

'I CAN DEFINITELY SEE POSITIVES'

Jade Low, 20, is about to start his third year studying civil engineering at Imperial College London

"My plan has always been to go into engineering and London was my first choice of university. I settled in well in my first year with halls of residence just north of Hyde Park. It was a good chance to make connections and start a social life. Other than that, I joined a club for those interested in rail transport. I also took up archery, as well as enjoying my studies.

But once the pandemic hit, the college was closed, and we did everything remotely. The social aspect deteriorated; it was hard to see friends, who mostly left London, while I was able to stay. My main internship was cancelled too so I had to find alternative ways to keep my personal development going.

My first move was to start a website design business with a friend and became a student ambassador for ProPrep, which provides supplementary course study materials for Stem students. Although I had lost my chance to do formal experience, I also did some work for an engineering company on residential housing projects and generally tried to stay busy. I'm aware that the more varied my skill set the better, and I have used this time to explore opportunities that are not standard, so there have been positives in what's happened. Following the ban of social gatherings between more than six people, student unions are

less keen for in-person events and have advised clubs and societies not to plan in-person ones. However, my club is working hard with our student union to organise in-person opportunities in smaller groups.

This latest announcement has certainly caused confusion. Some of my peers are deciding not to return to uni and some have regretted signing for student houses.

'I'm optimistic that this can be an opportunity to manage our time better'

Personally I'm still optimistic that this can be an opportunity to readjust how we interact with others and manage our time better. It is also important to stay happy and motivated (and not switch off) by keeping a healthy balance between work, study, exercise, hobbies and development.

For first years, I can see there will be challenges like getting to know people this term. I'd suggest talking to the year above for advice. Be ready to work hard and not fall behind. And make sure you also have a supportive bubble in case we do lockdown again. It's the human contact that keeps you going."

"I'm looking forward to having more friends again. It was a bit of a shock having two years of independence and a swing of having property and it was gone. I want to see all over the world. And it's hard to have the



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elcomeFest will be more inclu-
d help students settle in."
iversity has arranged a tem-
outdoor seating and events
including an outdoor cinema

'YOU'VE GOT TO ADAPT - BUT THAT'S EXCITING TOO'

manager who can be contacted discreetly if a student observes a lack of rule-following but doesn't feel confident enough to challenge their peers face to face. "We hope people will be sensible," she says. "A gentle reminder has always been enough so far."

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO TUTORIALS AND LECTURES?

ble. Indeed, as the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has advised, online-only teaching "would have an impact on students' mental health". But on the positive side, McConnell believes lectures may be even more exciting than before - look out, he says, for international speakers who universities might not have been able to justify flying to the UK but who can now be booked for an online event. It's all about being as adaptable as possible, he explains, despite limitations.

WILL THERE BE SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

A job might also help you if you are feeling the mental effects of having left home combined with the disappointment of starting university in semi- and lockdown. Alister Gray, life coach and founder of Mindful Talent, says that some level of anxiety is to be expected, and that applies this term more than