Be prepared for life in Scotland
Scotland is a beautiful country, though it is colder than most countries in Europe. If you’re coming from a hot country be prepared – bring jumpers, a waterproof jacket (the UK isn’t exactly known for its dry weather…), and make sure you have warm bedding. Scotland is actually quite warm during the summer months, but it can also be very cold in the winter months. If you come prepared then you won’t get a nasty shock when it starts snowing and all you brought was your shorts.

If you’re not used to shorter hours of daylight, consider buying a daylight lamp before it reaches winter so you don’t end up sleepy all the time.

If you’re a person of colour at university
Scotland is fairly forward thinking towards the gay community, with multiple gay political leaders and generally tolerant attitudes. Edinburgh University takes an active part in supporting LGBQT people studying here. There is the University Pride Society that you can join to participate in their socials and events: https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/societies/society/blogs/

There are also multiple gay clubs and a prevalent drag community in Edinburgh.

What’s it like to be an LGBQT student at Edinburgh University?

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Support for mental health
The university does provide 4 weeks of free counselling to students that need it, but the waiting list can be long and it is not a long term solution. The counselling is very good quality, and at the end they can help refer you to long time options if you need it.

If you are aware that you will need counselling when you arrive in Edinburgh, it is a good idea to look at where you can go before you get here. Counselling can be expensive and a lengthy waiting process in some cases so it’s better you do your research before you get here in case you get a nasty surprise about the costs when you arrive.

If you’re going to use public transport lots, get a Ridacard
If you have accommodation that’s further away from campus/you know you’re going to move around a lot, it’s much more financially efficient to invest in a Ridacard. Bus tickets are around £4 for a day ticket/ £1.70 for a single, but £42 monthly for students and so will save you a lot of money if you invest early on.

However, Edinburgh is a small city so if you don’t live far out from central campus you probably won’t need to take the bus much at all!

What’s it like to be a person of colour at university?

Edinburgh University has a large international student community, but Scotland itself could be considered as not a very international country. It can be slightly jarring to come from your home country to Scotland and not be surrounded by people your own race. This doesn’t mean that there are none, however. Edinburgh has many societies for people from different countries that you can join!

You can look at these here: https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities/societies/findasociety/ if you look under the ‘International and Multicultural’ section.
When you need help, ask for it

There are a ton of services available including the Career Service, Counselling Service, Disability Service – make use of them!

Remember it’s okay to keep in contact with them with issues as your situation changes, because the offer they can offer may change too.

Being a non-UK student changes the renting experience

If you’re an EU/international student you won’t have a UK guarantor, which makes renting a lot harder. Because of this, it is common you can also be asked to pay all the rent upfront/pay for the last month’s rent in advance so make sure you bring enough cash.

If the place you want to rent requires a UK-based guarantor, you can apply for the guarantor scheme that the university scheme here: https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/current-students/guarantor

Though note that this will also require time to sort out, so don’t do it last minute.

Take advantage of all the opportunities here

Life at university flies by faster than you can imagine, a four year BSc seems a lot before you come but trust me, it’s a lot less time than you expect.

Because of this, take advantage of every opportunity you can – we have so many societies and sports that you can get involved with, and so many career opportunities (myEd internships, career fairs, hackathons) and you’ll kick yourself later on if you don’t use them the best or your friends when you need it.

Don’t worry about who you’ll live with in Year 2 (Undergraduates)

Don’t stress! It’s always good to be prepared but don’t rush into flat commitments with people you’ve only known a month.

Flat searching mostly happens second semester so take the time to get to know people in first semester before you group up.

When you’re trying to rent a place, realise what it takes

To rent a place in Edinburgh, it can take several weeks to find the right flat.

This means you must be prepared to attend several viewings before you find a flat – some agencies won’t rent to you until you’ve seen it in person.
Look at potential courses early
You’ll have a lot more spare time now than you will when you reach university - take advantage of that chance to learn as much as you can about the courses so you know you’re going to make the right choice.

Talk to people who did the courses! See what they learnt and if it’s the right choice for you.

I’m not completely sure about the degree I’ve chosen to come study
If you’re considering a swapping to a joint degree or changing to a completely new one make sure you keep an eye on the required prerequisite course - e.g. You’re doing maths and decide you want to swap to physics – it’ll be a lot harder to swap in second year if you’ve not done the compulsory physics modules that other first year physics students did.

Think carefully about your credit distribution
Make sure you don’t take most of your credits in one semester – it is a horribly stressful experience. Take a look at what credits your courses have, and how the distribution is.

If you’re ending up with 80 credits in first semester, it’s a lot of work for you to have to cope with when exams come around.

Pay Attention in class
You may be used to not taking notes in classes in school, but university is different. A lot of classes fly by. Be aware that although we provide lecture recordings of a lot of courses, we don’t for every class and it is currently up to your lecturer whether they post the recordings or not.

Some lectures don’t have the most informative slides so when you come back to look at them, if you haven’t taken any notes you may feel a bit stuck or miss stuff out.

What’s my work load going to be like?
Obviously this will vary from course to course, but it will be more than it says on paper – if you only do the assigned work and the bare minimum you might find it hard to keep up so make sure you keep on top of your work and do some self-study each week as work may not always be assigned.

If you try keep up with your notes, exams won’t seem as daunting when they come around.

Studying at UoE
Remember that your PhD is YOUR PhD

Your PhD is your project, and that you do not have to always listen to your supervisor – they are only there to guide you.

If you can see that there is something not working well, do not be afraid of changing the supervisor! In the end, it is you who is responsible for this project, not them.

Ask for your MSc projects list before semester 2 starts - PGT

Keep emailing and asking for the MSc dissertation topics list before you sign up classes in semester 2! A lot of students this year ended up with a project they didn’t know how to do because they didn’t take the classes that would have helped. As your final dissertation is worth half your MSc mark, it is extremely important!
Start asking for the list in December after the semester 1 exams and then do extensive research into what it is each supervisor expects of you for the project. It is useful to get this in writing what is expected of you.

Make sure you know when labs/tutorials for classes start

Some classes have labs that will start from week 1 of teaching.

If you only find out about them in week 3 then you’ve already missed two weeks of potential learning you could have taken advantage of.

Think outside the box with optional courses

There’s plenty of time to think about your courses and you can swap them even after you start classes. Don’t limit yourself to courses that are similar to your compulsory modules –
It can be good to get more knowledge on the topics you’re studying, but it can also be good to expand your knowledge on other subjects and meet people on other degree programs!

Get your work done as soon as possible

You will always find yourself with work to do for the next week, deadlines due in a couple months’ time.

If you leave all the work until the days/weeks before, you’ll find yourself trying to balance all your other work and your deadlines at once and it gets hard to cope with.
What is Welcome Week?
Welcome Week is crammed with activities, society events, pub crawls, welcome talks from your courses and schools. There are some pretty important things going on in the week like the society affair and sports fair (so you can see all the societies and join the ones you like) and the academic fair. There’s so much on that you can download the UoE Events App to help keep track of everything you want to go to.

Read more on Welcome Week here: https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/new-students/welcome-week

Investigate Airport travel before you book flights
You can travel from the airport using public transport using tram or bus. Most of you will likely need to go to Waverley station, as it is the centre of town. Trams tend to run faster than the buses but are also more expensive.

If you are arriving late then make sure you check the timetables to make sure that there is still a service running:

Sign up to your GP early
Go sign up for the University health service during Welcome Week – if you leave it too late then the GP will actually fill up and you won’t be able to register for that semester.

Another tip is to tell them when you move house – if they don’t have the correct address in their database they can drop you from their registration and you won’t be allowed to register again.

Get prepared early to move to Edinburgh
Finding a place to rent, opening a UK bank account, applying for guarantor schemes, finding a school for your kids – all these things take at least a couple days or weeks to set up so don’t leave it until the last minute/until you need the service.

Get organised before you come to Edinburgh and it’ll be an easier transition.

I’m afraid I won’t make friends in Welcome Week
The scariest part of coming to university is always making friends, but don’t worry - Welcome week is so busy, and you shouldn’t worry if you come away from it feeling like you haven’t made your new university best friends. It’s very common for people to take a few weeks or months to feel truly settled at university, just know you aren’t alone in this feeling.

If you go to societies and social events you’ll be sure to meet people. Also make an effort with your flatmates/corridor mates! You’ll be living together for a whole year so you might as well try get to know them.