

university preparation

A note about the transcripts.

This is a transcript of exactly what the speaker has said. It is important to realise that spoken language is different to written language. When we speak we often make grammatical errors. We also tend to repeat ourselves, and to use short words or sounds like "um", "er" or "ah". These sounds are called 'fillers' because they are used to fill in the gaps while we're thinking of what to say next. These sounds are perfectly normal in spoken English. You probably use similar fillers in your first language; however they may be different sounds. In this transcript you'll notice that the speaker has used some fillers and that in some places the sentences are not always grammatical. This is often because the speaker is thinking about what to say next, or changes her/his mind in the middle of a sentence.

Transcript - Maria

I'm one of the student counsellors here at University. The University has a counselling service that is based in Peribolos East building. And it's a service that's free for students. I think that we all like very much, ah, meeting with the students, ah, getting to know them, and helping them through their university years.

What difficulties to students have when writing essays?

I think there are a couple of, eh, difficulties they encounter, one of them is the amount of words that they have to use. Students that come from school usually find that the essays are very short in terms of words required whereas at University increasingly requires more and more words and with more and more words you have to be clearer about what you want to do and have a structure about what you're doing. I also find that they, ... one of the difficulties they have is how they're going to organise their time around preparing and drafting the assignments, so there is a lot of preparation that goes before the actual writing. And that's something that they're not very accustomed if they've only had the experience at school. So how to organise their thinking is very important. And how to organise their time so they can have the time to think about those issues is important.

How do counsellors work with students?

We focus more on the emotional aspects of what they're going through. So we try to, er, understand their fears, understand their hopes, help them clarify what is required. Normalise that it is difficult. University is there to challenge the students to learn and to understand more. Also, to help them understand that there are support in the University, like the Language and Academic Skills Unit people are there to help them in the more formal parts of their assignments. Ah, so we help them to feel more at ease with the huge learnings that they are going through.

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What difficulties do students face?

There are multiple type of difficulties, some of them are about "am I able to do this work.", "Am I, am I smart enough to do it", which we are strong believers that, er, they are, if they got here, they can do it but there are a lot of skills they have to learn, a lot of habits that they have to learn. So is, the fundamental, I think there's a fundamental belief, problem about "Can I do this?" Another one is "How do I do it?", so they have to learn those skills.

And, as I said before, and, it's about, also about how they're going to balance the multiple challenges that they have around them. Some people also have expressed their concern with what to do with the amount of freedom that they have. And how they can organise themselves. Because that is a big transition coming from school settings, where a lot of the time was structured by the teachers, whereas now they have to organise their lives, so they have at one level, the wonderful freedom, but then, not knowing what to do with the time.

The other thing that I think is important is that, sometimes they have to do a lot of other things as well as studying so usually when you're at university you're exploring relationships, er, exploring friendships, sometimes you have to work, so, there's a lot of pressures in their lives. And sometimes they wonder, "Can I put them all together? Can I make it work?"

Advice for new students

Be proactive, take responsibility in your learning. If you have a question ask. Don't let it simmer in the back of your head, because then it becomes very big and unmanageable. Um... universities are not like schools, universities are not like other settings where people are more protective. We do expect students to be independent learners, to be mature in terms of, if they have questions, we are here, but we're not going to be following them. So, be active in your learning, and feel okay about not knowing. If you knew, you wouldn't be at University.

Who should use the university counselling service?

For people that have grown up in Australian society, or, in the Anglo-Saxon society, it, it is very comfortable, it sits very comfortable, the idea of, of you go to talk to a counsellor when you have some queries or some questions that, about, or confusions about how to go with your life. It, it's quite okay, it's quite acceptable, it's the social norm. It's something that your friends will tell you, "Well, have you gone and talked with a counsellor?" so it's much more normal and okay to do it, whereas if you come from societies where this is only something that you do if you're **really** sick, the idea of talking to us would be perceived as a sign of failure. Um, and I think it's important for people that come from other cultures who are still trying to negotiate what Australia has to offer to be aware that talking with a counsellor is a perfectly normal thing to do and is, is one of the supports that they have, like a teacher, like a nurse, like a pastor. It's somebody who has an experience of talking with people going through similar situations. And a person who has skills in talking, and sorting out, the person that has knowledge of the services within the university, and about what it takes to go to, to get the goals you want to achieve, to get there. So it's just a conversation, and it's a conversation that is confidential, that is private, that without their permission we wouldn't talk with anybody else. So it stays just for them and it's a support, in the journey.