

Starting at university

Key facts and your quick guide to support available through the medium of Welsh whilst at university



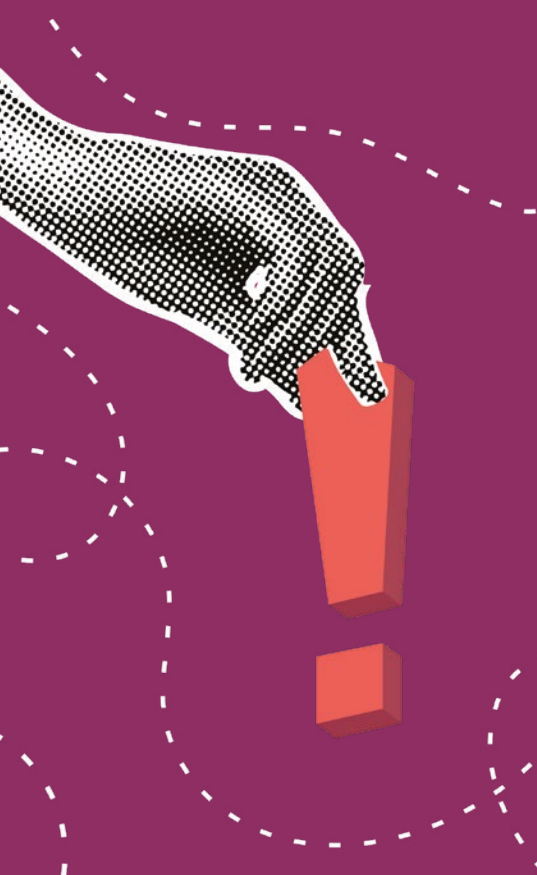


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1. About this toolkit

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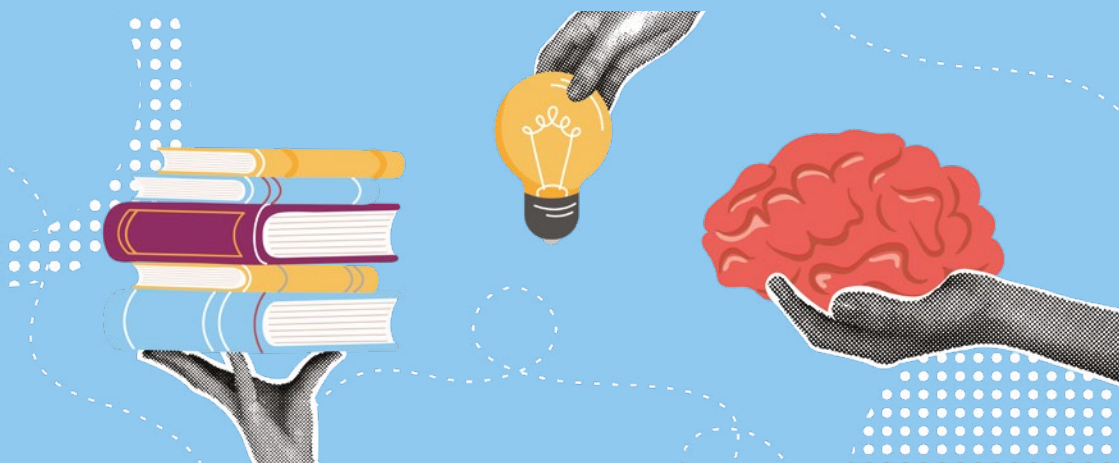
This toolkit is an updated version of the “Starting at University” guide that was originally created by myf.cymru, Bangor University, and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, following consultation with 6th form and Further Education students, and mental health professionals.

This updated toolkit has been created in collaboration between myf.cymru and telyn.

We will continue to update the document and if you have any suggestions for improvements or would like us to add content, please contact us at myf.cymru@bangor.ac.uk.

This information is for educational purposes only, and should not be used in place of professional mental health advice.

2. Introduction



Preparing for university can provide a rollercoaster of emotions and, understandably, making such big life choices can be daunting. There is the pressure of passing exams, choosing universities and courses, anxiety about meeting new people and making friends, and living away from home for the first time if you plan to relocate. Wales is a small nation, with few universities, even fewer large towns and cities, and tight-knit communities, particularly in the more rural areas. So, if you are planning a move from North to South Wales or vice versa or heading across the border to somewhere else in the UK, it can seem daunting.

To help bridge the gap, myf.cymru & telyn have developed this short guide, to cover the basics and provide some useful information to help you prepare before you head off to university. Hopefully, you will find it a useful reference tool once you have started your higher education journey. Promoting mental health and wellbeing is an integral part of this document, providing a focus on resources and services available through the medium of Welsh.

Good luck!

3. About myf.cymru and telyn

myf telyn
.cymru

The aim of myf.cymru is to improve mental health and wellbeing support for students through the medium of Welsh. We are trying to increase awareness, reduce the stigma around talking about mental health, and encourage access to help among Welsh-speaking students throughout Wales and beyond.



What is available?

Website - myf.cymru

It includes information on various mental health conditions, life at university and real-life stories and content by students.

Sgwrs? podcast

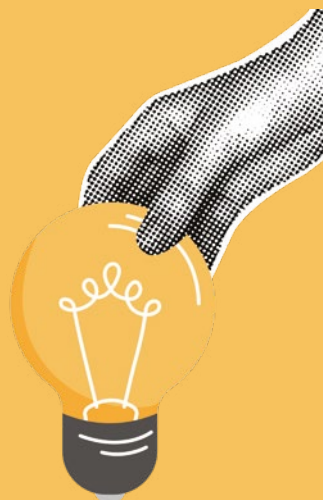
Students from across Wales share their experiences and discuss the important issues relating to their mental health and well-being. All the episodes are available on YouTube and the main streaming platforms.

Moving on App & Sorted App

myf.cymru has worked in partnership with the Moving On In My Recovery programme and the Sorted programme to translate their apps into Welsh. Packed with useful and practical resources to support an individual's recovery journey, the Moving On In My Recovery app can also help anyone navigate the day-to-day challenges of life. The Sorted App aims to boost mood and help individuals develop resilience through positive mental training audio programs. Available on Apple and Google app stores.

Social media and other video content

To receive the latest information, follow us on Instagram and access additional content on YouTube.



What is telyn?

telyn helps education and healthcare services work together more effectively to support students and learners.

Our vision

telyn's vision is a future where all post-16 learners experience better mental health, supported by stronger, more connected support between education and healthcare services.

What we do

We work with your Further or Higher education provider, local healthcare services, and third sector organisations to improve how support services work together.

Our goal is to make sure you receive joined-up support and don't have to navigate different services on your own.

How this affects you

telyn mostly works behind the scenes to improve how education providers and NHS services communicate and work together.

This means that if you are accessing support from more than one service, those services can work more closely together and provide better coordinated support.

Why the name telyn?

The name telyn comes from the Welsh word for harp.

The triple harp, with its three rows of strings, is the national instrument of Wales. Just as the strings work together in harmony, telyn brings together Higher Education, Further Education, and the NHS to improve mental health support for learners.

4. Timeline of key dates



Preparation for university starts 12 months or more before you start your first year. It is worth making the time to attend as many events as you can, and to talk to different people and gather information – including from current students – so you can make an informed choice about which course to study and whether university is for you. Below is some useful information including key dates for the application process.

UCAS Key Dates

These are the months in terms of UCAS key deadlines, but please check their website as these can be subject to change www.ucas.com.

October

Deadline for application to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and for most courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine/science.

February

Extra opens. If a student has used all five choices and is not holding an offer, they can add another choice using Extra.

July

Clearing opens.

January

Deadline for most undergraduate courses.

June

Last date for receipt of applications with choices. Applications received after this deadline are automatically entered into Clearing.

Other key events and dates you need to be aware of:



Student Finance

Applications for Full Time course funding opens in Feb/ March. Part Time funding applications open in June. Students should apply as soon as possible when applications open.

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



UCAS Events

These happen all year round at different locations. Check the UCAS website for details.



Open Days

All universities hold open days during the year. You can search for dates online.



5. Welsh language at university

Most universities in Wales have some Welsh language student representation either by elected full or part-time Sabbatical Officers or an elected student representative. Some universities have a Welsh student union that sits within the main student union, and its role is to support and represent Welsh speaking students and those who have an interest in Welsh culture and language.

Broadly, the elected officers aim to ensure students who are Welsh speakers and learners have the best academic and social experiences by:

- * **Supporting and co-ordinating Welsh medium events and activities**
- * **Identifying the available Welsh medium provisions and look at where they can be improved**
- * **Creating a supportive community for both fluent Welsh speakers and learners**
- * **Ensuring Welsh language rights are respected**
- * **Celebrating Welsh history and culture**

Several student-led societies and clubs are available for you to join, depending on your interests.

Some universities also have Welsh speaking halls of residence, providing a tight knit home from home community.

Support if you are planning to study part or full course through the medium of Welsh.

If you will be studying in Wales and are considering studying some of your course through the medium of Welsh, in addition to the financial support on offer, there is a wealth of study support available through your chosen university and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

Branch Officer

* **Each Welsh university has a branch officer**, and they are your go-to if you are studying through the Coleg Cymraeg and need any help or support with your studies. They also arrange several social and academic events throughout the academic year, so it is worth getting in touch. Follow the branch's social media accounts to keep up to date with the latest news.



Cadw Cyswllt

* **If you are planning on leaving Wales to study**, the Coleg has established a student community with whom they keep in touch with the latest news on grants, job opportunities, events, and work experience.

Language Skills

* **The Coleg can help you develop your Welsh language skills** where you can gain a certificate to evidence your ability.

Student Life

* **There are several opportunities to get involved with various activities** including becoming an ambassador and taking part in promotional activities and events at your university.

Porth Resources

* **A digital library packed full of Welsh medium learning** and information resources to help with your studies.

More information can be found on their website, your Head of 6th form or your lecturer/tutor if you are studying in college can also provide further help.



6. Welfare support at university



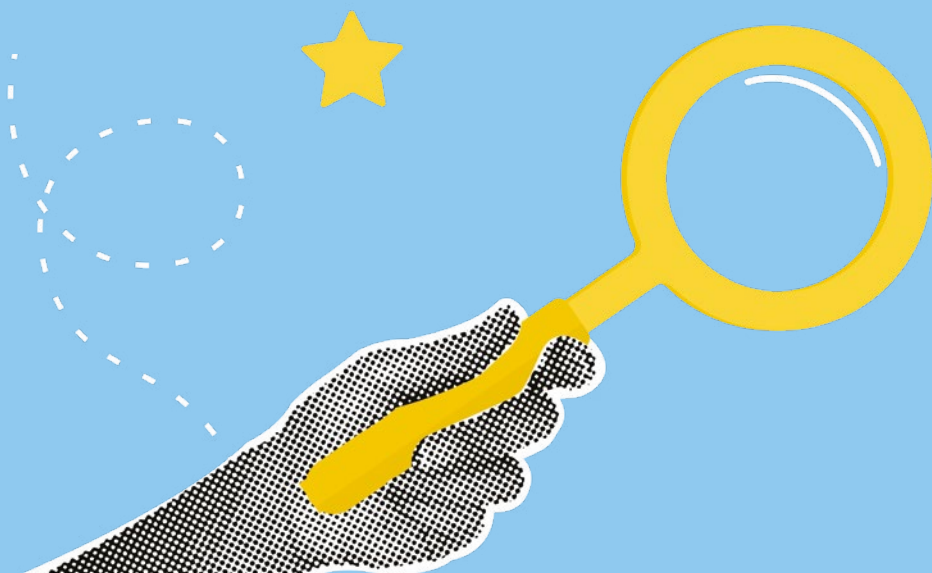
Every university has some student welfare provision, be it face-to-face, online or hybrid. Support is usually delivered by Student Services, but some institutions might call it Student Support or Student Wellbeing.

Student support services are well connected to local services such as the NHS, GP surgeries, local branches of national organisations and local charities.

These might vary slightly depending on the university you wish to attend, but most universities in Wales can provide some or all their support through the medium of Welsh. If you are not offered support in Welsh, don't be afraid to ask. You are not being a nuisance or demanding – some students find it easier speaking in Welsh about issues that are worrying them, especially if Welsh is their first language.

What kind of support is available?

- * **Sexual violence, harassment and hate crime** – if you are a victim of unwarranted or inappropriate behaviour, universities take these matters seriously and can provide support. Some universities have dedicated officers who can help, and academic staff who are trained on how to respond to disclosures of sexual harassment and violence.
- * **Housing** – finding suitable accommodation can be stressful, particularly if you have never rented before. Unsuitable or sub-standard housing can affect your mental health and wellbeing. Universities provide comprehensive support and information to help you along the way including useful checklists, as well as dos and don'ts.
- * **Disability support** – if you feel you may be encountering disability related barriers including Specific Learning Differences, dedicated advisors can help you with reasonable adjustments and accessing suitable support. Further information is available on page 22.





* **Financial support** – with the higher cost of living, money worries are high on the agenda for many students. Worrying unnecessarily about money can also have a detrimental effect on your wellbeing. If you are worried about how you will cope financially, universities have money advisors who can help. Whether it is budgeting advice, accessing additional funds or debt management, sharing your worries, and having support to help you plan can be hugely beneficial.

* In addition, **student unions** might also offer student welfare support on issues such as wellbeing, money matters and housing so it's worth checking out the student union website.

* Staying connected to other people is important for your mental health and wellbeing, and the student union can provide information about **university clubs and societies, volunteering opportunities as well as community activities** that they are involved with.

7. Mental health & wellbeing services while in university

Many universities offer counselling services, access to mental health advisors, and workshops, and can assist with accessing external support such as GP services or other agencies. Also, if you would like to take a break from your studies, it is useful to discuss this with someone else to further explore your options.

Why should I register with a GP?

If you are moving for university and are going to spend more weeks of the year at your university address than your home address, you need to register with a GP near your university as soon as possible.

This is especially important if you have ongoing health conditions, particularly one that you take medication for (for example, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, or any mental health condition).

You can choose which GP to register with. Universities will often work closely with dedicated GP surgeries – visit your university's website or ask Student Services which surgeries students usually register with.

For those needing ongoing support with their mental health, NHS Mental Health Services are usually provided by Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) although this may vary slightly regionally. You usually cannot self-refer to these services, so speak to your GP as a first step.



If you are already accessing NHS services, you should speak to your local NHS service provider as soon as possible about transferring your care, as this may not happen automatically even if you register with a GP.

Generally, any services you are accessing under your “home” health board are responsible for your care until you have formally transferred to another service. All health boards have different processes for this. Some Welsh universities also have dedicated liaison services or advisers to bridge between the University and NHS services.

Tips for speaking to your GP about your mental health:

Here are some ways to help you make the most of a GP appointment:

- * Be prepared** – usually you can book a GP appointment online or by calling your surgery. In either case, you will usually be asked what the appointment is for. You do not have to give a detailed reason if you don’t feel comfortable, you can say the appointment is for “mental health”.
- * Ask to book a double appointment.** Especially if you are nervous or have many things to talk about, it may be helpful to ask if a longer appointment is possible. The usual length of a GP consultation is 10 minutes.

* **Make a list of what you plan to discuss**, either on paper or on your phone. You could also save or print any information you've found that might help you explain how you're feeling.

* **Ask someone you trust to come with you** to wait for you or join you in the consultation room if you prefer.

* **Don't be afraid to ask questions**, or for your doctor to repeat/clarify something if you don't understand it.

* **Confidentiality** – in most cases, your GP will keep what you tell them confidential. The exception is if they believe you or someone else are in immediate danger, or if they feel it is beneficial for your care. In this case, they should tell you what information is being shared and with whom.



Where else can I find support?

NHS Wales offers free online access to SilverCloud's range of self-help programmes based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). There are three programmes that are available in

SilverCloud[®]
by Amwell[®]

Welsh, covering Anxiety, Depression, and both topics. The courses last about 12 weeks, with a time commitment of about an hour a week, and they can be worked through on a phone, tablet or laptop. In addition, you will be allocated a dedicated NHS supporter to check in with you regularly. SilverCloud is available to anyone above the age of 16 who is registered with a GP in Wales. You can sign up any time without seeing a doctor and access your programme 24/7.

Support in a crisis

In an emergency, please:

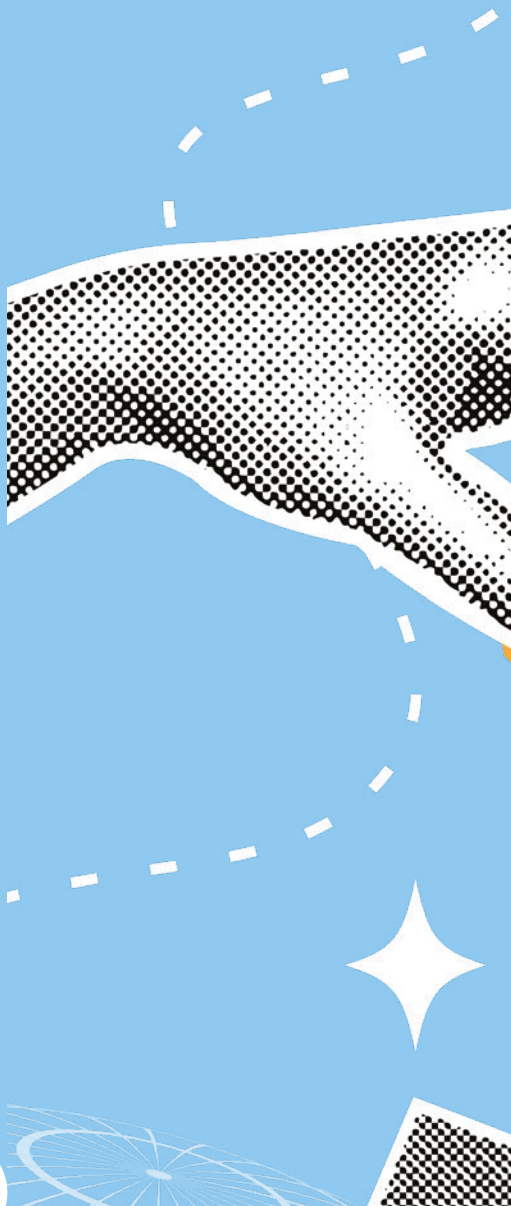
- * Call your GP for an emergency appointment
- * Call 111 and press option 2 to access the 24-hour helpline staffed by local Mental Health professionals
- * Call 999 or attend your local Emergency Department

8. Support for disabled students

Most universities take all possible steps to remove unnecessary barriers to enable full participation by disabled students in all aspects of university life. Many also provide additional support to students with disabilities. It is always worth checking university websites and attending open days so you can see the facilities on offer and talk to staff.

Here are some examples of how universities can support students with disabilities:

- * Provide information about disability, including specific learning differences or mental health issues, and the services and support which might be available
- * Offer personal and academic support and guidance
- * Advise on strategies to make studying and everyday tasks more manageable
- * Help you to apply for finance through Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) from your local education authority or other funding provider



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- * For students not eligible for DSA funding carry out study needs assessments to identify reasonable adjustments (necessary arrangements)
 - * Provide practical support through mentors, assistants etc
 - * Assist with the organisation of specific examination requirements
 - * Arrange for the provision of BSL interpretation
 - * Arrange for additional library provision
 - * Arrange for a tailored learning support plan to ensure necessary arrangements (reasonable adjustments) are in place
 - * Refer students to other services who can help both within and outside university, such as health care professionals

DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance)

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is extra support on top of your other student finances and can be used to pay for study-related costs such as equipment, non-medical help, travel and photocopying and printing.

You can apply for DSA to cover some of the extra costs you have because of a mental health problem, long term illness or any other disability. You can get help with the costs of:

- * specialist equipment, for example a laptop if you need one because of your disability
- * non-medical helpers, for example a person such as a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or specialist note-taker
- * extra travel costs, to attend your course or placement because of your disability
- * other disability-related costs of studying, for example having to print additional copies of documents for proof-reading

What's available

How much support you can get and what you can spend it on depends on your individual needs, not your household income. You do not need to pay Disabled Students' Allowance back.



Before applying

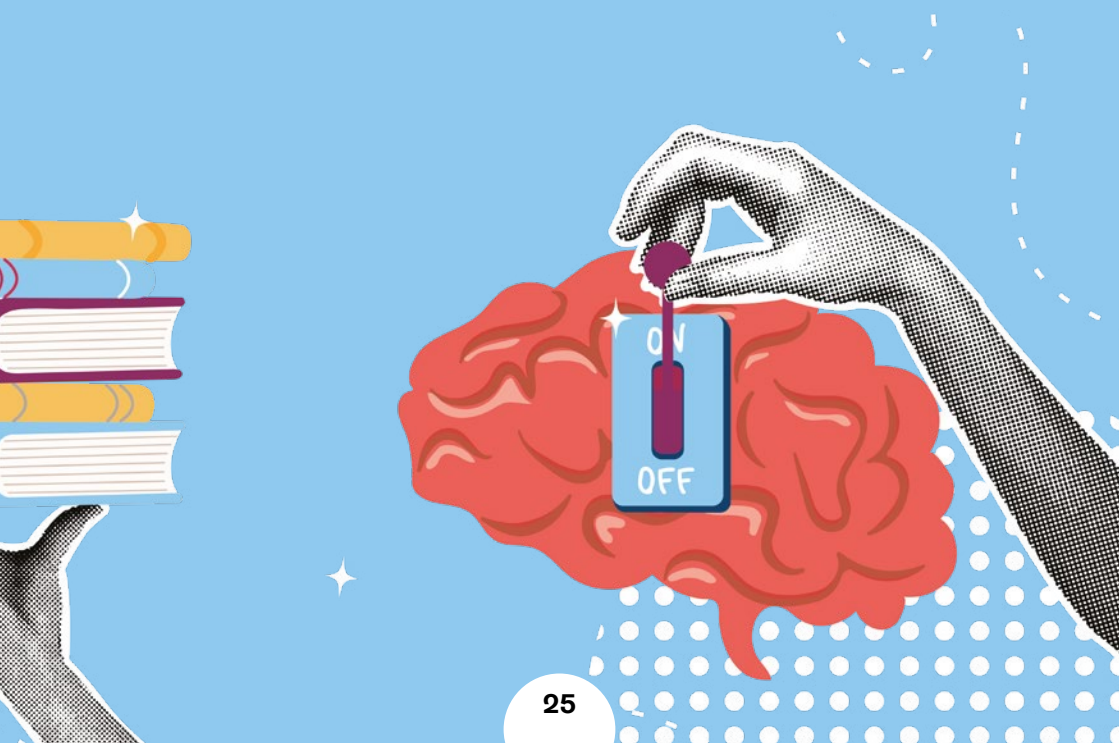
Students should look at the DSA page on the Student Finance Wales website to see if they would be eligible, and get any evidence required (doctor's letters, certificates etc) together in time for their application.

Learning support

If a student struggles with studies, institutions offer a range of Learning Support services to help them succeed. Support can be for a short time only or last as long as the College course, and may be on a one-to-one or group basis. A Personal Tutor can speak to the Learning Support team to find out more about help with specialist equipment and assessments for specific difficulties such as dyslexia.

Disability facilities and support

Universities are fully inclusive and provides equal opportunities for everyone can provide dedicated support for learners with visual or hearing impairment, or who need assistance due to mobility.



9. Guides, course reps and personal tutors

Universities have different ways that they offer support to students, just before you arrive at university, during your first weeks and throughout your course. Some universities in Wales also have Welsh language student representation. Below is a brief overview – titles and roles may vary depending on the university, so it is worth doing a bit more research to find out more:

Peer Guides / Student Mentors / Peer Mentor

Are senior students who have been trained to provide support to first-year students to settle into university and academic life. They can also help you get to know the campus, local community and provide practical information on basics such as where to do your food shopping to accessing support whilst at uni.

Course or Academic Reps

They are students who have been trained to provide information before



A stylized illustration on an orange background. In the bottom left, a red brain is partially visible. A grey hand with a halftone dot pattern points upwards towards the brain. Two lightbulbs are shown: one larger one with a glowing yellow filament and three curved lines above it indicating light, and a smaller one below it. A grey coiled cable connects the two lightbulbs. A dashed white line curves across the upper left portion of the page.

you start your course at university, what to expect, coping with the first few weeks of lectures and course structure. Their role is to also represent students from a diverse range of backgrounds including international students, Welsh language, female, and LGBTQ+. They listen to students, gather feedback, and try and influence change within the College / School you will be studying.

Guides, Course Reps and Personal Tutors

Personal Tutors

You will be assigned a personal tutor when you start your course. They support taught students with academic, personal, and professional development during their time at university. They engage students in course activities, provide feedback on performance, and understand different student needs including mental health, and disability, as well as signposting to other services.

It is worth getting to know who your guides and reps are at university, as they may be useful if you need help or information.

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