

Freshers guide

Life Changing

Starting at Middlesex University will inevitably bring about a time of great change in your life. Perhaps you've been concentrating all your efforts on getting a place at university, and may not have even considered what it will be like once you are here. It's possible that you may feel a mixture of excitement and nervous anticipation at what lies ahead. What will the other students be like? Will I be able to cope with the work? Will I feel at home where I am living? Once the term is underway, the differences between your expectations and the realities start becoming clearer, with some things turning out better than you could have hoped for, perhaps others not quite meeting your needs and wants, and some situations may simply be different.

These transitions can be both invigorating and disorientating. Perhaps for the first time, you are away from your usual environment and from the support of those closest to you. At times, this can have the effect of making the simplest of tasks feel quite overwhelming.

This leaflet is designed to help you overcome these obstacles which might prevent you from making the best of your time here at Middlesex.

Familiar Feelings

- Feeling like a small fish in a huge pond – everything and everyone is new and unfamiliar.
- Worrying that you aren't as intelligent as those around you and that you may be found out to be an imposter who doesn't really belong.
- Feeling uncertain whether you are here because you want to be or are following someone else's wishes.
- Are you really doing the course you want to be doing?
- Feeling overwhelmed by expectations, either your own or others, to be doing really well and having a fabulous time.
- Missing home more than you anticipated.
- Feeling that everyone around you is coping really well, making friends and settling in whilst you feel unable to do so.

Ways to Help you Cope

Some of these may seem obvious and just plain common sense, but you would be surprised at how easy it is to fall into patterns that reduce our capacity to deal with what life throws our way.

- Look after yourself! It takes time to establish the kind of friendships that we can rely on, friends who may know when we are feeling low, or haven't eaten properly, so it is important that you prioritise yourself. Putting time and energy into working out your new lifestyle so that you can get the most out of it is time well spent.
- Know yourself and your limits. Although at times, it can be difficult, try not be pressured into leading a life that is very different from your pre-university one. Sticking to similar ways of behaving will allow the transition to happen more smoothly. You will know what feels right for you, so don't try to tackle too much diversity, too quickly. To thine own self be true!
- Don't be afraid to ask. So much energy and time can be wasted worrying about things we don't know or understand. Most people around you are in the same position as you, so your questions might even help others to find out things that they were too afraid to ask. Try to see these challenges as opportunities to make the most of your situation.
- A Healthy Lifestyle will help you to stay on top of whatever challenges lie ahead. It is important to eat at regular intervals, to get plenty of restful sleep and there are plenty of ways to start or maintain your fitness regime with gym membership, and a variety of organised sports activities.

Managing Pressure

Most people will experience increased pressure at some stage during university life. You are not alone! Here are some ideas on how best to cope during these times.

- Try to plan ahead to reduce the risk of a bottle neck effect.
- Pressure can be a positive motivator.
- Endeavour to set your own expectations and not those of the people around you.

- Consider seeing your tasks as things you are 'choosing' to do rather than seeing them as things you 'have' to do.
- See the bigger picture. Try to keep things in perspective. Focusing in on something that's causing you concern will only cause the pressure to grow.
- Reward your achievements – maybe set yourself a goal, and once you have reached it, take a break and admire your efforts.
- The first piece of written work to be handed in and assessed often prompts a good deal of anxiety. However, if it can be faced and completed on time, a reasonable grade often results in relief that the required standard can be achieved, and more confidence in tackling the work to come.

Maintain Balance

Try to consider how you are spending your time, and ensure that there is an equal balance of work, rest and play. It may even be helpful for you to organise your room into separate work and relaxation areas.

Make an effort to spend time alone, as well as with other people. Friends can be a great distraction from dealing with tasks that we are trying to avoid. Equally, try to ensure that you are not using your work to avoid the social aspect of university life.

Creating a routine to your weekly life can give you an increased sense of stability and confidence to deal with whatever challenges may come your way.

Additional Support

There may be times when it feels as though your problems are insurmountable, and here at Middlesex, we have a variety of services to support you, and help you over the hurdles you may face.

- LET (**Learning Enhancement Team**) offers academic support with workshops, courses, one-to-ones, and online advice in areas including the ability to write essays and reports, give presentations and participate in academic discussions. They also offer extra support for students to whom English is a foreign language, and to students with dyslexia. Help with numeracy for those who need it is also available: <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/let>
- **The International Student Advice Team** is based in the Sheppard Library near UniHelp and offer visa workshops, one to one appointments, as well as advice by email and telephone. Staff can be contacted at: intadvice@mdx.ac.uk or 020 8411 4507 or use <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/your-support-services/make-an-appointment> and choose the link for International Student Advice. For further information go to: <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/your-support-services/visas-international>
- Childcare – there are full time nurseries at Hendon.
- The Counselling and Mental Health Service offers confidential support for those concerned with coursework, or struggling with emotional or personal difficulties: cmh@mdx.ac.uk

Please see website for up-to-date service details and contact numbers: <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/cmh>

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