

# First year: To work hard or play hard: that is the question.

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Coming to University, after stressing and worrying their way through 6<sup>th</sup> form, UCAS, and the dreaded Clearing, many students see being a fresher as a chance to relax. After all, these students will tell you, you only need 40% to pass, and that's all that counts, right? Whilst technically being correct, I feel there's more to this story.

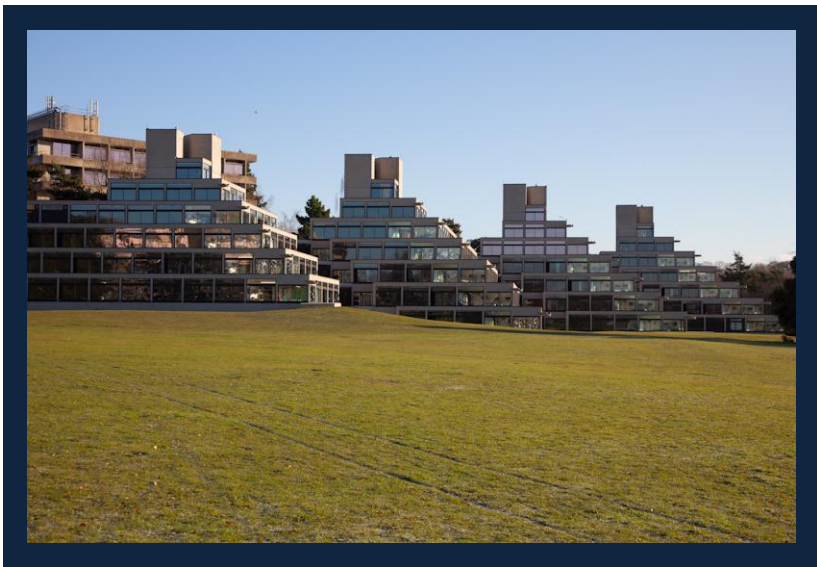
Earlier this month applications opened for the Government Economic Stream, or GES, summer internship. Part of the application was a section to fill in your grades from relevant modules and whilst my grades were good, there was nothing exceptional about them. Similarly I was recently asked to provide an academic transcript of my first year results for a position and couldn't help but wish I'd revised a little bit harder last summer. Whilst this explicit detailing of results is not a common or frequent practice that I have experienced with internship applications, it is true that the slate is not wiped entirely clean once first year is over: your results do stick around.



Furthermore, many second year modules build explicitly on the foundations of first year and failure to grasp important topics in first year can only mean falling further behind as the

difficulty progresses. Essentially working hard in first year makes life easier down the road and is the perfect opportunity to set your self up for a less demanding second year. Many of us come from an A-level and GCSE culture where we have been trained to learn something simply for an exam and can subsequently forget it, but arguably first year cannot be seen as such a year: it's not about jumping through hoops, but about providing yourself with a solid base.

On the other hand, I recently attended a one to one appointment at UEA's careers centre where they reminded me that often employers aren't looking solely for stellar academic results, but for how you fill your time, whether you take risks, or whether you seem to be an interesting person. This is not to say that strong academics aren't important, but perhaps I ought not to be too annoyed that I didn't get a 1<sup>st</sup> in my first year because I did other things that made me interesting, individual and above all, employable. Is this why 1<sup>st</sup> year is so important? In this way first year is a chance to try new things or join new clubs without the burden of consequential exams; it is a year to breath and find your feet at university safe in the knowledge that what you do will not directly affect your degree classification.



First year is short, fast and finite. Questioning the best use this time perhaps boils down to questioning the opportunity cost of it; “if I’d have worked harder and gotten a 1<sup>st</sup>, what would I have had to sacrifice, and was it worth it?” Personally, I believe it was because I had fun, I learnt a

lot and I still achieved reasonable grades. I like to think I found a balance that reflects the fact that first year is so important for laying the groundwork, but also for finding your feet and exploring your new life at university. Good luck in finding your balance too.