

Ask Aberdeen Transcript – Episode 4

Speaker 1 [00:00:07] I'm Georgie, and I'm Michaela,

Speaker 2 [00:00:08] and we're here to tell you about the University of Aberdeen.

Speaker 1 [00:00:11] in each episode, we will discuss frequently asked questions about topics such as applications, go abroad, student life,

Speaker 2 [00:00:18] sports and societies,

Speaker 1 [00:00:19] budgeting for uni and life in Aberdeen.

Speaker 1 [00:00:22] We will be speaking to current Aberdeen students, those who really know what it's like to study and live here.

Speaker 2 [00:00:27] And we'll be getting exclusive tips from members of our amazing staff.

Speaker 1 [00:00:31] Join us for this episode of Ask Aberdeen.

Michaela [00:00:36] Hi, everyone, welcome to our latest podcast episode of Ask Aberdeen. In this episode, we're going to be talking to three students who are from various places across the UK and can tell us more about their experience of what it is like for them to either live really close to home or have moved further away from home. A lot of you will be looking at different options across the U.K.: you might be thinking about staying at home with your parents and going to your local university, or you might be thinking about moving really far away to the other corner of the UK. You might be wondering what is that experience like, especially if your school mates are not doing similar things. You might be the only one who's looking at moving to Scotland and you might find that a bit daunting. Hopefully speaking to the three students that we've got here today will give you a little bit of an idea of what it's like and give you the confidence as well that it's all fine and you'll be fine regardless of what choice you make. So, with me today, as I mentioned, we have three students, and I will ask them now to introduce themselves and I will make sure that all of them have space to say things across the podcast. So if you are a student from England, if you're a student movement from elsewhere in Scotland or if you're staying in Aberdeen, there's someone here representing you and giving you an idea of what that will be like. Let's start with Greg - Greg, do you mind telling us a little bit about yourself, where you're from, what you're studying, all that jazz?

Greg [00:02:18] OK. Hi, Greg. I'm from just outside Durham, north east of England, and I'm studying clinical pharmacology as a Masters. But I did my undergraduate in pharmacology here in Aberdeen as well.

Michaela [00:02:30] How many hours away is Durham from Aberdeen?

Greg [00:02:36] It's about four and a half or five hour drive on a good day. On a bad day. It can be way more than that!

Michaela [00:02:42] And we've got Helen, who's from Shetland. Do you mind telling us a little bit about yourself?

Helen [00:02:48] I'm Helen, I'm from Shetland and I'm currently in fourth year studying Anthropology. In terms of hours. If you want to get the boat, which goes from Shetland to Aberdeen, then it's 14 hours on a short trip and 16 hours on a longer trip. But you can also get a flight which is only an hour - that's a bit better!

Michaela [00:03:10] People think of Shetland as being just off the coast of Aberdeen, but it really isn't! I guess we're the closest mainland that there is to Shetland. You're representing the people who are still from Scotland but want to go to a university further away from home. Finally, we have Caitlin. Caitlin is from Aberdeen - do you mind introducing yourself, please?

Caitlin [00:03:44] I'm Caitlin and I study Psychology and Business. I have lived in Aberdeen my whole life since I was born. I did live in Aberdeenshire for a while, but still Aberdeen! I went to Aberdeen Uni and just stayed close to home.

Michaela [00:04:03] So we have a really great variety of experiences here as you can tell. And I would like to start with asking Greg, why did you decide to go to Aberdeen? Because in and around Durham, there's quite a choice of universities. So what made you look at a university so far away?

Greg [00:04:28] It started when I was at school. I went to a chemistry competition that was hosted up here in Aberdeen University and that gave me a chance to look around university and I quite liked it. Aberdeen was always on the list of ones I was interested in and I looked at the courses and enjoyed what I saw. There was a lot of other universities that didn't offer quite as good courses. The [Aberdeen] facilities were excellent, so really distance didn't take too much of a role. If the course was good, then the distance wasn't too much of an issue for me.

Michaela [00:05:04] So you were more focused about on getting what you want rather than staying in a specific location. Did you know anyone else from your school who decided to move out or did most people stay local?

Greg [00:05:17] There wasn't too many people from high school to go into university, so there wasn't that many of us, not a big pool of us to choose from. One of my friends ended up at Glasgow University and that was the closest I had to anyone from high school to Aberdeen. Most of the people when I went south from Durham.

Michaela [00:05:34] So you weren't an outlier - you did your own thing, but you didn't have to battle people who were saying, why are you doing this?

Greg [00:05:45] Yeah, there was nothing like that at all. It was all there was no pressure to choose a particular place or feeling abandonment from people because you were going far away and other people weren't. Or you go in the opposite direction to people. It was more 'you go and get what you want to get and do what you want to do'.

Michaela [00:06:00] That's really good. I am not from the UK and I was the only person I knew who was not going to a Czech university and chose to go abroad. And I have to say, I did have a little bit of a pressure from others being like, 'why are you going abroad? We've got perfectly good universities!' I think it's just really about focusing on what you want at that point, because your classmates might be doing a certain thing, but it's about what you want. It's your future. Don't worry too much about what Becky from your Chemistry class thinks, because you're not going to see Becky ever again after you finish

school. Obviously, you might still be good friends with some of your school friends, but don't really worry too much about what everyone else is doing. Just focus on what you want to do. So, Helen, we've just heard from Greg. You know, he was moving from England, but there was sort of expectation that he was going to be going further away from home. But you were moving from Shetland, which is quite a small place to a bigger place, which is relatively close in Shetland terms. How did you decide to go to the mainland, to university in Aberdeen?

Helen [00:07:21] I always had an idea that I would come to the mainland of Scotland for university. There is a small college and university in Shetland, but there's not too many options. It's a really good option for people that would like to stay in Shetland, but for me, I knew I wanted to go to mainland Scotland and have that experience of living away from your parents and like growing up a bit, I guess. And I eventually chose Aberdeen because I was really quite inspired by the department that I was originally in, which was German, on one of my trips to Aberdeen. We were quite lucky in that we got to have a few trips to various universities around Scotland. And when we were in Aberdeen, we had the chance to speak to people who were in the department that we were hoping to go into, and I was really inspired by someone in that department. So that was kind of one of the main factors. As well, a lot of my friends from home were going to Aberdeen. I knew a lot of people in my class that decided to go to Aberdeen or to mainland Scotland as well, which was really nice. I knew that there were people around me that were having the same kind of same experiences. As well as that, like you say, Aberdeen is probably the closest mainland link to Shetland. There's a lot of people that are always passing through because of like hospital appointments or just go on holiday. If you're from Shetland, then you're always going through Aberdeen to get to somewhere else, so I was quite familiar with the main city centre area of Aberdeen. It was quite nice to be able to get to know other places around, and of course, the university is such a beautiful campus as well. I really enjoy the whole feeling of being on campus because it feels a bit separate from the rest of Aberdeen. It's like your own little enclosed area, so I really enjoy that as well.

[00:09:22] You said you knew a few people from your school. How big was your school? Were there were there many people who were going to university from your school?

Helen [00:09:32] Yeah, there was quite a few in my year, When we started in first year of secondary school, there were 47 of us, and that was considered a big class for our school! So it wasn't the biggest school ever. By sixth year, I think there were about 15 or 16 of us and I think about 8 of us went to university. A lot of my friends and a lot of my best friends were going to Aberdeen as well, so that was really helpful, knowing that they were that they would end up being quite close to me. One of my best friends went to Aberdeen Uni too, and we ended up living in flats just across from each other. It was nice because we got to know each other's flatmates, but we didn't necessarily have to spend the whole time together. It was good to be able to know that we were right next to each other when we needed each other.

Michaela [00:10:31] Yeah, that's quite a different experience. While Greg went to quite a big sixth form school, you went to nursery, primary school and secondary school, all in the same place.

Helen [00:10:46] Yeah, that's right. I've never heard of anyone else say that they've been to a school like this, but it was all the nursery, primary and secondary were all in the same place, just in separate buildings, but they were all in the same place, just five minute walk away from my from my house. It was a bit of a different experience when there was only

really about 150 pupils in the whole of the secondary school. We knew everyone, so it was quite a funny, different way of growing up.

Michaela [00:11:18] Yeah - and then you've come to university which has 15000 students, that will be quite a culture shock when coming from such a tight-knit community. We'll talk about that more in a little bit. Now I'm going to ask Caitlin - you are from Aberdeen, and you went to secondary school in Aberdeen, and then you decided to also go to university in Aberdeen. How did that come about?

Caitlin [00:11:50] Yeah, so I think I had always been quite keen on the idea of staying in Aberdeen. I just wasn't sure about going anywhere else. I didn't know anywhere else enough to think that much about going anywhere else. And then when I started looking at universities, I was quite keen and I heard really good things about Psychology at the University of Aberdeen, so that really attracted me to staying here as well. It seemed practical to stay here for many, many reasons. It's somewhere that I've lived since I was born, so it's somewhere that I know really well. I'm comfortable in the city and I was quite happy to stay where I was.

Michaela [00:12:36] Great. And did you know many people from your secondary school who also decided to stay or where people most are looking at going away from Aberdeen?

Caitlin [00:12:44] So in my year there were quite a lot of people that were moving away and they were moving to different parts of Scotland, places in England. There were people moving to America. There were people moving everywhere. There weren't actually many people staying in Aberdeen, which was strange to me from an Aberdeen school. But there were a lot of people wanting to go elsewhere. There was quite a small group of people, I think there were maybe ten of us, staying from my school that were going to universities in Aberdeen.

Michaela [00:13:24] That's interesting, that's good to hear that some people are staying in Aberdeen. How did you know about the university? Did you visit an open day before you actually decided to apply or did you sort of always have the knowledge that the University exists and you know that the University of Aberdeen is there? Did you look into what the university is like?

Caitlin [00:13:48] Yeah, I was always kind of aware they existed, but we were lucky that in school we would often get like little day trips to the University of Aberdeen to just kind of visit, and we did things like being a student for a day and that kind of thing. So I got to see it quite a lot, and we would go to events and stuff there. I think I did go to one open day but I was always aware it existed and then got more knowledge of it when I started properly looking into universities and actually looking at which ones would be best to go to.

Michaela [00:14:33] And were your parents supportive of you staying at home and living at home? How did they feel about you staying at home while you go to university?

Caitlin [00:14:44] They were supportive that I was welcome to move somewhere else, if that was something that I wanted to do. But I think they were quite happy for me to stay here. I have quite a lot of siblings. My mum's a foster carer, so I'm quite involved at home. So I think she was glad that I was there to help with that as well!

Michaela [00:15:13] That's good to hear, because obviously your parents are a huge influence in your lives. It would be a real shame if your parents if your parents are not on

board with what you're thinking you want to do. And Greg, your parents, what were your parents thinking? How were they feeling about you going sort of so far away from home that you wouldn't be able to visit every weekend?

Greg [00:15:35] They obviously weren't super keen to start with, but they did a similar thing when they went up to university, so it was something that they expected. It was something they'd experienced the other way around, a continuation of that which made me feel comfortable in doing it.

Michaela [00:15:52] And, Helen, I presume that your parents were on board with it, because in Shetland, you have to go away if you want to go to university.

Helen [00:16:00] Yeah, they were definitely very supportive of it. My dad was at university in Aberdeen as well, and my mum actually had to go to Edinburgh to do a year of college when she left school as well. They'd both experienced that as well, and I think that they knew that it was something that's good if you're from a smaller place like Shetland. They knew it was good to spend time in a bigger city and get to be acquainted with, like experience and meet lots of different people and find your way around somewhere that's a bit new and different. They were always really supportive of anything that me or my sister chose to do.

Michaela [00:16:40] So let's get into what it was like for you to actually move to university. How did you find transitioning to uni? Was it very different to being in school in general? And also, how was it being in a new place that you might not know that well before you moved there? Let's start with Greg.

Greg [00:17:01] It's different to school and different to living at home, because obviously you've got to do the chores. You've got to live by yourself, basically. And you've got to fit into your study to life at home. You've got support around you and everything that doesn't go away. But you need to fit everything into your day. Time to do chores, and food, and time to go shopping and everything, which does take a little bit of getting used to begin with, if you start from nothing. But it it's not impossible to do. It's just really good. It flows quite nicely with university life, I think.

Michaela [00:17:39] And you lived in Hillhead Halls right, Greg? So you were around people who were also in the exact same situation, most of them probably living away from home for the first time ever. That probably would have been quite a reassuring experience as well, right?

Greg [00:17:55] Yeah, definitely. Hillhead just was everyone was in the same boat, really being away from home for the first time. There were five of us and all from outside Scotland, so we'd all travelled a while to get to Aberdeen and didn't really know many people around the city or anything. It was good to explore as a group of friends and settle in together.

Michaela [00:18:16] Yeah, absolutely. When I lived in Hillhead, there were also five people in my kitchen. I lived in Adam Smith, which doesn't necessarily have the traditional flat layout, it's like a corridor style. In my kitchen there were five of us, and all of us were from outside of the UK, in fact. So we all dealt with varying degrees of homesickness and culture shock and, you know, figuring out how the heck do I use a gas hob?! It really was a learning experience together and that was nice. Also, all of us were trying to figure out what in the world is going on with having a separate tap for hot water and for cold water -

like, I'm sorry, UK, but who has that?! This is the 21st century, let's get on with stuff! I remember there was one time when we crafted a Coke bottle into like a mixer tap for our separate taps in our bedrooms. We had little craft afternoons together like that. It was really nice to have people who also didn't have their parents nearby and didn't always know what they were doing while we're also learning to cook for the first time together in a flat. Helen, you lived in private halls, is that right? And you said you lived near a friend that you knew from school, but actually in your flats, there was a mixture of people. How did you find transitioning into the Aberdeen big city lifestyle?

Helen [00:19:55] I found it OK because I've been in Aberdeen before, so I half knew my way through the city centre, like in terms of finding my way around. I really enjoyed living in halls as well. I mean, of course you always have like people that you're living with, where you're kind of like, oh, I don't know about them, but...

Michaela [00:20:14] Those who don't clean and those who leave their stinky food out and don't wash their pants. Oh, yeah, we know those.

Helen [00:20:21] Yeah, exactly. But overall, I found it was really good because in my flat because it was in private accommodation, there was a mixture of people from like all over the place and also going to different universities, which was interesting as well. Maybe if I did it again, I would probably stay at Aberdeen Uni Halls, but it was still a good experience. And I found probably the most difficult thing for me was like coming up with a proper routine. When you're at school, obviously you're there from 9:00 until 3:00, roughly. So that's like your time for study and maybe you have some homework in the evening, and when we were in sixth year that we had free periods so we could do what we wanted to do or study then. But then when you come to uni and then suddenly you have a different kind of routine that you have to put yourself into, then it becomes a bit different. I found that probably the most difficult. But again, it's not impossible. You just have to make sure that you make enough time for everything and that's something that you just learn over time eventually.

Michaela [00:21:36] Yeah, exactly. That's not something that everyone is born with. The majority of us really have to go through a trial and error phase where you try different things like getting up at 1pm and doing all your coursework at 3am... you know, I tried that for four years of my degree. It works for me but it might not work for everyone. You might find that a routine really helps and possibly keep into the same general timelines that you would in school, you know, like getting up early and doing your work during the day and then having the evenings off. Some people find that they work better in the evenings. You might find that you have people in your flat who are just on a complete opposite schedule to you. It's just a really interesting experience getting to know all these people and all these different ways of doing things, because in school, you might have been led to do things a certain way. You come to university and you do your own thing, you learn however you want to learn, you find what works for you, and there's also support at university where they help you figure those things out. If you struggle with attention, you know, if you, for example, have a specific attention deficit disorder, they are actually advisors who can sit down with you and work out a schedule that would work for your needs. There are also advisors in general who can just help you with advice, what will work the best for you based on your experiences. And Caitlin, you must have had quite a different experience because you lived at home and you were with your mum pretty much the whole time. Anytime you were not in uni you would have had your mum around. So how did you find transitioning to uni when you're in the same environment as when you

were at school? Did you find it quite difficult? Did you feel like anything did change, like did you gain confidence while going to university?

Caitlin [00:23:37] Yeah, I definitely feel as much as I was still in the same home environment, I feel like I really changed as a person, that I definitely did become more confident. And I think that even though my home environment was still the same, it was as though when you're in school, you're kind of you've got your strict timetable. You're with the same small group of people, and you're doing things that everyone's telling you to do. While at university you're still given that structure, but it's not the same and you have more freedom when you go to uni. I really I think that I benefited from that. And that change in environment really benefited me, that I became more confident and felt more free to just organise things - like you were saying about a routine, I could just make my own routine rather than having to follow one that someone gave me at school. So, yeah, I think that being at home didn't really affect me all that much, and I still benefited from transitioning to university.

Michaela [00:24:50] Yeah, I mean, a lot of people will end up being in the same environment. But still that doesn't mean that you can't change just because you are in the same room that you were a year ago when you were in school. It doesn't mean that you can't find new hobbies and new friends and meet new people, so it is really about what you want and what you make of the experience. Caitlin, how did you find making friends? How did you meet friends? If you are not in halls, what else could you do to meet friends if you're not living with them?

Caitlin [00:25:26] I was lucky that there was that small group of people that were coming from my school, so I did already know those people. They were people that I spoke to when I was in school, but they weren't close friends, but some of them became close friends when I went to uni. And then I was able to meet people in lectures and of course, Psychology particularly, is hands on and we have a lot of small group tutorials and stuff where I would be talking to people quite a lot in there and making more friends doing things like that. Even though I lived at home, I was still able to go on nights out and go to uni events. I was still quite able to do that because my mum wasn't very fussy about me going to these places. She was quite happy to have me socialising. In a way it might have been easier for me if I lived in halls, but then at the same time, like has been said, I think you can end up living with people that you're maybe not as keen on. At least I didn't have to worry about people not cleaning up after themselves! I didn't have that issue.

Michaela [00:26:59] Yeah, I mean, telling your mum off for not putting her laundry away - that would be a bit awkward! You said you went on nights out. Did you ever stay at someone's place after a night out or did you always go home?

Caitlin [00:27:17] Sometimes come home but sometimes it would just be easier to go and stay with my friends in their halls because halls are typically quite close to town and a lot easier to get back to. I'm like a 20-minute taxi home, so it made my night so a lot more expensive if I go and I if I got a taxi home. Sometimes it was just easier to stay with my friends in their house.

Michaela [00:27:43] You can still sort of get the best of both worlds: getting the nights out without parents' supervision when you stay away and stay at someone's place, and then just go home the next day and give your mum the lowdown on what happened the night before.

Caitlin [00:28:01] Yeah!

Michaela [00:28:03] I can definitely see the advantages of living at home where you don't have to clean up after other people! You always have someone who wants to listen to you. Living with your parents is not necessarily a bad thing, I have to say now that I have lived away from home for a while. Talking about how you meet other people, Greg, I know that you joined quite a lot of societies when you first came to Aberdeen, is that right?

Greg [00:28:29] Yeah. One of the ways of getting to know lots of people was the Freshers' Fair and the Sports Fair, just going around and talking to people and going to the taster sessions. You just go and meet them and see what they're doing, what it's like, and then inevitably have social events after to get to know people in social scenarios, which is quite nice. You get to meet people not just in your year at uni or your course, but a mishmash of people doing different stuff. You really meet a wide range of people with totally different life experiences, which is great.

Michaela [00:29:00] Helen, did you join many societies when you came?

Helen [00:29:04] Yeah, I joined a few, although I ended up not going as much in second and third year, but it was really good in first year because I was able to go and meet other people. Like you're saying, it was like a great way to find out about the best places to go and even just to get to know how you could meet other people. You always knew that it was there and it was an option - although a lot of the time what would end up happening is I would go along to these events and then suddenly my friends would turn up and then we'd end up going off and doing something else! But it was like a great way to start meeting people and just get to know other experiences.

Michaela [00:29:49] Aberdeen is a decent sized city. There's about 250,000 people, when you take in all the suburbs and stuff, but you still do get that sort of smaller city feel as well. A lot of the time when you're out with your friends, you might run into your other friends. Helen, you were once at a club, right, and you were saying that that was quite a lot of people you knew?

Helen [00:30:12] Oh, my gosh. It just used to happen the whole time because there are other universities in Aberdeen and there's a lot of people from Shetland that go to those universities and there's a lot of people from Shetland that go to Aberdeen University. And like there would be like countless times that we were in various clubs and suddenly there would be like one Shetland person that you knew you there, and then there would be another person and suddenly there would be like a huge super group, like in the corner of a club! It would just all be Shetlanders, not that we particularly knew each other well, but people would point to you like – Shetland! then they'd come around you. It eventually led to us nearly starting a Shetland and Orkney society. We tried to form the basis of that group - I think there were around 100 people in the Facebook group, so we were doing pretty well.

Michaela [00:31:09] You might try to move away from Shetland, but Shetland stays in you! They find you whenever you're in a club, clearly.

Helen [00:31:16] Yeah, exactly. I think that's the thing about Shetlanders is that doesn't really matter where you go. You always find someone from Shetland. Despite the small population, we just seem to get everywhere!

Michaela [00:31:26] I bet that Greg didn't really have that same experience with people from Durham where you pointed at someone like 'Durham!'

Greg [00:31:33] Not really, but I did meet one person once in a night club from Durham!

Michaela [00:31:38] It's nice that the city is small enough for you to run into people. That does make it feel a little bit less daunting as well. I worked at a job in the city centre at a grocery store, and the amount of people that would come by and buy stuff, I would be like, oh, we know each other from somewhere, right? Like, where do I know you from? Even though the city is bigger than what you possibly might be used to, or if you're coming from London it might seem like a really tiny village, there are people that you'll meet and the scene is not so large that you get lost in it. It also does give you the chance to sort of start afresh. So if you're looking to sort of find yourself more and sort of discover who you actually are, than the stereotype you might have been cast into in high school (like the school clown, which was me) you might be looking to see who you actually are. And university is a great way to build confidence and be yourself authentically. Greg, did you find did you find that was the case for you being just able to be yourself?

Greg [00:32:49] Yeah, it was a nice, totally blank slate. You could be whatever you wanted to be. No restrictions, really.

Michaela [00:32:56] Yeah, that's definitely the case. As Caitlin said, you don't even have to move far away from home to be able to do that. But if you do come to a university or a place where you don't really know anyone, that does give you that opportunity to say: don't call me by that nickname that my mum gave me when I was five years old, and that stuck with me for my entire teenage years. Just call me Michaela. Don't call me Mishka anymore, please! With you guys, Helen and Greg, moving a little bit further away from home, did you ever find yourself homesick?

Greg [00:33:32] To begin with. When I was driving up the first time, I got about halfway up and realised it's actually quite a long way and I couldn't go back for a day here and there. It is quite a long way away, but we phone to talk to family and they're always going to make time for that and they're always there to listen. Friends, much of the same.

Michaela [00:33:57] How did you find did it Helen, with you being actually physically so far away, were you homesick?

Helen [00:34:02] Yeah, I did get homesick sometimes, but I think it was always after I'd been speaking to family, especially my grandparents. I always found I was like, oh, I really do miss everybody at home. But I found it was quite easy to adjust eventually because a lot of my friends were close by and I knew there was other people from Shetland here and they were all experiencing the same thing. I think that was something that was quite helpful. It's not just Shetlanders who experience that - in my flat, there was a girl from Germany, and obviously she was so far away from her home that it put things into perspective. If I really wanted to, I could just jump on the boat and I would be home the next morning, so it wasn't too much. I always knew that I had that option, whereas for her she would have to get all these connecting flights and it would take forever and you would have to book it so far in advance before it was cheap enough that you could go. I felt quite lucky in the fact I could just hop on the plane or whatever and go home, whereas she had to plan out her trips, so that put things into perspective a little bit as well.

Michaela [00:35:18] Yeah, I knew when I was moving away that I was only going to be able to visit my family at Christmas and during the summer, so I was sort of prepared for it. But there are still things that you will find you miss; there'll just be a day when you're really craving your mum's chicken noodle soup or something. Greg, did you find that having stuff to do helped with your homesickness?

Greg [00:35:43] Yes, University's quite busy with a lot of social events going on, and there's uni work as well believe it or not! You've got to keep a busy schedule most of the time anyway, and you don't have time to just sit and think about things you're missed out on. You've got lots going on and time to discover Aberdeen without having the time to really worry about homesickness.

Michaela [00:36:05] I definitely see that as well. Just being busy and just planning your reading, that definitely helps. If you're moving away from home and you're worried about finding yourself in a new place, joining societies, joining sports teams, getting a part time job or volunteering somewhere, that will be one way that might really help you get through the worst of it. You will find that you're actually making Aberdeen your home and you might not want to leave afterwards! I decided to stay because I decided that Aberdeen was a lovely place and I really liked it. And that's not what I thought was going to happen at first because the first few weeks might be tough. It's such an unfamiliar place if you're moving from further away, and you might just really find it weird and you just really want to go back to your creature comforts. You will get through that initial phase and you will make yourself a new home. You might confuse people saying 'I want to go home', and that might mean that you want to go to your flat in Aberdeen or it might mean that you want to go visit your family in Shetland. It's quite a transformative experience. It makes you realise that you're your home. You just have to find the home in yourself and find what makes a home for you. And Caitlin, obviously, you probably weren't homesick because you were away from home for a three hour lecture and then you came back. But how did you cope with just being in Aberdeen? Did you ever want to leave Aberdeen? Did you ever go and visit your friends in other cities just to get a little bit of a different city feel?

Caitlin [00:37:59] Yeah, I think that was the advantage that so much of my year went to different places. There was always that opportunity to go to different places. My boyfriend lives in Glasgow, so I feel like I spent half of my time in Glasgow anyway! I was able to still visit other cities and almost get the student life of other cities as well as my own, and I could transport myself between the two of them. That was nice to kind of get the different experiences. But yeah, I definitely didn't get homesick going to uni from nine till five!

Michaela [00:38:42] Yeah, I guess that's an advantage of staying in your city. You know, you also did explore the city a bit more, didn't you? You said that you have discovered things that you didn't really notice about Aberdeen before, like Aberdeen City. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

Caitlin [00:39:03] I only turned 18 just before I started uni, like a week before! So, of course, I knew that there were clubs and stuff there, but I never really realised where they were. I would be in the the centre of the city shopping and I would be walking past these clubs and have no idea that there were clubs until I actually turned 18 and went to uni. People would be like 'oh yeah, that's a club', and I was like, 'oh, OK!' So it was kind of opening my eyes to that. I feel like you view things differently, I think like I would normally walk past the cafe and be like, 'oh, that's just a cute little café', but now I'll see it and be like, 'oh that's where everyone revises for exams'. My granddad used to call the library the 'big zebra print building', and now I actually know that's the library and I've seen inside of

it. So yeah, I think it gives you a bit of a different perspective. Of course, the campus is so big as well that I think people know the campus is big, but you don't really realise until you're actually going there how big it is. If you're just driving past, it doesn't look that big, but then you're in it and I still get lost and I'm going into fourth year!

Michaela [00:40:32] To be fair, some of our buildings are a little bit unique in their set up. There's one building, Meston Building, which I always joke, like just finding your tutorial room in Meston is like a task from the Try Wizard Tournament in Harry Potter! It's such a unique building in its layout that if you if you manage to find your tutorial room in your first year, then you can do anything! You can get that first class degree just as long as you manage to find that room. So what would you say, Caitlin, would be your main tip for people who are staying at home? What would you say is something that they should keep in mind for when they go to university?

Caitlin [00:41:18] I think don't be too conscious of what other people are doing. I feel like there were some times when I was in school that, of course, there were so many people in my year that were moving to different places. And I kind of did think, 'oh, am I doing the right thing?' but I always knew that it was the right thing for me. So I think to just know that it doesn't really matter what other people are doing and it's important that you do what is right for you, rather than what you think you should be doing. To be open minded about going to uni, and even if you are staying at home, then you can still get that uni experience. Don't be too concerned about 'oh, I won't be able to make friends' or 'all my friends are moving away' because there are always opportunities to do that and do new things, learn new things. There's plenty chances to get that student experience. It might be slightly different if you're living at home, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's a worse experience, it's just a different one.

Michaela [00:42:30] Yeah, absolutely. Greg, do you have any parting words for us?

Greg [00:42:35] Be open minded about it all and jump into some things. But if it's something you don't want to do, you don't have to do it sometimes. What you're doing is great.

Michaela [00:42:45] And Helen, what would you say to someone who's moving a little bit further away from home for university? What would you say to keep in mind?

Helen [00:42:56] Yeah, exactly the things that the two are saying. Just open yourself up to experiencing lots of new things. And if you don't want to, you don't have to do everything. Thinking about possible tips to maybe help if you are feeling a bit homesick, then just get some recipes from your family and make sure that you make those on days those that maybe thinking about people that you're missing. Just make sure that you're being who you want to be. You don't have to follow what everyone else is doing and make sure that you open yourself up to experiencing lots of new things. Go along to these society events, even just the Freshers' Fair and those kinds of things are great ways to see what the university has on offer. Just try not to close yourself off to experiencing all these new and strange and wonderful things.

Michaela [00:43:53] Yeah, absolutely. I absolutely would echo that; try new things. And if you find out that it's not for you, it's OK. You don't have to go clubbing because everyone else is going clubbing. You don't have to like going to cafes because everyone else likes going to cafes and studying. I think that's a little bit of a stereotype that we all love it. I don't know if necessarily everyone loves it. I certainly do. But it's OK if you don't, if you don't like

going to cafes, don't go. If you love doing sports and you just want to spend every spare minute of your time in different sports teams, that's fine as well. You know, it's really about you. The university is such a big place that you will find someone who is similar to you and likes similar things. There will be someone out there because there's 15,000 students across so many different programmes, you will find someone like-minded who will be your person and that you will be able to make friends with. Well, thank you so much, the three of you. It's been enlightening talking to you and finding out about your experiences. I hope that everyone who's listening really takes it to heart that you just do what's right for you. Don't worry about what other people are doing. This is something that you can talk to your friends and family about as well. You don't have to do this alone. Decisions are difficult, and especially as big a one going to university and choosing a university. So definitely, you know, chat with people, feel free to also chat to our current students. So if you want to talk to someone from your country or your degree programme that you're thinking about applying, we've got Unibuddies on our website where you can contact current students and talk to them, ask them your questions, and join us for our future episodes as well. So next week, we're actually going to be talking to someone about going to study abroad while you're at Aberdeen and what it's like to actually go even further away from Aberdeen than what you've already done before. Join us next week for go abroad and studying abroad, and I hope that we will hear from you. And thank you again, three of you, Greg, Helen and Caitlin, for joining us this week.

Voiceover [00:46:17] 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.