

Live in or out of College?

Think costs and flatmates!

Britt Peterson

Moving out of college – it seemed so alluring that afternoon in May, when I stepped out of my room to find a strange boy, who had passed out in the hallway, stinking of booze and sweat, immobile body stretched across the threshold of the toilets (I nudged him with a toe to make sure he was alive, then stepped over him as he grunted and smacked his lips). As graduate students, aren't we a bit old to be sharing toilets? Doesn't it seem infantilising to have to store food in a mini-fridge the size of a shoe box, with no freezer? After all, plenty of people our age have real jobs, make real money, and live in proper flats, with multiple rooms, walls on which they are permitted to stick tacks, and beds large enough to fit two full-size people in them without one of them having to hang his or her arms and legs off the side all night. It's no surprise, then, that many Cambridge students choose the alternate route and find flats or rooms of their own.

I took a totally unscientific

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survey of people I knew, and the people they knew, who moved out of college, and found that, across the board,

those who took the leap were glad that they had. *Alison McMinn*, an MPhil candidate in Epidemiology, moved directly into a flat with her boyfriend when she arrived from Edinburgh last fall. She reports that, although the rent seems expensive compared to her rents in Scotland, in Cambridge it's “one of the cheapest flats available.” Still, she's happy enough with the flat that she and her boyfriend, who works in Cambridge, plan to stay there next year when she begins her PhD. Alison enjoys the independence of living out of college, as does *Nathaniel Heisler*, an MPhil student in English, who also said he appreciated getting to know Cambridge outside of the “really limited stomping grounds” of his college. “Living in college reduces the scope of your knowledge about Cambridge,” he said. “When you live where you work, it begins to get claustrophobic.”

Kitchen space and saving money on food was one of the most commonly mentioned advantages to living out of college. Nathaniel says the kitchen facilities in the flat he shares with his girlfriend are “far better” than any he's seen in college accommodation. *Catherine Zentile*, an MSci candidate in Physics, used to eat often in the dining hall when she was an undergrad. Now she cooks in her flat, and says that she “pays much less” for food.

Beyond the increased independence, privacy, and better

2001. 29 offers of partial maintenance awards were made. In 2001, 155 awards were made to graduate students from 51 countries.

While the data seems sketchy, it does seem to suggest that there has been generally a decline in the overall amount of financial assistance available for graduate students. The Gates Scholarship was probably the most recent boost in terms of funding opportunities but even then, it seems that there has been a decline in the number of Gates Scholarships since the start of the Scholarship.

Other private / public funds

Depending on where you are from, especially if you are from the United States, there are sometimes scholarships available. For example, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation will accept nominations from accredited universities in the States for applications for graduate scholarships tenable even in non-US universities. (http://jackkentcookefoundation.org/jkcf_web/home.aspx?page=Main)

In many other countries, especially in Asia, scholarships or grants are awarded to bright students to study abroad though there might be conditions attached (typically a contractual obligation to work for a specified number of years for the sponsoring company or government). The conditions for such scholarships or grants vary tremendously e.g. the value of the scholarship and the universities where these scholarships are tenable.

eating arrangements, however, people mentioned several downsides to living out of college. Everyone I talked to drew my attention to the paucity of good, cheap flats and rooms in the Cambridge area. "The hardest part of moving, by far, was finding a place," said Nathaniel. "To get a semi-decent room or a flat for an acceptable price anywhere close to the university was near impossible." Most renters live a substantial bike ride away from city centre, in Cherry Hinton or Romsey Town, for example, and organize their lives carefully in order to minimize trips back and forth.

Moreover, to my surprise,

almost no one said that their cost of living had gone down when they moved out; utilities, internet, and furniture, among other expenses (and there are always more than you can anticipate), more than made up for the savings in maintenance fees and kitchen charges. The average cost for a room appeared to be about 200-300 pounds per month, not including utilities, etc., while the average cost of a flat for a couple or two flat-mates was about twice that. While the majority of the people I talked to said they found their rent to be fair, many complained about the hidden costs of flat-living. Alison told

me, "Be aware that deposits for flats are generally two months rent so you need quite a lot of money to start with. That came as quite a shock to me as previously flats I've rented only required one month's rent for the deposit."

Still, despite these cautions, not one of the people I spoke to regretted moving out of college, or thought they'd move back in the future. So long as you can handle the vagaries of landlords, potentially cruel flat-mates, and the daily back-and-forth cycling slog (it's good for you!), moving out of college seems to be a good option.

British Postgraduate Studentships

Ria Kioupritzi

Eight major funding organizations offer scholarships to British students; these include scholarships which both meet University fees and pay a maintenance fee to students.

There are 8 research councils which offer scholarships to students in the UK, for a standard period of 3 years, with extensions permitted by some of the organizations. They are shown in the table on the bottom of this page.

Of these, only 2 out of 8 offer funding for the Social Sciences. It appears that more emphasis is placed on the physical and biological sciences, which are connected to the generation of new technologies. The knowledge gained from such projects is probably easier to commercialise, thereby attracting more funding. The CCLRC does not fund full postgraduate awards (see their website) but it "runs a highly successful Engineering Apprentice training scheme alongside local

training providers as well as offering placements to undergraduate and postgraduate students".

(source: <http://www.cclrc.ac.uk/Activities/CLRC0405/CCLRCAR0405.pdf>)

It worth mentioning that the above organizations also offer fellowships, which are usually aimed at senior post-doctoral researchers.

The requirements to be met by students are similar for most of the Research Councils and the minor differences can be

1.	Arts & Humanities Research Board	AHRB
2.	Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council	BBSRC
3.	Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils	CCLRC
4.	Economic & Social Research Council	ESRC
5.	Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council	EPSRC
6.	Medical Research Council	MCR
7.	Natural Environment Research Council	NERC
8.	Particle Physics & Astronomy Research Council	PPARC