

Innis College: The Life of a First Year Student - Residence

The first year of university is a first that has many firsts jammed within it.

First Night in Residence

For most, moving into residence is the first time living without the strain, yet comfort of parents. As an Innis student living in the 89 Chestnut residence, I pulled up with a truck full of clothes to an ex-hotel in the heart of Toronto. With the hundreds of other students, my family and I struggled up the elevator to my room. Arriving before my mysterious roommate, we had just enough time to move the best furniture to my side of the room. The roommate arrives; the family leaves and the hours of unpacking begin. One of the most awkward experiences is trying to fall asleep with a stranger sleeping parallel to you, two feet away. After a few tears, realizing that even at night Toronto never darkens, I fell asleep with the anticipation (and fear) of the coming year.

First Frosh Week

My roommate and eventually campus companion for the past three years headed off to our first day of Innis frosh. The entire week is a blur of screaming at engineers, scavenger hunting and getting lost every day on our way back to residence. While there are very few people that I remained friends with that week, the Chestnut residence offered a second round of friends to make. I found that the people on my floor turned out to be the people I spent most of my time with. We ate meals together, studied together and explored the city together.

First Class

Leaving an extra hour before class in preparation of getting lost. Then getting lost and still being late for class.

First Financial Scare/Realizing There is a Registrar

As someone who plans out their finances at the beginning of the school year, the difference in the prices of Innis Residence and Chestnut Residence came to quite a scare. With over a \$5000 difference in prices, it seemed an impossible task to fund the difference. Just when I began to give up, I realized that in that Innis office where I picked up my OSAP was the opportunity to speak to a financial counselor. Here, the financial advisor, Tom went over every aspect of my finances down to the funds used to wash my clothes and figured how much I would need for the year. Factoring my various financial situations, my case was presented to a bursary board. I went into the office a blubbering mess and left with the assurance that the university was not out to get me, but actually assist me when extenuating circumstances arose.

First Toronto Winter

The simple 20 minute walk from Chestnut to campus turns into a treacherous 40 minute one in the snow burden months in Toronto. I quickly realized that University Ave turns into a wind tunnel in the winter, that cowboy boots have no grip on ice and that the warmest (and most likely ugliest) jacket is necessary for the winter. Numerous times I

wiped out on ice, had soaking wet feet and didn't leave my room out of fear of the cold, which leads to my next first ...

First Dropped Class

I can't fully remember the specific reason why I dropped my first (and second) course in my first year. I'm sure it had to do with not leaving my room in the winter months, taking courses that I have no interest in and thought of wondering what I got myself into with four more years of school. With being able to drop your courses online through ROSI and not having to face a counselor to do, I didn't think there were any downfalls. Until you later realize, that you are extending your stay at university by dropping courses.

First Contemplating Dropping Out

After dropping a couple courses, getting marks that were nowhere nears the grades I received in high school and generally seeing a foggy future I considered my 'alternate options'. I was one of those students that knew they wanted to go to university, but just didn't know what for. So in my first year when I took a wide range of courses to determine my interests, I ultimately got frustrated with my lack of direction. While dropping out never really seemed like an option, the annoyance of not having a clear path or academic game plan seemed to be the hardest part of first year.

First Realizing Where you Fit in

While some experience the stress of being away from their parents, or making friends, mine was with not having a distinct academic plan. I took many courses that confirmed that I did not want to take mythology, astronomy or environmental science. While I originally planned to be in environmental policy and practice, I realized that while a stable career path, it wasn't what I was interested in. While struggling through many courses, I realized that there was one course that I looked forward to attending, a first year English. It combined my interests, strengths and challenged me. All the stress I put myself seemed ridiculous when everything ultimately worked out on its own.

First Reflection

I feel like I learnt more in my first year of university than all of my high school days. I realized that 3 awesome friends is better than 20 alright friends; that getting good grades had a lot to do with being interested in the material rather than forcing yourself to do well. And finally, that proper winter boots can actually save your academics, along with your feet.

The firsts are the most intimidating, awkward and ultimately the greatest part of university.

- Third-year Humanities student

First semester was not easy for me and probably not for any first-year student. I was immensely overwhelmed by the huge academic workload and by learning to cook my

daily meals for myself in Innis Residence. Exams were relatively challenging too, and socially, I had little connection to friends.

However, I eventually rejuvenated after learning some strategies to overcome those problems. I got involved in Innis intramural sports, playing volleyball, soccer and Ultimate frisbee. I met a bunch of friends here and my "newness" is gone. The Innis College Student Society widened the circle of my social life through a number of events and workshops. The events bring together all Innis students and are arranged to make sure that students interact and get connected. It was at these events that I learned just how different University is from high school.

Daily trips to my Registrar's Office cleared all my academic and financial worries. I personally think that the Registrar's Office is the best resource out of the many resources for students at UofT.

I also registered with the Blueprint program where I get weekly emails for workshops held across campus. In these workshops I learned how to write a research paper, improve my study skills and leadership skills, and also improved a number of other personal skills through the exploration of life off-campus and learning about career information.

- First-year Life Science student, home country: Sudan

At first, I was a little reluctant to live in residence and make my own food but I'm glad I chose Innis Residence. There are so many caring and helpful people here that it doesn't feel like a residence but a family. I can walk down the hallways knowing that everyone here will be kind enough to lend a helping hand. The only advice I can give is to go to all the suite events and house Olympics - attending all the residence events made living in residence worthwhile. I made friends going to the events. The best part about Innis Residence is that if I see a resident out on the street, they will always smile and say hi whether or not I have said more than two words to them. Innis is my home away from home.

- First-year Humanities student

September

Your first week at Innis is bound to be one of the busiest and most exciting of the year -- between all of the frosh week activities, moving in and preparing for your classes, you'll have a very busy schedule!

If you are going to be living in residence, the move to Toronto and into residence life can be intimidating, but don't worry -- the residence staff is there to help with your transition. They even have move in helpers (upper year volunteers in outrageously orange t-shirts) to assist you in bringing all of your things up to your new room on move

in day! The first night in residence there will be a free dinner and “extravaganza”; a scavenger hunt designed to acquaint you with the building. Take this opportunity to meet people from other houses and programs (you will meet everyone on your floor later on in the week during your first house meeting!).

Frosh week typically begins the day after move in. The orientation coordinators and their exec have worked all summer long to make this the best possible week for new students to meet each other and get to know the university and the City of Toronto. Frosh week is jam packed with activities -- although it may seem impossible to attend them all, make an effort. This is the best opportunity to make friends and meet lots of new people before the academic year begins and everyone gets tied up in their studies.

The University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) typically hosts a day of activities to end frosh week. Activities include a concert and a massive clubs fair on back campus where you can check out all of the clubs at UofT -- there is literally something for everyone! Also check out the UTSU booth; your students' union offers discounted movie passes, Wonderland passes and Yuk Yuk's tickets (as well as much less exciting things like faxing services!).

September is the time to get involved! Innis has really strong student leaders, and in September both the IRC (Innis Residence Council) and ICSS (Innis College Student Society) will be looking for first year representatives. Consider running. These positions are a great way to meet people, learn new skills, and really have a say in what sort of events and activities your student groups run.

On OSAP? Make sure to defer your fees on ROSI so that you don't get removed from your courses! Check out the Innis website for some tips and pointers on how to process your OSAP loan.

Once classes start and you are given booklists from your professors, start looking around for your books! Although it's tempting to run to the bookstore and buy brand new books, you can save a ton of money by buying books used from other students online or through the UTSU's book exchange.

After classes begin, the UTSU will sponsor a week of homecoming events. These include the first football game of the season as well as pub nights, barbecues and a carnival! So come out and cheer on the Varsity Blues!

October

After all of the social events of September are over and done with, it can be hard to really get into the swing of classes. Now is a good time to double check the pre-requisites for your desired subject POST in the course calendar and make sure you are aware of any GPA requirements to get into your program!

Finding that you are spending more money than you had initially budgeted for? If you

are thinking of applying for a job, check out the [career centre](#) for job listing and resume workshops. The deadline to apply for [work study positions](#) is also in October!

Having issues with suitemates? Visit your don -- they are there to help you out!

The last few weeks of October can be a crazy time. Even though it seems like your first year has just begun, midterms are here already! Check out the [Innis Writing Centre](#) for help with essays and reports. There is also lots of study space available for you! Robarts is open 24 hours a day, or if you feel like staying around the college, check out the Residence Events Room (open to all Innis students 24 hours a day) or the Innis College Café (open from 9am-9pm Monday to Friday).

Need some fun after a stressful October? Why not wear a crazy costume and aim for a prize at the ICSS's annual Halloween pub night or join one of the many Intramural sports teams Innis offers -- they have everything from ice hockey to inner tube water polo!

November

Not loving one of your classes? Check in with the [Registrar's Office](#) to discuss your options before the deadline to drop an F course.

The second week of November also has a mini, two-day reading break. Take this time to catch up on any readings or classes in which you have fallen behind!

December

Exams, exams, exams! They have a tendency to creep up on you, so make sure you are prepared. Take some extra time this month to review your notes and readings -- you don't want to leave studying to the last minute. Make sure to attend any review sessions your professor may be holding -- they can be very valuable! Also check out the [Arts & Science Students Union \(ASSU\)](#); they have a past exam database that can be helpful if you are looking for hints as to what kind of questions could be on your exam.

After exams, you will get some time off -- relax and have some fun before the second term begins!

January

The new term brings new classes and a fresh beginning! To start the new term off right, check out the ICSS's frost week events -- this is the perfect opportunity to catch up with all the people you didn't see over the break!

January is also the deadline for submissions to the [Innis Review](#). If you have an especially amazing or entertaining paper, consider submitting it!

February

Ah, February! This month, check out the Innis formal -- the highlight of the Innis Social

calendar! Formal gives you a chance to dress up, dance, and party with your fellow Innisians!

February is also the month of reading week! Relax, read, whatever -- it's your week! Just remember that the last week of February can be busy (midterms, again!?) So use at least *some* of the time wisely!

Now is also the time to start thinking about what courses you want to take next year. Check out the [course calendar](#) and the [anti-calendar](#), the ASSU's assessment of courses based on student reviews (yes, those ones you filled out in class!). Still stuck on what courses are best for you? Head to the Registrar's Office, they are there to help!

March

By March, you should be thinking about your plans for the summer. If you didn't get enough of UofT during the school year, March/April is the time to sign up for summer courses and summer OSAP. Or, if you are planning to work during the summer months, make sure that you have begun to search for jobs!

April

The end is near! If you have completed 4.0 credits, you should enroll in your subject [POST](#). If you are considering applying for scholarships, many of the deadlines are in the first week of April, so check the [Innis website](#) for info on how to apply!

April is also the time to start thinking about your living situation next year. If you are currently living in the Innis Residence and want to return in September, make sure to complete your re-application form and get it into the front desk before the deadline (usually mid-April.) If you are going to look for off-campus housing, UofT's [housing service website](#) offers a rental search and other useful info for first-time renters!

Of Course, April is also the month of final exams. Study hard and utilize all the skills you have learned this year!

Congratulations -- you made it through your very first year at UofT! Celebrate the end of a busy year at the Innis end of year pub night, then sit back and enjoy your summer!

- Fourth-year Humanities student