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Transcript

INTRO: Millie

Welcome to Edinburgh Napier's 'Find Your Uni', this podcast looks at the different factors which can be important when it comes to choosing which university to go to. Everyone on this podcast is a current student at Napier, so we have been in your shoes before when choosing what to do next. We look forward to sharing our experiences and we hope that it helps you on your journey.

Millie

Hello everyone, I'm Millie

Erin

And I'm Erin

Millie

And we're both students at Edinburgh Napier. In this episode, we're talking about finding the right course and making your UCAS choices. We're sharing what was important to us when we chose our course and how it led us to Napier. Today we're joined by Shannon to share her experience in choosing her course.

Shannon

Hi, I'm Shannon. I'm a third year marketing and digital media student here at Edinburgh.

Millie

Napier, and I'm Millie and I'm studying journalism.

Erin

And I am Erin and I'm studying mass communications.

Erin

So, the first question we have for you, Shannon, is, did you always know what you wanted to study?

Shannon

Absolutely not.

So my education journey, I left secondary school after doing my Hires in fifth year and then I went to college where I studied photography at the time. Photography was my whole life. But I knew kind of towards the end of it that being a photographer wasn't exactly my career goal. I wasn't really 100% sure what I wanted to do, but it definitely gave me the platform to kind of explore my creative interests and gauge what kind of things I enjoyed in a career. I knew I wanted to do something really hands on and creative, but I wasn't 100% sure what to do about that.

So, when it came to choosing my university, I basically opened up every single Scottish universities website and trolled through all the courses that they had on offer. I found that marketing and digital media on Napier was something that really interests me. I didn't really know what marketing or digital media for that fact really was, but I really liked the sound of it. It sounded very hands on, very industry led and was something that really interested me.

So no, I didn't know what I wanted to study, but I feel like I've definitely gotten to the right place three years later.

Erin

I was kind of similar. I had no idea kind of what I wanted to do, and now I'm in mass communications and that was something I didn't know what it meant, what it involved, and after looking through the same as you looking through the website and all the different courses, I found mass communications and now three years down the line, I'm in something that three years ago, if you told me I would be doing that, I wouldn't have believed you, cause I didn't even know that it existed.

Millie

Yeah, I mean, I'm the same. I think it's probably quite cliché that no one really knew what they wanted to do, but I just didn't.

And I always knew I wanted to do writing of some sort. I just didn't really know where to go with that. And it was only until last year, really, that I actually decided one to go to UNI. I took a gap year and I think it was at the beginning of that. I was like, actually, I do want to go to uni. I just don't know where to start with that.

And I looked at so many courses, so many different options, it was quite overwhelming, sort of the amount of courses that were available for to do with writing. It was like creative writing and I was even looking at media communication, stuff like that, but I just didn't really know.

And then I came across journalism here and it was kind of like reading through the modules and it kind of just made sense to me. And it kind of fit in with what I always wanted to do but hadn't really realised it. And yeah, I I genuinely, I did not know what I wanted to do, but I'm in first year now and I think it's just like is definitely where I meant to be and Yeah, I definitely picked the right course.

So, Shannon, another question... When you were looking at your course options, what aspects of the course or university were important to you?

Shannon

So, I'm originally from Aberdeen and I knew that I wanted to move to a bigger city. If you've ever been to Aberdeen, it's quite small. And so the idea of going to Edinburgh in Glasgow, somewhere like that, I knew that that was something that was important to me.

I also joined university and when I turned 21 I counted as a mature student, being 21 and being a mature student is wild to me, but I knew I wanted something that was industry LED where I could gain a lot of experience and go into a job afterwards. I knew it was something that I wanted to essentially gain the knowledge for a career and so definitely something was that was industry led and also coming from a photography background, I wanted something that was very hands on.

As much as we all love an essay. I'm very much someone that enjoys a tutorial, a workshop, getting to make things, getting to have a final something as opposed to a written piece of work. And so something that was hands on was really important to me.

What about yourselves?

Erin

And for me, the one thing I really wanted was a semester abroad.

And that's something I noticed from the course that I chose. They had that and it was a really big thing for me in the end. I didn't actually go on the semester board, but it was kind of that one thing that caught my eye when I was looking at courses that I was thinking, oh, that's really interesting cause a lot of places don't have that opportunity.

But also, yeah, something for someone my age, I was also 21 in classes as a mature students, so I wanted something where I wouldn't feel left out and wouldn't feel like I was the oldest person there. I think it's actually, yeah, worked out quite well because there's so many different ages as part of the courses as well now, definitely.

Millie

Yeah, I mean. It's the same really for me but combined.

Yeah, definitely the study abroad, obviously, like I said, I'm in first year, so that's like to come, but it was an important thing that I just to have the option even if I don't do it, it's to have that option. I think it shows a good cause that they offer that to you

And something that stood out for me especially with Napier was this further work and further study like the stats that you can find on the website. I remember looking at then I think it was like 100 percent or something and I was like compared to some other uni's, I'd looked at that was really promising to me, and I think that was a big thing that I wanted to make sure that they were going to help you after you graduated as well because, you know that's an important thing.

And along with that, the satisfaction rates on the websites that you find as well were important to me because some of them were quite low. I mean, it's debatable how accurate they really are, but it was. But they were high and I was like, you know what, that's really good indication of a good course.

But there were loads of things. I mean, for context, I'm from Brighton, which if you don't know, is very much south from here. It's like 10 hours. Well, it's I think it was like a 20 hour round trip when I moved up. But yeah.

So I wanted to make sure that I was going far like for a good reason and as much as I did want to move away from home, it was like I wanted to make sure I was making the right choice coming so far, it wasn't obviously wasn't convenient and it wasn't convenient for my dad, who drove me either. But yeah, I wanted to. I had loads of sort of criteria of things that wanted to fit to make sure, and because I was so overwhelmed with the amount of options and courses out there I was like If I'm doing it this for four years, it needs to be the right

thing. I don't want to regret it. So I think the main thing for me was just the stats and study abroad option, placement as well was important to me that they offered.

Because I mean, some of these don't, but it's just so obviously it's that's like a major part of getting experience. And when you leave, you want that experience to get job. And just like looking at what careers I think was important because you can sort of find on the website the careers that go with the course and looking at that and seeing how it fitted in exactly with what I wanted to do was really like a big thing, because I could sort of see all the things I was wanting to do with my degree, like there was magazine production was an important thing for me and it was on there and freelance writing and stuff like that. And it just looked like it was directly what I wanted to do in coming so far to go to uni. I was like this is right. This is definitely what. But yeah, I had a very big list of criteria which I think is really important when you're choosing.

Shannon

Yeah, definitely, it's really good to be organised when you're looking at different university courses like I know for a lot of the courses I looked at, I made a literal pros and cons list.

And I think that is so important because at the end of the day, you're gonna be there for four years, so you might as well choose a good one and one that suits what you're looking for and things not only in an academic sense, but things like social life, accommodation, society.

Because yeah, it's four years. You've got to make the most of it. So definitely organise with a list.

Millie

I think there's like you can't spend enough time, you know, choosing. I think that yeah, it's a really big decision and it can seem scary, but I think just take your time and just like you say, make a pros and cons, but yeah, make decision. Yeah.

Erin

Yeah. And as you said, it's not only the four years that you have to make a decision for. It's, yeah, how that helps you with your life further on. So like placement like you mentioned and how the university itself helps you. So it's not just for years you need to actually think about the future. So it's a really big decision to think about.

So next question for Shannon is now that you are on your course, what makes it the right fit for yourself?

Shannon

Honestly, I'm, I'm so biased coming from Napier, but I absolutely love my course. I think academically and like I said before, it's very industry led. All my lecturers have worked in the industry. They know exactly what they're talking about, all the classes and lectures I've gone to are very up to date. Marketing especially is something that changes pretty much every day. You'll see it on social media, there's a different Tik Tok trend every single day.

And so, it's really cool to see that everything I learn is very up to date and isn't taken from a textbook that was written like 10 years ago as well as all the lectures. I think my course mates as well have been absolutely amazing. Coming to university at 21 I was surrounded by a lot of 17 and 18 year olds and I was a bit like Oh my goodness you are making me feel ancient here.

But honestly, like I've learned so much from them, I've been able to teach them things which I think is really cool as well. I'm currently on placement and so we spoke a little bit about that. I'm currently on my third year placement.

And my course, I'm not sure if this is all all courses, but at least at mine you do a placement in third year or you do a live project, which is a brief given by a real company. So in your third year you're getting that experience whether you go out on placement or you do your live project and a couple of other modules. And I think that was really important for me. Just looking further ahead, looking for careers and things like that in terms of Napier itself, I will always hype up societies. I'm a president of one of the societies and President of Book Club. If you come to Napier, you should join book club, self promo. But I will always say the societies here are fantastic. The people have gotten to meet through them are amazing. There's so many opportunities in terms of things like being a student ambassador, getting to work at open days and things like that. So yeah, I genuinely pair is the perfect fit for me. I've really enjoyed my time so far. I highly recommend it to anyone.

Erin

I would say I'm also very biased as well, but I think there is something for everyone. So regardless of who you are, what your interests are, there's always something that you can do which is really important.

Again, talking about that age thing of being 21 when you start and everyone in your course is a lot younger. That seems like such a scary thing, but it's actually completely fine, and you'll meet people that are your age or younger or even older. Yeah. So you're never really out of the loop. You can always make friends with anyone, which is really important. And also the placement thing as well. That's really important, I think. For a lot of people is not just learning at uni, it's actually learning on the job as well, which is really a big part. I think a lot of people, makes a difference to them when choosing a course.

Shannon

Yeah, I think placement has been pretty amazing just because in first and second year, you obviously gain all that knowledge and then you go out onto a placement and you really get to put that knowledge into practise. Like for me at least on my placement, we're very small marketing teams. So I've really got into honing all the knowledge that I've learned I've had so many different classes at Napier that worked with other students. So we had like a social media marketing course where I worked with journalism, with mass Coms, with hospitality, tourism, all sorts and being able to gain that knowledge from other courses and then put it into essentially a real life job has been really amazing.

Millie

Well, for me it was again a similar thing. I mean, like the practicality of it, I wanted to step up from my A levels, which was very like essay based. And it was like, you know, a lot of writing to be going to uni and doing something that's like it feels like a step up because you're really getting the real experience. And I feel like that's what uni meant to me was to, like, get experience for the real world as well as obviously there's going to be essays, and there's going to be things like that, but. I actually, yeah, the mixture of it was good. I do enjoy writing obviously, but in my course specifically so practical, always so engaging, we're always going out and doing stuff, we're getting interviews.

I remember, it was like the first lecture or something, and we were made to go out and get, like, interviews on the street. I mean, it was like, quite daunting, but it was fine and it was like, really, in hindsight, it was so good, it was practical. Really, like put you in the deep end, but in a good way. And I think it was like for me that was like initially straight away. I was like, no, this is right for me because it's just there was not a single part of it that was boring to me and I was like, that's obviously the main the main thing and the modules obviously like I knew what the modules were before going to uni because you can find them on the website.

But actually doing them, they fitted it in line with what I wanted to do after uni, which was like a really good thing which I yeah. And so, for example, in the first time we did mobile journalism, which was creating videos and radio reports with your phone and we had to go out there. And I remember I went to Edinburgh market and got an interview with one of the stall owners and it was just really fun. And it was like, really engaging. And it didn't feel like uni work. It was like, proper, real life stuff. And we're doing news writing. And another thing that that shows me that this course is for me, was this the the politics side of it as well because obviously, like, that's part journalism.

I'm not a very political person, but it's been so interesting to learn about. We had, like, global current affairs in the first term, and this time it's public affairs and it's been so interesting just to learn more about politics that you might not have, like someone that's not interested in politics. You know, you don't ever think you'd have to learn about that. But when you do, it's really it's an important thing to know, especially with everything's going on at the moment and yeah.

It was just the mixture of everything and the practicality of it was something that just proved to me, and it's just it was. It's just really interesting. I'm just loving it and learning new things. It's just like for me, it was that was the main things, but yeah, I think also.

Erin

There's so many aspects to a course that you don't even think about until you're here.

Millie

Yeah, yeah.

Erin

Like that politics part I've done, politics is part of one of my courses as well, which is something I never even thought I would ever do. But it was actually one of the most interesting classes I did and also the practicality side of it. I think in the last three years most of my classes have had a practical element where you actually had to work in the real world. And they've given to your lecturers. I've given you a real life situation that you had to work with, which helps a lot. Kind of imagine what you're going to do when you leave. Rather than just sitting and writing essays for for three years.

Shannon

Yeah, I totally agree. I think the practical element of it is amazing. Like I had a class last semester where we had to design a museum exhibition and we had to, like, do all the marketing for how we would promote this. We were teamed up with students in sound design and digital media to physically create what this exhibition would look like. Props, sound, what kind of people would visit all sorts of things and I think that was really cool. And I think that's something I really love about Napier, is that they do team you up with lots of different disciplines within the university. So you're not just with the marketing students, you're with loads of people and you learn so much you learn because they're obviously use different software's or different lessons that you might not have.

And so I think that's something I really love about my course is that I get to work with so many different people that I probably wouldn't have met otherwise because they're in different courses than me.

Millie

Yeah. And it's like, it's similar thing to that is that you do things that you wouldn't expect to enjoy, but you do. And it kind of like going into doing journalism, I knew I wanted to do something within there, but I didn't know exactly what.

But to do so many different aspects of it, and you don't think you're going to like you have to do broadcast journalism as well as news writing. And I might you might not think you're going to enjoy one, but it turns out to be the thing that you end up doing. And I think everybody thinks when you go to uni, you have to know what you want to do when you leave, but it's kind of about finding, like, refining it and like, getting to know what you want to do. There's so many different modules available and you learn so many different things that you might completely change your career idea, but your degree will still be helpful because you did so many different things.

Erin

Yeah. That's in the four years you've probably changed to a completely different thing as well.

Millie

It's still relevant. Yeah, and as well to go with that my lecturers, that's like my lecturers were really experienced and on the first day I remember we had sort of like a panel thing where they were like all set, we'd ask some questions and it that was just really helpful to me to see that actually these people who have been in the industry for so long and learning from such experience lectures was something that was like, this is definitely the right course for me.

I mean like most of them, not that this is well want to do, but they've all interviewed someone like ridiculously famous. I remember one of them would like Ronaldo and it was like Shakira and like Taylor Swift, I think one of them interviewed and it was like so yeah it was cool. But I mean, not just that, but so many different things. And they one of my lectures has been working for the BBC for 20 years and she's only just started teaching. But that's so to know that they have actually been in the industry. They know what they're talking about for me was a really important part of knowing that it was the right course.

Erin

The thing like lectures are really important and what they've done as well, because that changes your perception of what you're doing, if you know that someone has actually made it in your industry, it's quite good as well. And one other thing I wanted to touch on as well.

I feel like there's this belief that when you go to uni, you don't get any help and you're completely on your own. And yeah, that you're kind of dropped in the deep end, but in actual fact, there's a lot of help everywhere. So, in my head. I was thinking all was you know, I'm going to have to do everything by myself? I'm going to really struggle? And an actual fact, it's been the right fit for me because if I struggle with something, there's always help there if you do need. It as well, yeah, yeah. Hundred 100%.

Shannon

Like whether it's just emailing A lecturer or messaging someone on your course and being like, hey, we're in the same class. What kind of idea do you have?

I think the amount of help that you get is so amazing. And also with Napier, they have so many student support systems, so things like disability and inclusion, academic help, the library runs loaded, different workshops on like things like referencing how to write an essay because obviously it's such a big jump from coming from school or college.

Like the way you'd write an essay when you're doing your highers in school versus university, it can be pretty different. And so, it's amazing the amount of help you can get, like you are thrown in the deep end in a sense. But there is so much support out there. Napier, are very upfront about that. Like if you go to an open day or an offer holder day there will all there'll be all the stalls for like academic support and things like that and they'll e-mail you within your first couple of weeks being like, hey, we're offering this workshop for that. And I think it's just amazing that even though you do feel a little bit like you've been thrown in the deep end, there is so much support out there to help.

Millie

Totally! So, our last question Shannon..

What tips would you give people who are choosing their course right now?

Shannon

Will definitely like you said before. You have so much time. Do not rush it. Don't pick the well. Maybe the first thing that you see is the right one for you, but don't just go with the first thing you see. Explore as much options as you can. Look at your university's website,

whether that's Napier or another university. Look through the course page. On a lot of university websites, you can go directly to which modules they teach and that will show you how it's assessed, like whether you're doing group work, whether you're doing a presentation, whether you've got a report to write so you know exactly how you'll be assessed.

And other things such as studying abroad, placement opportunities, what kind of accreditations you can get afterwards, career support afterwards, all sorts of things like that. I would say, do as much research as you can and create that pros and cons list of everything that you want out of a university, because at the end of the day.

Yes, you're getting a degree out of a university, but what can the university give you? I think also, if you're able to speak to a current student, so listen to this podcast or a lot of universities offer Unibuddy, which is something that I'm on as well, where students can message basically to current students at their university. They can do it by which country they come from, if you're an international student, which course they study, which year of study they're in and you can ask any questions about the course itself, funding, accommodation, student life, societies is anything like that. And so, I think getting to talk to someone who's actually in the university is super helpful, definitely. Erin, what about you?

Erin

I think go to open days if you're able to. If you're in the area or able to travel to the area.

That was something that made a big difference to me, is actually seeing a campus in person because that's where you gonna spend 4 years of your life. You wanna make sure it's the right place? It's something not everyone thinks about is actually the building that you're gonna be in. But if you can go into an open day, that's always really helpful. If you have an offer already, go to an offer holding day as well. Just to get that idea and sort of get the atmosphere of the place that you're gonna, you're gonna go to as well and also speak to students if you know anyone that's been to that university, whether it's in a different course. Just always ask around because people are more than happy to tell you how they got on and their experiences.

Millie

One of the major things helped me to pick my course was actually speaking to somebody on social media. I found, I think it was like I just looked up on Tik Tok my course or something like that and it came up with this girl. And she's at Napier now. And she really helped me. It's just such a good thing to get the authentic experience from the student. And I text her saying, are you enjoying the call? What does it entail? And she just gave me so

much help. And she. Yeah, she gave me a massive list of everything you do and how practical it was. And she was so enthusiastic about it.

And it was just like a real, honest review of the course, and I was like, OK, that's that's good to have. It's just so good to be able to talk to people and you can find them anywhere. It doesn't have to be someone you know, you can find them online or you can also even talk to them on the website. They have options where you can chat to students, and that's a major thing. Just to get it from somebody else who is in your position as well, I think do what you want to do. I think it's easy to get opinions from other people. And actually, when I was choosing my course, I would did take on a lot of opinions from other people like my family, friends and stuff like that.

So that was helpful. I think I did actually get a little bit you know, a direction from them at the end of the day, it's you're you're going to be on the course for the four years and don't.

do what your parents want you to or what your friends are might be on the course doing. You know, you just do what you want to do and that will pay off. That's the most advice. I think that's the biggest thing I could say.

Yeah, just do lots of research, like Shannon said, do research. Give yourself time. Make a pro and cons list.

I think Edinburgh was. I've always wanted to live in Edinburgh and it was like my first choice. But then all these other options came and I was like, I'm not sure and every day was a different, you know, I wanted to go to. I'd wake up and go no, I want to go to this one and I want to get this one. But then in the end, it was like clear to me. But that's only after that time I could see that I think if you make a rush decision, then apply and then you might regret it, but pick the unit for the course rather than any other reason, I think, because at the end of the day that is what you're here for.

Erin

And just because it's worked for one person doesn't mean it works in different uni's.

Work for different people, which is really important as well. Yeah. So make your own decision.

Shannon

I think. I definitely want to add on as well about going to open days and offer holders.

Is it's so much more than the course, so like get to know your campus. It's things like where is the canteen? And is the food good?

Honestly, I do student tours all the time and I will tell you that the food is good at Napier.

Or like seeing the accommodation or what kind of social spaces are where would you be studying? What's the library like?

It's things like that that also really solidify your decision because like for me, I know that I work best in social spaces, so knowing that there are lots of different study areas around Napier where other people are studying and it's not just complete silence. Yeah, you will never find me in the silent area in the library because I don't like the silence. But I know that works for some people.

Or look at like different societies, things that interest you outside of your course. Things like hobbies that either you want to continue or maybe like a new sport that you wanna join. Societies are a fantastic way to make new friends. Yeah. So I think there's lots of different areas outside your course as well. That really solidifies that decision.

So 100% go to an open day or an offer holder day if you can. If you can travel or like you were saying before, look someone up on TikTok. like I absolutely looked up Napier on TikTok to see if people were posting stuff or for other universities as well because at least for me if someone messaged me being like, hey, do you go to Napier, how do you find it? I will happily chat about Napier all day long. I will always talk about my course and how I'm finding it, and because I think it it would, that would have been so nice for me when I was choosing like I didn't really reach out to anyone online. So knowing that someone maybe comes to me and that helps them choose is so nice.

Millie

Yes, definitely.

Erin

It seems so daunting, the thought of messaging someone that goes to you that's older than you and now I'm like at the same if somebody says that now to me, I'd be more than happy to help.

Shannon

Exactly. It's nice, it's.

Millie

Put yourself in. Yeah, I think it's so nice.

Shannon

Never a bad thing.

Shannon

Yeah.

Erin

Like ohh I could have wished I did it. Yeah.

We're hearing messaging people and tip talk that's such a good idea that.

Millie

Yeah. Yeah, I see. Yeah, but as well another point was just to really read the modules. I think that's like where a lot of, for example, my friends went wrong with it in other unions, they didn't read exactly what the description was and they kind of thought, OK, this sounds like, like by reading the degree, it sounds like, but you need to read, you know, each year what each it tells you everything on the website.

And look it up if you don't know what it means and see if that's something you want to do because you are going to be doing each one you know each time and if you're not enjoying it and obviously you don't have to enjoy them all, there's some things that you might enjoy as much, but just to get the general idea of it and look things up. I mean this uni is the only one that actually was journalism when I was picking my options, and I was convinced I was going to and do media communications and I think I was going to do creative writing, so many different things.

But reading the descriptions of the modules I was like actually that doesn't fit into what I want to do and when I read this one I was like no, this is really, you know, each module I'm interested in, even if I don't know what it is I want to learn more about it. Just really do your research.

Shannon

So often you'll find out something that maybe you either don't know what it's about or you think you really hate it. You end up loving it. That always happens, yeah.

Millie

Exactly. I think just the main thing is just to ask yourself what you want and why you want it, and then go from there and decide what you want to do and you'll be fine

OUTRO: Millie

So that's it for today. Thank you very much for tuning in and thank you to Shannon for joining in on today's discussion.

So, next time we're going to be talking about the student experience and whether satisfaction rates really reflect the truth for student life...

So, tune in to learn how to find a university where you belong.