

Shannon:

Hi everyone. Welcome back to the Find Your Uni Podcast. Over the next few episodes, we've invited students from different courses to share their stories, what inspired their course choice, why Edinburgh Napier suits them, and their tips on how to find the uni that's right for you. Whether you're still exploring options or need that final piece of advice, stay tuned as we guide you on your journey to find your uni.

Shannon:

My name is Shannon, and I'm a fourth year Marketing and Digital Media student. On today's episode, we're talking all about nursing courses at Edinburgh Napier with Kerr and Minnie.

Kerr:

So my name is Kerr, I'm a second year Learning Disability Nursing student.

Minnie:

My name is Minnie, and I'm also a second year Learning Disability Nursing student.

Shannon:

So before we get into it, could you tell me what emoji would describe how you're feeling about university right now?

Minnie:

Definitely an excited emoji. I just, I love the learning and the opportunities that the course has offered, and I'm just constantly wanting to get involved in opportunities. And I'm always just, yeah, really keen to learn. Basically.

Shannon:

Yeah, always on the go, always excited to try new things. I love that. What about you, Kerr?

Kerr:

Yeah, I'd say, over the past little while, there's been a few different emojis, but I'd say over the overarching emoji would be a big, a big smiling one. This is, I feel that this is definitely the right course for me, and I'm overall very happy with where I am

Shannon:

Nice, nice. I think mine would be the little, like, smiley emoji with the little sweat drop, because I'm like, excited to be here, having a good time, but I'm also in fourth year, and

I'm like, oh my goodness, I have to do my dissertation and graduate, yeah, and find a big girl job, and that's a lot. But definitely still having a lovely time. What would you say is the most creative way you've saved money as a student

Minnie:

Or not, hahaha. Yeah, I have been planning to get a piggy bank and just kind of put money in every week, to just have some funds there if I need them. But I've not got around to that yet. Hopefully in the future, it's definitely a goal.

Shannon:

That's a good one.

Kerr:

Yeah, no or not, I'm famously not very good with money. I have a savings account. I put something in occasionally, but I'm very bad for dipping into that.

Shannon:

That's fair. I'm also notoriously bad with money, but again, yeah, trying to put a little bit into my savings account. I always see these like challenges online where it's like, say if you put, like a penny a day, and then you do like, 2p 3p however many days you do it, and you end up with like, £600 or something like that. Like, that's quite clever.

Shannon:

Okay, now we're going to take a closer look at why you chose to study nursing. So what drew you to your course or to nursing in general? Were you drawn to a certain career inspired by someone, or was there an experience that you had?

Minnie:

Well I worked and volunteered with children with additional support needs, and I just loved what I did. I loved being able to improve their quality of life, give them opportunities that they might maybe not have otherwise. And it was just so rewarding, and I wanted to do something more and continue developing skills and knowledge and how to support people with learning disabilities and additional support needs.

Shannon:

That's brilliant. That sounds really rewarding.

Minnie:

Definitely, no, it's just as an amazing field to be in. It's just, it's fantastic, like you really make a big difference to people's lives. You really help people live independently and help them be able to do stuff for themselves. And it just says, yeah, it's great.

Shannon:

That's fantastic.

Kerr:

Yeah. So I was initially thinking I wanted to do somewhere more in the childcare sector, so something like primary teaching. So I went, actually, to the Napier University Open Day for child nursing, and that's where I discovered that learning disability nursing even was a thing. My brother, he's got a learning disability and autism. And I also worked for Scottish Autism in the summer between high school and going to uni. So I thought, this was, I like, found out it was a thing. I looked into it, and I thought, 'okay, this is where I want to be'. It's incredibly rewarding. I do love it.

Shannon:

That's fantastic. And it's always nice. If you've had, like, a personal experience that really spurs you to choose your career path, that's amazing. What was it that made you apply to study nursing at Napier specifically?

Kerr:

So it was, for me, anyway, the Open Day that really helped. Getting to see all the facilities, the actual Skills Centre is really great. So when it came to kind of nursing, I thought maybe it was kind of a no brainer.

Shannon:

The skills, the clinical skills simulation centre is amazing. I've seen it a couple of times, and it always blows my mind how incredible it is. What about yourself, Minnie?

Minnie:

I was the same, when I went to the Open Day, and I also spoke to students on the Open Day, which really helped me decide that this was definitely the uni that I wanted to go to. And, yeah, just basically speaking to people and getting that kind of perspective.

Shannon:

That's fantastic. I always recommend people speak to students as well. You really get a really great insight into the course outside of what's just on the website. And I always think that's so handy when asking about, like, you know, specific modules, or the way things are assessed, or for you guys, like how placements and things work and things like that.

Shannon:

What do you think was the most important factor for you in choosing the course? So things like university rankings, teaching methods, placement opportunities, that kind of thing?

Minnie:

I would say the teaching has definitely been quite high, and choosing the University. I just I felt Napier teaching, the lecturers are absolutely fantastic. They're very supportive and just speaking to them, and got that impression from the very start. And I think just yeah, having that support of inclusive kind of environment has definitely been, yeah.

Shannon:

That's fantastic. What about yourself?

Kerr: Yeah, so, I mean, the skill center in that was absolutely amazing, like, really professional. But for me, it was actually talking to the lecturers at the open day. They were passionate. They were they really loved what they did, and they really wanted you to come in and do it as well. And, yeah, and so they're amazing lecturers, and I got that from the open day.

Shannon:

That's fantastic. I always, I always think an Open Day is amazing. It's always good to see a lecturer that is, like, really passionate about what they want to do, and they're not just like, selling you the course, but rather being like 'this is such an amazing opportunity and an amazing career path' that they want their excitement about it to go to so many people.

Minnie:

Definitely.

Shannon:

So in terms of being a nursing student, could you tell me something about your course that people listening might not know about yet? So this could be things like facilities, content, information on lectures, placements, anything that kind of, you came across in your course that maybe surprised you or that you didn't expect.

Kerr:

So for me, it's that there's four, five different fields of nursing. Adult, child mental health, learning disability, and then there's Midwifery. Especially in first year, a lot of the modules are very like, you're all kind of in the same lecture hall together. You're all because it is all nursing. You're learning a lot the same content. So a lot of it is mixed. You get mixed modules, but there's also modules where you're just with your smaller

group, or with your specific course, which I didn't realize going into, which I thought was pretty, pretty cool.

Shannon:

That is really cool. It's nice that you all get, like, the same base knowledge, but then also get to do your specific field. I think that's really interesting. What about yourself, Minnie?

Minnie:

I think mine has been the variation on the course, especially with placement. You could be one minute, you could be on a placement in community, and then you maybe get a forensic placement, or you get a placement with complex care kids. It's been fantastic, 'cause you then get to experience different areas and find out what areas you enjoy the most. and yeah, I think that's been something that I hadn't really expected before coming on the course. So yeah, that's been a real positive and a really good experience to have such variety.

Shannon:

Fantastic. And that's also a great segue to my next question. So how has your work placement been?

Minnie: They've been really positive learning experiences. I love my community placement. It's that was an excellent opportunity to support people within the community setting. I particularly enjoyed also the educational side of that placement. So it was like, leading groups of people of mild and moderate learning disabilities, and it was really good to kind of be able to see the differences as well, and how you support somebody with a mild LD to somebody with a moderate LD, and how you can lead that educational group for that different set of needs. So that was, yeah, that's really been a really good experience.

Shannon:

That sounds it, that sounds really interesting and amazing that you're able to adapt to so many different needs. What about yourself, Kerr? How's your placement been?

Kerr:

Yeah, no, it's been fantastic. So this, I'm currently on my fourth placement now. So I've been to four different places over the course of uni and I will be two others. You gets six placements total, and they've all been very good, that you'll find that nurses on placement are lovely. They're very patient. They don't expect you to do everything right away. And then if you need any assistance, they're 9.9 times out of 10 more than willing to help. And if you have any issues, you can also ask the uni. It's, you don't need to stress. I should say, everyone stresses before, especially the first placement. But it is fine.

Shannon:

That's great. What would you say is your best, like, placement experience?

Kerr:

Like with patients?

Shannon:

Or, like, what areas? So Minnie said that she really enjoyed the community aspect.

Kerr:

Oh, right, yeah. Um, honestly, I'm really enjoying the one I'm at right now That's more inpatient, with a smaller ward with three individuals. And it's more it's quite a personal, because you get really get to know the individuals, and just seeing them kind of daily. It's, yeah, it's really nice.

Shannon:

Yeah, that's really lovely.

Kerr:

You do feel like you're making a good, positive change to those individuals lives.

Shannon:

Yeah, absolutely. And especially working with such a small group, you must see it like week by week, changes and things that happen that's amazing.

Shannon:

Is your course what you expected it to be like?

Minnie:

Mine's kind of... I expected it to be challenging, but not in the same way as I expected. I was expecting to be challenging, thinking there was, like, a huge amount of essays and deadlines and clinical hours, but it wasn't. It was more to do with, you face quite a lot of experiences that you may not be familiar with as you figure out a lot about yourself on the course, which I found. But then I've learned a lot about overcoming setbacks and developing resilience over that, and it's been a really good learning experience in that way, but not the expected learning experience that I was, I had anticipated before coming on the course.

Shannon:

Nice, nice. What about yourself, Kerr?

Kerr:

I have to say, I had no idea what to expect I was when I first went into first year, 17, straight from high school. So I wasn't 100% sure what to expect. I just expected University and nursing. But it's, that transition period was great. Many, like, the people at the uni were really helpful. And yeah, it was, it was great, honestly.

Shannon:

That's amazing. So could you tell listeners what a week on your course would typically look like?

Kerr:

Yeah, so with nursing, it can kind of vary, especially with the placements. You could be kind of theory, the more what you would think of uni being, you're in campus, and you could be in campus two or three times a week, but and then you can also, you've got, like, online work online to do. So typically, like in campus, two or three times a week, and then with a little bit of online work to do as well. And then, if you're on placement, you're just on placement, the only time you expect to go into campus, is like once for reflection, but that would be like once over five weeks. So you need to do 32 hours a week, I think it is for placement. And you can sort the shifts out with the nurses on the ward. It's great.

Shannon:

That's nice. It's nice that it's like, flexible, and you get to do, like, a lot of different things. What about yourself, Minnie?

Minnie:

And you're also in skills, where you do different skills, like CPR, manual handling, violence and aggression training, and you have interprofessional learning days, so that's where you go in and you spend time with other students and different professionals, and you do lots of roleplay kind of activities. And so it's very interactive those sessions, and they are pretty good, because you learn a lot from other students. And it's, I think, it's really good for providing holistic kind of approach to the care you provide to patients.

Kerr:

You also get to see a lot of the equipment before you actually have to go into placement and use it. With the clinical skills centre you've got, they've got very life like, like, dummies. It's quite bizarre.

Minnie:

Yeah, yeah, they blink and breathe.

Kerr:

You can take a stethoscope and put it on their chest or the back and you can hear them breathe. It's insane, but it's incredibly helpful to actually let you practice, yeah, good bit of practicing with that equipment before, uh, being shipped off the uni, not uni placement, and, being expected to use it. So it's great.

Minnie:

They have blood pressure machines that you could also, like, try and find pulses, because they actually have pulses. And it's, it could be scary at times, but then when you actually do it, it's like, oh, this is quite interesting. It is, yeah, definitely.

Shannon:

I just remember one of my very first Sighthill campus tours. I went into clinical skills, and they have the, like, the at home simulation centre. So it's like for anyone that doesn't know, it basically looks like someone's home, and it would typically be for like, if you were looking after someone who couldn't come into hospital, for someone that had maybe Alzheimer's or dementia, basically anything that isn't getting them into hospital.

It's also to help them practice, like, end of life care and stuff, which is obviously a very serious subject. But I came in, and in the bed was a mannequin and it looked on death's door, and I was with a family, and I, like, nearly screamed. I absolutely jumped out my skin. I was like, I just wasn't expecting it. Like these dummies, they are fantastic for learning what you're doing, but they terrify me! Like I have so much respect for you, being able to work with them. They're terrifying.

Minnie:

They also have a cat in that little home bit.

Shannon:

They have a cat?

Kerr:

Oh yeah, I've noticed.

Shannon:

I've never seen that!

Minnie:

As sweet as it is.

Shannon:



Does it breathe and make noises?

Minnie:

I'm not sure actually. I'm gonna have to observe that next time I'm in there like, goodness.

Shannon:

I'm gonna have to look out for that my next campus tour haha!

Shannon:

So studying for a degree in nursing has its challenges along the way, whether it's learning new clinical skills to managing balancing coursework alongside other life responsibilities. What have been some of the challenges you've faced so far, and how have you dealt with them?

Kerr:

Yeah, so, to be honest, with a balancing of theory and placement, it is one of the more challenging parts that you do have theory blocks and like placement blocks, you're not going to be expected to go into uni and learn theory while you're on placement, but you might have deadlines for like, assessments and stuff which do run into placement, so you might be doing placement and then trying to get like an assessment or two finished, which can be challenging. But it's just about kind of time management, to be honest, and not leaving it to the last minute, which we are all bad for, especially me,

Shannon:

Yeah.

Minnie:

I would say mine is self belief. Imposter syndrome has been quite a big thing over the years, and it's kind of gone up and down depending on the situation I'm in, but I have kind of developed quite good strategies for overcoming that and building back up confidence. And, yeah.

Shannon:

I can imagine, like, I can imagine going into a hospital ward for the first time as a nursing student, must be really overwhelming, but that's amazing that you've been able to develop kind of strategies for that, and you must build so much confidence once you're able to, like, do the different skills that you've learned in simulation and things like that.

Minnie:

I think it's just practice as well. Just the more you do it, the more kind of confident you feel, and that kind of the dis-self belief goes away, and you start to think 'I can do this'.

Shannon:

That's amazing.

Kerr:

Sorry, just bouncing off of what Minnie said. I very similar when, because, as I said, I'm literally was 17 when I first started uni. I went straight in from high school, and then there's quite a lot of people on my course that are slightly older and stuff like that. So I was sitting there like, have I done this too early? Should I be here? Should I have gotten more experience? Should I and then? But it's fine. Yeah, no, it's been perfect with you. I had needed slightly more assistance in my first year, I'd say, but yeah, no, I'm very happy with the decisions I made that have led me here.

Shannon:

That's fantastic. Do you have any study tips or techniques that you use?

Minnie:

I would say, be proactive. Know when the deadlines are, if you're going into placement, research everything you can about the placement before going in, because then you go in with an open minded, positive mindset, and you know what opportunities you want to learn, which you can then seek. And also, if there's areas that you want improvement in, knowing what they might be, so you can then ask for opportunities in that area, and I would just say, ask questions, um, ask for feedback.

Kerr:

Don't procrastinate would be my biggest tip. That's actually easier said than done. And there's actually, like, the lectures at uni have at least have reached out, like on email and said, If you have problems with procrastination, you can talk to us. It is a bigger thing, but yeah, don't leave everything to the last minute. I am very bad for that, and it has not helped, which is something I'm getting slightly better at now, especially with some of the more like clinical skill, online stuff you need to complete and that, it's best to just get it done, and then you don't really need to worry about it.

Shannon:

That's fair. Procrastination is also such a huge part of my uni.

Minnie:

Yeah,

Shannon:

I feel that. I'm always like 'Oh, I can just do it later, I've got loads of time', and then you can't do it later and you do not have time.

Kerr:

Yes!

Shannon:

Have you used any of the student support services to help with any of your coursework, or things like that?

Minnie:

I've used quite a few, actually. I've used counselling, academic skills. I'm also part of the disability and inclusion, which are really helpful with just helping me progress. And yeah, there's pretty fantastic with like the support systems at the uni.

Shannon:

They really are, I can also say I'm part of the disability and inclusion, and I've used counseling as well, and they are brilliant, I highly recommend. What about yourself Kerr?

Kerr:

Yeah. So when I was on my second work placement, I had to take time just for like, health issues. And so first of all, the like the people at placement were completely understanding, like, not a problem there. If you need extra assistance, no one's going to penalize you for that. But then also, like the people at the uni were... one person in particular, one of my lecturers, was great. She got me my time off, and was very understanding, and I just needed one or two weeks, and I was able to get back, back into it, but I was kind of nervous beforehand, like, because I'm going to be missing so many hours, I need to catch up on, and she kind of put my mind at ease a bit. I can get them back. It's not the end of the world.

Minnie:

I totally agree with you with that, Kerr, like.

Kerr:

Yeah

Minnie:

They are really amazing. The lecturers, like, and providing that space to kind of have you need to take a bit of time off, and to actually facilitate that and support you in doing it. And, yeah, that's what's amazing about it.

Shannon:

That's fantastic. That's so nice. So I'm going to ask some questions on advice. So what would you say to someone who isn't sure about pursuing a nursing degree?

Kerr:

I'd say, I mean, nursing might not be for everyone, but I think if you're thinking about doing nursing in the first place, I think you're definitely thinking about it for about it for a reason. I think it's definitely the right thing for a lot of people. But I say just have a good think, and I think eventually you will, you will kind of know if it's the right thing for you. I'd say go to Open Days if you can. And as I said, kind of the beginning, it really helped me decide what I want to do. But yeah, I think if you're thinking about nursing in the first place, I think you're probably going down the right avenue, anyway,

Minnie:

I would say nursing got so many career pathways. So you can always use the nursing degree if you decide it's not for you, to transfer into another field if you want. There's so many ways that you can use that degree to do what you want in your life. And yeah.

Shannon:

Yeah, absolutely. Lots of transferable skills for other things.

Minnie:

I actually did childcare before, which I'm actually using a lot of what I learned on that course on my nursing degree, and it's been really helpful, even though I've not actually used the childcare qualification.

Shannon:

That's fantastic. What should people know about what it's like to study at Napier?

Minnie:

Napier is a great, very supportive University. I definitely recommend it to anybody. That goes from like, kind of the university itself, the lecturing team, just generally, everything's really positive.

Shannon:

That's great. What about yourself, Kerr?

Kerr:

Yeah, no, I do agree. I would hammer home that it's a really supportive kind of space to learn. They if you need anything, they are more than open to help, because at the end of the day, they just want they want you to succeed. They want you to come out of this with a degree, and they want you to graduate at the end of the day. And I would just say, for the content, there's slightly more online stuff than I expected. That's not a negative thing. It's just going into it. It's a pretty good split between being in campus, getting to get those skills, and actually being there to practice, and then also kind of being at home and just getting a lot of work done. It's a good split.

Shannon:

That's brilliant. Yeah, I really like Edinburgh Napier personally, I've been here for four years and had a really positive experience. I do completely agree that all the staff and the university as a whole is super supportive, and same as Kerr, I really enjoy, even though I don't do nursing, I do marketing, but I really like the mix of online work and practical things that you learn. And it's a very, I think it's a very practical university. A lot of our degrees are very much, you're going into a field of work. They're not just theoretical based degrees, which I think is fantastic, because the uni, they do want you to go out into the workplace and graduate and get something really amazing out of your degree. And I think the university is so supportive in offering that, whether that's things like the student futures team or any of our student support services, and also just providing that practicality aspect in any of your courses too.

Shannon:

What would you say is your top tip on how to choose the right course for you?

Minnie:

I would say go into the open days, speak to students already on the course. Speak to the lectures and just a bit of research on the course beforehand as well.

Kerr:

Yeah, I feel like I'm just kind of repeating what I've said and what Minnie said. But the open day was like, I can't stress enough. It was really helpful, even just to see, like, the tour of the clinical skills, and see, wow, this is really great. Yeah, I think between the open day and just kind of looking into it yourself, if you're stuck between two different courses in that research, personally.

Shannon:

So thank you to Kerr and Minnie for joining me today on the Find Your Uni podcast and discussing all things nursing. For more student stories, you can check out the rest of the Find Your Uni podcast online.