

Student Life webinar transcript

Hi everyone, my name is Avtarnika Sharma. And I work at the University of Manchester. I'm a Marketing and Recruitment intern. And I'm here to talk about Student Life at Manchester in this webinar. So, I graduated from the University of Manchester last year. In June. I did my undergraduate degree. I completed my bachelor's in Film Studies and East Asian studies. I did a double major. So yeah, let's just make a start. I'll just change the slide.

There we go. So, in today's webinar, I'm going to be talking about Welcome Week, which is going to be your first week at university. Then I'll be talking about clubs, societies and sports that we have on offer at the University. Also, the Students Union, which forms an integral part of the student experience at university. I'll also be talking about university study; the university support we have on offer and the city of Manchester itself.

So now let's have a look at some facts and figures. We have over 40,000 registered students at the University of Manchester from over 160 countries. So, as you can see, on its own, it's a very diverse and multicultural community we have here at the University. We also offer over 400 undergraduate degree programs in three faculties. So, there's almost an unlimited choice of degrees that you could choose from. And we also have eight thousand rooms in 23 halls of residence. So, accommodation is not-should not be a worry at the University of Manchester.

So now, let's talk a bit about Welcome Week. A Welcome Week is your first week at university. Some people call it 'freshers' week' and it's an exciting time for you as a

student. As you can get involved in a lot of different events and activities and meet a lot of different people. There are a number of student fairs held at the University. One of them being the highly anticipated societies fair, where the student societies at The University of Manchester are advertised and you can sign up for any society that interests you, we have over 400 societies to choose from, so the choices are practically endless. We also have a sort of careers fair for some businesses and employers that gives you the opportunity to network at the start of university for opportunities later in the future. We also have a number of freebies available at fairs. If you're interested. I'm talking free pizza, free utensils, free stationery. So, if that's something you're interested in, you can look forward to collecting some freebies as well. There are also events held in halls, throughout Welcome Week from BBQs to fancy dress parties. They're a great way to break the

ice with the people you will meet in your halls and make a lot of new friends at the same time. Welcome week is also the time where you will have your induction, so you will collect your student card from the University, and you'll be provided with your course timetable, and you'll be also given a proper course welcome. So, you'll be in a lecture theatre or a classroom with all the people on your course and your professors who will be teaching you. So, you essentially get to meet everyone, and it will really help you get settled into the course and help calm your nerves. If you're feeling nervous about starting University and it's something that id really helped me when I started University as well. So, you should definitely look out for the course welcome during welcome week. Also, look out for some external trips that are offered during welcome week. Sometimes they might do a quick trip to Ikea or something so you can go and grab essentials that you need before you actually start University.

Now, moving on to the numerous clubs and societies offered at the University of Manchester. Like I said, we have over 400 of them and they range from the more traditional to the more quirky and unique. We have societies like Amnesty International, Choir and Orchestra, Filmmaking, K-pop, LGBTQ+, and even Quidditch. And if you can't find anything that you're interested in, there's nothing to worry about. You could even make your own society as long as you find 15 other like-minded people. So, it's really a great way to socialize by taking part in these societies. I feel like one thing that you can do is like - there might be a course that you're interested in, but there's also another thing that you're interested in, you can just join the society and you can study something while enjoying that other thing that you're interested in at the same time. It's not like you're letting go of anything. So, if you are say interested in baking, but you don't really want to study cooking or anything or baking. You can just join the society and enjoy it while you study something else.

Now, we could talk a bit about sport at the University of Manchester. We have a wide variety of sports available and a lot of different number of ways, in which you could get involved ranging from the more social side to more competitive side. We have three different top-class facilities, and you can get discounted rates for things like the gym. So, we have the Sugden Sports Centre, Manchester Aquatics Centre. So, if you're interested in swimming, then Manchester Aquatics is for you. We also have the Armitage Centre in Fallowfield where you can play football, basketball and a lot of different types of sports. We also have the Christie cup, which is an annual varsity match between the universities of Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester across a different number of sports. So that's something that you can look forward to. It's also worth noting that we have this thing called 'Sporticipate', which I think

is my favourite part about sport at the University of Manchester. So basically, you can participate in any sport that you like. All you need to do is download this app called 'playwaze' and log in with your student login details, and you'll have access to all the different kinds of sports that are being played at the University, different sessions throughout the week. So in between lectures or even after your days of lectures, you can go and play whichever sport, you want. It doesn't matter what level you're at, whether you're a beginner or you're almost a professional, everyone's welcome. And I think that's a great way for anyone to start a sport or, you know, get involved and make new friends while playing a specific sport.

Now, moving on to the Students Union, as I mentioned, it's an integral part of the student experience at the University of Manchester. Our student's union is the biggest in the United Kingdom. We, as I said, we have over 40,000 students and being a student at the University of Manchester makes you a member of the Students' Union. So, they are all members of the Students' Union. It'll be a really important part of your Welcome Week, the Students' Union, because it's where all the fairs are held. They have the union executive where students are elected as officers within the student's union and it's a great opportunity for students to be more involved in student life, or even add some really valuable experience to their resume. So, if that's something you're interested in, or if you're interested in a career in politics, you could always sign up to be Students' Union Officer. The student's union also has the Mancunian newspaper, Fuse FM radio and Fuse TV station and they're all student-run. So, you can always take part in creating that kind of content, if that's something you're interested in, especially if you're interested in a career in journalism or broadcasting, that's something you can look forward to taking part in. The Students' Union is also home to over 400 clubs and societies, as I've mentioned earlier. The Students' Union also has a number of bars and cafes where they sell hot and cold food and drinks, so it's really a nice place to hang out with your friends and grab a snack in between lectures. There's also plug sockets scattered across all levels of the building. So, you can just plug your devices in and get a bit of work done when it's a bit quieter as well. We've also got the Union Hairdressers, which is my favourite part of the Students' Union because we offer haircuts at discounted prices for students. I used to go there for my haircut for the student and I still go there even now as an employee, even this haircut, I got it done from there because it's-the prices are just so great, and I highly recommend it. The Students' Union also has the Manchester academies, which are state of the art music venues, and we've welcomed acclaimed artists such as Rita Ora, the Foo Fighters, Kylie Minogue and alt-J. So, if you're interested in going out for a night out, attending a concert, you don't even have to go travel far. It's right on campus.

So now moving on to accommodation. We do guarantee accommodation in your first year for all undergraduate students coming to University alone. Even if you're from Manchester, and I know a lot of universities don't do that. So that's something that we offer, that's very special to The University of Manchester. As I mentioned earlier, we have eight thousand rooms in 23 halls, and these come across three different areas. We have the City Campus halls, which are near the City Centre, really close to the University campus itself. Then we have Victoria Park, which is a leafy and green area, a bit further away from the campus and finally, we have Fallowfield, which is a really big student community. It's a bit further away from the University campus and I'd even go as far as calling it a student suburb or a suburb of students because just considering how many students live there in their second, third, and fourth years. We also have lots of different student facilities and the rooms can range from different types. You can choose from en suite or shared bathrooms, catered or self-catered accommodations, and mixed and same-sex flats. So, there's something to suit everyone's tastes and budgets. We also offer excellent pastoral support through a number of 'Reslife advisors' who are available to help you with any problems - whether you're feeling homesick, or if you want to change your room, they're there to support you all the time and when it comes to accommodation after your first year, you can apply to stay in student halls. That's always an option. But most students, however, choose to move out with their friends and rent privately. So, they usually go to the surrounding areas in Manchester. So that's-I'm talking Fallowfield, Withington, Didsbury and so on. The rent varies according to the quality and location. We've also got the Manchester Student Homes, which is a free University-run housing service for students, and they can do lots of different things for you. They can mediate, contract check and they also have a list of approved landlords, so they can ensure you don't get a bad deal anywhere.

Now, moving on to study methods, which is obviously an integral part of university life. Whenever I talk to prospective students, who are considering higher education, one of the main things I advise them to do is research their course inside out, because it's very easy to just look at a degree title and think, "Oh, this is something that I'm interested in", but, when in reality, it's-I think it's very important to have a look at the course content. Especially the number of contact hours. At the University of Manchester, we've got a number of ways in which your contact hours are calculated depending on which course you're studying. So, if you're studying a Humanities-based subject, you're likely to spend more hours on self-study with fewer contact hours. So, I'm talking around 5 to 15 hours of contact hours in a week, but if you're studying more science-based subject, you're likely to have more contact hours as you'll be probably spending a lot of time in

laboratories as well. So that would be a bit higher than the humanities subjects around 20 to 30 contact hours in a week. We have a variety of teaching methods, one of which, of course, is online learning which obviously after the pandemic has developed in many different ways. We have 'Blackboard', which is a website where you can access all your course content, watch lecture recordings and listen to podcasts as well. When you come to university the majority of courses will be lecture and seminar-based and then you have additionally things on top of that. So, basically, lectures are essentially where you'll be in a big classroom with everyone studying the same course module and there will be a professor teaching you for two hours and you just make notes throughout. Two hours, depends on the length. It's not always two hours, but you just make notes on what's being taught. And seminars, on the other hand are a lot more personal and they're personally, my favourite part of university because there's a lot more involvement from students as well, because there are a lot of discussions taking place, it's just like a smaller group of students. And, yeah, you just discuss on readings that you did in your past week. And yeah, it's really fun. Some course modules call for tutorials while some science-based courses, obviously, like I mentioned involve lab work. It's also important to note the various types of assessment that we offer in different courses. So, I personally studied Film and East Asian studies as I mentioned earlier. So, I had a lot of essays to write but there were also like different types of assessment involved, which kept like the study methods fresh. So it wasn't, like, I was writing essays every single time for every different course module. I had poster assignments, group presentations, and I even had a video essay if I remember correctly, which was great to make. In your final year, you will probably have to write a full-length dissertation or shorter research essay on any topic related to the course that interest you, which is related to your course, and that's something that you can look forward to. I can say from personal experience. My dissertation was- finishing it was probably the proudest moment of my life because I don't think that I could write fourteen thousand words on any topic. And when I did it, it was a big moment for me. So, you could definitely look forward to writing a dissertation.

And now moving forward, I just want to talk about what Student Life could look like. And I think this timetable describes a week in the life of the student very well. In this particular example, there appear to be a lot of contact hours with the lab units. You can probably tell it's a science-based course timetable. And as you can see on Wednesday, the student has volunteering on their timetable, and I think that's a great place to mention that we do offer volunteering opportunities for students. I think it's a great way to make new friends, and also give back to your local communities in Manchester. The student also has Student Ambassador work

in their timetable. As a student, you will have the opportunity to work for the University, promote us by talking about your experiences in a genuine way, and you can get paid for it, by participating in open days and attending higher education conventions across the UK. It would be a great way to have a kind of part-time, casual work, while you're studying and you can even add to your resume, it's great experience.

The second timetable I have looks like more of a Humanities timetable for a Humanities student because as you can see the contact hours are much less. It's the same amount of time spent studying. It's just that a lot of this studying is reading-heavy. So, there's more about- more self-study involved, so you're studying on your own.

Now, moving on to support services, offered at the University of Manchester. We have a lot of support-different forms of support on offer to our students. First of all, we have academic advice. So, in your first year, you will be assigned an academic advisor, who will be available to answer any of your queries regarding study. If you're concerned about things like referencing or assignment load, you can ask them for advice. You also have peer support wherein in your first year, you'll be assigned a peer mentor who will be a student studying in the second, third or fourth year at university, doing the same course as you and they'll have a group of students. So, they can contact through a WhatsApp group chat or a Facebook Chat, and they'll check in with you ever so often. You can ask them any questions that you have. And I think it's great to have the student perspective from someone who's closer to your age. So, the peer mentor program is something that you can look forward to taking pardon. We have the Disability Advisory and Support Service also known as DASS that offer specialist support to any student that identifies as disabled or has a long-time health condition, and they can offer you specific appointments and put special support in place that can help you thrive at university. Be it with assignments, or examinations DASS will look out for you. We also have financial support at the University of Manchester, as we offer things like bursaries and scholarships. We have a brilliant careers advice service, which I'll talk a bit more about in the next slide. We also have a 24-hour Mental Health Helpline and app, and I can say about this when I was a student. I remember, I used to go to the main library during the very tense exam period. And I used to see on the computers in the computer cluster. The screen savers used to have the details of this mental health helpline and I thought that was really great because exam period can definitely be very overwhelming. So, it's great that the university thought of advertising the mental health helpline on all the computer screens during that period. So that's a great service that-if you ever

need to like, get some advice you can just call on the mental health helpline. I think they even have an email address. You can just send an anonymous email to them, if you want. We also have Togetherall which is a system where you can talk to trained clinicians, who offer mental health support. And finally, we also offer tailored support for specific communities. So, for example, if you're a member of the LGBTQ+ community, if you're a care experience student, a refugee or an asylum seeker, then you can get specific tailored support as well.

Moving on to the Careers Service, which I mentioned earlier, you can access the careers service from the day you start university up until two years after graduation, which is amazing. They offer a lot of different services, as you can see, listed on here. We have 'CareerConnect', which is a website where they advertise all different kinds of jobs, vacancies, ranging from work experience, placements and even internships. You can even filter the search according to your needs - whether you want to work in a specific field or a certain country, you can get results tailored to what and where you want to work. They can also offer general careers information and guidance as well as help with your CV and application advice. I can say on a personal level, I'm a big fan of the CV template that is offered by the careers service at the University of Manchester and I still use that template because it's just such a systematic and well-thoughtout CV. They also have a lot of different programs that will enhance your employability prospects and help you develop transferable skills. They also offer workshops for psychometric testing and they have interview and assessment centre preparation too. So, basically, they have a variety of services that they can help you.

Now, this is basically a map of the university and the city centre. Now, when I go for higher education conventions, I get a lot of questions from prospective students. And the most common question is, "is University of Manchester a city uni, or is it a campus uni". Now my stock answer to all of them is that-I always say, it's a bit of both. So, you can see it's a campus uni in the sense that all the buildings are really close to each other, over here. It's not like youthere's a separate campus, miles away, and you have to like, take a bus several miles away just to attend one lecture on a different campus. All the buildings are really close and that's why it's a campus uni, and I'd say the city uni - just look how close it is to the city centre. Sometimes. I'm walking through the University campus, and I just end up in the city centre somehow. It's just bizarre how close it is. It's probably like-probably ten minutes' walk and 10 to 15 minutes at most and there are a lot of buses running very frequently as well to the city centre. And I think that's one of the biggest benefits of being a student at the University of Manchester, is how close you are to the city centre. Because if you're a student at the University, you're probably

going to be living in an accommodation, not too far away from the University and just because the university is so close to the city centre that makes you close to the city centre as well. And I think, me coming from India, another country, I think it was really great to have the city centre so close to the university, because that's where that's where the diversity is. That's where the Multicultural communities are. That's where you want to be, basically. And it's great that there's so many students in the city centre. It's just full of students everywhere. So that's probably one of my favourite parts about the university, is how close it is to the city centre.

Just a bit more things about Manchester here. You can probably recognize the gentleman seated in this photograph. It's Brian Cox, the famous astrophysicist. He studied at the University of Manchester. He did a Bachelor of Science degree in physics, and he completed his Doctorate, as well. I would like to point out that Manchester is frequently on the list of most liveable cities in the United Kingdom. So that's something you can look forward to. I obviously agree with it. I'm a bit biased, but yeah, it definitely is one of the most liveable cities, I would say. We've got a lot of green spaces in Manchester. We've got Piccadilly Gardens; we've got a lot of green spaces on campus as well. So, if- when the weather's good and the sun is out, you can just chill out and relax with your friends anywhere on campus. We've also got Heaton Park, Platt Fields Park and Whitworth Park. So basically, a lot of parks in Manchester, so don't worry about greenery, it's very green.

And yep. So, moving on, if you're interested in chatting with a student, you could access Unibuddy, which is a service that we offer, where you can talk to current students, who are studying a specific course, and they're from different countries. So, if you're interested in talking to someone who's studying a course that you are maybe interested in and you want to know more about that course, I think there's nothing better than talking to a student who's studying the course right now. You can- so when you access Unibuddy, you can like type the course that you're interested in, and if there's- if you want to talk to someone just from your country, doesn't matter what course they're studying, you just want to know- talk about their know more about their personal experiences. You can do that as well. So Unibuddy, I think is a great system there. It's just an easy chat function. You don't have to worry about anything.

Manchester live webinars, like the one I'm presenting right now, they are available on this website, right here. We have webinars on student experience, like the one I'm giving right now. We also have accommodation, student finance, UCAS, personal statement- other types of topics that might be interesting to you. All the webinars are available on this website, you can stream previous webinars and

we'll be uploading new ones regularly as well. So, this one will also be uploaded on that website.

And finally, 'Manchester Connect'. This is funny talking about it right now because I had a session of Manchester Connect yesterday where I was talking to a student. So basically, it's a one-to-one chat with staff about applying to university and student life. And I think it's a great way to just- it's like up and close and personal, you know, it's a great way to talk to staff member about any specific queries that you have about Student Life, accommodation. Yesterday. I talked to a student who had a lot of queries about accommodation. So, I was going through all of their options because I knew that they were postgraduate student. I knew what they were- what they were looking for. I offered to the best of my ability, what they could consider applying to in terms of accommodation. So, if that's something you're interested in, you could book a session on Manchester connect and talk to one of us staff. And we'll be able to help you to the best of our abilities.

And yep. If there aren't any more questions that, will I'll just check if there are any open-ended questions that haven't been answered.

I'll just check.

Yep, that brings us to the close of the session. Thank you all for coming.