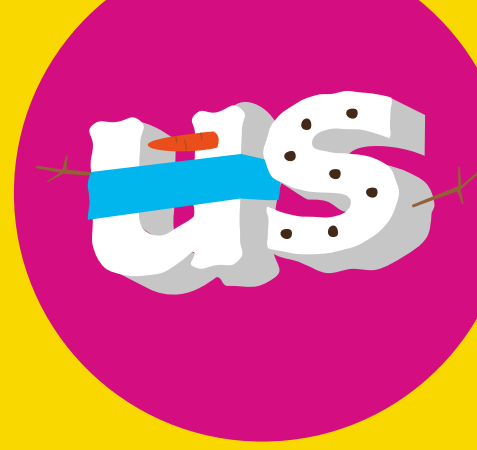


A problem shared



Your Union Advice newsletter – a little bit of help when you need it most

Issue 13 (Dec 2021)

The importance of independence

by your Vice President (Education) Nina Cupric

I'll start off by explaining what I mean by academic support: any and all support that directly influences students' learning and teaching. For the sake of this conversation, I won't discuss any support that is related to mental health, wellbeing and other pastoral concerns.

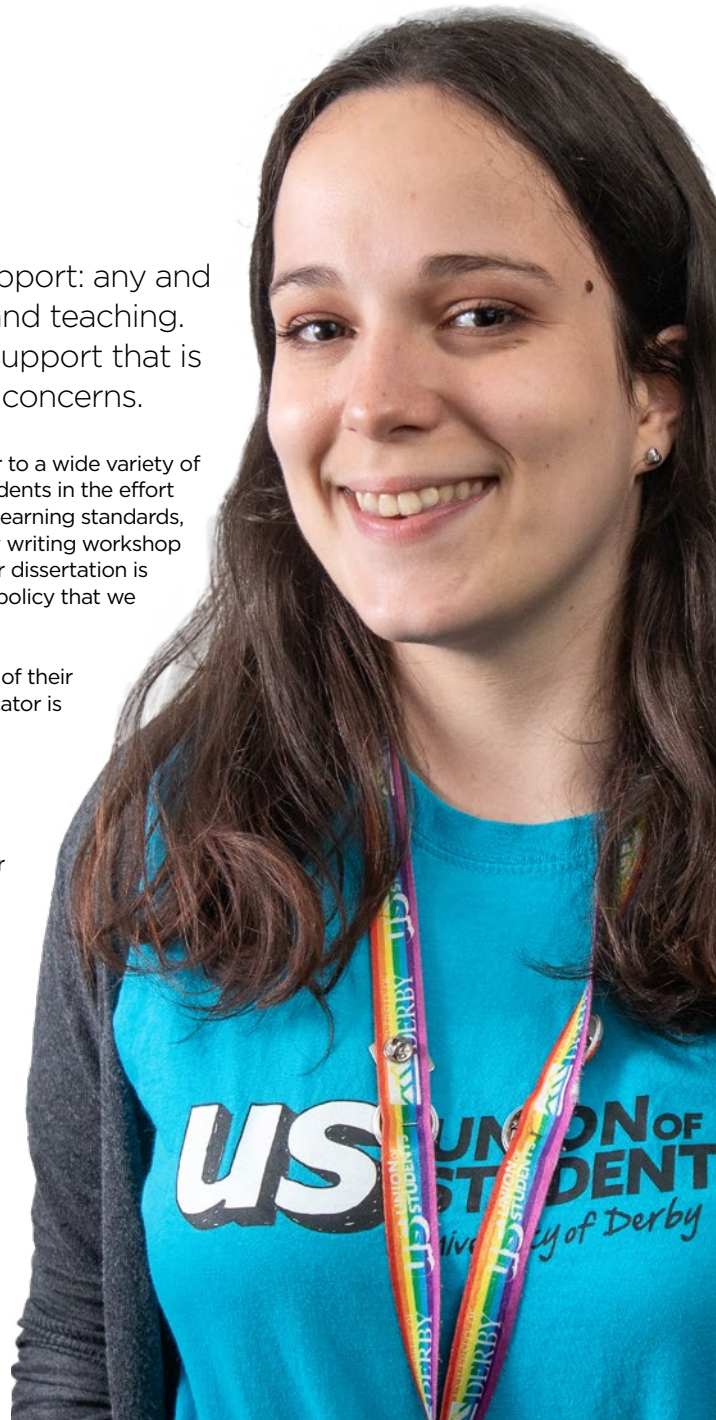
EdGlossary defines academic support as "The term academic support may refer to a wide variety of instructional methods, educational services, or school resources provided to students in the effort to help them accelerate their learning progress, catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school." Some examples of academic support – an essay writing workshop with the Study Skills team at the library, a PAT tutorial where you make sure your dissertation is correctly referenced or looking at grander scale initiatives like the no detriment policy that we had in place last year.

Students will have encountered some aspect of academic support at every part of their learning journey – from kindergarten until now at university. The role of the educator is clear – but what part do the students play?

The obvious answer is that they are the ones who are supported. And that is the truth of it – all support systems in the university exist in order to help students prosper and achieve their full potential. However, in order for the individual to succeed, they need to gain independence and be empowered by support, rather than dependant of it. It's a delicate balance between ensuring they achieve their full potential but also are able to expand that potential on their own.

Students have an active role within academic support – from supporting themselves as well as supporting their peers. The latter can be formal – like the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme or super informal like spellchecking your friend's essay (beware of collusion though!). The first one is about building that independence I mentioned. It's about taking your own initiative and researching topics that interest you and then embedding what you have learnt into your main course work. It's about asking questions. It's about knowing when to ask for help as well – everyone moves and academically matures at their own pace.

The skillset that is needed to academically support yourself is something that will grow as you progress. Very few students start their first year at university knowing everything – if that was the case why would they come? The core of it is curiosity and passion – everything else can be taught and learnt.



The Importance of Being Honest

A message to you from Senior Lecturer in Diagnostic Imaging Jane Gooch

Apologies to Oscar Wilde for my play on words there, but I want to catch your attention.

As a Senior Lecturer in the College of Health, Psychology & Social Care I spend a lot of time reading and marking academic work. Most of the time it is a pleasure to read, and I am happy that the students have produced a good piece of academic work. Occasionally though I recognise the wording, or it is littered with multicoloured highlights from Turnitin suggesting there may be an issue with the integrity of the work.

During my first degree in 1990, I was given an academic handbook and read about plagiarism and academic integrity. To me that meant not 'borrowing' my mates answers or copying straight from a book or journal. To be honest I didn't give it a second thought until someone in my cohort failed the degree because they had plagiarised part of their dissertation. They had copied large sections of text from a book which was written by the Professor that was assigned to mark it. Unlucky we all thought, what were the chances of that happening. That was 31 years ago when there was no internet and we wrote everything by hand, and in today's digital world there is little chance of that happening thanks to programmes such as Turnitin. So why does academic integrity matter?

Academic integrity is a moral code of conduct; it means honesty in your studies and when you use the work of others, you acknowledge it. Students at Derby are expected to behave in accordance with the University of Derby Rules and Regulations. Every university has a set of academic regulations that define the framework within which teaching & assessment will be conducted, and within them you will find a section on academic integrity and offences. The regulation F2.2 states 'students must understand what constitutes an academic offence (Part J), including plagiarism, collusion' (Academic regulations for Undergraduate programmes, p3, 2021)

That was 31 years ago when there was no internet and we wrote everything by hand

You can of course check that your work is original when you submit through Turnitin. If you haven't used it before or don't know what it is, it is a web-based system that checks for originality. It compares your submitted assessment against all other texts in its database. Once you have submitted your work you will see an originality report which suggests all the matches in your work to the sources in its database... so make sure your citations are correct.

Getting a place at university is a brilliant thing; you passed all your exams and assessments so you could study for a degree or other qualification in your specific field, so why would you cheat now? Most students who have attended an academic offence meeting with me, admit that they didn't understand what plagiarism and academic integrity are. Others state they ran out of time and didn't have time to reference everything. From an academic's point of view, it is so frustrating to see students throw it all away through silly and avoidable mistakes. No amount of Xbox or Netflix time is worth that feeling in the pit of your stomach of last-minute assignment dread. Get

yourself a wall planner, fill in the exam and assessment dates and get organised. Keep a picture on the fridge of the graduation gown to motivate you and think of what an amazing achievement it is to graduate in front of your family and friends.

Use the links to the library skills workshops if you need

help with any areas of academic writing, they are excellent and can be done online.

I'll end with the website tagline 'make it real at Derby' - quite apt for this topic.

Useful Links

Links to the library skills workshops: <https://libcal.derby.ac.uk/calendar/events>

Link to Cite them right: <https://www.citethemrightonline.com/Home>

Plagiarism quiz: <https://academicintegrity.uoguelph.ca/plagiarism/quiz-plagiarism>

Reference

Academic regulations for Undergraduate programmes (2021). Available at:

<https://www.derby.ac.uk/about/academic-regulations/assessment-regulations-for-undergraduate-programmes>

Peer Assisted Learning

Representing your academic interests with the PAL scheme

Peer Assisted Learning is where a PAL Leader (a student in year 2+) supports students in their first year, and foundation years, within their discipline by aiding their transition to university and academic study.

We are here and ready to support you, particularly as we enter the busy assessment period.

We have been in your position so you can feel confident asking any question relating to your studies (there are NO silly questions!).

We will regularly share new tips and tricks to help you adjust, help you understand the support available at derby and introduce you to other students in related subjects.

Why get involved?

We strongly advise joining this scheme as it has so many benefits:

- Advice and tips from students who have been in your position
- Support from a peer, (so you can feel confident in asking any question relating to your studies)
- Tips and tricks to help you adjust to university life quicker
- Help to cement your understanding of the support available at derby
- Help you to meet new people in your discipline and develop your sense of community here at Derby
- If you have any other questions about PAL do not hesitate to get in touch with the Union of Students via jennifer.allam@derbyunion.co.uk
- We are looking for PAL Leaders now!



For more info on PAL and the PAL scheme you can visit the Union website:

derbyunion.co.uk/pal

Paid PAL Leader vacancies

We have paid roles available for second, third year or Masters students in our Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme for certain disciplines. PAL Leaders run online sessions and online support for groups of first year students on all things related to their academic subjects. Check out the vacancy lists and apply for roles at unihub.derby.ac.uk/Form.aspx?id=1041730 or email jennifer.allam@derbyunion.co.uk for more information on the role.



Let's Talk Consent

Sexual activity without consent is sexual violence.
(Source: rapecrisis.org.uk)

The Union of Students are campaigning to highlight the importance consent. We will be asking what consent means to you and encouraging you to make a pledge with us! For more information on our campaign events, please visit our website.

Consent looks like

- Enthusiastically saying "yes!"
- Talking to your partner about what you do and don't want, and listening to them in return
- Checking in with your partner – "Is this OK? Do you want to slow down? Do you want to stop?"
- Respecting someone's choice if they say "no" – never trying to change their mind or put pressure on them

Consent does not look like

- Feeling like you have to agree to sex because you are worried about your partner's reaction if you say "no"
- Someone having sex with you when you are asleep or unconscious
- Someone carrying on with sexual activity despite your non-verbal cues – for example, if you pull away, freeze, or seem uncomfortable
- Someone assuming that you want to have sex because of your actions or what you are wearing (for example, flirting, accepting a drink, wearing a short skirt)
- Someone assuming that because you have had sex with them before, you want to have sex again
- Someone removing a condom during sex, when you have only agreed to sex when using one

Union Advice Service

The Union of Student's Advice Service is free, confidential and independent. If you would like to contact an Advisor you can do this through infopoint, via live chat, email, or phone call. There are further details on the [Advice webpage](#). Advisors offer private appointments on weekdays and can signpost to specialist external resources.

Report and support

The University of Derby recognises the importance of students' safety, on and off campus. We aim to ensure students and staff can access appropriate advice and guidance.

[Report and Support](#) is an online system for staff and students to report incidents either anonymously or by requesting contact and further support from a University Adviser.



Consent Is...

The Union Advice team are bringing the 'Consent Is'... Roadshow to you this December.

Come along to brush up on your knowledge of consent, make a pledge, and find out what advice and guidance services we offer.

Full roadshow dates are as follows:

- **Leek**
Friday 3rd December,
Gallery 12.00pm-1.30pm.
- **Kedleston Road**
Tuesday 7th December,
11.45am - 1.30pm
- **One Friar Gate Square**
Wednesday 8th December,
11.45am-1.30pm
- **Markeaton Street**
Thursday 9th December,
11.45am-1.30pm





FREE Condom Postal Service from the NHS

Your Sexual Health Matters provides a free and confidential condom and lube by post service to people who live in Derbyshire and Derby City.

Packs are sent in a discrete plain envelope with a plain postmark and will fit through a letter box.

They will process one order per month per person.

For more information, please visit:

yoursexualhealthmatters.org.uk/contraception/condoms/postal-condoms

Improve the advice service

Any ideas on how to improve your advice service, we'd love to hear them.

Either pop them onto the ideas forum via derbyunion.co.uk/ideas or contact us directly using the contact details below.

Live Chat

The Advice Team are now available through the Live Chat function on the Union website for quick guidance and information

derbyunion.co.uk/advice/livechat/

Your Union's independent advice service

Contact us on 01332 591507 if you need advice or help or email advice@derbyunion.co.uk

derbyunion.co.uk/advice