



HOW TO CURB YOUR STUDENT DEBT

The recent announcement by the Government that University tuition fees should treble to £9,000 per year is once again a reminder of just how expensive higher education is in Britain today.

In addition to the above there is evidence that students are struggling with debt, not only during the course of, but also after the completion of their studies. A recent survey (Times Newspaper 18 August 2009) suggested that students starting university in 2012 could end up with debts of up to £27,000 after graduating.

Student debt is no joke and is becoming increasingly serious. So what can be done about it? Well here are the Ant's top ten tips for surviving your degree with as little debt as possible:

1. Live at Home

A substantial part of student expenditure goes on living and eating expenses when living away from home. Accordingly, If at all possible stay at home this way you can, save rent, save the cost of meals, washing, and drying, utility bills. I appreciate this is not ideal university experience but it can be just as much fun. However I would not suggest that you actually choose your University for this reason, but as the above report it will increasingly become a factor in your choice.

2. Student discounts

There are endless discounts for students to make your lives easier in terms of expenditure, including travel, clothing cinema, restaurants, and sportswear but to name a few. Your NUS card is a gateway to numerous discounts (see www.nus.org.uk) but also check out the following sites some of which offer not only discounts but free stuff including cash www.studentdiscounts.co.uk www.studentbeans.com www.wealthystudent.co.uk

3. Check your bank account

It is a well-known fact that the first bank a student chooses to open an account with is probably the one that he or she will stay with for long after their education has been completed (I stayed with Nat West for about 18 years after I had completed University). The banks are well aware of this fact and therefore bend over backwards to secure student accounts. You must use this to your advantage and make sure you carefully examine the bank account you pick as a student. There are numerous incentives given by banks to try and secure you as a customer but you must choose your bank based sound financial criteria such as overdraft facilities, interest and account charges rather than free gifts. I will not personally recommend any particular account but suggest you check out websites such as www.moneysupermarket.com/currentaccounts/ and www.moneyfacts.co.uk/banking/.../banking_stud_accounts

4. Cook your own food

Whether living at home or in student accommodation you can save money on your lunch and dinners by cooking your own food. Eating out (even in halls of residence) for lunch and dinner can eat into your limited funds and can be avoided by you cooking your own meals and taking them into University if you live off site to if you're living or at home.

5. Get a job

Many students work their way through university by using part time income to supplement grants and student loans. Obviously you should ensure that work does not intrude on your studies to the point where it becomes counter-productive but if you can balance part time working and studying it can not only provide you with extra income but also help you to start saving for your post university life.

6. Bursaries

Another means of supplementing your grant or student loans is applying for bursary. Bursaries are given by universities or colleges to eligible students. English universities and colleges who charge fees over £2,835 are obliged to provide extra financial help to students on a low income who receive the full Maintenance grant or special support grant. Check out www.studento.com for a guide to bursaries.

7. Buy and sell second hand books

You don't need to spend hundreds of pounds per year on new text books. You can buy second hand books from students who have just completed the academic year of you degree or course you are entering. The advantage of buying such books is that they are probably annotated and have the important provisions already highlighted. You should however check that the books you are buying are not out of date. You can also buy second hand on line. Check out www.sellstudentbooks.com/ and www.academicbooktrade.co.uk/

8. Mentoring /Student Ambassadors

All universities need student ambassadors offer tours around the campus to prospective students and assist during events. Some Universities also have connections with local schools and need student mentors to work with school children. All the positions are paid and are on a casual basis. If you find yourself short on money being a student ambassador can help you bring in a bit of extra cash when its needed without having to commit yourself to a weekly hour commitment.

9. Online

As can be seen above the internet is an invaluable source of information on how students can save money. Use the internet to research any questions you have on finances relating to student loans, bank accounts, discounts, eating out, living away from home.

In conclusion remember the years you spend in higher education are supposed to be amongst the most rewarding and exciting time of your life don't let debt ruin it

Isaac Carter is the author of "**Go to the Ant**" a simple but effective guide to money management which can be purchased at. www.gotheant.co.uk