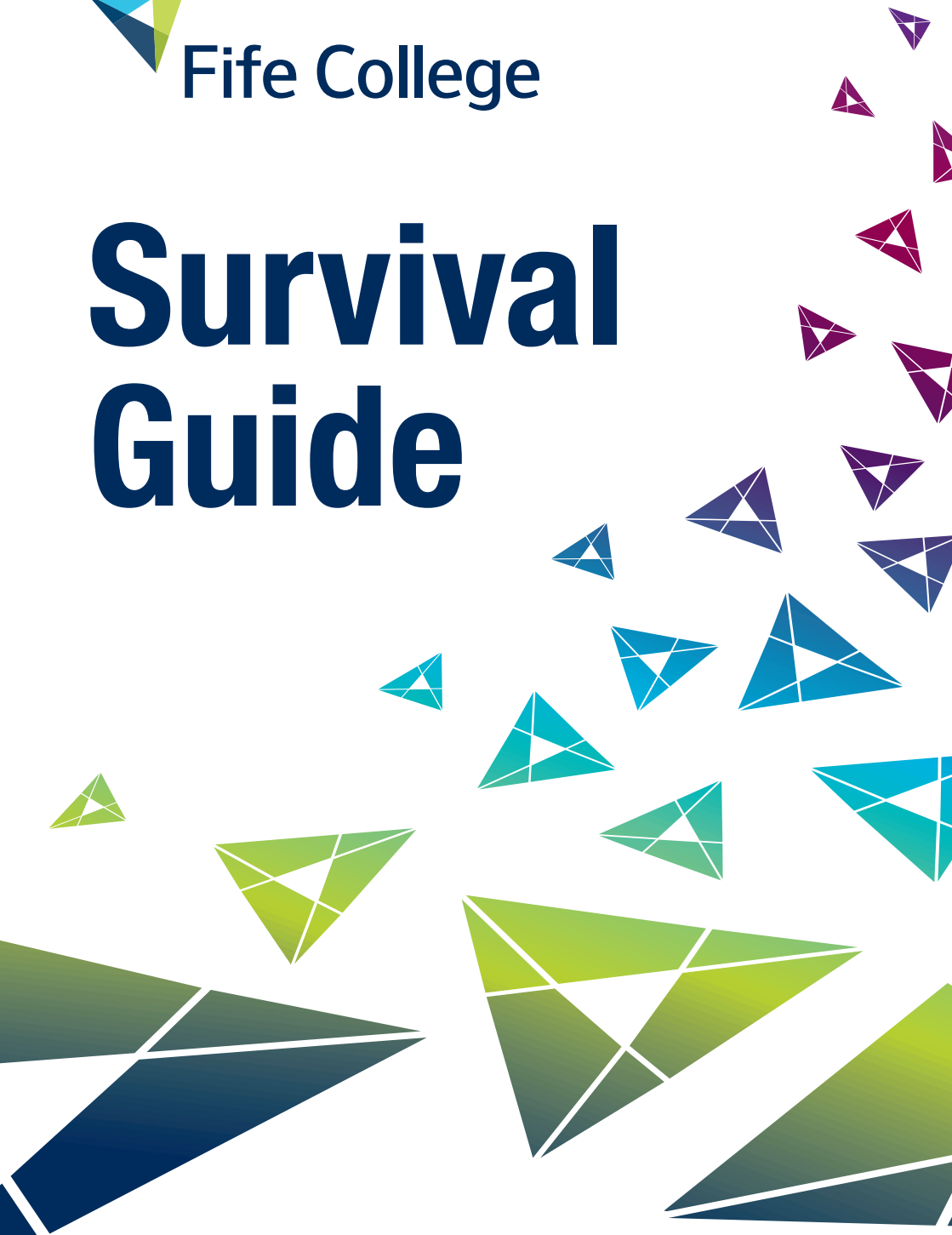




Survival Guide



Welcome to Fife College!

The Guidance Team's Survival Guide is designed to provide you with useful information, advice and tips to help you through the academic year and to ensure you have the best possible experience at Fife College.

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1. Coming to College

Whether you are coming to College from school, another college or employment, it can be quite a daunting experience.

There are a few things that you should make sure are in place during your first week at College. These include:

- Having your funding in place by ensuring you have provided us with the relevant forms and evidence.
- Being properly equipped for your course with the necessary equipment, stationery or uniform.
- Completing the enrolment process and ensuring you have your student ID card.
- Having a copy of your timetable and knowing where you need to be. Also having any childcare in place and knowing how you are going to get to College.
- Making yourself familiar with the College Policies and Procedures, such as the College Attendance Procedure and knowing what is expected from you during the academic year.
- Learning about the Guidance and Attendance team and also the Inclusion team and the role they play in supporting you throughout your studies.

2. The Social Scene

Being at College isn't just about studying all the time. It is a great chance to make new friends, develop your skills and try new things.

You will meet a lot of new people in your first week. Don't worry if you feel you are not good at starting up conversation with new people, there are hundreds of people at College in the same position and you are bound to meet people in your classes or through a college activity. The College facilitates a variety of extra-curricular activities throughout the year for you to get involved with which is a great way to meet like-minded people and get to know the College.

During the academic year, there will be a programme of extra-curricular activities for you to get involved in, including various sporting activities, movie nights and arts and crafts. Keep an eye on the College social media sites and website for further updates.

New to Fife? Make sure you take advantage of what the Kingdom has to offer, whether that is a trip to the beach at St Andrews or a night out in Dunfermline. During Freshers' Week, the Fife College Students' Association along with local businesses often hand out discount vouchers which can help you discover new places and activities in Fife.

Fife College Students' Association

When you become a student at Fife College, you automatically become a member of the Fife College Students' Association (FCSA). The FCSA provides a network of student support including:

- Student Representation
- Academic and Welfare advice (including disciplinary hearings, appeals and complaints)
- Campaigns and Events

The FCSA is here to work with you to ensure you have a great student experience. They aim to fairly represent you and enable you to participate in shaping your academic and overall student experience. This is done by giving you every opportunity to provide them with feedback on their services and various aspects of the College, including the delivery of your course.

The FCSA also offers a variety of volunteering roles within the Students' Association. If you are lucky enough to be elected as a class rep, the FCSA will support and advise you in your role and provide training so you can voice your opinions with confidence.

Get in touch

For more information, call 0344 248 0115 and ask to speak to a member of the Students' Association.

You can keep up-to-date with news and events by following the Fife College Students' Association Facebook and Twitter pages or by visiting the Fife College website.

3. Studying and Exams

Exam time can be a stressful time which is why we have made a list of our top ten study tips to help you achieve the best results you can!

1 Make a study plan that will work for you

Studying and revision are very important in the lead up to exams, but a one-size-fits-all approach may not be the best. It's also important to make sure that you are studying in a way that works for you.

2 Take regular study breaks

The great thing about creating a study plan is that you can incorporate regular study breaks. Not only do these breaks offer a good goal or incentive while studying, they are also good for you and will help you study more effectively.

3 Make sure you test yourself regularly

It may seem like there are enough tests coming up to keep you occupied, but setting yourself short quizzes can help you to remember information.

4 Be sure to mix it up

In the same way that regular study breaks help you to maintain your focus. Studying in different locations can have a positive effect on your concentration.

5 Get into a study routine

Routine is important. Creating and sticking to a study plan is a fantastic start!

6 Stay positive!

Your attitude has a big impact on how productive your study sessions are. If you're not really committed to what you're doing, it will be much harder to get anything from your study. When you think positively, however, your brain shows greater activity and you are more likely to retain new information.

7 Find study partners that are best suited to you

Ok, so by now you will know who is a good study partner for you and who is more of a bad influence. It is important that you only study with those who work best with you.

8 Look after yourself

If you take good care of yourself, you can study better. You should make sure that you are getting enough sleep and physical exercise, as well as that you're eating well and drinking enough water. A little bit of caffeine can aid study, but too much can have the opposite effect.

9 Try different revision techniques

Reading your notes over and over again may work, but you should try a few different revision techniques to see what works the best for you.

10 Is there an app for that?

Embrace new technologies! Revision doesn't have to be just a pen and paper activity anymore. There are loads of useful apps and online tools that can help you, from quizzes to prompts.

Exam and Assessment Arrangements

If you have a disability or need additional support, assessment arrangements are available to you, giving you an equal chance to show what you know and can do. For example, if you normally use a scribe to assist you with writing, you can use a scribe in your examinations and/or assessments at College.

Please talk to the Guidance or Inclusion Team about your support needs and to decide the assessment arrangements that will be best for you on your course.

The College has to prove to the SQA that the arrangements you require are beneficial to you in your learning and development. This means that you will need to discuss the assessment plan with your individual class lecturer and the Inclusion Team.

We can organise and arrange support if we know in advance what is needed. It is important to have this in place before the SQA deadline date for an arrangement request which is January.

If you have had assessment arrangements in the past, please do not assume that the College will automatically have assessment arrangements in place for you this session. It's better for you to come and check with us to ensure you have everything in place that you need.

Speak to the Inclusion Team about support. If there is anything which could get in the way of your learning and participation at College, or you encounter a problem with learning, a good starting point is to talk to a member of the Inclusion Team. Remember, you don't need to be studying for exams to receive support during your time at College.

The Team is full of ideas to make learning a reality. They want to work with you to develop your skills, confidence, motivation, independence and expertise in learning. They also realise that every student is different and do what they can to make the College accessible and inclusive to all.

If there is any way you think the Inclusion Team can help you achieve your learning goals, please visit their staff base at any campus where you can get some advice or make an appointment with a Learning Inclusion Facilitator. Alternatively, you can email learning@fife.ac.uk to book an appointment.



4. Health and Welfare

Guidance

You don't need to worry about disclosing mental health difficulties to the Guidance Team. We are friendly, approachable and professional and only have your best interest at heart. You can speak to us about your health, personal matters, financial concerns, educational matters, progression and careers.

The Guidance Team is available at all five College campuses.

To book an appointment with a member of the Guidance Team, please pop by reception at any campus or email guidance@fife.ac.uk.

Attendance

Attendance Advisers are available at each campus throughout the week and are part of the Guidance Team, but with slightly different roles. Attendance Advisers work in conjunction with the College Attendance Procedure and work with both the support teams and academic staff to monitor student attendance and support students who are experiencing difficulties in attending college.

For more information, please email attendance@fife.ac.uk.

Think Positive!

Your time as a student is often described as 'the best years of your life' and while it is, sometimes things can be tough or stressful. There can be many ups and downs while you are studying and it is important to stay positive through all the downs to avoid your mental health being affected.

Top Ten Tips from Think Positive

1 Have some "good mood food"

Eating five pieces of fruit or veg a day to stay healthy is not just good for our bodies, but is good for our minds. Eating healthily prevents you feeling sluggish and tired, increases your concentration and can give you the much needed energy to stay awake for that early Monday morning lecture.

2 Exercise

Ok, so sweating it out at the gym every day might not be everyone's idea of fun, but even just walking more can actually make you feel happier. Joining a sports team or a walking group will also give you the chance to meet people and try new things.

3 Socialise

Socialising can also be beneficial to you, meeting new people and exploring new places can be great fun. This doesn't always have to involve alcohol either. Like everything, alcohol should be consumed in moderation and not used as an escape from worries or mental health concerns. Visit www.drinkaware.co.uk for further information on alcohol and your recommended alcohol intake.

4 Spend time laughing

Having a laugh is always a good way to improve your mood. Spending time with friends and family can make you feel good about yourself and life in general.

5 Live well

Your mental health is influenced by your surroundings, so try to make your living space somewhere you want to be. Put photos on your wall and make sure your room is comforting. Managing your money is really important too – debt and financial difficulties are very stressful. Living well doesn't mean spending lots. Being with friends and taking care of yourself can be done within a budget. For advice on finance or housing visit www.adviceguide.org.uk.

6 Take a break

Make sure you don't overdo it. Being a student does mean revision, coursework and exams but try to take breaks in between to keep a good balance between work and social time. Take a walk and get some fresh air – being in green spaces can help lift your mood.

7 Volunteer

Make the most of your spare time and do something fun. Volunteering is a great way to make new friends, learn new skills and do something for others. It is also a good thing to write on your CV! The Students' Association will be able to help you find a project suited to you. There is lots you can do, from being a course rep to campaigning for a good cause. Talk to the Students' Association about how you can become involved. If you want to volunteer in your local community you should contact your local volunteer centre. More information can be found at www.volunteerscotland.org.uk

8 Support network

It's important to know where to go for support. Whether you just want to talk to someone, or need help with a specific issue, there is always someone to offer support and advice. Friends and family are often your first contact. Learn to be honest with them about what is going on and share your problems with each other. If you feel you need some extra support, there are plenty of organisations out there that can help you.

9 Remember the good

It can be easy to let the bad things overshadow your day and forget the little things that make you smile, especially when times are tough. Try to get into the habit of ending your day on a positive. Before you go to bed, write down the good things that have happened to make you smile.

9 Get some sleep

Sleeping and student life don't always seem to go together, but you should aim for about eight hours every night. A lack of sleep not only causes tiredness but has been associated with mental health problems.

Mental Health

Mental health is extremely important and can often have an impact on your performance at College. We are always on hand to ensure you have a positive experience at Fife College, so if you are concerned about your mental health please do not hesitate to speak to us.

Stress

A little bit of stress isn't a bad thing, it mobilises our bodies and energises us during the coping process. But being overstressed can result in a range of health problems, including headaches, upset stomach, high blood pressure and even strokes or heart disease.

One of the first steps to cope with stress is learning to recognise your personal signs and symptoms. The way you function on a daily basis may change, or you may notice a difference in your body (such as tense shoulders), thinking, or general sense of wellbeing. Is the cause of your stress a real threat? Or is something causing needless worry in your life?

Stress is a part of life but we don't need to compound our problems by putting ourselves down and thinking irrational thoughts such as "nobody gets stressed out like I do". We're not weak or neurotic because we're stressed – we're stressed because we're human.

So whenever you feel stressed, remember you are not alone. Come and book a Guidance appointment and talk to us about what is bothering you.

Depression

People sometimes describe themselves as 'depressed' when what they mean is that they are feeling a bit down. Depression is where these feelings are severe, or long lasting. Depression is becoming increasingly common. Significant life events can trigger periods of depression, exam or work stress, family turmoil, or concerns around identity or sexual orientation are all types of things that can be triggers.

Symptoms of depression can include:

- Feelings of overwhelming sadness
- Lack of interest and pleasure in things you would normally enjoy
- Difficulty sleeping
- Paying less attention to themselves e.g. forgetting to wash your hair or wearing clean clothes.
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Having recurrent thoughts of death or suicide, self-harm, or make suicide attempts.

David Richards, Professor of Mental Health Services Research at the University of Exeter, offers these self-help tips for dealing with depression.

- Don't withdraw from life. Socialising can improve your mood. Keeping in touch with friends and family means you have someone to talk to when you feel low.
- Be more active. Take up some form of exercise. There's evidence that exercise can help lift your mood. If you haven't exercised for a while, start gently by walking for 20 minutes every day.
- Face your fears. Don't avoid the things you find difficult. When people feel low or anxious, they sometimes avoid talking to other people. Some people can lose their confidence about going out, driving or travelling. If this starts to happen, facing up to these situations will help them become easier.
- Don't drink too much alcohol

Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling that everyone will experience at some point. We all experience it when faced with situations we find threatening or difficult. People may often use the term 'stress', but this is not the same as anxiety. Anxiety may be caused by an ongoing worry or as a sudden response to something that may make us feel scared or threatened (fear). About one in every ten people will experience anxiety at some point in their lives. People suffering anxiety may feel worried and tired all the time and suffer symptoms such as irregular heartbeats (palpitations), sweating, muscle tension and pains and dizziness.

NHS provides these useful tips to help deal with anxiety:

- Take time out. It's impossible to think clearly when you're flooded with fear or anxiety. The first thing to do is take time out so you can physically calm down. Distract yourself from the worry for 15 minutes by walking around the block, making a cup of tea or having a bath.
- Breathe through panic. If you start to get a faster heartbeat or sweaty palms, the best thing is not to fight it. Stay where you are and simply feel the panic without trying to distract yourself. Place the palm of your hand on your stomach and breathe slowly and deeply. The goal is to help the mind get used to coping with panic, which takes the fear of fear away. You can also try this breathing technique for stress.
- Visualise a happy place. Take a moment to close your eyes and imagine a place of safety and calm. It could be a picture of you walking on a beautiful beach, or snuggled up in bed with the cat next to you, or a happy memory from childhood. Let the positive feelings soothe you until you feel more relaxed.
- Talk about it. Sharing fears takes away a lot of their scariness. If you can't talk to a partner, friend or family member, call a helpline such as the Samaritans (116 123, open 24 hours a day). If your fears aren't going away, you can ask your GP for help. GPs can refer people for counselling, psychotherapy or help through an online mental health service, such as FearFighter.

Panic Attacks

A panic attack is a sudden rush of overwhelming fear that often occurs without warning or any obvious reason.

Symptoms

- Hyperventilation and fast breathing resulting in lack of carbon dioxide in your blood
- Palpitations
- Nervous behaviour
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Trembling

Actions

- Try to keep calm and seek out a quiet place
- Seek medical advice
- If you are assisting a fellow student remain with them until the panic attack is over

Self Harm

In its broadest sense, self-harm is described as “a wide range of things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging.” Self-harm is always a sign of emotional distress and that something is seriously wrong. People self-harm for a number of reasons. For some people, self-harm provides the means to cope with overwhelming emotion and is a way to control feelings of helplessness and powerlessness

Strategies to Deal with Self-Harm

- Learn how you feel – are you feeling angry, sad, depressed, craving sensation, wanting focus, wanting to see blood, wanting to see scars/pick scabs? Try and match the feeling to an activity.
- Talk to someone - Speak to someone close to you, whether that is a friend, family member or lecturer. Our Guidance Team is also always available to talk!

Sexual Health

The Guidance Team is able to dispense condoms, completely free.

We can also make referrals to NHS Fife and point you in the right direction should you want to discuss sexual health in more detail with a sexual health professional.

If you have any questions or would like some advice, you can email shealth@fife.ac.uk

Staying Safe on the Internet

- Don't give out personal information, such as your name, home address, phone number, the name of your school/College, pictures, credit card numbers, etc.
- If chatting with someone you have never met online, do not meet them in person and if you do, make sure you are not alone and in a public place.
- Never give out your password to anyone.
- Use a gender neutral username in chat rooms so you are less likely to receive pornographic material or other forms of harassment. If you do receive any of this content, contact 101 and alert the Police immediately.
- Do not share intimate pictures of yourself on the internet. Whether you know the person or not, those pictures will be in cyberspace forever and could get into anyone's hands.

All Guidance appointments are treated with respect and confidentiality. If you are concerned about your mental health, please email guidance@fife.ac.uk or pop by reception to book an appointment.



5. Money

The Guidance Team can offer support on how to apply for Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) funding or help investigate any student loan problems you may be having. If you are not studying for a HN or a degree and you are applying to college for an EMA or Bursary, we can help direct you to the people you need to speak to to ensure your funding is in place. We can also provide advice on how to budget, manage your finances and handle debt.

Benefits

You may be entitled to access Government Benefits while you are studying. You can find out if you are eligible for this by visiting www.gov.uk or visiting your local Citizens Advice or Job Centre.



6. University and Beyond

The Guidance Team is dedicated to supporting students in their application for jobs, future courses and University.

There is a college system in place for UCAS applications and students can meet with us to get advice and support with their UCAS application and personal statement. There are workshops on offer before the UCAS deadline and plenty of resources available.

You may also rely on your lecturer to provide academic references so it is always a good idea to talk to them as early as possible about your application.

Student Employability Hub

The Student Employment Hub will be involved from the start of the student journey and throughout. Employability Advisors are assigned to each faculty and they will work in collaboration with the curriculum and ensure employability skills are as important as the academic outcomes. You will be able to create an Employability portfolio and achieve awards recognised by employers.

Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland hold appointments once a week at our Halbeath, St Brycedale and Stenton campuses which can help you decide what career path you want to go down, how to write an effective CV, how to fill out job applications and how to prepare for interviews. Appointments can be made at reception at these campuses.



7. Useful Contacts

Skills Development Scotland

www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk

Samaritans: 116 123

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87

Frank: 0300 123 66 00

Childline: 0800 1111

National Union of Students Scotland

0845 5210262

mail@nus-scotland.org.uk

www.nus.org.uk/scotland

Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

0141 5301000

info@samh.org.uk

www.samh.org.uk

The Mental Health Foundation (Scotland)

020 7803 1100

scotland@mhf.org.uk

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/scotland

CAMHS

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Cupar - 01334 696250

Dunfermline - 01383 627031

Kirkcaldy - 01592 208460

See Me – End Mental Health Discrimination

0141 530 1111

www.seemescotland.org.uk

Depression Alliance

www.mind.org.uk

www.lookokfeelcrap.org

Think Positive

– Improving Student Mental Health Wellbeing

www.thinkpositive.scot

Scotland's Colleges Supporting Student Mental Health and Well-Being

www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk

Young Minds: Think Positive

- Improving Student Mental Health in Scotland

www.youngminds.org.uk

FRASAC

Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre

www.frasac.org.uk

01592 642326

DAPL

Drug, Alcohol and Psychotherapies

www.dapl.net

01333 422277

The Hub

NHS Sexual Health

www.thehub.fife.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust

Sexual Health

www.tht.or.uk

0808 802 1221

The Student Room

www.thestudentroom.co.uk

BBC

www.bbc.co.uk/health

Wellbeing Glasgow

www.wellbeing-Glasgow.org.uk

Benefits and Welfare Advice

www.gov.uk

Foodbanks

Trussell Trust

www.trusselltrust.org

Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Frontline Fife

Preventing Homelessness, transforming lives

www.frontlinefife.co.uk

Kirkcaldy - 01592 800430, 01592 583394

Dunfermline - 01383 602388

Leven - 01334 659391

Cupar - 01334 659390

Contact us

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