

Conrad

“But feedback in my view is the basic essential tool for learning.”

Conrad is a mature age, second year student who changed direction after he was made redundant from his job. After successful certificate studies at a partner adult education college, he registered for a degree at Oxford Brookes University. In addition to his studies, Conrad works part-time, has been a student ambassador, a student rep and a warden, and is very engaged in university activities.

Conrad has consulted the Student Support Co-ordinators (SSCs) in his school, particularly for problems with his PIP. Information on the SSCs was first communicated via induction week in the first year as well as via sessions they ran on PIP. His most recent PIP problems arose when single modules, for which he was registered, were converted to doubles. This necessitated careful adjustment of subject selection in order for him to be registered for the correct number of modules for each semester. The SSC helped with the adjustment and provided him with a handbook of information.

In terms of a module that Conrad is considering taking that will help his approach to other modules, Conrad intends to consult either the Field Chair or lecturer (he is not sure from PIP of the person's exact role). His reason for seeking this face to face consultation is that PIP gives insufficient information on the module contents if he is to be assured that it meets his expectations.

Other advice and information services that Conrad has consulted at Brookes include the Careers Centre. As his studies are towards a new career direction from his earlier employment history, the Careers Centre has been helpful in his refining a CV from a more generic version to reflect more specific career oriented skills. In addition he now has useful templates for covering letters that enable him to add new skills each year. In addition he is now better able to present these in the concise manner required of applications without losing the detail required to stand out among many other applicants. Conrad has also consulted the centre on placements, although he also obtains placements each year based on networking from previous placements. In his opinion the Careers Centre is one of the best departments at Brookes.

Conrad does not consider that being a mature student has resulted in specific issues as a Brookes student. Rather he indicates that being the first in the family to study at university and coming from a smaller college resulted in uncertainties about fitting in and getting along. Conrad thinks that many other students from similar backgrounds might also experience these issues whether they are younger or older students.

An issue that Conrad experienced and that took considerable effort on his part to resolve was that, on first registering at Brookes, he applied for a scholarship for which he understood his college studies qualified him. After not receiving the scholarship he found it difficult to obtain information as to why he did not receive it. Eventually he discovered that it was because his certificate was not considered at the required level despite this not being explicit in the online application

This story was collected as part of the Evaluation of the Revised Student Support at Oxford Brookes University. Conrad is not the student's real name.

See <https://wiki.brookes.ac.uk/display/pedres/Student+Support+Evaluation>

information. He was eventually successful in obtaining an alternative scholarship though for half the monetary amount.

A further difficulty that Conrad has experienced while a student at Brookes was with considerable noise levels at the hall of residence where he stayed in first year. He was disappointed that his complaints resulted in his being offered a move to another place whereas he would have preferred to have the noise situation dealt with in terms of the existing university hall regulations. In the end, rather than be identified as the person complaining, Conrad chose to go to his family home in the evenings and return to halls during the day. Currently, as a warden, he has become aware that the regulation processes protect the identity of complainants though this was never made clear while he was trying to get a solution to the excessive noise.

As Conrad achieved good grades at his adult education college, he is concerned that his university results are not up to the level he aspires to. For this reason he would like more detailed and critical feedback from lecturers with some indication of how and where to improve. Currently most of the feedback is no more than a few lines, often completely illegible and without any suggestions of how to achieve better grades. He suspects that contributing to the situation is that lecturers do not get enough time for marking or for providing adequate feedback.

Conrad suggests that a system of mentoring by senior students and alumni would help enhance the student experience. He would be prepared to offer time as a mentor to other students.