

An interview with a British student

Interviewer: *Hi Andrew, you're a second year student at university, aren't you?*

Andrew: *Yep, that's right, I'm studying IT in Organisations in the School of Electronics and Computer Science.*

Interviewer: *Okay. Can I ask you a few questions about your relationship with your tutors on your course?*

Andrew: *Certainly.*

Interviewer: *How many academic tutors do you have each semester?*

Andrew: *We usually have around six, but some lecturers teach more than one module, and some modules are taught by more than one lecturer, so it can be anywhere between about four and eight.*

Interviewer: *Mmm hmm. And you call them lecturers do you, rather than tutors?*

Andrew: *That's right, yes.*

Interviewer: *Okay. So, do all lecturers lecture as well as run seminars, workshops, tutorials?*

Andrew: *There's a bit of variety on that front. Some lecturers have different roles, and take on different positions depending on their areas of expertise, and so some take lectures and seminars, whilst others will only take lectures.*

Interviewer: *Okay. How well do you know all of your lecturers?*

Andrew: *Some of them I know quite well, and some of them even know me, which is a bit scary at times, but, others... we have less often, so, for example we do have some guest lectures, who will come in literally just once, and do one lecture per term, or even per year.*

Interviewer: *So, you don't really get to know your guest lecturers at all?*

Andrew: *Not really, no.*

Interviewer: *Hmm... that's interesting. Do you have a personal tutor as well as lecturers on your course?*

Andrew: *I do. He also lectures me as well though, and he's in charge of general administration and pastoral care.*

Interviewer: *Okay. Can you give me an example of the kind of thing that you might want to contact your personal tutor for?*

Andrew: *If I've got any concerns about the course, or if I'm ill, or need an extension for a personal reason or something, and, also keep a check on how I'm getting on, and how his other tutees are getting on as well.*

Interviewer: *Right. So how does his role differ from that of a lecturer?*

Andrew: *He's got more personal contact, so it's generally in smaller groups of up to, say four or five, rather than a class of twenty or thirty.*

Interviewer: *Right. And how often would you see your personal tutor then, in the year?*

Andrew: *In the first year, it was every week, so it was once a week, pretty much every week.*

Interviewer: *Quite often then?*

Andrew: *In the second year it gets cut down to once per term; maybe twice per term.*

Interviewer: *Right. Let's go back to talk about your units or modules that you take for your degree; it's an undergraduate degree you're doing isn't it?*

Andrew: *Yep, that's right.*

Interviewer: *Okay. Um... how do you decide which ones you're going to take each semester?*

Andrew: *In the first year we weren't actually given any options, which is quite a common route, and in the second year, on my course in particular, we also didn't have any options, but in the third year we get to choose from a variety, depending on which modules we've done in the past. Some have prerequisites, whereas others are just free-standing. As long as we take enough modules to make up a full years' worth of credits, it's absolutely fine.*

Interviewer: *Do all students call them modules, or...?*

Andrew: *I believe most do, but some might just call them subjects.*

Interviewer: *Do you need to go to your tutor when you decide which modules you're going to take each semester?*

Andrew: *We do, yes. It's generally a case of we'll make our first choice, and then we'll check over with our tutor, if he or she wants us to do a given set of modules, or thinks that we'll struggle with one, then they'll explain why, and then we'll get the option to change our selection.*

Interviewer: *Presumably you have to fill in a form and get your tutor's signature as well?*

Andrew: *Yes, that's right.*

Interviewer: Okay. How do you submit course assignments and get them back?

Andrew: Generally we've moving on to online submission now, but there are still some paper submissions. The advantage of online submission is that it can be run straight through a plagiarism checker, and it's also more convenient for students as well, because we get to submit wherever we are, rather than having to go into a certain office at a certain time to submit by.

Interviewer: So basically you can submit by email, is that correct?

Andrew: Pretty much, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And how do you know that your essay has been received by the tutor, or your report.

Andrew: We get feedback in the form of a barcode, which is sent to us by email, and if we don't get that then we have to try resubmitting.

Interviewer: So it's like a kind of receipt to show you managed to submit it by the deadline?

Andrew: Yes, that's right.

Interviewer: How do you get your course assignment back from your tutors?

Andrew: Usually we get feedback handed back to us during the lectures, a couple of weeks later, after we've handed in, and after the tutor's had a chance to mark them. Usually it's a fixed form of cover sheet, so we'll have marks for this section, marks for that section, but then also we'll get the assignment back, printed out with the lecturer's comments on them.

Interviewer: Oh that's quite useful. Then you can learn from the feedback that your lecturer gives you.

Andrew: Usually, yes.

Interviewer: How do you get in contact with your various tutors, for your various courses?

Andrew: With most lecturers, the best way to contact them is by email, and then set up an appointment with them through that means, or sometimes things are dealt with purely by email. It's very unusual to turn up at their office, just expecting an appointment, unless it's very close to a coursework deadline, or it's something really urgent, so you wouldn't usually do that.

Interviewer: Is that because the tutor wouldn't necessarily be available (I guess)?

Andrew: Exactly. They're only in their offices a few hours a week, usually if they're not lecturing or teaching, so it can be difficult to find them.

Interviewer: Okay Andrew, thanks very much.