

Ask Aberdeen Episode 11

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 Societies...

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 and welcome to the latest episode of our informative, interesting and, above all, super fun podcast called Ask Aberdeen. So today we will discuss university accommodation, which is something that every new student has to think about. And it is always one of the most popular sessions during our Open Days as well. Some students even make their decision on which university they will apply to just based off the accommodation on offer. So I completely understand that this is a huge deciding factor for many of you. And I know that my two guests will also make sure we cover all questions that we often get asked about. Otilia, take it away and introduce yourself!

Otilia [00:01:15] Hi, I'm Otilia! I am Finnish, but I grew up in Luxembourg. I currently study in Aberdeen and I am an oncoming fourth year and I study English with Creative Writing.

Michaela [00:01:26] And Kirstin, how about you? What do you do at the university?

Kirstin [00:01:30] I'm the Operations Manager for student accommodation. I'm based at Hillhead, which is our main student village, if you like. We've got over 2000 students that live with us every year.

Michaela [00:01:42] So you've just mentioned that we have Hillhead, which is a student village, and sometimes we will mention Hillhead just by itself. Sometimes we might say student accommodation. But Hillhead really is like a village, isn't it?

Kirstin [00:01:57] Yes. So that's the main village, if you like. As I said, we've got over 2000 students who stay here. It's the main base for most of the undergraduate students that stay with us. We do have campus accommodation as well, but that tends to be aimed at postgraduate students or sometimes returners. But yes, Hillhead is definitely our central undergraduate accommodation.

Michaela [00:02:25] And what sort of accommodation do we have on offer in Hillhead?

Kirstin [00:02:30] So we've got a few different types, actually. Mainly our five person flats with shared facilities. We've also got five person flats with en-suite facilities, and we've also got the more traditional style accommodation, which is more like the halls of residence, which has shared kitchen and bathroom facilities with larger corridors of up to 20 people.

Michaela [00:03:01] Yeah, that's the one I lived in, a corridor with doors off straight into your room, and then one of the rooms is instead a kitchen. You're also sharing facilities at the end of, or in every corner, of the corridor. It's slightly different from the traditional flat layout that you might be used to from living at home with your parents. It's a bit more fractured, I guess, but you will still be in a kitchen with like five other or four other people. So you will still have a little set of friends that you will be sharing your facilities with. And this might be a difficult question to answer because it will change every single year. But can you give us an idea of what the price ranges are like?

Kirstin [00:03:48] Yes - so this year's prices, for session 2021, our prices start at £90 per week and that's our cheapest standard room. That goes up to £148 per week which is the en-suite price. And there are some in between that.

Michaela [00:04:09] So you have quite a wide range of prices so it suits all budgets. It goes from what is it, £360 up to £600 three hundred sixty pounds a month, up to six hundred pounds a month. So there's something for everyone depending on your budget. And we do also offer a catered option, is that correct?

Kirstin [00:04:27] Yeah, so there is a catered option. At the moment it's in Adam Smith House, but the catering can be flexible as well for any other accommodation, and that would be £147 a week. And that's fully catered. So you'd be getting breakfast and either lunch or dinner option each day. And it's very flexible, the catering nowadays, so it's not like you've got set meal times. You can have breakfast maybe at Hillhead and then grab something when you're on campus studying.

Michaela [00:04:59] So Otilia, which halls did you live in?

Otilia [00:05:02] I stayed in New Carnegie Court, which is the one with en-suite.

Michaela [00:05:07] Did you like having your own bathroom then?!

Otilia [00:05:09] I think it was the best choice moving out of home and having to share stuff with other people. I think the kitchen was enough at this point! Currently I do share a bathroom also with other people, so I have upgraded to the adult life now.

Michaela [00:05:24] It's funny because I was at the exact opposite end of the price scale. I was in the cheapest accommodation. I shared my bathroom, my toilet with the whole floor and I didn't mind it at all! So I think a lot of people might be thinking and just hearing about

how we have to share a bathroom, they might be really worried about it and might be imagining really bad things happening. But actually, after your first year, after you go through it, you sort of realise that actually sharing is not that bad. You will not really be struggling with finding time, when to go in and that sort of stuff. So if you're worried right now about, if you end up in non-en suite and you're really, really fussed about having your own bathroom, I think I would just want to say, don't worry too much, because you will find that actually it's not it's not as bad as you might think. So that would be just my one message from someone who lived in the cheapest house and still had a great time and didn't have to spend that much money on my own accommodation there.

Otilia [00:06:29] I do have to agree with you that it's definitely not necessary to have your own bathroom. It's nice, but it requires you to clean it yourself, which is not as nice!

Michaela [00:06:40] Yeah, definitely. And when I said 'don't worry about getting your top choice' - Kirstin, can you actually explain to us how the application process works? Am I definitely going to get the halls I put down or is there a list I have to put together?

Kirstin [00:07:00] Yes, we usually ask for your top three choices. Just because there might be a chance that you don't get your first option. We do find that Carnegie Court, which is the en-suite sells out the quickest. So it depends how early you apply. But I mean, I would say don't panic. You always get something because we guarantee all students accommodation of some sort. It might not be your first choice but you will get something. The quicker you apply, the better. And like I said, it does change every year. So I wouldn't worry too much about it.

Michaela [00:07:42] Yeah. And I have to say, all the halls have recently been renovated, over the last few years they've been going around and renovating them. So all of the halls are nice, it's not like there's one that's an absolute dump.

Kirstin [00:07:54] Yeah. They're all of a high standard. It's just that these days people tend to prefer en-suite.

Michaela [00:08:01] Also to get the guaranteed accommodation you actually have to apply by a deadline. But this deadline is in late summer, weeks after results day. So don't worry too much if you applied in January and you're waiting for your results and you cannot apply yet because that is perfectly fine, and so many other people are doing exactly the same. They can't actually apply or we're their insurance choice, and they will only find out they're going to Aberdeen after results day. There will be a wealth of accommodation still on offer even in August. You just need to make sure that you apply by the deadline, which, as I said, is usually a couple of weeks or a few weeks after the results day, so late August, early September. However, the team will still do their best to accommodate you, even if you apply afterwards. The accommodation process opens during spring, so you have if you have an unconditional offer or if we are your first choice, you can apply from about spring time up until late August. So plenty of time to apply and you will also get an offer of a flat and then to secure that specific flat you put down a £100 deposit, is that correct?

Kirstin [00:09:14] That's right. It's a pre-payment, actually.

Michaela [00:09:16] Prepayment, because it comes off your rent. So the process is quite easy. And if you are not 100% sure where you're going, that's perfectly fine as well as so many other people are in the same boat.

Ottilia [00:09:31] I do have to add here that I, for example, I think I applied quite late in the process service like late August when I applied and I still got my first choice. So you still have good chances of getting the place where you want to be, but still don't like don't fret it it's everything's going to be OK.

Michaela [00:09:47] Yeah, I know. We just keep saying this, but it is it is true. Right. Just don't worry too much.

Kirstin [00:09:53] Yeah. I think that's what most people ask us in Open Days and things like that. They seem to be really anxious about how quickly they can apply. But you'll get a place regardless.

Michaela [00:10:03] Yeah, definitely. So let's talk about what living in the student accommodation is actually like. The Hillhead team and Kirstin, they organise like a Move-In Weekend, which is the earliest date when you can move into your house. Of course, if you want to move in a few days later because of, say, logistical issues or just personal choice, you don't want to move in during that specific time. That is possible. But most people do take the opportunity to move in as soon as they can. Ottilia, do you remember about that first week in halls was like.

Ottilia [00:10:35] So I actually drove from Luxembourg with my mum straight to Scotland. We took a little ferry, so I had a lot of stuff. So the moving was a big move because I know a lot of my friends just came with one suitcase or two suitcases, but I just had a lot of stuff. So I feel like it was it was quite hectic to sort everything out. And then I got sick and the whole first week just was me being in bed and not really experiencing that much.

Michaela [00:11:06] Well, let me say what I did during my Move-In Weekend and the Freshers' Week afterwards. Well, this was like seven years ago now, but we moved in with a huge event. There were so many people around. There was a lot of volunteers like older students as well, who just volunteered during Move-In Weekend to make sure everyone got where they needed to be. They picked us up at the airport, we registered for a little pick up and they drove us to the halls and then there were so many different people who are just so keen to help. And, like you said, I had a couple of suitcases that had all my worldly possessions in them. And there were so many nice people who helped me carry them. And I was sweating and it was hot and I didn't know where I was! Everything was new. But there were so many people who just wanted to help. So what I remember was that I came into my room, I picked up my keys, I came into my room and my suitcases, and I immediately went out and started mingling with people. And I remember there was there were some events as well. Kirstin, do you know what sort of events you do for Freshers Week?

Kirstin [00:12:13] They do loads of stuff over Move-In Weekend. They usually put on a movie night, quiz nights, and they even organised like walks along the beach and stuff like that for smaller groups, just for people who maybe find it hard to to mingle.

Michaela [00:12:29] Yeah, that's definitely something that also helps you meet people, because I think we all forget that everyone else is in the same position. Pretty much no one will move to Aberdeen and already have like an established group of friends. So everyone moves and is looking for friends, is looking to find people who are doing the same course or possibly people from the same country as well, because you will find that Aberdeen is quite international. So you will find so many different people. And those events during the first week really do give you that opportunity to meet up with people who

then might be your friends for the rest of the time in uni. And I think people still say that, like, you know, people I met during freshers and people I met in halls are still my friends to this day. So you will form friendships for sure spontaneously when you don't expect it. And it helps to have the group of people that don't know what they're doing with you as well, because you can just not know what to do together! I don't know about you, Otilia, but we always organise these, like, shopping trips together, like it was like a hunting expedition. And we'd message in our group chat, like, does anyone need to go shopping for food? And then, like, four people would say, yes, I need food as well. And then we just wide-eyed set off into the city centre with just backpacks and bags. And we just fled into the nearest supermarket shop and shop together. And it was just nice, you know, to have this little community of people who have no clue what this bread is - you know, I was used to much different bread! The bread was different, the milk was different. So we all just got down and liked it together.

Otilia [00:14:11] Yeah, definitely. Like the people in my flat, like my best friends in my flat at the time, we always went to shop together. We bought stuff and one time the flat bought matching slippers and I still wear those at home. They were like this leopard print ones. And I think there's just a little reminder of the like good old times in Hillhead!

Michaela [00:14:32] And because you mentioned that you were buying things for the flat Kirstin, can you just sort of mention what usually you would need to buy for your flat and what is provided?

Kirstin [00:14:41] So, yeah, we don't actually provide any bedding or crockery or anything like that because these days we just find that students want to take their own stuff prior to moving in usually. And people get in touch with each other through Facebook pages so they'll actually know who their flatmates are before they arrive. And more often than not, they've set up a group chat or something like that. So sometimes before they arrive, they'll discuss who's taking pots and pans, who's buying the plates and cups and and things like that. So it's very useful to get in touch with your flatmates before you come.

Michaela [00:15:16] I also remember this was my first encounter with the Scandinavian Society. The Scandinavian Society organised a bus trip to IKEA.

Kirstin [00:15:26] Oh, really? Yeah. Wow.

Michaela [00:15:27] Yeah, yeah. Those good times on the bus to and from IKEA just loaded up with tons of different £1 cups and stuff that you absolutely needed because they were £1. Yeah. So there might be even opportunities to do this sort of big shopping trip, but you can also pre purchase online these packs that will be brought to your room, so it's there when you move in.

Kirstin [00:15:52] That's right. So you can order your bedding and kitchen packs and things like that in advance if you want to get it delivered to your room before you come. But more often than not, we see the parents and the students going to Asda or Dunelm or wherever and buying everything they need on the day.

Michaela [00:16:10] There are many options for what you can do. What I did was I also ordered an Asda delivery on the day when I was arriving to be delivered, so like online shopping. That way it was also waiting there for me, so that's another good way to get your essentials. And of course, during that first week, you will probably be talking to your flatmates a fair amount, but you will also be meeting other people. Otilia, how did you find

the mixture like in your flat? Were all your flatmates from the same country, were they doing the same programme or was it sort of a mixture?

Ottilia [00:16:47] It was five girls and there were three Scottish girls, one American and then me where I'm from. And I think we were all doing different degrees – actually, there was me and this one girl who shared a degree but everyone else was doing completely different things. And I think that's really cool to get to know people who are doing different stuff, because later it's like you start to mingle with people who do the same kind of thing that you do. So I think also in Hillhead, it's so nice to meet people that you otherwise wouldn't. I don't think I would hang out with like Law people if I didn't have one person studying law, you know, in my flat or something like that.

Michaela [00:17:30] Is that how it works, Kirstin, You just sort of mix people together?

Kirstin [00:17:34] Yes, we try and mix up as much as possible. So you don't have all Medical students and one flat or Law students in one flat, you're getting the experience of meeting people that you might not have made friends with otherwise.

Michaela [00:17:48] And is there an opportunity to say that I want to be in a quiet flat, alcohol free flat, or stay with other mature students?

Kirstin [00:17:57] Yeah, exactly. We do usually try and put mature students together. We do have the option to choose a quiet block if you're not into partying and also an alcohol free block as well.

Michaela [00:18:13] Yeah. So even though you will be mixed, you still get the opportunity to be with like minded people. And how does it work with gender mixed flats? Do we as a standard, do we mix genders or do we stay single sex?

Kirstin [00:18:26] Generally they are single sex flats, but we do have mixed flats as well. So there's all options there basically.

Michaela [00:18:35] Yeah. And again, it's up to you to decide what you want to stay in. And Ottilia, you said already that you socialised with some people from Law who might have been, you know, your your flatmates' friends and that sort of stuff. Did you ever have friends come across from different buildings and visit you in your flats or where did you hang out?

Ottilia [00:18:53] So like most of the time, like in the beginning of the first year we hung out in our flat because I was it was the biggest, then we had the biggest kitchen and it was easier to fill in with people. But then I got to know other people, like through societies or like just other kind of like courses that I had gone to. We started to move away from my flat because we had some people who had told us like they don't want that much noise in the flat in the evenings. So we just respected their decisions and we moved away from our flat and kind of I moved to Grant Court with my current flatmates that I met just randomly in a corner of Hillhead and we became the best of friends! And then I just thought, I'm living in Grant Court instead of New Carnegie

Michaela [00:19:44] Grant Court, I think is actually my favourite. I like the colour scheme of it!

Ottilia [00:19:49] Yeah, definitely.

Michaela [00:19:50] Yeah. That's one thing that I would like to mention is that you can go online on our website and you can see 360 sort of pictures, visualisations from all the flats and all the different types of accommodation. So I will put a link in our show notes to lead you to these. And I've also personally filmed a Hillhead campus tour where we take you into three different flats and we also show you around the central building. So I'll pop that in the show notes as well. And I also mentioned we went around the central building with a camera to take you guys around - that is hugely beneficial for so all sorts of socialising. Did you ever go there, Ottilia?

Ottilia [00:20:31] Yeah, I think after I met my current flatmates and they loved playing pool, we went to the main building to play pool quite a bit. And then I discovered also that there this games room next to the music room and we started going there. They're amazing!

Kirstin [00:20:47] Yes, the central building got quite a lot of different spaces, actually. Ottilia, I think you were talking about there's a music practice room, so it's kind of like a sound proof room where you could go and practise the drums or play the piano, that kind of thing. There's also the community space where we've got board games and things like that, or DVDs. You can go and watch a DVD with some of your friends. There's also the community kitchen where we organise cookery classes. You could also book that if you wanted to hold like a larger dinner party or something like that, sometimes like the American students would organise a Thanksgiving meal there, for instance.

Ottilia [00:21:28] Can I say here with about the kitchen before I forget - some of my friends organised this little Christmas party around Christmas, and then everyone brought, like, a bit of food and some people, like, cooked it there or heated up. And then we just shared a great little party of just eating and having Christmas fun!

Michaela [00:21:50] Yeah, it's an amazing kitchen, huge.

Ottilia [00:21:51] It is so big.

Kirstin [00:21:55] You know, when we refurbished the central building, it was a really important area that we wanted there.

Michaela [00:22:04] There's also like a gym space, right? It's like an exercise room.

Kirstin [00:22:08] That's right. Yes. So there's a large hall and we sometimes have exercise classes there. So it might be yoga or Zumba and we've also had movie nights in there. So we'll put a movie on the projector and we usually do that during Freshers Week.

Michaela [00:22:26] And there's also a bar and restaurant that you possibly could get your meals from if you wanted to. But available to anyone, you don't have to be a catered student, right?

Kirstin [00:22:37] That's right. So it's the café bar and they serve meals. You go in there with your friends and just have a burger and a drink and but yeah, like you said, if you go for the catered options and you can get your meals there, that's breakfast and dinner.

Michaela [00:22:51] And I noticed last time I was there, there are some screens as well right in that area.

Kirstin [00:22:55] Yes, if there's big football matches or big sporting events and they'll show them as well.

Ottilia [00:23:02] And I do have to say that the food is really great in the bar. I think even, as a vegetarian or vegan, I think they have a couple of great dishes for everyone.

Michaela [00:23:11] Isn't it like super cheap as well?

Ottilia [00:23:13] As I remember, yeah, I think it was pretty cheap. And also because Hillhead is so far away from the town, sometimes you do want to eat out.

Michaela [00:23:20] I would say when she says super far, she really means it's so close! It's only like forty five minutes walk guys, and there is a bus as well, so, you know.

Ottilia [00:23:29] I mean the bus is like ten minutes. It's not that far away.

Michaela [00:23:32] Yeah. So she didn't really mean when she said that. But actually that is something that we haven't mentioned. How far is Hillhead from the main campus?

Kirstin [00:23:41] And so I would say it's less than a mile to the main campus and it's actually a really nice walk through Seaton Park and it takes fifteen, twenty minutes, something like that. You'll see hordes of students every day walking back and forward. And there's also a bus, which is, what, five minutes to the campus. And I would say about ten minutes into town.

Michaela [00:24:01] Yeah. And we have a free shuttle as well, which usually runs - it mainly runs for the medical students from Hillhead, stops over at Old Aberdeen and then goes to the hospital. So that is free for students usually as well. The schedule might be changed and that sort of stuff so keep an eye out for it. But yeah, there's usually a bus as well.

Ottilia [00:24:25] And I do have to say that the the walk through Seaton to campus is like the prettiest thing during, like, autumn mornings when it's a bit misty. So it's definitely an experience to do that. And you can do it in ten minutes if you're fast enough. And I do have to also mention that you can go around Old Aberdeen, which is another way. If it's super slippery in Seaton Park, you can go through Old Aberdeen and that's also like the prettiest place ever to just walk and have a little moment before uni starts.

Michaela [00:24:57] Yeah, yeah. And that's also something that the first few weeks we did in groups together, people from different accommodation, buildings were like always like always like 'is anyone going to Macrobert for 9am?' and we all were like, yes, let's go together.

Ottilia [00:25:12] So I love doing it by myself. I always had my headphones on. I just, you know, took the moment for myself to walk through Seaton Park.

Michaela [00:25:21] And so you sort of mentioned, Ottilia, that you spoke to your flatmates about having people over and you've worked out what works for all of you sharing the flats. But there's also something that people might wonder about, and that's how they will arrange to clean their flats, because it's up to you. It's only the shared communal areas like stairwells and hallways that are cleaned by the university staff. If you're in a flat, you're

responsible for cleaning that flat yourself. Do you have any tips for us how to organise cleaning so that we don't end up with a really dirty flat and really passive-aggressively angry people?

Ottilia [00:26:08] I think that's really important. Talk to your flatmates about when things need to be cleaned and who cleans it. Because if somebody does it at some point, that's not going to work. Like you need to have someone like - you take care of the trash and I take care of oven, or whatever, because otherwise nobody will do anything. And then things get mouldy... speaking from experience. So try to have a schedule and instead of just like winging it, I think for us it worked out somehow because I like cleaning and one of my other flatmates like cleaning. So we just really cleaned everything every two weeks, which is like 'you guys should do something else as well!' We were nice flatmates. Like, I think my current flatmates can say that, yes, I am a nice flatmate, but if you want to have like good relationship with your flatmates, you should schedule cleaning.

Michaela [00:27:01] Yeah. And that's something that you will probably come across as well. When you move in with different people, be it in university halls or in private accommodation or in a flat, you will find that people are used to different things. And might have never been responsible for their own bathroom or bedroom before. So it might be sort of a shock to the system to discover that actually your mum did a lot of cleaning without you noticing. So this is just something that you will work it out – in the first few months, I just sort of didn't really know what was going on. I didn't know how to cook, didn't know how to clean. But you will learn. And that's the important thing. I guess communication is important, isn't it?

Ottilia [00:27:47] Oh, it really is so important to communicate because otherwise things might happen and you don't want drama in your flat!

Michaela [00:27:53] Yeah. And you had your own private bathroom, Ottilia. So you had to clean that up.

Ottilia [00:27:59] I think I was pretty good at cleaning my own bathroom. Sometimes I neglected it, but one of my flatmates, she neglects her bathroom for I'd say seven months. And at that point she could not do anything and she had to call like the people in the main building to unclog all the drains in the shower or in the bathroom because the water was everywhere. And I think that's a good reminder that you can actually, like, call people to do that for you. You don't have to do it yourself.

Michaela [00:28:31] Yeah, there's a maintenance staff and security staff on site. And the security guards are there non-stop, aren't they?

Kirstin [00:28:39] That's right. So our reception is open 24 hours, 7 days a week. There's always porters on duty, so there's always somebody to call. And if you get locked out your flat, for example, or if you've got a maintenance issue, we tend to respond to them very quickly.

Michaela [00:28:56] Yeah. So it's a really safe environment because there's always someone who's there.

Kirstin [00:29:01] Yes. So the security are on as I said, 24 hours. So they do security patrols throughout the night. There's also CCTV all over the campus as well. So it's a really safe environment.

Michaela [00:29:15] And you said, you know, if you lock yourself out of your flats, how does access to buildings and flats work? Do you have an old school key? Is it a card?

Kirstin [00:29:26] So more and more, as we've had buildings refurbished and new buildings built and they are either on the your ID card so you can actually get access to your flat with your ID card. Some of them have some of them have the key card, which is more like the hotel style key cards and some of them are still old fashioned keys.

Michaela [00:29:51] Yeah. So there's a variety of different ways to get into your building, but you can only get into your own building. No one without a key can get in. So that's another good thing as well. You can feel safe and secure because you know that it's only the people who actually live in this building that can enter this building. And if anything, you know, if you ever needed any help, the porters, because they're there 24/7, they're absolutely fantastic. I can't tell you about the amount of times I called them at midnight because I locked myself out on my way from the bathroom. Or there was also one time when my light bulb went off and I was in the middle of writing an essay at 3am and I could not stop. Like, I cannot stop what I'm in the zone at 3am! So I had to just call them over and get them to change my light bulb at 3am because I would not stop with that essay.

Ottilia [00:30:48] I do have to say that I didn't realise that you can also get the light bulbs from the main building. And I had the worst experience trying to buy a light bulb for the lamp in my room. And it was a mistake. But I have learnt and I think if you move to Hillhead, I think you should just know that everyone will help you. Like, you will get everything you need. It's not like you living just by yourself. And you need to know all the light bulbs.

Michaela [00:31:13] Light bulbs are a mystery still. And we were also saying if you're there overnight, there's support. Apart from porters, there is also student residence assistants who are on hand overnight.

Kirstin [00:31:26] That's right. So the student residence assistants work in the evening time through till six o'clock in the morning, so they're there for support, welfare support and they also organised a lot of the events I was talking about earlier, like the quiz nights, the craft nights and the cooking nights, things like that.

Michaela [00:31:48] And they're there just if you want to have a chat, if you're feeling lonely overnight.

Kirstin [00:31:52] Yeah, exactly. So, you know, if you're feeling a bit homesick maybe in the first couple of weeks or if you've got anything worrying you, exam worries, relationship worries, there's always somebody that you can get in touch with to talk to.

Michaela [00:32:09] Yeah. And that's I think something that we have an edge over private accommodation with or living on your own in your own flat because you will not get that sort of 24/7 security on site and someone just there to hang out with if you need to.

Kirstin [00:32:26] That's right. I think because for many of the students it's the first time away from home, it can be quite daunting. And of course, you want to be independent, do your own thing. But we just have that support there if you need it.

Michaela [00:32:40] Yeah, absolutely. And also, you don't have to worry about any extra bills because just everything is included in the price. So if you're living in your own flat, you might get a shock when you find out how expensive electricity is and you will not be heating the flat for like four months over the winter because you're like, 'I'm not paying for the heating!' When you live in Hillhead, that's all included, including good Wi-Fi. So that is definitely a plus as well over living anywhere else.

Ottilia [00:33:11] Yeah, I think like living in halls, especially in university halls, is such an easy way to ease the life into adult life. Like, you get you live by yourself, but then you get all this stuff given to you like Wi-Fi. You don't have to worry about Wi-Fi or water bills or anything. It's so much easier to move in there than straight to like your own flat and just figure everything out by yourself.

Michaela [00:33:34] Yeah, I think it's a nice middle step. So if your parents as well are a little bit worried about your level of independence, your parents are worried that you don't know how to use the washing machine. That's OK. Move into Hillhead, and you will you will have quite a protected environment. And it's comfortable. It's still giving you the independence. There's no one who's watching when you come home. But also, if anything goes wrong, there's someone there who can help. Ottilia, you also mentioned that you had friends in different rooms. And sometimes what happens, you might have a little conflict with your flatmates. Kirstin, is that something your team also can help with when it comes to conflicts and, you know, if you need to move flats?

Kirstin [00:34:23] Yeah, definitely. So we do ask you to give it a go in the first couple of weeks to start with. If you do find that your flatmates maybe aren't your kind of people or you made friends elsewhere who've got a room in their flat going, then yeah, you could ask to move and the student residence assistants and they can intervene if there are any flat disputes and maybe try and sit down and resolve amongst you.

Michaela [00:34:50] Yeah, that's a good thing to keep in mind as well. You know, if you if you ever find that things are getting difficult, just ask for help. There's help out there.

Ottilia [00:35:00] I do have to also say that, like even like if it obviously gets that bad you have to move out. But you have to also remember that you don't have to be friends with your flatmates. Like, you don't have to be best friends to live with people. You just have to be nice to them and, you know, work things out and be friendly, because you can also find so many other people outside of your flats and you can be friends with them and maybe move in with them later on and the flat life is not everything.

Michaela [00:35:29] Yeah, definitely. I think that's actually something that a lot of people find. Like in their first year, they make a group of friends and it might be people from their flat, it might not be people from their flat, but then in further years, in their second year and beyond, they then go and look into private accommodation or a landlord owned flats with that group of friends. Is that what you found, Ottilia?

Ottilia [00:35:54] Yeah, I moved in to a private landlord owned place with my flatmates, and we lived there for two years. And those were not people from my flat. They were completely different people. And I think that's a great thing to find, also people from other places.

Michaela [00:36:13] You then do you find that this is true across the board? Do most people go their own way after first year?

Kirstin [00:36:20] Yeah, definitely. I do think that's exactly what happens. They have here, if you like, for support and their first year. And then after that, they want to do their own thing and want to go out into the private accommodation world.

Michaela [00:36:35] Is there the option to stay in Hillhead or in university accommodation in general, if we do want to stay?

Kirstin [00:36:43] Yes, we do get some. Every year we get some returners, but not a huge amount.

Michaela [00:36:49] Yeah, but there is a possibility if they do want to. So that's something to keep in mind as well. So is there anything else that you guys would like to share? Any parting words of advice that you think, Otilia, you might want to tell people when they're thinking about accommodation and moving university?

Otilia [00:37:08] No, I honestly just have to say that I think moving to halls, especially uni halls, is such a crucial part of the uni experience, if I can say that, that it's so worth to actually look into that, because I also moved to Aberdeen without ever being in the country - like I had only been to London, which is quite far from Scotland. So, you know, I think it's just so easy to find like like-minded people in Hillhead because it's so small and everyone is in the same situation. It's so worth it to actually try that instead of being like, I'm going to be an adult and I'm going to move to my own flat, because that way you might not find as many friends or people as easily. I think yes, living in halls is a great thing.

Michaela [00:37:58] Yeah, I totally agree. It's a very special experience that you will never replicate again in your life. That first year of university is just such a formative year. And anything goes that year, you'll learn how to make chips. You learn, what the settings on the washing machine are for, you go to football games with people. And even though you hate football, you just give it a go. You know, there's just so many different experiences that you can get from sharing your space with other people. And university halls give you that sort of space, that framework where you can meet people from all walks of life, all countries, all different courses as well. So that what you don't have to just socialise with people from your specific course. You can just find anyone anywhere, you know, just come up to someone who's sitting on their own in the central building and strike up a conversation, you know, and you might be friends forever. You never know. Kirstin, is there anything that you would possibly tell parents who are worried about their child coming into accommodation?

Kirstin [00:39:07] Yeah, I think it's just reassuring to know what I said previously, basically, that there's always somebody here. We've got 24 hour cover 7 days a week. We've got qualified first aid staff. There's always somebody at the end of a phone. There's somebody at reception and they won't get locked out of the flat in the middle of the night and not have anyone to let them back in. And I think just generally, there's always somebody here to help for whatever reason.

Michaela [00:39:40] Yeah, I hope that people got the sense from our conversation that the whole Hillhead staff is a really supportive bunch of people who genuinely care about the students and are there for the students. We definitely felt it. And I'm speaking for you and me, Otilia. I'm just saying that we both felt that the porters and the staff on site were just really there to help. And it was a lovely experience to live in Hillhead for my first year.

Otilia [00:40:09] Yeah, I shared the same experience. It was so nice to live there. Sometimes I miss it still!

Michaela [00:40:14] So thank you to all of our listeners for joining us. And of course, thank you to our two amazing guests who shared their expertise and their experiences. So if you want to hear some more from our current students next week, Georgie will be chatting to two students about sports and societies, which is another hugely popular topic. So join us then to find out more. And thank you again, Otilia and Kirstin.

Voiceover [00:42:11] Thank you for joining us for this episode of the Ask Aberdeen podcast, if you would like to suggest a 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.