We work purely in the interests of our students and our aim is not only to provide support and guidance on a problem, but also to empower you to tackle the problem yourself. Advice and information is available on the main Advice Unit Webpage.

To arrange an appointment with the Advice Unit Co-ordinator please contact Reception on: (01204) 900 850.

Making New Friends

A great way to make new friends is to join a sporting club or society. Make sure you come to Fresher's Fair located in the Chancellors Mall. Visit the Fresher's Fair webpage for more details.

At Fresher's Fair you will find a variety of local businesses, community groups, banks and travel companies hoping to catch your eye, and give you some freebies.

On Wednesday each of the Students' Union Sporting Clubs and Societies will have a stand. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and join any number of the clubs and societies you choose. Please bring some money and a passport sized photograph with you! Check out the website for details of **Sports** clubs and **Societies**.

Some Common Feelings

You may have spent quite some time working towards getting to Bolton, but may not have thought very much about what it would be like once you had arrived. It is very common for people to feel things like these:

- a small fish in a large pool, that you aren't as intelligent as others, or that you won't understand the work,
- or you feel like an "imposter", uncertain whether you are here because you want to be here,
- or because someone *else* (e.g. parent or teachers) wanted it, similarly, the choice of course or subject may not be fully yours, or as you expected.
- you feel burdened by the weight of *others'* expectations - for you to be doing well, or having a wonderful time,
- you may feel homesick and find this more difficult than you anticipated, everyone else may seem to be supremely confident, making friends and doing fine, while you may be feeling quite the opposite!

Some General Strategies

Firstly, Look After Yourself!

It takes time to get to know other people, and for them to get to know you. This means that it is unlikely that others will really know how you are feeling or what you are thinking. Consequently, you need to look after yourself. Putting time and energy into arranging your life here in ways that make sense to you and are enjoyable is time well spent.

Know Yourself And What You Can Handle

This is a time when you can experiment and find ways of living that suit *you* . This can take time. Try not to be pressured by others into doing things you do not want to do, and that don't feel right for you, or that you are not yet ready to tackle. Allow yourself to work within what you feel able to do, and don't live a lie: be yourself!

Confront Difficulties

When everything is new, we can waste endless time worrying about things we don't understand or don't know. Don't be afraid to ask; you can save yourself a lot of time and energy by finding out or asking. At the start of the year others will be feeling and doing just the same, so your questions are unlikely to cause any embarrassment. Begin to see these occasions as a challenge rather than as a problem: what can you do to change the situation?

Get/Stay Fit

It is much easier to cope with new challenges when we are fit and healthy, have a good diet and adequate sleep. If you have been a keen sports-person, it shouldn't be difficult to find ways of maintaining this. Think about taking advantage of the wide range of opportunities in Bolton - there is almost certain to be something which suits you. Visit the Fresher's Fair on and have a chat with the various representatives from the sporting and non-sporting clubs and societies.

Managing Pressure

There are times during the term when most people feel pressured. Recognize that this is a common experience, and is not just you! 'Listen' to your body and feelings and *work with them* rather than against them. Here are some other ideas:

- plan ahead to reduce pressure,
- use pressure positively - to motivate,
- separate 'others' expectations from your own,
- try changing the thoughts 'have to' to 'choose to',
- put it all into perspective, reward yourself; give yourself praise for what you *have* achieved.

Maintain Some Balance In Life - Don't Work All The Time!

Take time for leisure, physical and social activity, and time to relax. It is important to keep up to date with your work as you can get a backlog very quickly, and it can then feel very difficult to catch up. Problems tend to escalate, so have the courage to tackle them early!

Separate 'Work' And 'Not Work' Times And Spaces

It helps to be clear with yourself when you *are*, and *are not* working. Otherwise you can find yourself thinking of all the fun things you're not doing while you are trying to work, and also find it hard to enjoy leisure time as you punish yourself for still having outstanding work. If you have planned out your work and achieved your immediate goals, then allow yourself some fun without any guilt!

Similarly, you may find it helps to separate your room(s) into working and non-working areas, however tiny these areas may be. This can help you to work more effectively when

you have decided to and are in your "work-place" where you keep your books etc., and similarly help you to relax when you want to, *away* from your work.

Maintain A Balance Between Time Alone And Time With Others

Friends can be a wonderful support - and a great excuse or distraction! Sort out in advance when you will be able to do things together.

Create A Routine/Normal Pattern For Your Day/Week

Boring as it may sound, having some regular structure to your day/week is likely to help. Depending on your subject and timetable, there can be little structure in the student life. 'Structure hunger' can be quite debilitating. We each work effectively in different ways and at different times of day, so devise a pattern that works for *you* - and keep this as your normal routine.

You Wonder If Bolton Is Right For You After All...

It is very common for new students to wonder if they have made the right decisions about their choice of university or subject. However, the great majority do find their feet and enjoy their work and time here.

For some, though, it may be that this isn't the right place or subject. If you are seriously wondering about this, it is important that you speak to your tutor before you make any final decision. The Careers Service or Counselling Service may also be able to help you find the direction that is best for you - whether this is at Bolton or elsewhere.

When You Could Use Some Additional Support

There is a wide range of excellent support available in the University, and more that is open to you in the locality. You don't have to maintain an "I'm OK" image all of the time! If you feel that you need to talk over how you are getting on in Bolton, seek out someone to talk to sooner rather than later:

- Friends or family
- Tutor
- Careers Service
- Chaplain
- Students' Union
- University Counselling Service

Fresher's Week

The Students' Union will be holding a number of events aimed at Fresher's. Dates and location of the events will be posted on the website nearer the time.