

Ask Aberdeen Ep 3 Researching University Transcript

Georgie [00:00:07] I'm Georgie.

Michaela [00:00:08] And I'm Michaela.

Georgie [00:00:09] And we're here to tell you about the University of Aberdeen.

Michaela [00:00:11] In each episode, we will discuss frequently asked questions about topics such as applications...

Georgie [00:00:15] Go abroad...

Michaela [00:00:17] Student life...

Georgie [00:00:18] Sports and Society's...

Michaela [00:00:19] Budgeting for Uni...

Georgie [00:00:20] And life in Aberdeen.

Michaela [00:00:22] We will be speaking to current Aberdeen students, those who really know what it's like to study and live here.

Georgie [00:00:27] And we'll be getting exclusive tips from members of our amazing staff.

Michaela [00:00:31] Join us for this episode of Ask Aberdeen.

Michaela [00:00:36] Hello, welcome to the third episode of the Ask Aberdeen podcast. This week, we will discuss how to research universities and courses before applying. So you might have an amazing guidance teacher or family member who knows exactly where to look at and what to look for. But you might also possibly be the first person going to university in your social circle or you're applying from abroad and don't really know what the UK university scene is like. So either way, we hope that this will give you some ideas and more confidence as well when it comes to applying and making your choices. So here today with me is a current student group and we also have Helena, who is a student recruitment manager. So, Helena, do you want to say a couple of things about yourself?

Helena [00:01:17] Yep. Hi there. So my name is Helena. As Michaela said, I manage the team that looks after the UK student recruitment for the University of Aberdeen. We have a small team, but we're mighty and powerful. I am originally from Canada, but I've lived in the UK now for over 15 years. I have three sons, two of whom are at university and one who is just applying right now. So not only do I live and breathe student recruitment professionally, but it's also a big part of my personal life right now.

Michaela [00:01:49] Great, thank you. And Drew, can you introduce yourself as well, please?

Drew [00:01:54] Hello, my name is Drew McMichael. I'm one of the medical students here at the university and I'm also a student ambassador for the uni. so I get an opportunity to speak to lots of applicants about why Aberdeen is a great place to study.

Michaela [00:02:09] And Drew, you actually right now have a part time gig at the vaccination centre, isn't that right.

Drew [00:02:16] That's right, yeah. So I was offered the opportunity to help with the vaccine centre so I've been doing one shift a week so far and which is really great, helping on the frontline.

Michaela [00:02:28] Yeah, that's exciting. And so you definitely get to go out and get about and use your medical degree to help people. That's exciting. So Drew, let's take you back to when you really started looking at universities and when you start thinking about what you might want to go and do at uni and where you might want to go. Do you remember around what age or what year you were and when you started sort of looking at things?

Drew [00:02:59] So I think thinking back, I'm back further than I would like to actually admit, and I think it was about year S3 or S4 a high school, I really started to think, what do I want to do? And originally it was kind of engineering or physics that was my favourite subject at school. But also I wanted to think where do I want to live and study in Scotland. There's lots of different universities, so lots of different cities that I thought 'yeah I could see myself living in St Andrews, I could see myself staying in Glasgow where I could see myself living in Edinburgh or Aberdeen or Dundee'. All these different cities looked lovely. Luckily I had a really great librarian at the time who collected university prospectuses and so I would sit in the library, you know, in the PSC or your kind of social ed class or your a personal study time. And I would highlight the courses and the unis that I thought were and where were the value to me at the time. You know, I was still a bit uncertain about what I wanted to do. I thought for a long time until I decided in kind of fifth year medicine was what I wanted to apply to. and I narrowed it down to about seven or eight universities all across the UK and didn't really decide based on any kind of research or merits and just put down five universities at the time that I thought Yeah I could. Could see myself studying there, could see myself living there in Aberdeen was one of them, as well as Dundee. I think Newcastle was in there and Glasgow as well. But I had done no research into the course. I didn't go to any of the open days at that point. I didn't read anything about unis at all and just applied. And lo and behold, first time that I applied, I didn't get in based on the fact that my personal statement didn't really target the unis at all, didn't really target medicine that well. It was just a statement about why I thought I was a relatively cool person. But reading it back I think I was not very cool person at all. And so then I took a gap year. I decided, 'you know what, I'm going to take some time out here'. I got a job, I worked part time and tried again. And the second time that I applied to uni I looked to all the courses that take medicine for the places that I thought I wanted to live in. So I had about 20 prospectuses that I either ordered or printed from the Internet. And I sat there and looked at the courses and kind of thought, how do I learn? So I learn by doing things. I learn by moving around and experiencing different things. So that ruled out about half the courses because they were mainly lecture based only. So Aberdeen was very much in there at that point. And then I narrowed it down further by the ones that are left, where do I want to live. And luckily a lot of the universities have 'about our city' or 'what's nearby' sections on their websites and kind of narrowed it down further. And at that point I decided, you know, I'm going to go to some open days here and open days are such an amazing way that you can actually experience uni life. So for example I went along to one university, in my head, I thought this is going to be the perfect place. This is where I'm going to want to go. And I would say that the building was absolutely amazing. You know, it just looked so old and so grand and I got a tour through it. There wasn't much enthusiasm for the uni, there wasn't that much effort put into the open day and it actually

put me off going to that uni. The first time I came to Aberdeen was actually for the open day and I got this amazing chance to see the university and see the city all in one day. And Aberdeen, one of the reasons that it became my top choice was actually because the open day there was so much effort put into recruiting and welcoming these students and even people who were quite open about the fact the Aberdeen maybe wasn't their top choice. And the university still put a lot of time and effort into saying, that's OK, but make sure that you pick the right place to study. And here's what you should think about. So I was just really, really impressed by how open Aberdeen was and that was kind of in my gap year and luckily Aberdeen offered me a place, so I thought yes, Aberdeen is where I'm going to go and here I am five years later still studying.

Michaela [00:07:45] Great. We're lucky to have you as well. Thank you for that overview. So we're now sort of going to drill into the more detailed parts about your experience and what people experience in general. So Helena, Drew said that he started looking around S3 or S4, which is two years, three years before you would usually apply to university. What is usual? What do people usually look at this early or is it just Drew because he was a very diligent student who started looking early?

Helena [00:08:15] So I think it does depend on the person themselves and what they're looking to do. Some people know right away what they want to study. I've met students who are twelve who know they want to study medicine. And they're committed to pursuing that path. There are others who, even when they get into the S5, so about sixteen are still trying to figure out what they actually want to study. There's no right answer. There's no one way for anybody. So what I would say to everybody is, though, around the time of year, probably about 14ish, you should start thinking about if you are thinking about university, you should start thinking about possibilities, because if there is a specific degree you're interested in doing it, maybe that you have to take certain subjects in high school, in secondary school. And you need to make sure you know what those are true. Drew mentioned the engineering he was looking at one point. So engineering has very specific subjects that you must study, maths and physics. Medicine has very specific subjects. You must study chemistry, for example, other degree subjects that you could take at university don't have specific subjects you must take in secondary school. So it's important that you start to think about them. And if you really are in a position where you're not sure what you want to study at university, then keep all your pathways open in school, so take as a broad selection of subjects as you can with your curriculum in your secondary school as they will allow you, because that gives you the most choice when it comes to applying to university. I would say start thinking about it around 14, 15, 16, start to get a bit more serious and start doing your research at that point. But it again, varies depends on the student. And if you are committed to one path or you really just open to any possibilities, they'll be a different approach.

Michaela [00:10:06] And who would you say was is a good person to speak to at your school? Drew said he had his librarian who was really good. Is there anyone else you would recommend?

Helena [00:10:17] So most schools will have a guidance teacher or a career advisor on staff who are there to support you and help you understand possible options for university. They should be able to tell you which subjects you must take for certain degrees. And if they don't, then speak to somebody at your school and ask them if they could put you in touch with the university. Also in Scotland, we're really lucky, there are government organisations that do support students. So Skills Development Scotland and Developing the Young Workforce DYW. And in England there are similar organisations that are out

there to support students finding out more information for pathways after secondary school. So ask any of them. And if there is a particular university that you are interested in, then don't hesitate to get in touch with them as well. We get enquiries from students who are in the early years of their secondary school phase who are starting to think about what they need to plan for and they get in touch with us. And that's OK, too.

Michaela [00:11:21] Yeah, absolutely. And Drew, I know that your school had someone from UCAS who came and did a little presentation. And there were also some schools also have careers fairs. And you personally actually recently attended one career fair at a school as a representative of the university. What did you find that experience like?

Drew [00:11:40] So it was very different to the careers fair that my school put on, the careers fair was quite a small deal in my school. And so they did invite some universities to the school and not many. And there were mainly the Glasgow based universities. So Strathclyde, Caledonian and in Glasgow came along and I think Napier was there as well. But it certainly wasn't a very representative example of careers that when they are out of the universities that were out there as well. But luckily actually about a year ago, I went along to a careers fair at a school here in Aberdeen actually and Aberdeen were invited along and I'm not sure whether there were other universities there, but there was certainly a whole range of companies and voluntary sector organisations as well as different members of the public who did different jobs. And there was lots of stalls in this big hall and students were kind of given the chance to go and ask about different careers, different jobs and different training pathways. So we were there to represent a kind of the University of Aberdeen and the medical school and the general admissions. But I know the School of Science was there as well, as well as some bigger science companies. There was a local college and they were running talks all through the day and people could get applications that were aimed at both parents and students. And so it was really, really useful. And I think this entire affair was actually set up by a particular student and which I think was unusual, but it was really, really well, well organised kind of day that gave lots of people a really good insight into different careers and different ways to get to your dream job. I know it's not kind of common practise in every school to do that sort of thing. But if there is the chance I would 100 percent recommend going along because even if you're not interested in becoming a scientist, but you're interested in going to the university that see the scientist went to, then you know, they would be more than happy, I'm sure, to talk about they'd experience at university and what they thought about applying to a particular subject. And most people are happy to kind of talk about these things. So I find it really useful, even though I had already chosen when I was already four years into my medical degree at that point, you know, and I had already decided, well, four years ago I had decided I was doing medicine and I had a great time because I went round and spoke to different people as well. So I would recommend going along to these things.

Michaela [00:14:25] Yeah, we as universities do try to bring our students along quite often because we obviously know that's what students or pupils want to hear from. They want to hear from people who also have the firsthand experience. So I hope that also people who are listening can hear that, Drew, as a current student really enjoys sharing the experience. So don't be afraid to ever ask us questions or ask the students that are there as well to represent questions because Drew loved it. So, you know, that's one person telling you that we really do want to hear from you. But there's also another type of fair which is a big UCAS fair. Helena, would you mind telling us about what sort of thing you should if your school takes you to a UCAS fair, what would you keep in mind while going around? What is the best approach? Do you just sort of observe or should you as a student come and ask questions? What do you recommend?

Helena [00:15:21] Yeah, sure. So if you are lucky enough for your school to take you to a UCAS fair, that's great. You also can go on your own as a quote unquote, private citizen. So don't worry about it. If your school doesn't give you the opportunity to go to you guys where you can go along on your own. So UCAS fairs are run all over the United Kingdom, usually in the larger population areas. And what they are is an opportunity for universities across the UK to be all in one place and give you the opportunity to talk to as many universities as possible at one time, because the career fairs at your school are great. But as Drew said, they don't always offer you every opportunity, every university to speak to. So UCAS does try to give you as wide range as possible before the event. You will be sent or you can pick up at the door a map of the venue and it'll list all the universities that are there. And it's not only universities that go to UCAS. There are organisations such as the armed forces. Large firms sometimes have stands there. We'll talk to you about different opportunities to come and work with them or do apprenticeships. So it is actually not just for universities, but further education and higher education and apprenticeships as well. So have a look at the map. Maybe think about if you particular universities, you know, you're interested in circle on the map, find out where they're located, go and speak to the staff that are there. We love doing UCAS fairs because it gives us a chance to talk about our university and really explain to you why we think it's a great place to study. There are also going to be universities there that you have never heard of. And as you walk around the venue, have a look at those universities, have a look at where they're located. Almost all of us will have a map to show where we are. They'll have information that you can pick up prospectus or leaflets or different bits of information. You can even just stop and ask the person and say, hey, where are you? And that's a really good way for you to find out about universities that you might never have heard about and maybe actually the university that could be the right place for you to go to. So you could just stumble across the right place for you. So it's really important to take the opportunity to see as many speak to as many staff at the UCAS fair as you can. And like I said, seek out the universities that you've done research on and that you know about, but also remain open to finding out more about universities that you might never have heard about. The United Kingdom has about 190 different higher education institutions. There's a lot of places and a lot of opportunities for you in the UK. So take the chance during the UCAS fair, under one roof on one day to find out as much as you can,

Michaela [00:18:22] what if I have absolutely no idea what I want to study? Is there still any point in me going?

Helena [00:18:26] Absolutely. So at the UCAS fairs, there are always seminars that are running the really short little fifteen minute talks about different subject areas. You can go and listen to those, find out a bit more about what it's like to study medicine or education or law or history. Go around, as I said, have a look at the different universities. All of us advertise or put posters up on our stands that show the different degree courses we teach. There could be something on our list that catches your eye. And you think, I didn't know you could study that at university, for example, archaeology, anthropology, film studies. There are so many different things that you can study at university that you will never have heard about or you might never have heard about it in school. And this is your opportunity to find out what what's out there.

Michaela [00:19:18] Great. Thank you. So once I've gathered all of this information, you know, that's when you will start looking at sort of shortlisting your top choices and. You spoke about how you have shortlisted your choices. Can you tell us a little bit more about

what sort of things did you look at? Did you look at the city itself, the programme? Did you look at rankings? You know, what were the most important things for you?

Drew [00:19:42] Well, I suppose for me, the biggest and most important thing was the type, of course, and the way the course was taught. So I'm the type of person that really struggles to sit in a lecture for even an hour and kind of just look at a screen or listen to a lecture. I much prefer to be doing something, to be up and about and moving around lots. And that's just because I've got really short attention span and can't focus on one thing for too long. And I started looking at courses that use that kind of combination of teaching styles. And that information is really readily available on the university's website and in their paper prospectuses as well. And so under each course, you'll usually find a short description about how this course is delivered, whether it's going to be mainly lecture based, whether it will be a kind of online for some of it, whether it will be a distance learning, etc. And so I started to look at kind of how the course was taught. So for me to study in Aberdeen, for example, the first three years are a mixture of tutorials and lectures followed by the last two years are kind of practical based. And there's the opportunity to do what I've done this year, which was an intercalated degree as well, which really, really appealed to me because I don't want to graduate. I love the student life. It's been great. So let's try and push off for as long as I can.

Michaela [00:21:16] And intercalation in medicine means that you take a year out pretty much, right, and you do something else.

Drew [00:21:22] So I did pharmacology for the year, which was honestly amazing, would recommend to anyone who's vaguely interested in the sciences and pharmacology is a really, really interesting subject. So going into it, I just thought it sounded really cool and I knew it was vaguely related to anaesthetics or thought he the sounds fun. Let's do this. In actual fact, it was really, really well thought. I had a really, really good year and also added a year to being a student as well. So I pushed that graduation away for another year. And so me and my mom actually sat down one evening. I think it was a Friday, and we used a big piece of paper and we made our pros and cons list of the top and I think maybe seven, seven or eight unis. And so we tried to write a profile about the city and of course, Annacone, about the city and about the course. And then we kind of looked at each of them and decided what's most important to me. So I wanted to live somewhere that was nice and easy to access to. The countryside was quite important for me. So I really like cycling and I really liked kind of exploring the country. And so that's why Aberdeen won some points for that. And I didn't want to be terribly far away from home. So home for me is Glasgow and Aberdeen, I think there's a wee bit of a perception that it's a way we at the very top of Scotland and you're cut off from the rest of the world. But in actual fact, there's only really two hours on the train, two and a half hours on the train. So we worked out and compared the unis to each other. And, you know, looking at the unis, compare to each other and we made a kind of ranking list, decided, you know, where do I want to apply. Strangely some of the unis that I thought Yes. Like I'd love to go there actually ended up at the bottom of the list.

Michaela [00:23:25] Yeah. So you actually mentioned you made your own rankings. But we also do have some independent bodies that make rankings on a nationwide scale. And that is something that is so often mentioned, every university will tell you about how amazing we are at this in this subject and in student satisfaction. Is this something that I should actually pay attention to while I look at my options?

Helena [00:23:51] Yes, I would say yes. They are a helpful resource to look at, in addition to everything else that you research about the university and hopefully visit, etc. rankings take into account all kinds of different factors. And the universities have to submit all the information. So it's all verified. You can't not tell the truth, basically. And the student satisfaction ranking is acquired from a survey that is done of current students at each of the universities. I would say that the rankings for the university as a whole, and then there are rankings for the different subject areas, and it's important to look at both because a university could maybe not have as high a ranking overall, but might be really, really high in the subject area that you're interested in. So make sure you look for both. There are about three or four major rankings in the United Kingdom. It's worth looking at all of them and comparing because the different ranking systems look at different factors and they weigh different factors, that they weigh the factors differently in their rankings. So it's important to look at them all as a picture. But also, I would say it's a good thing to look at as one part of all the research that you are looking into for the university.

Michaela [00:25:13] And people are also often talk about, you know, you need to apply to Russell Group or redbrick universities. Well, even are those and do I really have to go to a Russell Group university to get a good degree?

Helena [00:25:26] So. Well, perhaps I'm biased because Aberdeen is not a Russell Group. Russell Group is a group of universities that have chosen to join. It's like a club basically, I think is the right way to describe it. And they've chosen to join that club and to be part of a Russell Group. You must have certain things, including a medical school, for example. Aberdeen is eligible, but has not chosen to be part of that club. And there are lots of other universities that don't choose to be part of the club for various reasons. Redbrick universities are those universities that were formed in the United Kingdom in Victorian time. So they were built with red bricks, which is why they're called that. So they have a certain they have a certain age. And that gives you an idea of how long they've been around. There are lots of universities in the UK, like Aberdeen, for example, that are very old. So they are not redbrick because Aberdeen, for example, is granite. And we've been around for a long, long time. There are other universities as well that you might sometimes call the plate glass universities. So those are the universities that were set up in the 60s and 70s. They were set up initially as polytechnics, for example, and then converted over to universities in in the 80s and 90s. So it's just a way of describing the university and putting them into groups. That's makes it perhaps easily, more easily to identify them as a type of university or what you might expect from the university. So you might expect a certain type of experience or buildings and campus at a red brick university versus a plate glass university. Your campus will be a certain type. And Russell Group, the universities that belong to the Russell Group are all very good universities. They're all of a certain age. But it's a way of just designating a type of group. And your question about whether you should only apply to one type of university or other, I would say don't restrict yourself that way. Don't look at the groups and the clubs of universities, look at the degrees and the courses and what suits you and your needs and your interests. Don't think about what type of title or a group that the university belongs to. Think about what suits you and your needs best.

Michaela [00:27:54] Yeah, that's a good advice. And Drew, thinking back about what you were saying there beforehand about how you spoke to your mum and made a list with your mum, did you speak to any other friends or family who were able to advise you and guide you on where to apply?

Drew [00:28:09] Absolutely. I suppose the most helpful person was definitely my mum and that's just because she obviously knows me quite well and knew what I would like and I wouldn't like. But I'm aware that I'm in a fortunate position where my mum has been to university, so she was able to use her experience. And if that hadn't been the case, you know, my guidance teacher was equally as helpful and so we spent a probably about an hour and just in a couple of different chunks and we just spoke about what sort of things that I quite like to get out of uni. She was able to offer me a wee bit of guidance about where she thought would be good for me as well. We did have a careers adviser in school and unfortunately, my school career advisor wasn't the most up to date. So she'd come back out of retirement and took a kind of part time gig. But I'm aware that normally the careers advisers are, are really useful people to, to get in touch with, and they've usually got the most up to date advice on where to get support as well for applying to uni. And they can often offer you a contact at each university and, you know, maybe in the department or in specific schools within the university to get in touch with if you have any kind of questions or queries that they can answer themselves. And also I had some friends in the year above me who came to Aberdeen. And actually jokingly when they applied, they said, oh, you should you should come to Aberdeen. And I thought, OK, OK, well, you know, I'll keep it on the list. But I had the chance to go up and visit them a couple of times, so I went and stayed in the halls for a couple of nights. And, you know, we did experience the nightlife once we went out for dinner a couple of times. And that kind of let me experience the city from a student perspective. And it did actually get me thinking actually, you know, I could see myself living here. And this is quite a nice place. Nice place to be. Halls were quite nice. So, yeah, that's kind of who I spoke to and got everyone's opinions together, which was really useful.

Michaela [00:30:24] So you were really lucky that you actually knew someone who had gone to Aberdeen and you could speak to them. But what if I don't know anyone who goes to Aberdeen? How can I get in touch with current students to ask my questions?

Helena [00:30:36] So we have a programme called Unibuddy, which is I can find information about it on our website. It's actually a way to chat with any of our current students and actually staff members as well. It's really easy to do. You just create a sign up, create a log in and sign in. You can ask questions. You can pick you can search for a student who is either studying the subject area that you're interested in or is from the same country, or you just like the sound of their profile. And you think that's somebody who I may be interested, you know, might sounds a bit like me and maybe would feel the same, have the same answers as me. So it's just really easy. And you just you can chat sort of conversation with them. And I would just echo as well. What you said is that the university teams, the recruiting teams and the admissions teams are really there to help everybody and make sure I what we call what we do, information, advice and guidance. And that's exactly what we do. We provide information, we give advice and we provide guidance because we want to make sure that you end up going to the right university for you, because that way everybody wins.

Michaela [00:31:51] And a lot of us have also actually attended the university that we are still working for. So, you know, we can also offer you first-hand experience from that position, which is often very helpful. And, Drew, you mentioned that you went to an Aberdeen open day. How did you what did you find the most useful about that day?

Drew [00:32:11] What I found the most useful was coming up to the university and having kind of a free pass to go through the university am not access all areas, but access most areas. And I'd just wander around campus. So and to anyone listening at the King's

College down our main campus is one of the most beautiful areas in Aberdeen. And just by kind of walking through and there's a kind of central road, some lovely kind of coffee shops, but I was really impressed by the amount of effort that going into this open day. And so there was lots of students and staff all wearing these red t shirts. I think they said something like, we're happy to help or something like Welcome to Aberdeen. But instead of you having to approach them quite often, they would approach you and say, how are you enjoying the day? And so I find it really useful that they would kind of show you about they would show you down to the library that we show you down to the sports village. And they were very honest with you as well. So you could say what do you not like studying about Aberdeen. And I think most people seem to see there is a wee bit colder or the buildings can be a wee bit grey. But other than that, most people said, you know, that's easy to live with in comparison to easy access to the countryside, a very supportive uni, you know, all these sorts of things. So I really enjoyed that. The medical school as well, was open. So not only did I see the main campus, but I went up to Foresterhill which is where the medical school is and chatted to people who I was going to meet at my interview, or people who studied anatomy, people who studied biomedical sciences as well. And it was just a really good opportunity to kind of get firsthand experience of, of looking around. I really enjoyed it.

Michaela [00:34:15] Great. Helena, what would you say is a good tip for someone attending an open day. What would you say they should do during an open day.

Helena [00:34:22] I would say well first of all, the very first thing is if you can attend an open day, do, because I think it's really important for you to have a feel of the campus, the university, and find out if you are actually comfortable at the campus, at the university, so every day will offer you an opportunity to have a campus tour. And so perhaps I would say that might be your number one thing to make sure you do. You'll usually get a campus tour from a student who will be able to give you the facts and figures about the campus, but also some of the insights and insider knowledge about maybe where the best coffee shop is or where is the best place to study quietly or the halls of residence that perhaps has the best atmosphere, that kind of thing. So those kind of insider tips you'll get from the student ambassadors who are giving the campus tours. And you're also welcome to ask them questions like Drew said. And so that kind of one to one conversation is really, really valuable. My second tip for an open day is to be, if you're truly trying to figure out what to study, is be open to the possibilities at the university. Most open days will promote everything they offer unless it's a specialist open day like medicine, for example. And it's at those open days where you get the opportunity to again find out about degrees that you might be able to study at the university that you have never even heard of before, or you don't really know what it's about. And that's your chance to find out more about those and those degrees. And they could be the one for you, could change your life if you stop and ask that question, what's Celtic in Anglo-Saxon studies about or what do you do with a degree in geology?

Michaela [00:36:20] So some of those listening might actually be from Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire. So they might, you know, be quite familiar with the campus and be specifically have gone to Aberdeen and visited and walked through the campus. So, Drew, you are actually from Glasgow, right? So you had a lot of universities right there on your doorstep. Did you attend any open days there? Did you see a point in attending an open day at Glasgow University, being from Glasgow?

Drew [00:36:48] Yes, I did go along to Glasgow Uni Open Day who do have a lovely medical school. I think it was probably built around the same time as ours. And so I went

along and saw the Glasgow open day and my ranking system with my mum, it did make it onto the board. And but again the style of teaching I'm not sure would have fitted with how I learnt so would definitely advise kind of going to these open days, even if you think that you know all about the uni campus, all about uni itself, by doing your research online, actually, by going along, speaking to staff, speaking to students, you know, is the best way of figuring out which uni is going to be suited for you.

Michaela [00:37:40] Yeah. And actually next week we're going to be talking to three of our students who come from very different areas of the UK. So some of them are from Aberdeen and decided to stay in Aberdeen. Some of them are from elsewhere in Scotland. And we will also have a person from further away, in England who will talk us through what decisions they have to make, you know, to decide whether they want to stay close to their home or move further away. So that is also something that you need to keep in mind. You know, do you want to be just do you actually want to live at home while you're at university? Of course, that's going to clarify your choices somewhat. Or if you want to expand your search, that will also help you really just there's going to be a whole world of universities out there if you're willing to look at universities further away. But definitely if you can visit, that will be one factor that will really help you clarify your choices. And Drew, just one final question for you here. And you are from Glasgow, and it's about, what, three hours away? Students often think that they will be going home every single weekend. And that's why they're like, I don't want to move further than 30 minutes away from home because I will be going back every single weekend and it's going to be a massive trek. So how often did you go home for the weekend?

Drew [00:39:03] The start of uni was really scary. It was the first time that I lived away from home for more than a week and I was very much of a homebody. And the first week at uni I was thinking, you know, just get to, to Friday and when I can get on the train and go home and I'll come back on Sunday and that's what I'm going to do for the rest of the five years that I'm here, if I have to. And in my head, you know, three hours was so far away as well, you know, so I would sit there and read my book or like I said earlier, short attention span. So I'd read my book. I play my game to have a game of solitaire as well. And, you know, and then I'd have a 30 minute snooze as well. But pretty quickly it became clear that actually three hours is really not that far. And uni is very different to school. So worst comes to worst, in my head I was thinking if I was feeling incredibly homesick one evening and even if I had lectures or a tutorial, the uni were incredibly understanding about students being away from home for the first time. So actually during our introductory lectures, the uni said, if you're feeling homesick and come and speak to staff about it, come in, come and let us know and we can see what we can do and whether that means giving extensions to deadlines because you've had to run home suddenly or whether it means just joining more society so that you're a wee bit busier, then we can sort that out for you. I actually think I went home for maybe the first first two or three weeks. I even bought one of these like real car things, you know, for I think it was 50 quid or something to get my, my cheap train tickets home. And actually after the third weekend I really got a good group of friends who I'm still friends with today. We met on the very first day of uni and they're still my closest friends and actually we all started doing things together, I think we started by going to the beach. Aberdeen has a lovely, lovely beach. I mean you can't miss it to be honest. If you walk in any direction towards the sea, you'll find this beautiful beach. And we started hanging out. So we had movie nights. We went and saw the new Harry Potter film which had just come out and all of a sudden it had been two or three weeks since I've been home. And my mum was actually messaging me or phoning me and saying, hey, when are you coming home? You know, get your washing done. I've got a food parcel here ready for you to go home and all this stuff. And it occurred to me, while

I've not been home in two or three weeks, so it becomes really, really normal to not go home as much as you thought it would. And three hours was really not that not that far. Aberdeen also does have an airport so I know lots of my friends from, for example from London could actually hop on a flight for the weekend and jump back down to London and if they organised and planned it they could get flights quite cheap as well. And so they could be home in a couple of hours. I think there's this kind of big apprehension coming to uni that's maybe away from your home town. But when you get here all of a sudden you realise that actually there's so many cool things to do and so many weird people that you never thought you would ever get to meet. And actually they end up being some of your best friends.

Michaela [00:42:38] Yeah. Your experience mirrors a lot of students' experience where they think they might be going home quite frequently, but they find themselves quite busy with societies and sports clubs. And if they get a part time job, you know, and you suddenly forget that you haven't been home in a few weeks and, your mum's got your washing and you've got to go home. So, yeah, I think that is quite frequent experience. And, of course, this is up to you. You can go home as often as you want, but I would not be hung up on trying to find a university that will get you home the fastest because, you know, you're out there. You might be busy. You might find a new group of friends that will really form a new home for you.

Drew [00:43:22] I never thought that I would actually see this, but moving away from home was one of the best things I did. I love my family, I love going home but moving out of home for uni was such an amazing experience.

Michaela [00:43:36] Yeah. That's fantastic. I very much relate to your you know you suddenly feel like an adult. So yes, you will definitely learn a lot about yourself and get an independent streak in you that you didn't know existed. Helena, is there anything you would like to advise as a final parting words?

Helena [00:43:55] just to say that searching for the right university is a combination of searching for the right degree, for whatever you want to study or whatever you career you want to pursue, but also making sure that the university suits you and fits you. And the type of person that you are interested really brought that to life today, talking about how he narrowed down his choices. So I really want to say that there's no one way to find a university or to find a place to study. You have to seek out what suits you, what suits your aspirations, your study interests, and it might not necessarily be the same university that your best friend wants to go to, or it might not be the university that your mom or dad wants you to go to. So you really have to make sure that it's a personal decision and that it suits you. I guess that's my biggest top tip, really. When are you thinking about researching university choices, make sure it suits you personally.

Michaela [00:45:02] Great. Thank you for that advice. So thank you for joining us. This week. We had Helena, who provided some great advice from her viewpoint as a manager of the recruitment team. And then we also had Drew, who's actually a current student and had a lot of great examples that he was able to share. Join me again next week. I will chat with three students about what led them to decide to either stay close to home for their university experience or move further away and what the transition was like for them. We touched on some of this this week, but also next week we will go in-depth on all of this. So thank you very much and join us again next week.

Voiceover [00:45:43] Thank you for joining us for this episode of the Ask Aberdeen podcast, if you would like to suggest the topic we should cover, please email us at ukteam@abdn.ac.uk. We would love to hear from you to be alerted about new episodes. Subscribe wherever you get your podcasts.