

A very warm welcome to Exeter. My name is Steve Smith and I am the Vice-Chancellor of the University.

First of all, let me say *well done* for getting into Exeter. We had nearly 27,000 applications this year for just over 3,600 places, so you had to be very good to get in. And you are the best qualified set of students we have ever admitted, so congratulations to you all.

It's one of the most exciting times to be at the University. We are firmly in the top ten in the UK for student satisfaction, according to the National Student Survey. We are also in the midst of a major investment programme, which will further improve the student experience and give Exeter some of the best facilities in the UK.

Over the next 6-12 months many of the projects which have made up our £275 million investment programme are being completed, ready for you to use – including new accommodation blocks, INTO's academic centre, the Business School's new building and the work at the School Biosciences. The first phase of the Forum project will follow in late Spring. Work to improve your library facilities is also happening.

This investment in facilities will help us to maintain our position as one of the UK's top University's in the long term – meaning an Exeter degree will continue to be an enviable possession as you move through your careers.

Our first priority during the construction period is your safety. The hoardings and footpath diversions that are in place are there to keep you out of danger. Please abide by them. Our campuses are always busy, and now particularly so with the extra construction vehicles. So please take extra care when you are walking or cycling around.

I would like to reassure you, personally, that we have many dedicated, senior staff, the Guild and contractors working very hard to ensure your experience isn't diminished and to keep disruption to a minimum. We very much appreciate your patience while the work is going ahead. We have developed lots of ways for you to feed back to us and the Guild - so please if you have a concern let us know and we will do our best to help.

Having a degree from a top university will stand you in good stead when the time comes to get a job. But you will need to work hard if you are to leave with a good degree. I also advise you to start thinking about your future career as soon as possible, not six weeks before you graduate.

So please make the most of the wonderful, world leading staff who will be teaching you - and don't be afraid to ask for help. Most importantly, enjoy your learning. Many people say that University was the best years of their life, and rightly so.

But I do realise that starting university can be a difficult transition: most of you will be living away from home for the first time. If you feel unhappy, whatever you do please don't suffer in silence. Please talk to somebody; the University has a wide range of support services.

I encourage you to get the most out of your time at university by getting involved in clubs and societies. Exeter is known for its vibrant student scene, epic parties, and award-winning student media. One thing we do particularly well is volunteering. Last year student volunteers spent thousands of hours helping others, including the elderly, carers and disadvantaged children. The University is a multicultural, multi-faith community – tolerant and understanding. I am often told about the great things our students do and this is part of what Exeter is all about.

Please bear in mind that the University has a very good relationship with the city. On the whole the citizens of Exeter will give you a warm welcome. They are proud of their University and recognise the important contribution it makes to the local economy. Exeter residents do not expect you to creep around like church mice, but they DO expect you to respect their privacy.

If you are out late at night, please bear this in mind by not making too much noise. The University takes its relationship with the city very seriously and we will not hesitate to fine or exclude students who step outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour and compromise our relationship with our neighbours and your fellow students.

My final piece of advice is, if you are going to drink alcohol, then please do it sensibly. Four years ago one of our students died as a result of drinking too much. This was a tragic event which we are determined will never be repeated. As a University we will do everything in our power to advise you about the dangers of drinking too much, but we cannot watch over you 24 hours a day. It is up to you to take responsibility for your alcohol intake. Please also do not encourage fellow students to drink too much or put them in a position where they feel that they have to get very drunk to be a part of your group.

Can I end by saying to you that by coming to Exeter you will join a worldwide family of graduates, some 65,000 of whom are still in regular contact with their University. They include some very famous people like Thom Yorke of Radiohead, Harry Potter author JK Rowling and Peter Phillips, son of the Princess Royal. We also have DJs, weather presenters, High Court judges, Admirals, Bishops, an Arab Shaikh, journalists, MPs, managing directors, international sportsmen and women, academics, and a former Mastermind champion. You name it and an Exeter graduate has probably done it. So you are in good company.

I would like to end by simply saying how much I hope that you will enjoy your time at Exeter.  
Enjoy Welcome Week.  
Get involved in the life of the University.  
Stretch your mind.  
Budget wisely.  
And respect others.

Thank you.

