

## Lizbeth

*“During Induction week there are all these events and we get to learn what’s around, so if students got more involved with what is happening that would help a lot”.*

Lizbeth is a second year International student who began her first semester one January when other students were entering their second semester. On arrival, initially accompanied by her sister, she found out where to pay fees from the main reception and on her arrival in Halls, made use of an information pack that outlined sources of help and advice.

Having arrived from a far warmer climate, Lizbeth’s arrival was at the time of the extreme cold and snow of early 2009. Homesick and knowing no-one she was uncertain who best to approach for help but headed for Helena Kennedy centre to speak to a counsellor. There she discovered that this would only be possible with an advance appointment so was left feeling even worse,

The International Student Advisory Service (ISAS), however, was able to listen and outlined the information on available societies. They also pointed her in the direction of her helpful Academic Advisor (‘personal tutor’ at the time) for work related issues. Lizbeth later changed her Academic Advisor to one who was in her school of study. She also changed her original school of study owing to unfamiliarity with the courses she was taking that caused her some difficulties. Though Lizbeth was persuaded not to quit altogether she did move to a different school after finding that she could not make any progress with a compulsory subject which required for her original course of study.

Lizbeth also felt under pressure from her family as she was not studying in the field that they had hoped she would (as it was not available at Brookes). For personal help she consulted the chaplaincy where she was able to obtain spiritual guidance as well. Although advice has not always been what Lizbeth expected it has made life easier and enabled her to cope better.

Lizbeth admits that when she first arrived and felt homesick and isolated it was tempting to stay in her room and not venture out. Instead she chose to follow up on available activities. These included volunteer work at a local primary school which she did through STAX. On learning more about the Careers advisory and the Job Centre from friends who were already working part-time, Lizbeth also obtained help with developing her CV. This earned her an internship in her home region.

Another source of help has been a senior tutor in her school who provided her with help with her PIP. Since then, however, Lizbeth’s activities as a course student rep have brought her into contact with the recently appointed Student Support Co-ordinators in her school and who she has consulted as part of her rep work.

She has continued to have a good relationship with her Academic Advisor, though she was particular at first to choose someone who did not teach her. This was because she did not want to come to the attention of lecturers. Over time she considers she is developing more confidence to approach them for more subject related help in future. ,

While Lizbeth does not have language difficulties herself she considers that International students are often hesitant to speak to lecturers or speak in class at all, being aware of the predominance in class of students with English as a first language. She knows student who have had difficulties in understanding then language in PIP as well as subject material and language used during classes.

She appreciates her friendships with students who share her same home language and understands why common language often draws students together from similar home regions.

Issues that caused Lizbeth difficulty owing to her being an International student include having to study part two of a course having missed its part one. This results from many International students beginning their studies in January when local students are already entering their second semester. Starting university studies with extra work to catch up can potentially increase the work load at a time of already difficult adjustment.

A related issue was having to move out of Halls while still in her first year as other students were already to move to second year. Lizbeth was provided with a place to stay for two extra weeks' accommodation while she looked for another place to live. Her subsequent move was some distance from campus and when the drainage gave trouble she moved out a month later. After joining up with a friend, Lizbeth found, and still shares with her, suitable and pleasant accommodation. Lizbeth's total of four different addresses in 8 months was potentially problematic for formal applications that require a stable history of residence e.g. bank accounts and temporary work.