

Don't Panic

Welcome to our final podcast in the library pathway series for new students here at Falmouth University and Exeter Penryn campus.

We've called this podcast Don't Panic, and it's about what to do when those panicking feelings start to creep in. It could be that you're getting anxious because your first assignment deadline is approaching. Sometimes these feelings can be mixed up with other non-work related worries. And it might be hard to see just what the problem is.

But the good news is, there's lots of help available both face to face and self-help. So there can be something to suit everyone. In this podcast, we will be reviewing the steps to take as your first assignment deadline approaches and we'll also get some advice from Steve who works in the front line team who deals with all student inquiries. That team is very used to dealing with a wide range of people and questions. Nothing can surprise Steve's team.

Okay, so to focus back on your academic work, and our top tips as your first assignment deadline approaches. Before your first assignment, it might be a good idea to listen to podcast seven and eight again, in those podcasts we got some good advice from the academic skills advisors. Now is also the time to make use of the people and resources we have in place, such as the Study Hub web pages, Info-Perch, and one to one appointments.

So to sum up, what we advise is to go back to the brief, check what sort of assignment it is, are you writing a report, an essay, or a review? How many words, does it require you to make use of certain types of resources such as journals or was it left open. Make sure you know the hand in date and the time. it may be midday for example, and not 5 o'clock. And know how you're expected to make that hand in.

Make sure you know what referencing style you're expected to use. If there was some recommended reading, make sure you do it. Make a plan or a mind map. That should help identify what you need to find out about and will also give you key words that you can use when you're searching and finding more resources to use in your work.

Make sure you know what you're going to write and what order you're going to put your points in. Start writing. Factor in time for proofreading, try to leave plenty of time to review your work.

And this is probably our most important tip: it's really important to remember that this is your first piece of work, there'll be plenty of more opportunities to practice and improve on your academic work.

And here's a quick reminder about the extra help that's available. So if you prefer face to face help, you might like a one to one appointment with a member of the ASK team, that's the academic skills team. They give advice about writing and referencing, or a one to one appointment with your Liaison Librarian for advice about finding good quality sources.

You can use the Ask The Library website, you could try Info-Perch, which is a drop in service, which provides the same help so it's like an appointment without the need for an appointment. It takes place in the library on both campuses and runs on different days with the ASK team and an Academic Liaison Librarian. Remember to check the library website or ask the library staff for more information. If English isn't your first language, there will be academic English classes that you can go to and you might also want to look at some of the English for academic purposes team.

If you're happy with the more self-service approach, remember you have the Study Hub website. Find it by googling 'Study Hub FXPlus'. It's divided into sections such as research skills, which covers finding and evaluating information, and one about making the most of lectures and note taking which covers things like effective reading techniques and reading technologies. There's free text to speech programs that you can download.

Each topic has a great Top Tips section which is definitely worth looking at. Then there is also the subject guides on the library website. And you can find these by googling 'library FXPlus'. Once you're there, look for Subject Guides, Subject Guides pulled together resources that are relevant for the subject you're studying, and provide you with links to your Liaison Librarian.

Finally, we have a study skills book collection in both libraries and online. And these books with titles like 'The Student Phrase Book', 'Vocabulary for Writing at University', and 'How to Write Better Essays'. Also 'Getting Sorted - How to make the most of your Student Experience'.

If all this sounds a bit confusing, or isn't likely to answer your question, we have just the person for you. I'm going to introduce you to Steve, who's a student information team leader.

The Help Desk provides a kind of information guidance and referral to a range of different services on campus. So it's really the first port of call for help really, about absolutely anything and everything. And hopefully in doing so we try and take out some of the time, effort and energy in trying to access support.

So what's the most common questions you get asked,

Given the nature of the service that we provide, we get asked a wide range of different things. It can be anything from very simple orientation stuff, obviously, on a university campus, people need to find out where they need to go, which can be big for some people, particularly students with particular needs. But it can range to mental health concerns, crisis situations, and everything in between; timetable issues, particularly at the start of the university experience, kind of homesickness, settling in and things linked to that really. And then practical things; finance, back accounts, a kind of plethora. Probably in the seven years that we've been open, we've probably been asked most things. And our biggest asset is that if we don't know the answer, we probably know the person or the team that does.

So in terms of new students, what sort of worries to new students come to see you about

Students are new to the environment, so things such as the orientation of the campus - and timetables - can be a little bit complex for students. So help decoding that I guess, and orientating with the timetable. I think generally settling into university geographically where we're located as well. It's a slightly different experience for many. So adjusting to that if you're from a kind of big city takes a little bit for some people. So I think early on people can be perhaps unsure about their course and need a little bit of support in finding their way through that a range of different things. Really early on a lot of practical stuff.

So it's a busy time.

Absolutely.

Okay, so what's the most surprising thing your team has been asked?

There's one thing that always comes up. I think I've mentioned earlier that we get asked most things, but there was one time where I think it was an overseas student heading back for Christmas or a summer break. And they wanted to find somebody to look after their pet rat.

But every question we get asked, however kind of strange they seem is a student with an issue or a problem and hopefully we can try and, and we did actually find someone believe it or not.

Okay, so finally, do you have a favourite place on campus that you could share with us?

I think one place that is really great to get away to and I think not a lot of people know about it, is the walled garden. Particularly in the summer, in the spring, to unwind, it feels like you're away from it a little bit. So even just for 5 or 10 minutes, you know, escape and just be a bit mindful and just, you know, take advantage of that area.

The other place that springs to mind is the chaplaincy in the cottages area. I think the chaplaincy for many is regarded as something about faith and spirituality. And it's not really, it's just a quiet place where people can go and sit, reflect and have a cup of tea and a piece of cake.

Well, thanks, Steve. Thanks a lot.

So podcast 10 is the last in the series. We've got a lot of topics from what to expect as you walk into our libraries to thinking critically about the sources you might be using for your assignments. We've also talked to some of the people you might meet. These have included your Academic Liaison Librarian, some of the academic skills advisors, or people like Steve, who can connect you with other student services.

We hope you found it useful and good luck with your studies.