

Wayne

“Even switching courses I found it hard to find out how to do.”

Wayne realised within two weeks of arriving at university that the subject he had registered for did not meet his expectations. He found it ‘underwhelming’, repeating work that he had already studied at school GCSE and A-levels. As a newcomer to the university he approached the first line of contact he was familiar with, the lecturer. He was referred for assistance but unfortunately the information provided was incorrect with the result that he received a letter that he was to leave the university. Wayne’s resulting panic drove him to find help from a different lecturer, which resulted in the letter being withdrawn. Wayne is now studying his preferred subject though he is in second year despite it being his third year at the university.

Working part-time in order to finance his studies independently of his parents, Wayne had two jobs at one time. When his grandmother became very ill he experienced some difficulties that brought him in contact with his personal tutor. Although his parents and his employers were also supportive, he considers for university and study matters, the most helpful people are the lecturers with whom he is able to meet face to face, who know and understand the work required and who are able to guide him to appropriate resources.

Wayne prefers face to face contact as it facilitates more specific and personalised help than email messages or the more generic online question and answer resources.

Although during induction week students are given a great deal of information on many university related aspects, Wayne considers that more targeted sessions are needed once students are more settled in and more aware of what they need for their studies. Examples include that one of his class mates did not realise until recently that he could check his grade average on PIP.

In his second year Wayne found it particularly useful when a librarian in charge of resources was given lecture time to explain the extent of available library and Internet resources. This answered his concerns about how to tackle his preliminary dissertation work. In addition, he considered that through the face to face contact with an individual librarian the students became aware, not only of the available physical and online resources, but even more importantly they could now identify who to go to for the necessary assistance and be confident that the person was keen to help them. If they had instead been referred to a website he doubts if he or his class mates would have delved deeply enough through the layers of information that the librarian was able to present to them during the lecture session.

In his experience student reps for his study course are effectively invisible once they are elected. He was also unaware of the existence of Student Support Co-ordinators (SSC) in his school. He heard of the SSC role for the first time at the time of completing the survey on student support.

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

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

Owing to his initial difficulties with attempts to get help to change his study course, Wayne now makes more use of available assistance. Academic Management have guided him through form filling for new modules and he values their calm handling of stressed students. Through their assistance he is now more empowered to negotiate the processes of adding, removing and changing modules.

Gaps in student support that Wayne suggested included communication when the student loan company was late with payments. Although his part-time work meant he was able to manage financially, Wayne discovered only through his house mate that Brookes was providing some assistance. Even his mother was aware of this though reading of the matter in the press while Wayne, as an affected student, was not provided with the information via the university.

Wayne would also like to see more visible outlets for leaflets of Brookes information and assistance. With main reception being the most visible of the help desks when one arrives on campus, he would like the help there to extend to the provision of clear maps of the various campuses with building names clearly identified. Campus signage could also be improved with 'Get Help Here' signs given the same exposure as the signs that support the 'Brookes is changing' campaign.

Wayne is currently very satisfied with his study choices and looking forward to internships that he has organised for the summer. These will help extend his entrepreneurial inclinations though in the longer term Wayne would like to continue his university studies through to master's level. He does though consider that limited funding and scholarship opportunities in the UK make this more difficult than for his peers at US universities.