

## Julia

*“Mainly my friends - as we send our essays to each other read other people’s as we have different points of view and ideas to do the same thing, so that helps..”*

Julia is a third year student from the EU. In her first year, shortly before she arrived at Brookes to register, Julia received a brief email from Brookes to notify her that there was no available accommodation for her in the university halls. As a result she spent her first week in Oxford in a hotel while she looked for accommodation, missing induction week altogether. She later discovered that there were empty places in the halls but by then she had signed a year’s contract for private accommodation.

Although Julia obtained advice from her father’s office in terms of the legal aspects of the tenancy contract, she subsequently experienced difficulties with the landlord when the heating failed and she was without hot water for seven weeks and without heating for three. Fortunately friends were able to advise her of her right to appeal to the Oxford council if the landlord did not fulfil his obligations. The threat to the landlord of so doing resulted in success. At the end of the tenancy she consulted property agents and moved to more favourable accommodation, though all without information or advice from the university. Among Julia’s friends at Brookes are a number who also experienced a variety of uncomfortable difficulties with landlords although they learnt by trial and error which they were able to implement after the first 12 months was up.

In terms of her studies, when faced with changing a module in PIP, Julia sought help from the Student Union as it appeared to be the place for student help. The SU referred her to administration and they in turn referred her to the module leader. The module leader could not help her with PIP but suggested that she should continue to take the module as it was one the module leader considered to be of value.

As Julia’s first language is not English she took a module to help with language but found it too general to be of help either with academic and subject specific English, or for structuring essays and reports. There was no more advanced course that she was able to take following on this one. As part of a group, Julia also consulted Upgrade who provided very basic help that Julia considered not advanced enough for their needs. It was only by the end of the year that Julia began to feel more confident in her writing.

When a group project faced difficulties with coming to grips with the given criteria, email communication between the group and the module leader proved beneficial. With another group project Julia was unable to attend meetings that the group scheduled but that clashed with her lectures. Reported for non-attendance that she feared would affect her grades she appealed to the module leader. Although he referred the issue back to the group she appreciated the calming influence and

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

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

suggestions of the module leader's email correspondence and the project was subsequently successfully concluded.

Julia has worked part-time while studying and, without adequate information on obtaining legal employment in the UK, she relied on the manager who employed her and who indicated he would 'register' her. At a later stage Julia realised, from listening to friends, that she was not legally registered. On approaching her manager she was told she no longer worked there and was not paid monies owed her. Julia suggested that online information for EU and International students on the employment registration process including how to obtain a National Insurance number would fill an existing gap. Julia's attempts to consult the Careers centre and Job centre on this issue were unsuccessful as they were never open at times she could consult them.

Julia is unaware of Student Support Co-ordinators and has mainly benefited from support and advice from friends or learnt the hard way along with them. Included in this peer network have been older students who have studied the same courses and shared information about expectations of specific lecturers. In addition class peers exchange essays and offer support including providing a diverse range of ideas and perspectives on the topics they are all working on.