

Marion

"I knew I was dyslexic when I came to university but I had never registered it."

Marion came to Brookes University after first studying at a university where the classes were big and impersonal and where she found the course did not meet her expectations. After working for a year she selected to come to Brookes, a university nearer her home.

At her initial Brookes school level interview it was suggested that her grades were not good enough but she was determined and on registration chose a related course where the numbers were small and the lecturers very helpful.

In her first two years Marion did not register her dyslexia as she considered she was able to achieve results that reflected her ability. She also had a concern that lecturers' marking (even at a subconscious level) might be negatively influenced by the blue card required to identify the work of a student with dyslexia. There was also some pressure from another dyslexic student who considers that they should achieve on their own merit without the need to formally register.

In her third year of study, feedback from lecturers that referred to her work's 'sloppiness', 'carelessness' and 'poor spelling' provoked Marion's decision to formally register her dyslexia. With marks bordering on achieving first class results she is particularly keen to ensure that her third year results reflect her full potential.

Referred to the Student Learning Centre, Marion found the staff pleasant and reassuring. Only the follow up process caused her some difficulty as the blue card promised in time for her subsequent work submission was not forthcoming for a further four weeks owing to lack of communication. Although she handed in the card some time after submission of work she is uncertain if all the markers would be made aware of it. In addition a large pack of information that was meant to be posted to her did not arrive though she was given a pack on a subsequent visit to the centre.

Marion is not aware of any Student Support Co-ordinators for the school where she is registered but has, since first starting her course, always consulted the Field Chair for any help, information or advice and it was he who referred her to the Student Learning Centre.

"...my field chair when I first met him was so friendly and nice that everyone just goes to him if they have a problem".

The accessibility of the Field Chair and the availability of lecturers who welcome students to drop in if they have any queries or concerns about essays or any aspect of the course, together with the small class size, has suited Marion's learning style.

The process of registering her dyslexia, although undertaken only recently, has set her mind at rest. To date she has not been able to check if her results are improved as Brookes Virtual was unavailable when her class tried to access their most recent results.

Based on her experiences with fellow students Marion referred to two possible omissions in the general support services for students at Brookes. The first concerns the event when one of her class members simply 'disappeared' from class, Marion and her class mates assumed that the university was aware of this absence as the student was missing all deadlines and these are recorded. After four weeks passed they were shocked to realise from a chance remark from a lecturer that the school had not been aware of the student's absence. Although the Field Chair then followed up appropriately, in retrospect Marion realised that she and her class did not know how to go about recording their concern or to whom when they realised that the student was no longer reachable – or even that the onus was on them to do so.

The second issue arises from Marion's realisation that although she herself has a sound support base of family and friends, that there are students, often those far from home or from other countries, that do not have such support structures. For those often at risk for suffering depression, Marion considers that signs such as 'Are you depressed' displayed around campus may be incorrectly targeted. As those suffering from depression may not have the energy to act on the suggestions or referrals, she would like to see more support targeted at how the friends of those who are depressed might be encouraged to take appropriate action that might result in appropriate interventions. The overall impact of Marion's experience of the friendliness and approachability of academic staff in her school is that it has contributed to her motivation to continue at Brookes to pursue a master's qualification rather than to further her studies at a different university.