

FOUNDATIONS

Episode 2 – Help! - (With being a student)

Oonagh: This is Foundations, a series of podcasts hoping to answer those questions you have at the end of the day.

[Music]

Oonagh: So for this episode we are joined today by Sean. So, Sean, tell me who you are and what you do.

Sean: Hello, my name is Sean Johnson. I work at the Central Saint Martins Student Centre. We're based on the group floor of the main building [um], just inside the barriers on the right hand side [um] and we we are there to offer a range of services to students, [er] ranging from money and immigration, counselling and health [er], letters, disability and dyslexia service as well. [Um] we can also provide access to things like the Academic Support [um] and also things like the Chaplaincy service [um] are among the things that are available to you at our centre.

Oonagh: So I think I once by accident called you a lamp post didn't I? I meant a sign post, you're basically—if a student feel as though they need any help, they come through the barriers, turn right, and they can get to you, and you then signpost them to the—

Sean: —Yes—

Oonagh: —You don't do it all—

Sean: —No, I don't actually, I'm not an Advisor as such. What I provide is a triage service. So, a student will come to me, and very often a student will come to you with what seems like a very simple enquiry, and then you'll talk to them and then you'll discover that actually it's more than that and they don't just need, let's just say, for example, a letter to take to the bank to get a bank account, they might also need to be put in touch with, say, the accommodation service or, for example, they might need some guidance on how to register with the doctor. I always say to students, you know, don't suffer in silence [er], you know, you're away, particularly [um] you know, you're quite young, you're away from home for the first time, sometimes you're here from overseas, and things can get on top of you—

Oonagh: —Yeah—

Sean: —And when they do, well just remember that there is a wide range of support services and help available, so don't suffer on your own.

Oonagh: So Sean, if you were to give any new students any advice when they were starting, what would you say?

Sean: Well the first thing I would say is that once you've registered on your course, register with a doctor—

Oonagh: —Right—

Sean: —You can do that either through your hall manager or you can do a Google search for Doctors in your local area.

Oonagh: OK, before you get ill.

Sean: Yes, before you get ill, don't wait until you get ill! [Um] the other thing I would say, particularly to overseas students, is there is no need for you to carry things like

your passport, your police registration, your BRP card around with you all the time. Those particular documents are highly targeted by thieves.

Oonagh: Ah, so if can see maybe if you're a new student, they might have the documents.

Sean: Yeah, and if they get stolen, not only are they expensive to replace, but you are restricted in travel until they have been replaced.

Oonagh: Well that's super useful and you've been great, thank you so much for coming in today. So, some really great advice there from Sean, and I think the main takeaway from that discussion was there are loads of support systems at the university and that really there are people whose main job it is to help you, so not to just suffer in silence, as he said. So, following on from that conversation, we decided it would be really great to hear some students and their experiences of how they use different support systems within the university. So, we're joined at the moment with a former Foundation student and present university UAL student who has used our student services so we wanted to talk a little bit more about, well, how you found the student services and what you used them for?

Student 1: Well [um] the first time I went—obviously apart from the council tax that I wanted to sort out—[um] it was, I had, I was struggling with [um] dealing with my finance [um] financial problems, and I wanted to [mm] manage my [um] actually my money when I was, whilst I was studying, because it was hard to work at the same time—

Oonagh: —Yeah—

Student 1: —So I went there and I asked for some advice and they said—booked an appointment for me straight away—

Oonagh: —OK—

Student 1: —And they emailed me and on the day I went in and I saw an advisor and the advisor sat with me. She started talking about different options of getting funds [um], applying for scholarships possibly, or, and then she gave me a list and she helped me with [um] organising my money. So [laughs] how to divide different things for different parts, for example costs for [um] university or commuting, or other things, other stuff, food. [Um] so it gave me a general idea which was quite helpful. It didn't sort out 100%—

Oonagh: —Yeah—

Student 1: —But it was quite helpful.

Oonagh: So it at least started you that idea of budgeting and how to divide up the money—

Student 1: —Correct—

Oonagh: —And fill in some gaps—

Student 1: —Yes—

Oonagh: —It's common that when you start a course, so this is when you started?

Student 1: Yes.

Oonagh: You were trying to juggle all these things.

Student 1: Yes.

Oonagh: Ok, that's good, so you sort of sorted it out?

Student 1: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and I know at the moment that that help is there, you know, so if I have/ if I really struggle with something [um] I will definitely go to Student Services and and ask for—there are people there, I might not know who/ what kind of help is there—but I will go and I will say ‘ I have this problem’ and they will get back to me. I mean, they might be able to help, they might not, but then some specific [um] things like [er] financial problems, they definitely [er] can give you advice.

Oonagh : So it’s just reassuring to know that that exists, that it’s there as well.

Student 1: Yeah, yeah.

Student 2: Yeah, so I just have accessed counselling. [Um] pretty much I wanted to do it, I was having a bunch of, just, issues that I needed to talk to someone about. I had wanted to do it for a long time but I just didn’t know where. It seemed kind of like a rumour and [um] I ended up breaking my ID card so I had to go to the main campus to get a new one and I saw the sheet to sign up and that’s when I was like ‘oh, OK, I just need to do it’. So I took that and it was actually quite a process, like I had to go online and fill out a really, like a detailed form and then wait, so I think that’s one of the things that’s most important to know, because like do it sooner than later, because like a lot of people need it, so a lot of people are on the waiting list. Once I got some it was really really great. I just got an email saying ‘come in here, this date if that’s fine’ and it’s negotiable. I couldn’t have—I think I changed it like 3 times and saying I can’t do it ‘cause the course is so busy and them [um], yeah, once I got there it was, it just began. The whole experience has been so good, like it’s made me a complete advocate for counselling for everybody. I think everybody should do it, especially if you have access to do it here ‘cause it’s free for the limited sessions which quite a lot, I think it’s, it’s over 10. Honestly, it’s been just really good and it’s always like, no matter how bad things are, it’s always something I look forward to ‘cause you’re gonna have counselling to go to. it’s hard to be proactive and say ‘OK, I can actually do it’, ‘cause especially on the Foundation, it’s so intense,

so I was like 'OK, I can do it' and then I'm like 'wow, I have a deadline on Friday, today's Tuesday, I can't do it yet' and it just never happens.

Nichol: So would you arguably recommend making it a priority?

Student 2: Yeah.

Nicole: 'Cause it feels like there's a lot of deadlines and there's a lot of pressure and there's a lot of other things that are impacting on your time

Student 2: Yeah, you have to make it a priority. I think the act of making that a priority also kind of made me feel like I put myself first so I feel like, 'cause moving away, I'd moved across the country to come here, or, no, I'd moved across the world, the entire ocean, to come here. [Um] it kind of made me feel like I'd reached that point in my life where I was like taking care of myself. Just do it. It's like I felt like I kinda wanted somebody to do it for me—

Nichol: —[Mmm]—

Student 2: —To be like, here I've filled out your form for you and got you on the waiting list, but they're not, and like, just do it.

Nichol: So basically, I think overall, what I'm getting from you is that support is available and that the difficulty really lie in making sure your making your wellbeing a priority.

Student 2: Yeah, yeah.

Nichol: But also talking to your tutors.

Student 2: Yeah, definitely. I talk to people about counselling all the time because so many people want it or need it but they don't really know how to do it. But if you

just ask, if you just ask someone, they'll email you the website, like no problem, you fill it out.

Nichol: So I'm here with a former Foundation student who accessed Student Services for a variety of reasons and purposes, and used it in lots of different ways, so I wondered if you could just talk us through how you accessed it and what you used it for?

Student 3: I accessed it through [um] my tutors. So I was recommended to go because [um] I needed to resubmit one of my units and it was really helpful because I had been looking for [um] how to get tested for dyslexia as well, so when I went to them they were able to guide me to the correct person that I needed to speak to in order to get all of that booked, and [um] yeah, it was really helpful. So, like I'd tried counselling but I didn't like pursue it 'cause I realised it was dyslexia that was getting me down and not anything else.

Nichol: And then with the dyslexia screening, can you talk me through where you are in that process/ how that's happened?

Student 3: Yeah, so I've been like diagnosed and I've had the assessment, and then today, now, it's like a follow up meeting that you have with the student services team, and they're able to offer you the correct support and [um] show you like what the uni can, almost like provide you with to make sure that you're getting the like support that you need. They tend to like be very, like, almost like recommendational. I don't know if that's a word. But it's like, if you need something or if you feel like you have a concern, like, it's OK to bring it up with them 'cause they'll know exactly what to do. So, like, at the beginning, I was like feeling kind of discouraged and, like, I saw where all my other class mates were going and i didn't feel as though I could be there as well. And I couldn't really pinpoint what the problem was but, like, going to Student Services and, almost like, being given the opportunity to explore what I need, I was able to figure out that it wasn't counselling. It was more, 'I'm a dyslexic person so I will struggle with a lot of the tasks that other people would find easier'.

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