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First Impressions

First Impressions is the opportunity to tell the story of your university journey and tell us what your university life is really like.

The project

Students provide us with a regular diary about their experiences as a new student at the University of Birmingham. From preparation for arrival to your first few weeks immersed in university life and study and beyond, we want to hear about your feelings and experiences throughout the journey.

The benefits

- In return for submitting a regular diary entry, you will receive a £50 Amazon gift voucher at the end of each term, which you can spend on anything from books to sports equipment.
- You'll also have the opportunity to meet your fellow First Impressionists at optional, informal get-togethers. These will be confirmed by email towards the end of term.
- Previous First Impressions students found writing down their thoughts and feelings to be a theraputic process and appreciated knowing they would be read by University staff and used to inform improvements made for future years. See the student feedback section below for more details.

Feedback from First Impressions students 2011-12

Here's what one of last year's participants said about their experience:

- 'The opportunity to look back every few weeks on University life with the First Impressions project has been a joy and I can reflect on this year with positivity because I can see the difference that this year has made to my life. The prospect of a further two years at the University of Birmingham is an extremely exciting one; university has gone from being seen as a stepping stone to something which provides the opportunities to be shaping me and obviously my future. Thank you Birmingham!'

More student feedback...

Open all sections

- 'You have the opportunity to represent students like you, offering your perspective, opinions, and comments. It's an opportunity to take a little time out every two to three weeks to reflect and speak honestly about your university experiences, it's also very empowering to know that you're one of many student voices, which contribute to improving student experience.'
- 'It gives students the opportunity to feedback information that might not necessarily otherwise come to the attention of the university, and, of course, it's nice to know that your views matter and will be listened to.'
- 'I've got to meet some great people, and have something interesting to add to my CV and talk about in interviews. Everyone I've spoken to that has been involved in the project has got something positive out of it - and not just the amazon voucher at the end of every term! Do it!!'
- When you all come together at occasional meetings, you realise that everyone has gone through a similar process to you, and it's great to know that. The blogging is almost cathartic really; I sometimes felt less stressed having my feelings and thoughts on paper rather than bottling them up. On top of the benefits of the blogging itself, it's also an amazing addition to your CV. I talked about my experiences with the programme at a recent interview for an internship, which I've now been offered, so the possibilities are endless!
- 'Why take part in the FI project? It's really a no-brainer. Firstly, it's great knowing that your experience matters. Secondly, it's a good regular way to 'check-in' with your problems and worries and acknowledge them before you can tackle them. Secondly, books are expensive, so an Amazon voucher goes a long way. And thirdly, it's been fun going to the feedback chat and tea and to feel valued.'

Writing for First Impressions

We want to hear what is important to you at each point that you write your entry (submission dates in the table below). If there are specific topics/questions that we would like you to consider, we will email you in advance.

Submitting First Impressions entries

Please email your entry to **firstimpressions@contacts.bham.ac.uk (mailto:firstimpressions@contacts.bham.ac.uk)**.

- Please include your **name, course** and **date of writing** at the top of your written entry.
- The filename of your entry should include your name and date of submission. (e.g. John Smith - 3 September 2012).
- Entries should be no less than 400 words (there is no upper limit).
- It is important that you keep to the submission dates (i.e. not early or late), as timely submissions are necessary to inform our work.
- Please be honest and constructively critical (where applicable) in your writing.
- All entries must comply with the **terms and conditions (/welcome/firstimpressions/terms-and-conditions.aspx)**.

What to write about

We really want to hear about what's important to you at the time you're writing your entry, but we have included some example topics below that might be relevant to you. If we have any specific requests about topics to consider we will email you in advance of the submission date.

Possible topics to include (throughout the year)

- Making friends
- Starting to study
- Getting on with flatmates/accommodation issues
- Extra-curricular activities/getting involved in University life
- Finding support and advice
- Travelling/commuting
- Money
- Balancing social/home/work life and study (time management)

- Interaction with your School/Department
- Working with other students
- Settling in to university life
- Assignment work
- Exam preparation
- Career decisions

Submission dates for the project throughout the year

Autumn term (24 September - 3 December 2012)

- 24 September
- 8 October
- 22 October
- 5 November
- 19 November
- 3 December

Spring term (7 January 2013 - 22 March 2013)

- 3 January (Please note this is before the start of term - we want to hear about your thought and feelings before you return to the University.)
- 14th January
- 4th February
- 25th February
- 18th March

Summer term (22 April 2013 - 14 June 2013)

- 8th April
- 29th April
- 20th May
- 10th June
- 1st July

Contact

If you have any queries about the First Impressions project, please contact the team by email: **firstimpressions@contacts.bham.ac.uk (mailto:firstimpressions@contacts.bham.ac.uk)** .

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