

A problem shared



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

Issue 8 (Oct 2020)

A welcome from the President

Hi everyone, my name is Corey and I am your Union President! I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome all students both new and returning to your Union.

When you enrol at the University of Derby you also automatically become a member of the Union of Students, giving you access to our services and the opportunity to get involved in our extracurricular opportunities.

All of our opportunities are designed to enhance your experience here at the University; to aid you in creating friendships; and to provide you with a safe environment in which you can express yourself. Making the most of these opportunities now can also help enhance your portfolio when you graduate later, giving you an edge over competitors in the labour market. My personal recommendation is to just turn up at any of our sessions and give it a go! If you enjoy the activity then you're welcome to participate as much as you like; and if not, I'm sure there will be another opportunity which you may prefer more.

No matter what you study or what you like to do in your free time, the Union can connect you to others who like the same thing. We have around 40 Sports Clubs and almost 100 Societies who meet regularly to do what they love! Joining one of these clubs is a great opportunity to meet new people, challenge yourself and network with other students. Additionally, we have a range of student-led services which includes: TV, radio and a student newspaper, as well as, a volunteering platform that can provide you with in-industry experience. Our final activities offer is embedded in our Raise and Give program, RAG for short. Their focus is charitable activities to support local businesses and their endeavours to fundraise has even seen students climb Mt. Kilimanjaro.

As I said at the start, this is your Union, therefore, we are run by students for students (you!) Because of this, it is important we hear your student voice loud and clear. On our website you will find our ideas forum in which you can submit new ideas or issues that you would like us to explore; you can become a representative, and be involved in providing feedback to your lecturers and course leaders to shape your university experience for the better; and you can always send any of the team a message, through the full time officer Facebook accounts or reach us through [@derbyunion](#) and a member of the Union will do their utmost to help you throughout your time here.

The final part of the Union I wish to talk about, and the reason you're reading this newsletter, is our Advice Team. Many students don't realise, but our advice team offer free help and advice, and they are completely independent from the University, placing you, the students, at the centre of their work. Our advisors are professional, fully trained and most importantly, really great people that will make you feel at ease. They can help you with a number of things, from housing to complaints, to signing you up for a C-card so you can get free condoms, dams and lube. Even if you are worried about something I haven't listed, they will do their best to help you or will find someone who can. If you remember only one thing from reading this article, remember your Union advice service is here for you through a live chat function on the website, to video calls.

I wish you all the best in the coming year; and should there come a time where you need us, we will always be here for you, don't hesitate to get in touch. Stay safe and we look forward to hearing your voice and see how you transform while here at the University of Derby.



A welcome from your VP (Welfare)



Hello! My name is Emily and I am your Welfare Officer for the 20/21 year. I have just graduated from the Bachelor of Education Primary Teaching course (four-year route) and during my time at the University I was heavily involved with the Union. During my first year I joined several societies and became the social secretary committee member for the Imagineers in my second year. As I moved into my third year, I wanted to be more involved with the Union so, as well as taking on the Secretary role for Board and Card Gaming, I also joined the Societies Council as the Interest Councillor. This was a much more involved role where I could be directly involved in decisions for societies and share my opinion to try and improve other student's experiences. I continued my role

as the Interest councillor in my fourth year and took over as the President of the Board and Card Gaming society. My time with the Union as a student was extremely positive as I met many people who helped me grow as a person and became good friends of mine.

As your Welfare Officer I have lots of ideas to help us all through this year. I have three main manifesto points:

Addressing student safety and loneliness

This point has become more relevant than ever as students have experienced distanced learning and social isolation throughout the lockdown. I have had to alter my original plans for this due to the pandemic, but I strongly believe that it is crucial to ensure that students do not feel lonely whether a pandemic is going on or not. There are two things that I have started working on, the first is bringing the Living room project to the other campuses and halls. The second thing I have been working on along with the Advice team, Wellbeing centre and the Equality, Diversity and Equality committee is to improve the Report and Support system and raise awareness for students of this service.

Mental Health

There are three officers looking into Mental Health as a manifesto point and I am looking at supporting the Wellbeing centre and providing resources for students to access online. I am working with the other officers on this as it is a subject we are passionate about and want to make sure you are getting the best service during your time at the University.

Raising awareness around the Liberation Campaigns

The Liberation Campaign Months we celebrate are a big part of the University life and I wanted to expand them further. I have already been working on having celebrations for individual days and have also introduced a new Liberation Month with Mental Health Awareness Month being included in March. In order to make these Months as vibrant and inclusive as possible I am bringing the Equality and Diversity Part-Time Officers together and using the EDI Council to gather ideas and work together to ensure everyone gets their say. This will also allow other groups, such as societies and members of staff to also put events on and really show solidarity as a University.

This year has been difficult with the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement and the A-Level results algorithm, but I believe we can use these as educational moments to better ourselves as an institution as well as individuals. Stay safe, stay healthy and I look forward to meeting you all in September!



Mental Health Awareness

Hello, there! Welcome to the University of Derby!

Now, we all know how strange and difficult this year will be due to the ongoing pandemic, but just know that every member of staff has worked relentlessly to ensure that YOU have the best experience here in the safest way possible.

To introduce myself briefly: my name is Danny, I'm a second year Sports & Education student and your Mental Health Awareness Officer for this academic year. I believe that it is quite obvious how vital taking care of our head is, especially right now. My job is to help provide you with the information on how to get the support you need, where this can be accessed, and how you can help others whilst helping yourself.

My plan for this year is to provide an easy-to-access online well-being page that will contain key contacts to the University's well-being team, descriptions of what the university provides in terms of mental health support, self-help guides on mental health and more learning tools so that each student can be both proactive and reactive when it comes to taking care of their mental health.

Another goal for this year is to hold discussions in safe spaces for those who wish to talk, share, and learn about issues regarding Mental Health within different areas of our community.

Here I have provided some tips and brief guides that will help with the coming academic year, whether it's your first time at uni, or you're a returning student. (Note that not everything may be applicable to you, and if you require more information follow the contacts provided).



Loneliness

Loneliness is one of the largest problems facing students, as 46% of students in the UK admit to feeling lonely. One way to tackle this is through pursuing or discovering new hobbies. There are plenty of societies to choose from where you can find likeminded people and do something you really enjoy. If it's sports your into, there are plenty of them here too. Also make sure to keep an eye on union events happening around campus and halls to get involved.

Another tool is to transform loneliness into solitude, which is where you learn to enjoy your own company by tuning your mental tools to be more selfish (in a healthy way) and find contentment within your own company.

Combine the two and you're good to go.

Get in Touch

I would love to hear from you! So, feel free to contact me via my email officer.mentalhealth@derbyunion.co.uk.

Further Wellbeing Help

derby.ac.uk/study/student-support/health-and-wellbeing



Leaving Home

You've taken a massive step to becoming an independent adult human: congrats! These can be confusing and exciting times. Whilst you could be looking forward to your new independence, you could also be feeling anxious, nervous, or homesick. Acknowledging the fact that the feelings you are experiencing are natural is the first step to overcoming these negative emotions.

Settling in can be a long and exhausting process, so try not to put pressure on yourself to get everything perfect the first time. Try to get yourself into a routine that suits you, do your best to plan ahead so that you have something to look forward to, and focus on the positives within your day-to-day life (no matter how big or small).



Stress (Anxiety)

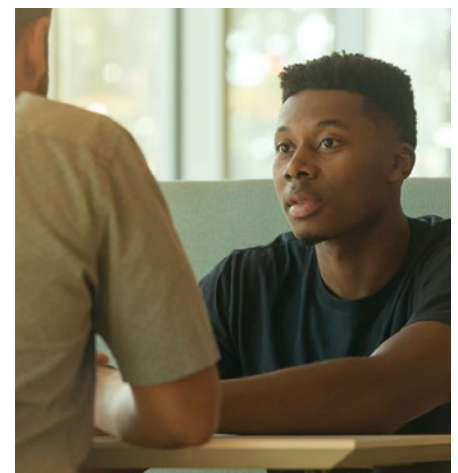


Stress is a natural reaction that has kept us alive throughout history but can now confuse our survival instincts with non-life-threatening everyday occurrences. There are several methods to help with this, such as breathing techniques to help manage stress in the moment, or practicing mindfulness and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) for the long run, both of which help me every day (tips for these can be found by following the 'Further Wellbeing' link).

Taking Care of Others

If you're concerned for a friend, relative or housemate, it can be intimidating to approach them on the matter. The Union of Students provides free training for this with the 'Look After A Mate' course, which will help you understand how to help others, whilst taking care of yourself at the same time.

The main points to help are empathy, listening and putting yourself in the other persons position, without judging or comparing. Then, if you feel overwhelmed or unable to help, signposting them to an appropriate place to get help.



Representing your Academic interests

The University's academic regulations documents contain the academic policies, procedures and regulations about your rights and responsibilities as a student at the University of Derby.

Some key times to consider within the University regulations are:

- **Appeals must be submitted within ten working days of formal publication of results or a decision**
- **Complaints should be submitted within three calendar months of the issue arising**

These documents are really helpful at supporting you if things do go wrong, they will advise you of the next steps to take and help you follow the process.

The Advice Service are here to support you each step of the way, whether that is with help drafting emails, reading statements, proof reading forms or advising you of the procedure if you are at a loose end.

All the documents we provide can be found online at derby.ac.uk/about/academic-regulations/

These documents also cover; how your assessments are marked, what happens if you miss a deadline, how to apply for EECs and how to access support for your academic work should you feel you need to.

These documents also provide information on what happens if something goes wrong, or if you are accused of committing a "suspected academic offence".

We at the advice service are trained on how to help you within all these scenarios. However if your questions, queries or issues don't fit into these categories you can contact us anyway. We are happy to help with any problem, in many instances we can signpost you to the best possible person to assist you.

Academic appeals

A Union self-help guide

Your Union of Students' Independent advice service
01332 591507
advice@derbyunion.co.uk
derbyunion.co.uk/advice

Talk to
US

Making a complaint

A Union self-help guide

Your Union of Students' Independent advice service
01332 591507
advice@derbyunion.co.uk
derbyunion.co.uk/advice

Talk to
US

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.

Housing issues and Coronavirus

More info on housing issues and coronavirus

england.shelter.org.uk/housing-advice/coronavirus

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