

## Tips for making the most of campus living and living with other students

1. Understand the Realities of Shared Spaces. First-year students are usually expected to live on campus, choosing from accommodations like Sherbourne (with en-suite bathrooms) or Rootes (with shared bathrooms). Shared bathroom accommodations often have misconceptions about cleanliness and availability. Having lived in shared bathroom accommodations three times during my four years at Warwick, I found that bathrooms and kitchens, although shared, are often cleaned once or twice a week. While they can get messy, especially towards the end of the week, they are generally manageable.
2. Choose your housemates wisely. When given the opportunity to choose your housemates, it's crucial to pick people whose values align with yours. Discuss important topics like how you'll share bills, the frequency of having partners stay over, and preferred noise levels. For example, in my final year, I lived with people who were reluctant to pay bills, which was quite challenging to navigate. Ensuring you're on the same page can prevent future conflicts.
3. Set clear boundaries early. At the beginning of your tenancy, sit down with your housemates or create a group chat to discuss everyone's boundaries and preferences. For instance, decide whether dishes should be washed immediately or if it's okay for them to pile up. Making compromises early on can prevent anger and resentment from building up later.
4. Consider Your Options in Intermediate and Final Years. In your intermediate and final years, it's typical to move off-campus to neighbouring towns like Coventry, Leamington Spa, or Kenilworth. While Leamington Spa is popular, students sometimes struggle

with morning commutes due to the high demand for buses. However, multiple buses run in the mornings, so if you're patient, it can be a good option. If you prefer less hassle, staying on campus might be better, and it's possible to secure on-campus accommodation in your intermediate and final years, living with peers from those years.

## Preparing for the BSc and MPhys Final Year Projects

1. Approach Based on Degree Type. How you prepare for your final year project can depend on whether you're pursuing a Bachelor's or an Integrated Master's degree. I completed a Bachelor's, so I can share my experience from that perspective. One difference is that Bachelor's students are typically informed about their project at the beginning of the second week of their final year, with an expectation to start immediately. In contrast, Master's students often know their project in the summer before their final year, giving them extra time to conduct literature reviews, additional reading, and learn new skills such as Python or C (or whatever programming language your project focuses on). I didn't have much time to prepare in advance, but while working on my project, I focused on advancing my Python skills. One crucial thing I wish I had known earlier was the importance of managing version control and organising all documents efficiently. This organisation would have made accessing and writing my project much easier. Students are generally required to use OneNote for maintaining an online lab book to record notes and comments. Additionally, qualitative software such as NVivo and SPSS can be very helpful. These tools allow you to code and organise different papers related to your project, making it easier to reference them later. My project involved about 50 sources and organising them was challenging.

Learning to use these tools in the summer before your final year can save a lot of time and effort during the project.

2. Balancing Lectures and Project Work. It's important to attend lectures even while working on your project. Although the project is a significant part of your final year grade, exams are also crucial. I missed about three weeks of lectures due to the pressure of project work, but in hindsight, balancing both is essential for overall success.
3. Discussing Your Project. Talking about your project with people outside of your field can help you understand it better. Explaining your project to others can clarify your own understanding and highlight areas that need further exploration.
4. Disseminating Your Research. Once your project is complete, look for opportunities to disseminate your research. Platforms like [ICUR](#) (International Conference of Undergraduate Research) and [Reinvention](#) (an undergraduate research journal) are excellent for this purpose. Disseminating your work helps you develop skills in compressing information and communication, and it's a valuable addition to your CV.
5. Choosing the Right Project. Select a project you genuinely enjoy and that aligns with your career aspirations. If you're considering a PhD, choose a project that not only provides relevant skills but also maintains your interest throughout the 20-week period, during which you'll be expected to spend two full days per week on it.

## Navigating the University System and Finding resources and support when needed as an estranged/WP student.

1. Understand Financial Aid and Bursaries before coming to Warwick. Being a widening participation (WP) student has significantly impacted my university experience, often presenting challenges, especially in the context of the cost-of-living crisis post-

pandemic. During my first year, I became an estranged student. Initially, I was receiving the Warwick Bursary, which is automatically awarded based on the information provided to Student Finance England. However, I wasn't aware that there were additional bursaries available specifically for estranged students. I recommend new students to thoroughly check the Warwick website to explore all possible funding options they might be entitled to before starting their journey here. The university's part-time temporary working agency, [Unitemps](#), provided numerous job opportunities that allowed me to work alongside my degree. I highly recommend WP students explore Unitemps for employment opportunities during term time and holidays. In my second year, I received financial support from the Institute of, which was especially helpful during the exam season.

2. If you work during your physics degree, don't set yourself up for burnout. Balancing work, study, and personal life during a demanding physics degree was incredibly challenging. Working out of necessity made it even more difficult. While working up to 20 hours a week in the first year can be manageable, it's crucial to assess your own capabilities and how work affects your academic performance. At times, I found myself working up to 32 hours a week during my first year, which was necessary for my financial situation but detrimental to my studies. It's important to recognise your limits and adjust accordingly. If you notice that your academic performance is suffering due to work, it's time to cut back on work hours and seek alternative financial support. In the final year, I strongly recommend limiting work to no more than 10 hours a week, if possible. Realistically, minimising work commitments during this crucial period can help ensure academic success. Remember that your degree should be your top priority. It's essential to balance your responsibilities in a way that supports your academic goals while managing work and personal life effectively.

## Maintaining mental health while studying Physics

1. Take Physical Breaks when you can. Studying for a physics degree requires a great deal of stamina to keep up with the extensive list of requirements and contact hours, including lectures, assignments, and labs. It's essential to take regular breaks to avoid burnout. I found that taking small, inexpensive solo trips at the end of terms was incredibly rejuvenating. Whether it's a day trip to a nearby town or a weekend getaway, these breaks allowed me to recharge and return to my studies with a fresh perspective.
2. Communicate with Support Services when you feel like you need help. It's important to communicate with those who can support you best. This includes reaching out to Well-being Services, Disability Services, and your personal tutor (insert link here for Warwick Well-being Services and Disability Services). They can provide valuable resources, such as counselling, academic accommodations, and general advice on managing stress. The university also offers access to counselling and therapy services through the Well-being Support Services (insert link here for Warwick Well-being Services). These services are available both in person and online, and I highly recommend utilising them if you're struggling with any issues. It's important to take advantage of these resources to ensure your mental health and well-being. I received significant support from the Disability Services, which are part of the wider Well-being Support Services at the university (insert link here for Warwick Disability Services). Due to word processing issues, I've had since I was a teenager, I was granted extra time in exams. If you think you might require similar assistance, it is crucial to reach out to Disability Services early to get the help you need.
3. Well-being and Mental Health Support. The university also offers access to counselling and therapy services through the Well-being Support Services (insert link here for

Warwick Well-being Services). These services are available both in person and online, and I highly recommend utilising them if you're struggling with any issues. It's important to take advantage of these resources to ensure your mental health and well-being.

## Tips for navigating Gender-and-Race-Specific Challenges in the Field of Physics

1. Experiences of Gender and Racial Challenges. Physics has a long history of notable female physicists, however, women in physics remain significantly underrepresented. At the University of Warwick, for example, only about 20% of undergraduate physics students are female. As a Black woman studying physics at Warwick, I have encountered both gender-specific and racial challenges. One common issue I faced was the tendency for my contributions to be overlooked or dismissed – during group work - only to be acknowledged when repeated by someone else. This experience is well-documented in the literature as a common occurrence for women, particularly Black women, not only in academic spaces but also in the workplace and society at large. Outside the physics department, I also encountered overt sexist and racist comments. Despite these challenges, I found support through various initiatives and communities within the university. [The Black Women's Project](#), a society dedicated to supporting Black women at the university, provided a safe and empowering space where I could connect with others facing similar challenges. This community offers various events and resources aimed at fostering a supportive network. Being involved with the Warwick Anti-Racism Society and the Warwick Anti-Sexism Society during my first year also played a crucial role in providing support and solidarity. These societies work

to raise awareness, advocate for policy changes, and create a more inclusive campus environment (link here to Warwick Anti-Racism Society and Warwick Anti-Sexism Society).

2. Advice for Other Students Facing Similar Challenges. My main advice for students facing similar challenges is not to internalise the sexism or racism they encounter. It's important to recognise that these comments reflect the biases of those who make them, not your own worth or capabilities. In addition to this, finding and engaging with supportive communities and initiatives can make a significant difference. Whether through societies dedicated to anti-racism, gender equality, or specific support groups like the Black Women's Project, these communities provide essential support and advocacy. Whilst misogyny and racial discrimination can be very suffocating experiences, it's important to not be afraid to speak up and advocate for change. Whether it's in academic settings or through student societies, your voice matters and can contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable environment. Lastly, cultivating a network of allies and mentors within and outside your field can provide both professional and personal support. These relationships can help you navigate challenges and provide opportunities for growth and development.