

Penny

“I didn’t take any action at the time though I realised that it wasn’t just me that felt like that - but there was no channel of communication to follow”

Penny is a mature student in her first year, who lives locally. With a considerable number of years since her earlier studies, Penny’s initial source of advice was the representative for the Mature Student Society who advised her about past examination papers available in the library as well as the Upgrade facility. Penny has also valued the assistance of her Academic Advisor, who has always responded promptly, including to her emails. Specific subject tutors have encouraged her to drop in for consultations and Penny has found the library staff members ‘excellent for putting one on the right track’.

With positive experiences of assistance from the above-mentioned sources, Penny was unaware of Student Support Co-ordinators in her school, nor of any student rep for the module in question. When faced with a problem related to the quality of one of her courses and the resulting ‘chaos’ in the class response, Penny was at a loss as to how to proceed.

“When I came out of that class I could almost have burst into tears for it was such a waste of time”

On behalf of herself, as well as other students in the class, Penny eventually consulted a field chair who said she would report back to her. Co-incidentally Penny received the invitation to participate in the survey on student support while awaiting a response, assumed that this might be an opportunity to report her concerns, and volunteered for a follow up interview. Penny did also provide feedback on her negative course experience in the end of semester evaluation form. At the time of the interview the field chair had not responded to Penny’s concerns nor to similar ones from another disappointed class member. (The latter having indicated that he might leave university as a result of his experience).

Penny’s experience illustrates the dilemma faced by students to obtain advice on how to proceed with problems that involve members of teaching staff. Having learnt of the role of Student Support Co-ordinators from the survey and the interview, Penny considers that they could be of value to students as a communication channel for dealing with issues including those that otherwise cause discontent and frustration.