

Janice

“Making it clear that Student Support co-ordinators do not mark your work makes them more approachable for, if students have problems with somebody, they know it won’t affect their work even though it shouldn’t anyway but it makes them less worried about it”

Janice is a mature age student whose most recent motivation for seeking help was as she felt she was not doing as well as she could in her essays. Janice had a good chat with one of the Student Support Co-ordinators (SSC) and also discussed a personal matter concerning her responsibilities in relation to a chronically ill family member. Janice was referred to a helpful module leader who went through an essay with Janice and made suggestions to help her transfer her ideas to her writing e.g. initially using a voice recorder before writing down her ideas.

On reporting back to the SSC Janice was also referred to Upgrade. Receiving assurance from all those consulted that she had the ability, Janice was provided with pamphlets and leaflets. Also recommended to her was the publication ‘Critical Thinking’ (from the Pocket Study Skills Series). Reading the booklet before each essay and implementing helpful recommendations has enabled Janice to improve her results from a B symbol to an A within a semester.

For the more personal issues Janice was referred to a very helpful counsellor (who has unfortunately left). However she also received help from a student advisor and another counsellor. With her Academic Advisor on extended leave Janice has consulted her module advisor as she developed the confidence to do so from the guidance provided by the SSCs.

Initially hesitant to share personal issues with a male counsellor, Janice has realised that gender is no longer an issue though she accepts that it might be for some women.

Janice also contacted the Student Advice Centre concerning finance issues but after she received no response from them she now goes direct to the Oxford Council for general finance matters or to student finance for study related ones.

As a student rep and someone who finds the SSCs very helpful and good at communicating with students, Janice is also aware that not all students, particularly students arriving at Brookes for the first time, realise what information and advice services are available to them. While Fresher’s Fair is useful, there is so much information presented in limited stall space that does not ‘grab’ student attention. During her time with the Mature Student Association Committee they added bright balloons and banners to their stall. The result was an upsurge in membership numbers suggesting that such enhancements can help draw students in.

Through its provision of social functions and activities Janice considers that the Mature Student Society is another facilitator of a supportive network where members can share commonalities, diverse ideas and solutions to issues.