



## **Snowball: How much studying do you have to do?**

The amount of studying that you have to do varies greatly between courses and institutions, so there's no one answer to this.

Generally, college HN courses (HNC's and HND's) and the first year of university have more classes and less free time. Later years at university tend to involve much less time in classes, but you are definitely expected to study during the time away from them. Course tutors can offer advice on how much time you should be studying.

Ultimately, it's up to you, but remember that not doing enough will impact on your results!

## **Snowball: How much does it cost?**

LIFT OFF says: Scottish students who study at a Scottish college or university do not pay fees. Financial support is available to students in the form of Student Loans and Bursaries. The amount you are eligible for will depend on your household income and is designed to cover your maintenance costs for the weeks you are on your course. If you study away from home, you will receive more than if you stay. You can also apply for various grants and scholarships to help cover the costs (for example, travel, Disabled Student Allowance etc.).

If you are a Scottish student and study at an institution in England, Wales or Northern Ireland you will have to pay tuition fees, but you can apply to SAAS for a loan to cover these. There are other costs that you should take into account when researching your options, such as accommodation, food, travel, socialising and books and stationary as these all vary from place to place.

**For more information you should contact the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) at [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk).**



## **Snowball: How much do students spend per week socialising?**

LIFT OFF says: There is no fixed answer to this question. It depends mainly on who the student is, and where they are studying! Someone who likes to go out 7 nights a week in London will spend more than someone who goes out once or twice a week in Dundee. An educated estimate would be approximately £20 - £40 per week. Remember that Students' Unions are good places for cheaper entertainment, and many pubs and clubs run weekly "student nights". Activities run by clubs and societies are cheaper for members, too.

## **Snowball: Do you get any of your travel costs back?**

LIFT OFF says: Yes! You can apply to SAAS for assistance in covering costs in travelling from your term-time address to your place of study. The amount you receive is also based on your household income. If you are living at home, you can apply for the cost of public transport from your home to your place of study. If you are in rented accommodation you can apply for the cost of public transport between this address and your place of study, as well as three return journeys between your term-time address and your parents' home over the course of a year.

## **Snowball: Do you get your own room?**

LIFT OFF says: Halls of Residence are student accommodation, usually in large buildings where students all live together, and come with a range of services (like "catered" as opposed to "self-catering") at a range of prices. They are popular with students in 1<sup>st</sup> year as services such as food and cleaning are provided, the cost usually includes bills and it's a great place to meet new people. Most rooms in halls are single (some are even en suite!), but there are still a few twin rooms in the older halls of residence. Twin rooms tend to be cheaper than single rooms, and many people who share a room end up becoming good friends. If you do not want to share with someone, you can make this choice known on your accommodation application.



## **Snowball: Are there lots of exams?**

LIFT OFF says: Very broadly speaking, university courses will usually use exams as a means of assessment more than colleges, but as ever there is big variation depending on what you are studying and where you are studying it. Colleges and Universities often use a mixture of exams and continual assessment (course work) to assess students. You should remember, though, that even those rare courses that set very few exams will demand a high level of input from students (course work, projects, presentations, etc) so don't think few exams = an easy course. At university, most courses have exams at the end of each semester, though some modules can be assessed completely by coursework.

## **Snowball: When do you get holidays?**

LIFT OFF says: The dates and length of holidays differ from institution to institution. Students at university usually have long summer holidays (sometimes up to 4 months), and a few weeks at Christmas and in the spring. There are also Reading Weeks, where there are no classes, but students are expected to do private study. College holidays are more like those of schools, but a little longer.

## **Snowball: What qualifications do you get at the end of college?**

LIFT OFF says: It depends what you sign up for! If you want to study at Higher Education level, you can choose to start with a Higher National Certificate (HNC), which you are awarded after a year. If you complete another year beyond this, you would be awarded a Higher National Diploma (HND). Colleges also offer a massive range of Further Education (Sometimes called "non-advanced") courses. Check out the websites and prospectuses to find out more.



## **Snowball: How do I know what course is for me?**

LIFT OFF says: To start with, you need to ask yourself a few questions:

- Do you know what do you want to do as a career?

If so, do a bit of research to find out what sort of qualification or training would be most appropriate for you. Look at the Careers Scotland website for some help ([www.careers-scotland.org.uk](http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk)).

- What subjects at school do you enjoy / are you good at?

There's no point in studying something after school that you don't like. Do you like any of your school subjects enough to think about taking them further?

- Do you have any interests or hobbies that you might want to take further?

Loads of hobbies can transfer into a college or university course if you're enthusiastic and (let's face it!) good enough at them. Drama, sport, music and art are some examples.

- Do you know what options are out there?

There are SO many courses out there, many of which are not studied at school. You need to take the initiative here and go fishing for info. It's really worth while spending time online, looking at the college and university websites to find out what's available because there is a course to suit a variety of interests and levels of study. Don't make a hasty decision. Make sure you have explored all your options and have all the information that you need.

You should also make use of the resources that are available to you. Speak to people (guidance teachers – it's what they're there for, career advisors and college and university Admissions staff, for example).

Another great way to get a feel for a course or an institution is to visit it. Open days and information days run throughout the year, and they are a great opportunity to ask questions.

There's nothing wrong with taking a gap year between school and college or uni either. You can get a job, save some money, volunteer, travel and buy a bit more time to decide (but don't use this as an excuse to put things off).



## **Snowball: Is college or uni just like school?**

LIFT OFF says: Not at all. The big differences are below:

- You choose to go to college or university
- You are much more personally responsible for getting work in and studying (lecturers are very approachable, but don't offer the same amount of help and support as teachers do)
- You choose what and where to study
- You have a much greater choice of what to study
- Usually you will have less time in class through the week and will be expected to study outside of classes

## **Snowball: Do you get a lot of homework?**

LIFT OFF says: Hmm. Again, this will depend on the course and the subject, but it's daft to think that there will be no homework. You usually get your deadlines well in advance, which should help you to plan the workload. If the module or unit you are sitting has no exam at the end of it, you are likely to have to do more course work. All those stories you hear of students "pulling an all-nighter" at the library, are about people who haven't planned properly. We at LIFT OFF never left our course work to the last-minute!

You should also remember that you need to do a lot of reading for classes, so even when you don't have an essay deadline you still need to hit those books!



## **Snowball: Is it scary?**

LIFT OFF says: Most people will be a little anxious about starting a new course, meeting new people and maybe moving away from home, but the great thing about college and university is that everyone is in the same boat when they start and there are lots of people around to support you. So while it is perfectly normal to feel a little anxious, most people get over this very quickly and make lots of new friends.

## **Snowball: Do people listen to you and not judge you by the way you look or talk?**

LIFT OFF says: University and colleges are full of people of all sorts of backgrounds and tastes. The chances are that you will find someone who has similar likes and dislikes to you. Students tend to be who they want to be and do what they like. In fact, this freedom and independence is one of the great attractions!

## **Snowball: What grades so you need for uni?**

LIFT OFF says: The grades that you need will depend on the kind of course that you decide to take. Some universities have higher entry requirements than others. It is worth thinking about what your current grades are, and what your predicted grades are likely to be when you are deciding where to apply for university.

Generally universities look for at least three of four SQA highers. Factors that might affect the entry requirements of a course are the number of places available and the number of applicants that the course receives.

Another way that people can gain entry into university is through completing a HNC/HND course at college first. Many colleges also have links with university courses to allow people to gain entry into the course once finishing college. It is worth checking this out with the college/university that you want to attend.



## **Snowball: What's the best uni/college in Scotland?**

LIFT OFF says: There is no right or wrong answer to this question. There are a lot of different institutions in Scotland that people can choose to study at. There are some colleges or universities that have better reputations than others, or that are top in a particular area of research.

However when you are deciding which college or university to go to, it is important to have researched the institution so you are aware of what it has to offer students and what facilities you would like from a college or university. It is advisable to visit different institutions to see them for yourself.

Colleges and universities are ranked by the government and sorted into league tables. However choosing to attend an institution with a lower ranking doesn't mean that the quality of your education will be any less than a higher ranked institution.

## **Snowball: How long does a typical student day last?**

LIFT OFF says: The length of your day as a student may vary from week to week. In general there is between 2-4 hours of class per day. However this does differ depending on the type of course you choose to study.

However having fewer hours in class doesn't mean that this is where your work should finish for the day. Less time in class usually means that you will probably have more independent reading and studying to do outside of class hours. Also courses that include practical elements to them may have longer classes in labs in order to carry out experiments well.

If you want to see what a whole student week is like then follow the link below to our Blog where LIFT OFF Student Volunteer Rachael W tells you about a typical week at university: <http://lift-off.org.uk/blog/>

☺ **As always, if you have any questions then email us or post on the Blog** ☺