**Interview #4 Transcript: Second Year Male English Literature Student (01.11.17) (University B)**

Interviewer (I): Okay, so why have you chosen to do an English degree at this particular university?

Participant (P): Well the university seemed quite, sort of, I don’t know if *homely* is the right word, but it seemed quite – because it was *small*, it seemed *nicer* to – it seemed more *involved* as opposed to a larger university.

I: Okay, okay. Why did you pick English?

P: I just enjoy English [laughing]. I don’t know, it’s just a subject I’ve enjoyed for a while, so I just thought I’d continue it [muttering]. I didn’t know – I don’t have any particular direction I want to be going, but I just enjoy English so, yeah.

I: Okay. Are you the first in your family to go to university?

P: Yeah, I think so, yeah, yeah.

I: What does value for money mean for you? And is it important that you get value for money from your university?

P: [mumbling the question] I suppose, just as long as I’m *happy* with what I get for my money. As long as, I don’t know, it depends. Value for money, I suppose, depends on what I’m *buying*. If it’s food, if it’s filling, but if we’re talking universities, I suppose as long as I’ve enjoyed it and I’m happy, then yeah, so, yeah, I think – sorry what was the second part of the question? [laughing]

I: [laughing] Is it important that you get value for money from your university?

P: Yeah because it’s a lot of money, even though it’s a good whole loan sort of situation, and you pay it back, but you’re still *paying* the money so, yeah, no – but yeah, it is important, but I think as long as you’re just happy with what you get, you don’t have to think, “Oh is this *worth* the money?” but as long as you’re just happy and enjoying it, you’ve sort of – the money is, because it is sort of, loan-wise and you pay it back, it is sort of out of your mind. Sometimes you do think, “If I don’t turn up to this lecture, I’ve wasted £200 or something” [laughing] but yeah, no. I think it’s fine…[mumbling]

I: Okay. Do you agree with paying fees?

P: [pause] No…? [laughing] I don’t know, I just enjoy education and it’s free up to a point and then you’re like, “Oh, can’t be free education anymore”. But then of course, I don’t know, because isn’t it, the £9,000 sort of just standard but that’s because the government department demands that you charge £9,000? So, the fees help with research and things but, then at the same time, I think the university could do it cheaper it’s just the government is like, “You have to do it at least this much” isn’t it? I don’t know…

I: I think it’s that there’s a cap, the government has set the cap at £9,000 so universities can’t charge more than that, but the university funding is being lowered now that the fees are higher, so they’re charging the maximum in order to get the money that they don’t get from the government.

P: Yeah, yeah. So, it, sort of, helps with research and university *stuff*?

I: Yeah.

P: But same way – I suppose in the same way lots of schools just suddenly turned to academies because they wanted to have more money and more funding for their schools, so like the same way, a university *needs* to have funding because needs funding for things! But at the same time, it’s education and you’re like, “Oh I don’t know, should I be paying to learn more?” [laughing]. Yeah because it’s sort of an alternative – it’s not like, the students don’t have jobs but like, you’re a full-time student so instead, so your contribution is to help with studying things but then you’re paying to do that contribution… I don’t know. Sorry.

I: No that’s good, that’s good! Okay, what does being a university student mean to you?

P: [whispering] I don’t know [laughing]. So, I suppose – I like learning things, so my main thing is learning things [laughing] and sort of just contributing to the whole English department sort of, as a whole, like I do peer mentoring which helps first years, that’s what I did last year. So yeah, I like contributing to the whole learning, sort of, education aspect. I also, I think I just – the main reason, one of the main reasons, I came to university is because I needed to, sort of, I don’t know if *escapism* is the right word, just change from being at home all my life and I just wanted a more… *control*? Over just general things that happen in my life as opposed to, I don’t know, things being *out* of my control which might not necessarily lead to good things so, I then decided if I could control more things, then my life would just be better and the easiest way to suddenly change your entire lifestyle is to go to university [laughing]. It’s because it’s a very – I think I decided that I wanted to, like properly, go to university the week of the deadline of UCAS so, I sort of did a university application very last minute. I visited universities a bit and researched them and stuff and it was something I always had in mind, but then I sort of went off the idea for a bit, and then I suddenly went, “No, I’ve just got to go to university” so within the last 2 days just before the thing, I applied and was like, “Yeah, there we go”.

I: Gosh. Why did you go off of it for a while?

P: I don’t know. I think I get, I don’t know, self-esteem-y [sic] and you’re like, “Oh am I good enough to go to university?” Because A-Levels are difficult and then you’re like, “Oh no, I’ve done very poorly in these A-Levels [laughing] so…” Because, I like to think I’m quite smart so, I – GCSE’s I was very good at stuff, and then A-Levels was like, “Oh no, A-Levels are really difficult” and I’m back at university and I’m doing well again so then I’m like, “Oh, clearly I deserve to be here”. And I started off combined with Digital Media or something like that, but at the start of this year, I was like, “Nah, I just want to do full English” so that sort of thing.

I: Okay. What do you think being a university student means to people *outside* of the university? So, non-students or non-affiliated with universities?

P: So, universities… I suppose it’s more prominent in a university town I’ve noticed. The general attitude, I don’t know, the general attitude towards students is, “Ugh, students” [laughing] but where I live, there isn’t really univ – at home, at *home, home* I don’t – there isn’t really universities nearby so you don’t get as much of that mentality. I live in [location removed] which is sort of [location removed] area, but then I don’t know, it’s not like people are thinking necessarily of universities there but here, where there’s [removed for confidentiality] universities in [location removed] and there’s a Facebook group called “[location removed] residents group” and it’s just constant *moaning* about students. Some of it’s satire, like somebody takes a picture of [removed for confidentiality]. So, some of it’s satire, but that satire comes from a general, sort of, people – other people moaning about students and things. [removed for confidentiality] but yeah, in a student town, there is definitely *more* opposition to students being students so, I don’t know, that might suggest there is something there because you don’t get the same opposition in towns *without* students. Actually, moments before I came here I was just scrolling through things on that group and one of them was – I think it was an article from [removed for confidentiality] but somebody clearly follows it or something and it was like, [removed for confidentiality]. But, I don’t know, I think there’s a lot of *contention*, I don’t know if that’s a word, but yeah, there’s a lot of contention, particularly in [location removed] about it, which is obvious and I don’t know if I am aware of it because I am part of this bickering thing on Facebook. I don’t partake in it as much but I have quite a few friends who are quite debate-minded so they’ll get involved and I’m like, “Ah” [laughing]. But yeah, it does get quite contentious, but that – I suppose that’s an online thing and lots of people can be more *forthcoming* online than they would be just walking down the street, see a student, they wouldn’t then start debating the point of students in [location removed]. Yeah, that sort of thing. I don’t know.

I: Okay, why do you think people moan about students? Why is it a negative…?

P: I don’t know. Yeah because there must be *something* behind it. There are students, I – so student lifestyle, of the stereotypical going out, partying, causing disruption, I didn’t – I don’t partake in that. I only started going out towards the end of last year because I’m nerdy and stay indoors [laughing] and I’ve started doing it a bit more and now I, kind of, see the student lifestyle is a plausible, just general, like, “Yes, this is a thing that *could* happen and there is probably reason behind it”. But then, due to – I was thinking, it’s similar – it’s just like – similar how like, this is going to sound extreme, it’s similar how racism works: a small individual set of people cause these things, but it is – there are individuals who do the negative things that are attributed to racists, but there are a small number of individuals who do the things that are attributed to students, but then people begin to make *swathing* comments about students, which doesn’t necessarily – like me, well not me now, but I didn’t, I basically didn’t leave my accommodation very much, apart from to go to university and the shops, I didn’t go out partying last year very much, mainly because I’m not that sort of person generally, but yeah, other people who do do that – I know the student accommodation last year, you would get lots of parties going on and you’d get more of a sense of people going out – *there* for going out purposes. But I don’t know, it’s just – you get it because it *is there* in, maybe a smaller than is suggested sense, but then you get swathing comments and stuff. I suppose it’s also from people’s own experiences of university? They go, “Oh I was like this at university, so every other student must be like this at university” but it’s more that you have to think of people as individuals as opposed to making swathing comments. It’s like any form of racism or orientalism or something like that.

I: Yeah, okay! Okay, what meaning does the word engagement have for you?

P: [laughing] Well I suppose I always put it as, I’m not – I always think of it as, I’m not always constantly looking at the clock of, “When is this going to finish?” If, for example, a seminar or a lecture finishes quickly, due to me being very into what’s being talked about and stuff, then that would be engaging because then you’ve sort of been taken out of external time things and you’re just within the – you’re within the lecture or the seminar or the content of what’s being said and that, as opposed to what’s going on around you, like, “There’s a squirrel outside” or something [laughing] so as long as you – yeah so that’s engagement. But then I suppose there’s the other side of engagement which is just general, people engaging with *other people*, like connecting with other people, and I suppose that’s the sort of other side of that. So, engagement as in, your own engagement and sort of paying attention and being – enjoying what’s going on, but the other one’s, sort of, people *relating* to people, people engaging with other people. I suppose that’s an attempt to relate or represent similar interests as other people, sort of thing. So yeah, there’s the obviously just being engaged in something and then there’s people relating to other people and sort of, I don’t know, trying to represent interests and stuff [mumbling] okay, sorry [laughing].

I: Okay. Okay so, thinking about what you’ve just said, in what ways do university staff attempt to engage you as a student?

P: So, yeah, the most significant way is in lectures and seminars and each lecturer has their own way of doing it. One particular lecturer might do many workshops and get you *interacted* and involved and that sort of thing, so it’s more interactive as opposed to someone talking at you. There’s all sorts of teaching methods. Whereas others have quite good personality for just being *able* to talk at you, but then still be very interesting at the same time. So, I suppose that’s a good way of doing it. But yeah, and there’s always a PowerPoint going on so there’s a bit more of a visual thing going on. But I think all the staff are very, I don’t like using the word passionate because it seems like a throwaway, but very *interested* in what *they’re* talking about and because of that, *you’re* interested in what they’re talking about because as long as somebody’s passionate about a thing [laughing] – if somebody’s talking enjoyably about a thing, you’re going to enjoy it too so that’s why you tend to enjoy people teaching things and stuff like that. And then just in a general sense of the other sense of engagement, I don’t know, people are very responsive with emails and generally the university’s very understanding and things, if you send them an email about a problem and they’re like, “Oh it’s all alright, come see me at this time and that’s fine” and you’re like, “Okay, I might” [laughing]. Yeah and there’s – people make a point of having feedback so you can give feedback, so that’s a way to engage or relate to each other, like just a way to communicate things well and, I don’t know, I’m pretty sure any of my – *any* of the English Literature department, but probably my lecturers because I know them *better* than others, any of them would be happy to just chat with me, just for like an hour or something [laughing] because I was a bit funny Monday, I was like, “Hmm I wonder if I’m a good student” or something so, I emailed a couple of them like, “Do you think I’m an effective student?” or something like that, and they were like, “Yeah you’re very capable, if you want to talk to me, you can come to my office at some point”, I was like, “Alright, thanks” and – but I probably won’t do that because I’ll end up ranting to them, as I did [lecturer’s name removed] last week so… Yeah, that sort of thing. So yeah there’s engaging literally with their own personality and ways of doing things – all the ways of doing things, despite being tried and tested techniques, they do seem *unique* to particular lecturers, they like doing it in different ways so, I don’t know, one lecturer does like to use workshops but other – particularly in her lectures, in interactive things. Other lecturers do *do* that but if I think “Workshops”, I would think this particular lecturer. If I thought, “*Extremely* passionate about their subject and talking really in depth about it” I would probably think of this other particular lecturer. Yeah so, they’ve all got their ways of engaging you and they’re all ways that existed before these lecturers came about, but the way they carry it seems unique to them. But then the other side of that again, is – communication is quite good between university and there’s things in place that make you feel engaged and stuff. I think more so this year because, I don’t know, I feel more confident *approaching* people because I’ve been here for a year so I’m like, “I can approach things better”. A weird one was, parts of the university I felt I couldn’t enter yet last year [laughing] there’s loads of places for computers and libraries that you can go and places, you can just walk in there, but last year I was like, “I don’t think I can walk in there” and this year I’ve just, sort of, been going into areas, just to study and stuff, and going, “Yeah, this is – all of this is available to me but I just chose to avoid it last year because I felt I wasn’t worthy” or something, I don’t know [laughing]. But no, it’s all communicated well and stuff so…

I: Okay. How do administrators or other non-academic staff members engage you, if they do at all?

P: So, I only know the name of one administrator that’s for Humanities, but I think [pronoun removed] the one that particularly does English Literature, and I’ve not been exactly *directly* contacted with administrators. I suppose I’m more thinking to do with *School* administrators, as opposed to wider university administrators because I’ve had recent experience with it, but I’ve had problems with the website and stuff, or to do with a thing called Blackboard? [interviewer nods her recognition] Yeah, yeah, yeah and they’ve been quick to sort it out. The lecturers are more the ones that communicate with the administrators and the administrators are quick to sort it out and I think last week, I got [lecturer removed] to check on something on my Blackboard and the administrators were in there working something out without me knowing anyway so, I suppose, they’re this sort of external – they’re sort of this *unembodied* sort of thing that does have an effect, you can see them working well and they’re *doing* things to help, but you – the closest I’ve had with communicating with one directly was I was linked in an email with – because it was something like, “Hi, I’ve linked you and this other administrator into this email to sort out this problem” and I was like, “Oh okay”. But yeah – and the general wider administrators of the university, they seem fine. I don’t – last year, when I was a first year, they seem very helpful with the start of the year and they were all very friendly and stuff. This year, I’ve been like, “They’re sort of administrators, but they –” so there’s the [removed for confidentiality] which is like a hub for getting information, but you tell them and they’re like, “Oh right send this to the people who need to know what’s going on” but then they do this weird little summary that miscommunicates what you’ve done and you’re like, “That isn’t what I told you but alright” [laughing]. But then, with the – and that same issue wasn’t really resolved for me so I went to a lecturer and [pronoun removed] was like, “You can talk to Health and Wellbeing” so I went to Health and Wellbeing and they were quite helpful and nice about it. So, I don’t know, I suppose it’s, again, *individuals* and how individuals operate but, I don’t know, generally they are this unembodied force that you *occasionally* come into contact with. But they’re there doing things I think. So yeah.

I: Okay. What are your thoughts on the concept of student as consumer in higher education?

P: As consumer? So as in we’re generally contributing a lot of money because we’re…?

I: Yeah, so the idea that students are now customers more than they are students.

P: I see. Yeah [pause] I – particularly last year, not to do with English Literature, it was the Digital Media side of things I was doing, it was with this particular tutor and they had a very – they relied heavily on *independent* study of students as opposed to telling them how to do things that they’d never done before in their lives, like with web design, I’d never done it but it’s sort of a soft subject you can pick up at university but, you were very relied on teaching yourself [sic] and I was like, “What am I paying this money for?” That sort of thing. I don’t know if it’s a *consumer* thing, it’s definitely a consumer thing going, “Oh I am purchasing this service, therefore I can change what I’m not happy with” but I think it’s an *academic* thing as well, it’s just feedback and evaluation and just, I don’t think anyone would be – the same way a shop attendant might get insulted if a consumer was like, “I’m not happy with what you’re doing” whereas academics – in an academic situation, I’m not sure anyone necessarily goes, “Oh I’m very insulted that he wasn’t happy” it’s more like, “Oh right, I need to work on that and change it”. So yeah, students do have the right to go, “I’m not happy with this service you’re providing” but that can be done in a sensible evaluative sense as opposed to a *complaint*. So yeah.

I: Okay. Do you think the idea of students being customers has impacted on the way you interact with staff, at all?

P: There is sometimes that, sort of, distance of, I don’t know, *hierarchy*? Or something. There is this person providing this service but they’re more knowledgeable than you, so you’re sort of like… and then you’re sort of…. But then you are, sort of, required – *using* the service, so you have the *right* to go – question them. But at the same time, they’re more knowledgeable than you so you’re like, “Can I?” [laughing] So, sorry what was – remind me of the question…?

I: So, has it impacted on your interactions with staff?

P: Oh yeah, so there is sometimes that *distance*. I personally – and I like to be friendly with people, so I find it difficult when there is professional/colleague/academic relationships [sic]. I can’t quite – I like to just be friendly towards people but then I don’t like professional attitudes too much, just like, “Oh I’ve got to be slightly distanced but not too…” but I think, again, last year was very much distancing of lecturers and things, but that might be because with particular lecturers, you’d only see them for like two sessions and then you never see them again or something like that. With the ones that you interact *more* with, I think you become a bit more relaxed with and you’re like, “Oh, I sort of know how this person operates” so you can be more familiar with them, whereas others, you have to, sort of, still hold that professional, sort of, distance.

I: [laughing] Okay. Do you think paying fees gives you more entitlement as a student? And if you do, what kind of entitlement does it give you?

P: I think, as I just said, you are entitled to – if you’re not *happy* with something that’s going on, I think you are entitled to say, “I would like this changed please. Could you please take this on board?” because I’m not impolite, I wouldn’t be somebody that necessarily does that, because I want other people to be happy so I’ll just let myself deal with whatever’s going on as opposed to asking for it to be changed. So yeah even in a shop I wouldn’t generally – if I was unhappy with a sandwich I got in a shop, I wouldn’t then go, “Excuse me, can you change –” I’m not that sort of person to go, “Excuse me, can you change this sandwich for me please?” or something. So, I think yeah, we *are* entitled, but I personally wouldn’t use that entitlement as much as other people might because it’s just an individual thing. I don’t want to keep repeating myself but I do, [pause] yeah, I wouldn’t – yeah there we go. That was an answer. *Yes,* we do have an entitlement to do things but as me as an individual, I probably wouldn’t use the, “I’m paying money to do this” card as much as other people.

I: Okay. Do you ever feel as though the university, both on the level of the institution as a whole and individual staff members, are engaging you as a consumer rather than a student?

P: No. I think it’s all very academic and we’re doing education *things*. It’s not like, “Oh this person needs to be…” So, the university generally is like, we’re being engaged as individual students where like, “Ah yes, these are young people that are, kind of, have informative lifestyle things with university” and so, the university as a whole is generally just quite understanding and they’re not like, “I’m providing a service” it’s more like, “Hello, *individual* person, student, how can we help you as a – not as a –?” Not as – I made it sound more consumer, it’s not [laughing] it’s not “Hello, how can we help you today?” sort of thing, it’s more like, “Oh right, and –” I don’t know…

I: It’s hard to explain? [laughing]

P: It’s hard to explain. But I think we are – as a university as a whole, we are respected as individual students and people, as opposed to a nameless consumer, like somebody comes, if you’re working in a shop and somebody comes in, you’re not going to learn their name. I mean, again, me personally – when I have worked in shops and things, I have just tried to break down the whole professional attitude a bit, because I’m not a fan [laughing] but – and it’s individuals *definitely*, none of the lecturers are trying to go, “Right, I’ve got to make this lecture good because otherwise I’m going to get a poor review on the lecture thing” but all the lecturers just do what they want with how they want to teach, how they want to do it, they’re not going “Oh, am I wasting a student’s money?” they’re thinking, “I’ll just make an interesting lecture” type thing, I’m pretty sure [laughing]. I don’t think any of them are thinking, “Oh if I – I don’t want any poor reviews” they’re more thinking, “I’ll do what *I* find interesting” which hopefully everyone else finds interesting so…

I: Okay. Okay, so moving on to learning. How engaging and/or useful for learning do you find lectures, if at all?

P: I really like lectures because I like taking lots of notes. I don’t know what – you know you can have learning *types*, like kinaesthetic and auditory? I don’t know, I’m a mix of everything I think. I do like auditory stuff and like writing down lots of notes and things, you know, I just like hearing other people’s discussion on topics, then it sort of enables me to think, “Oh that person has that opinion but then I can think this” and so yeah, I like taking down lots of notes and then going – and also listening and interpreting what people are saying to my own sort of understanding of the thing. So yeah, I really like lectures as a thing. It’s where you can get a lot of information. Whereas in a seminar, where you’re having conversations and discussions, you might not cover everything? Whereas a lecture is a planned-out way of doing things, which gives you the information you need and then the seminar is when you talk about that information. So, the lecture is quite crucial, I think, to just…things [laughing].

I: Do you ever find it hard to be engaged for that amount of time, just listening to someone talk?

P: Yeah, you get – I think you’ll get that, but I think it depends on how *you’re* feeling that day, how the lecturer perhaps feels that day because you can pick up, maybe, when a lecturer’s feeling a bit more stressed than usual, and then you might feel a bit uncomfortable so then you, sort of, lose focus. Or you might have something yourself in your mind that means you might lose focus. But I think, lecture-wise, you – yeah, so as long as – if a lecturer is good, I don’t think you lose concentration and I think all my English Literature lecturers are pretty good at lecturing [laughing], but [pause] yeah you do lose focus, but that’s a natural thing, anyone can lose focus. I think there’s some sort of weird statistic, which is, people can only focus for 45 minutes, so then you think, “We’ve got 2-hour lectures” but then you get breaks in the middle so then that’s sort of a break from stuff so, I think yeah, but I don’t know, as long as *you’re* interested in what you’re doing, hopefully you’ve picked modules you are interested in as opposed to you had to, so, you’d pay attention as best you could anyway. That’s my personal feeling, you’d pay attention as best you could, because you’re *there* so… [laughing].

I: Okay. Okay, so how engaging and/or useful for learning do you find seminars?

P: Seminars are good to get ideas about – I’ve noticed this year more, last year seminar tutors were *separate* from lecturers and seminar tutors would have different opinions to the lecturers and therefore, I found seminars almost like a *mini* lecture, type thing. The seminar tutor would impart a lot of *their* knowledge onto you as well, as well as what the lecturers had already done. But *this* year, where the lecturers are the *same* as the seminar tutors, they know what they’ve already told you, they’ve already given you that knowledge, this is their opportunity to, sort of, sit back a bit and let you, as a group, talk and it’s smaller so it’s a bit more individual and stuff. So that’s nice, it’s nice to have that. I like *closer* study of things and it’s more to talk about the same thing but in greater detail, but at the same time, because you’re talking about smaller items in greater detail, you’re not talking about *more* things – I often find seminars, we run out of time quickly because we’re talking about these two, three things but then there’s four, five, six things that you wanted to talk about in the thing, in the lectures. Also, because a lot of the ideas come from fellow students and the lecturer is this individual who *has* the knowledge basically, you’re like, “Should I be noting down what my fellow student is saying, is what they’re saying *correct* or is –?” The lecturer’s nodding, is that a thing? Some lecturers have this way of summarising what people are saying when people – I’ve noticed when I do peer mentoring for the first years, first years will say some stuff and I’ll go, “Yeah, yeah” and then I’ll summarise what they’ve said and then *that’s* the point when they put their pens to paper and go, “Right, he’s confirmed that what my friend [name removed] said is correct” [laughing]. So, you’re often apprehensive to note down what other students have said in seminars *until* the lecturer’s gone, “That’s a good idea” [laughing]. So… but yeah, I think it’s valid and it’s a good way of exploring ideas. Seminars are also a way to basically help you with revision. So, if the lecture’s like the class, the seminars are just sort of a led revision type thing and I have a good work ethic for *compulsory* things, but *optional* revision, I’m a little lazy on. So, I don’t know, it’s there to also help you revise and stuff, so there we go.

I: Okay! Where do you choose to sit in seminars and lectures, like at the back, front, middle or do you not have a preference?

P: I’m generally the front. I sometimes sit at the back if I’m considering people behind me because I’m tall so I’m – sometimes I’ll sit at the back because I’m tall and I don’t want to sit in an awkward position but, I think generally I’m at the front or closest to the – or very close to the lecturer. I don’t know, I just sit there, mainly because the back is furthest away from the *door* I think, I don’t know if it’s a subconscious, “Got to sit near the front” I don’t know, I just *do* sit at the front. I’ve noticed that more this year, last year I think it was more back but this year it’s just front because I don’t want to – because I’m big and I can’t climb past all the chairs that everyone’s already sitting in, so I’m like, “Ah, I’ll sit at the front”. Also, I can be late quite often, just because I’m a late person. I’m good with everything else, I’m just generally late. So, it’s a bit awkward if you’re late and then walk all the way to the back of the class to sit down when there’s a chair just right at the front and nobody’s chosen to sit in it, so you just sit down there and go, “Alright, I’ll just quietly let everyone get on with this lecture that’s already started” [laughing].

I: Okay. How engaging and/or useful for learning do you find one-on-one sessions with your tutors?

P: I don’t have that many one-on-one sessions with tutors….

I: So, I’ve heard [laughing].

P: … It’s just not a thing that occurs. You can book time with tutors, but I’ve never done that. I don’t know, when I’m – it’s particularly with essays that they go, “Oh you can book a time and we can talk about the essay a bit” but I – I think that’s – because we have this [removed for confidentiality], that was arranged by students and stuff but the Department gets involved. It’s not to do with the Student’s Union, it’s more just a student-thing that the Department, sort of, advertises. So, you get to know a lot more opinions of other people. I know Year 3 students do very much use booking a time within hours to talk with – but so far, I haven’t really booked a time. The only one-on-one sessions I’ve ever had with tutors are [removed for confidentiality] tutor meetings and they’re your, sort of, [removed for confidentiality], that’s what it’s called and I’ve only had two of those, like ever. It’s not a *poor* thing, I don’t know, I think there’s the opportunity there to *book* one-on-one appointments, but it’s just if you *want* to and the [pause] couple of one-on-ones sessions I’ve had haven’t been very academic orientated, they’ve just been talking about general university *things*, so I don’t know, we don’t really have one-on-one – we don’t really have timetabled one-on-one sessions unless we *ask* for one.

I: Okay, so why haven’t you – just curiously, why haven’t you ever –?

P: I don’t know I think I’m very independent in going, “I’m going to do my *own* essay, therefore…” Also, I am a – I’m not a person that does an essay in advance. Not because I am lazy or leave it until the last minute because I’ve gone, “Ah I haven’t done this essay, I’ll got to do it now”. I deliberately leave myself a set amount of time, like 2 days before the deadline because I like the pressure of working to a deadline, but then because I haven’t thought about – I’ve only been roughly thinking about an essay in my head before that, making an appointment with the lecturer is *difficult* because I haven’t got any plan to talk about because I like the pressure of having it closer to the deadline. I’ll leave a sensible amount, depending on the assignment, like 500 words I’ll leave like 2 days, but maybe like 1,000 words I’ll leave a week, 2,000 words I’ll leave like 2 weeks and so, it’s a sensible amount of time that I can work around but I still leave the smallest sensible amount of time I could possibly do. That’s probably one of the main reasons I haven’t made appointments, because appointments would be particularly to talk about essays. But yeah, it’s not that I don’t feel I *could* it’s just that I don’t *want* to. I’m just more independent in that, sort of, acade – I’m independent in an academic area, I’m trying to be less, sort of, closed off academically but, generally I just like doing my own thing. It seems to work so… [laughing].

I: Okay, fair enough! Okay, is there anything you particularly like about the learning style of universities, compared to compulsory education?

P: Yeah, I was saying this earlier, actually. University is what I like about English Literature; it is my *own* opinion, it is just writing what I think about things. Compulsory education is a lot of jumping through hoops, it’s a lot of just learning how to get *marks*, there’s – I was saying last week actually, by the end of GCSE’s or, to an extent, early A-Levels, if I saw the words “suggest”, “explain” or “discuss”, “suggest” was 1 mark, “explain” was 2 marks and 3, and then “discuss” was maybe do a bit of an argument for a few more marks but, the actual *use of words* suggested to you how many marks a question was going to be and how many bullet points you could do to answer the question [laughing]. It was very algorithmic. I had algorithms – I suppose even older – even younger compulsory education tests and examinations, I suppose there’s only so many ways you could do patterns to match up the type of animal to its – I’m thinking science, to its habitat or something – this is younger exams but it follows through to more complicated stuff anyway. But it would always be the same *pattern*, not that I would *not* think about it and just draw a pattern, but it would always be the same pattern on the piece of paper, I was like, “Why is this?” So, it’s more learning algorithms of how to *answer* things than to – than actually *thinking*. You get to *think* more at university, so yeah. There’s more *choice*.

I: Okay. Do you always understand what your teachers are explaining to you or the material you’re set to read?

P: I think I always understand it when they’re explaining it to me. I know that some people sometimes don’t understand when it’s explained to them, just me personally, I do understand it when it’s explained to me. But if – when we’re set to read something, I don’t necessarily understand what I’m reading all the time, but that’s because with English literature, it can be interpreted very differently all the time and some of it is from Shakespearean times and some of it’s from older than that, so you’re not necessarily going to understand every word that’s used or everything that’s meant in an English Literature-type sense because it’s a text that can be interpreted, but often when lecturers do give some explanation about what’s going on, you’re like, “Oh, now all of this makes sense” or something. I do enjoy it – but yeah, with things that we’re set to read, which is usually just – we’re given other things like secondary reading if we *want* to read it, but the primary texts, which are usually works of literature, I think they can be understood to the extent that they’re *meant* to be understood because it’s a book or a poem or something, so you understand it as much as you’re meant to.

I: Yeah, okay. What about secondary reading?

P: Secondary reading, so people talking about that book. I don’t know, I suppose that’s just – depends on, I suppose, who’s written that secondary reading, it depends on *their* writing style because generally, your secondary reading would be in modern language that you *can* understand but usually some scholars go a bit heavy on academic register so you’re like, “Mmm”. Or sometimes – and the interesting thing, that I do bear in mind but then you find it difficult is, secondary reading is *not* always correct, it’s just an opinion of another person and we’re all people [laughing] and so, something that one of my lecturer’s showed us the other week was a piece of secondary reading, and he was like, “Look at this piece of secondary reading, what can you tell –?” – he was trying to develop our ways of looking at things and I’m pretty sure – this book had *nothing* to do with what this person was saying, for example, this person said that the short story had “*incestual overtones*” and “overtones” was completely the wrong word if they were suggesting that because it would be “undertones” but even *then*, there was no incest in the story at all and I was like, “This is just a bit nutty” to the extent where you’re like, “This was peer-reviewed, how did this get through? There’s no evidence to support this whatsoever” [laughing]. But yeah, so yeah, so sometimes you don’t understand it because the opinion of the person is *wrong*, or you don’t agree with the opinion of the person. I think that answers that question. [laughing]

I: Yeah [laughing]. Okay, so from your own experience, is there anything you would change to improve your own learning so, in terms of the teaching, resources you have access to, curriculum and assessment or anything else?

P: [paper rustling] There is one – sometimes the way things are timetabled are weird. For example, this year, for one of my modules, the 2-hour lecture – the 2-hour session would be usually lecture/workshop type-thing, is *after* the one-hour seminar session and so, yeah the one hour that would usually be for seminar purposes is on a Tuesday, whereas the 2 hours which would usually be for lecture purposes are on a Thursday so then, the sort of lecture is sort of squeezed into that one hour and a bit of the 2 hours and then you do the seminar – that one I’m not too keen on, it’s just a bit *weird*, I don’t know, it’s not too bad, it’s just a bit weird. And yeah, resources – I think there’s plenty of resources about. *I* should probably use the library more, but yeah, I don’t think I would change anything to do with resources, I think that’s fine, everything seems quite clear and resourceful [laughing]. [pause] Yeah, no, I’m pretty happy with everything that is going on in that regard I think. There we go.

I: Okay, fair enough! Okay so, I sent you the document that refers to this, Student Charter [name changed].

P: Yeah, I didn’t know it existed [laughing].

I: Oh okay! So how evident is this policy in your day-to-day experience of being a student here?

P: Just the general aspects?

I: Yeah.

P: Okay, I probably wouldn’t use the same language it uses but I think the general gist of it is – yeah, it’s there, it’s evident. I’m not a fan of the Student Union one but the Student Union one – I don’t like the Student Union anyway [laughing]. I am a president of a society which is not a sport society and therefore, it’s frowned upon. They’re not very helpful with something that isn’t Sports, even the Student Activities person – President of Student Activities, comes from a Sports background so you’re like, “Oh”. It’s a bit bureaucratic [laughing] but apart from the Student Union, yeah, I think the general gist of stuff, the university one yeah, I agree with that one, student one yeah, I agree with that one because yeah, I am a [removed for confidentiality] of the university, but then some people do act poorly and again, links back to our thing about why do people not like students because there are a select few who are the stereotype but yeah… The student one I think I agree with most, and the general gist of the value and the university ones, I don’t know if you wanted me to speak more specifically about the parts that – of the thing.

I: Yeah you can do, if you’ve got more to say?

P: I don’t know? [laughing] [pause] I think this emphasises the thing that I said of, this university is very, sort of, *connected* and, sort of, homely or *intimate* is a word that I suppose could be used. The university is small and intimate and close-knitted, I suppose, parts of this suggest the same sort of community feeling.

I: Yeah okay. When you said you wouldn’t use the same language, what do you mean?

P: I think a “[removed for confidentiality]” – it’s definitely a good, an enjoyable – I’m not a person that uses extreme words to describe things so I – [removed for confidentiality] was a bit far. High quality I’ll agree on, but [removed for confidentiality] [laughing] it has, sort of, connotations of rejuvenating spa-type things and I wasn’t – I don’t know, it sounded a bit like an advertisement as opposed to just general, sort of, “This is what we will promise to do”, it sounded more like an advertisement for what’s going on. Like, “[removed for confidentiality]” but without the whole fluffy language to make it look fancy on the page, the general gist I agree with. Just the language is a bit much and sounds very much like an advertisement [laughing].

I: Fair enough, okay. So, you’ve never seen that document before?

P: I haven’t, no.

I: Okay, it’s in your handbook.

P: Is it? I only go to page 18 of my handbook because that’s where all the referencing information is [laughing]. I’ve not read the handbook, apart from page 18 [laughing] and the presentation of assessments is the most important part for me. The rest of it is just general information that I’ve found… Meh.

I: [laughing]. Okay, in your opinion, should undergraduates have greater control over, on input in, the curriculum and/or assessment design of their chosen courses?

P: Sorry, should…?

I: Should undergraduates have more control over the curriculum and/or assessment design of their courses?

P: I think, I found this out earlier, I think we do have quite good control over the way that the course is led, anyway. The lecturers have *compulsory* feedback bits where they have to give us a proper printed out feedback sheet, but lecturers also give us an interim feedback sheet, just off their own volition because they *want* the feedback, they want to know how to change, so I think we have very much control over what’s going on [sic]. [removed for confidentiality] is a module that you do in your first year which is, sort of, just a refresher of how to write essays and things, but the assessments are interesting. So the first assessment is correcting a very poorly written essay, the second assessment is writing an introductory paragraph, third assessment is doing body paragraphs, fourth assessment conclusion, fifth assessment writing a bibliography including different bits and pieces, like different types of research into it, and I think a lot of feedback on that was, that’s a very weird way of doing things because each of the assessments, introduction, body paragraphs, was for a separate essay, so you were doing it for this imagined essay that you’d written, but only part of it. So, it was a bit – there was some feedback on that and I found out this morning that they’ve completely changed how that module’s assessed, so now they write one essay, which they change and adapt and improve over the year, and it’s only three assessments over the whole module so, yeah, that’s changed significantly and that was from feedback that has been given over a couple of years because I remember them saying, “We’ve changed this module because of feedback” as well. So, I think yeah, we do have – from feedback and, I think, the lecturers do enjoy just getting *random* feedback as well and so, I think that all goes into what they’re thinking about when they’re planning and leading sessions and I think we just have a lot of control *already* so I don’t think – do we need *more* control? I don’t think we need *more* control. I think we have *enough* control, they already take in our considerations quite significantly, as I found out this morning, where they’ve changed the *entire* module from last year.

I: Okay, what about – because obviously you have control to change courses for the next lot of students, but what about actually being able to help design something you’re about to do?

P: Yeah there’s not so much of that. Again, with mid-way feedback type-thing, mid-way feedback helps you for the second half of what you’re doing so that helps you currently, but the whole idea that the feedback is compulsory at the *end* of the thing, after you’ve finished it, as opposed to lecturers, of their own choice, do feedback earlier in the semester [pause] yeah, it’s not – it doesn’t help you when you’ve just spent 3 months not enjoying something and you complain about it at the end and it’s not fixed. I think you’d have to – generally, if you want something changed as you’re currently doing it, I think you’d have to probably be very active in saying that thing before the whole session – but you’d have to go out of your way, there’s no option to go – there’s no *encouragement* to change things *before* they happen. There’s no *discouragement* either, there’s no like, “You *can’t* tell us not how to – on how to change this before you’ve even started it” but there’s no, “Here’s a form if you fancy anything that might be changed” and that might be quite handy. Yeah [pause] and yeah things are planned and changed without – so, first year, the modules were already there for us because they’re very cohesive and packed modules of lots of different things and give you a taste of everything, and first year isn’t so much about assessment for your final grades, that’s only second year and third year, and you get to *pick* modules for second year and third year but you don’t get to choose what goes into those modules, you’re just sort of picking from a *menu*. So yeah, there’s not a lot to do with changing things before they’ve happened, it’s only after they’ve happened really, or *during* when they’re happening. Yeah. for example, I picked one module because this particular lecturer was doing it and now they’re not [laughing]. I found out – that’s next year though, but it’s still an enjoyable module, I didn’t pick it *solely* because of that lecturer, but they were a significant [laughing] – but I won’t *not* enjoy it, I’m not going to go and change my course – it’s for after Christmas but I’m not going to go and *change* that, because I still want to do that module. Yeah, in regards to what goes into them before we do them, we don’t get a lot of say I don’t think, which is – I don’t know if that’s necessarily a bad thing because I don’t – without the experience *of* the module, I don’t know what you could say you want to change, because they go, “Here’s some books” and you’re like, “Well I haven’t even purchased those books yet” so I can’t really say, “I don’t want to read that book” or I don’t know, I suppose you could look at the reading and go, “Well that’s a lot of reading, could we calm it down a bit?” I don’t see – yeah, we don’t have a lot of choice or area to change beforehand but I don’t see how we could fit that in apart from a form that says, “If you’re allowed to change something” but I wouldn’t know what goes *on* that form because I don’t know how you would go about wanting to change a thing before you’ve even done it, so… yeah okay, it’s an interesting one, yeah, it’s – the feedback that goes into the *end* of it, would be then they tailor it to if you did the module again, but you’re not going to do the module again so, I don’t know, but then you can’t really tell – give people that same feedback if you’ve not done that module so, it’s a bit of a tricky one [laughing].

I: Okay, so what are your thoughts on the idea of students as partners in the learning experience? So, this idea that academics and students, sort of, work together to create knowledge in the sense that they’re both equal, but for different reasons, so the academic has the expertise of the subject, but the student has the expertise of being a student, so yeah, they work together to create something from those different, but equal, perspectives. What are your thoughts?

P: I think there’s definitely some sort of [stumbling over the word] *symbiotic* relationship going on. If the students aren’t there to participate, it’s very difficult on lecturers. Again, I’ve had a taste of that, being a peer mentor, basically running a little seminar myself, but then if they’ve not read the text, or they’re not talking, like if you go, “Oh, so what do you think of that?” and they go – they stare at you for 5 minutes then, it’s very difficult – it would be difficult for a lecturer, as I’ve had a little taste of it myself, to continue with what they were doing if there is no participation or interest or listening from the people they’re talking to. [pause] And at the same time, the student can’t get – bring ideas forth without sufficient knowledge that would be imparted – like, I can’t suddenly come up with an idea about a thing that I don’t have any context for. So, a lot of context in English Literature is religion or politics at the time, very much effects this piece of literature, but because if you don’t have that context [sic], you won’t be – the lightbulb won’t turn on because you don’t have anything to *power* it – I don’t know why I used that metaphor [laughing], but yeah if you don’t have the context then you can’t suddenly realise without looking like, “Oh wow, he’s talking about [removed for confidentiality]” or something like that [laughing] that’s just a recent thing, yeah so you can’t have that if you don’t have the context, the sort of historical context and also, some of the things the lecturer *knows*, because they know about that sort of thing because they’ve been teaching it for years, so yeah. [pause] University is very much a symbiotic [stumbling over the word] – yeah, I don’t know why I can’t say the word – symbiotic relationship, there we go. I don’t know why I can’t say it when I’m *thinking*. But yeah, you can’t do it unless it’s together. University’s very much about that, otherwise there’s no point in university. There we go.

I: Sure, that’s true. Okay, so in recent government policy on higher education, students have been placed at the heart of the system. So, for you personally, how central or important are students in this university?

P: [pause] What’s the context for that question? [laughing]

I: So, the government has used the rhetoric of putting students at the heart of the system so, for you – in your opinion, how central or important are undergraduate students in this university, or to this university?

P: I think, for this university, I don’t know about other universities where they’re a bit more distanced from their students, but this university where again I’ve said, it’s very intimate and connected. I think students are very important at this university, I don’t think without – I think a lot of choices that are made are *for* students, they’re not as a showy-offy [sic], “Look how much research we do, we’re a good university” type-thing. I think this one just cares about the students’ well-being and how they’re doing academically, I don’t think it’s – they’re not so showy-offy [sic] as a university might be, or like, “Look at us, we’re a good university –” they’re just more caring about the students and how they could benefit them, I think, just for this university, whereas other universities might not, I don’t know.

I: Okay. What meaning does the word relationship have for you, in the context of interacting with university staff?

P: I think I’ve sort of said, I don’t like professional attitudes to relationships. I think human connection is *good* [laughing], but [pause] I don’t know, I know a lot of Year 3 students and alumni now, but – and they had quite good relationships with basically everyone in the thing because they’ve gone through the 3 years and gotten to know all the lecturers and had quite good relationships with staff. I know somebody that has been to one of the lecturer’s houses, but it’s not – it wasn’t one of *his* lecturers, it was through a different thing – right, it was a politics student but one of the lecturers is politically inclined so they’d been doing some politics, like – I’ve forgotten the word, like advertising –

I: Campaigning?

P: Yeah, campaigning, in the area together and then they ended up going back to his house to get something or something, so that – I don’t know, that’s a bit *far* [laughing] but sorry, I got a bit off track, as students *go*, there should be some sort of distance because it’s a professional relationship, you’ve got to keep it, kind of, professional. But at the same time, I know a lot of Year 3 students have very good relationships with the lecturers. I think we’re planning on – for the [removed for confidentiality] which I, sort of, help run in English Literature, we’re planning on getting the lecturers to join us and that [removed for confidentiality] is usually held in a pub [laughing] so that sort of thing. But I would very much like to have quite a good, friendly, sort of, relationship going with the lecturers because I just want to get involved in the whole English Literature, sort of, situation. So, I can have a friendly, sort of, relationship with all the lecturers and they can come to the [removed for confidentiality], but still keep it, generally professional or whatever. But generally, be a lot more friendly I think, that’s what I’d like. Again, I said that I had some uncertainty or concern towards the start of the week, just this week, it was kind of, I don’t know, I was in a weird mood, but I was *basically* asking if they *liked* me [laughing] but in a more academic way [laughing] so yeah, that sort of thing. I don’t know if that answers that question, that’s an interesting one.

I: Okay so, what do you consider to be the main purpose for building a relationship with university staff?

P: [eating biscuit] Sorry.

I: [laughing] That’s fine, take your time.

P: [eating] Sorry, I’ve got a mouthful of biscuit…

I: [laughing] That’s fine, you can finish your biscuit.

P: …I thought that question was going to take longer and I could finish my biscuit [laughing]. [pause for eating] So I think just conducting yourself as a capable student would *probably* show you in a good light with university staff, and particularly with the lecturers that, just showing you as a good, *interesting* student with some good ideas and capable. I think that would be a good way to have some, sort of, more than just a distanced, horribly distanced, relationship. Just more *friendly* relationship. I don’t know, this is a weird one because I don’t want to make it sound like, “Ah I want to be friends with the lecturers” [laughing] I, kind of, *do* [laughing]. Just because they seem like interesting people. But yeah so, I think just showing yourself as capable in the environment of university would probably be a good way to have – to form relationships with members of staff. Sort of, yeah.

I: Okay, do you think there’s a link between the relationships you build with staff and your levels of engagement as a student?

P: Yeah, just in anything, not even university, just any point in your life, if you don’t like – if you don’t get along with a member of staff, you’re not going to enjoy the subject that they’re teaching. Luckily, most teachers have always liked me [laughing] so… But [pause] yeah so, without you liking a teacher, you’re not going to enjoy what they’re doing so yes, it’s very important I think, and luckily, I *do* like mine. All the English Literature, the English Literature department is very nice and understanding, friendly people, so it works, and that’s probably why I always enjoy – I don’t know, I don’t know if it’s an English Literature thing, I just always – my GCSE English Literature teacher, which is a little off track because we’re talking about university, but he was known as a very scary Irish man, but he liked *me* and he was very good at teaching so I *liked* him, so I did very well at English. But then, for example, my Statistics teacher was very abrasive and was very poor at teaching so, I didn’t do as well. So yeah, I think you’re engaged if you like the person, because you want to *not* be rude and *not* listen or something, you know, something like that.

I: Okay. So, can you think of any particularly good relationships without telling me who they are, with any university staff members, and why you would say it was a good relationship?

P: I don’t know if I’m at that level yet, to consider myself in fantastic relationships with – the [pause] Is that too…? No that’s not too specific. The department as a whole [laughing] I think there’s some good, general relationships, but it’s definitely not gone past anything than professional academic relationship [sic]. I think no, I don’t really have – I’m not at that point yet, I’m only in my second year and second year is when you, sort of, get to start *knowing* the lecturers properly. First year you get them for like 1 session for 2 weeks of the year, this year they’re proper English Literature Head Lecturer people for the modules you’re doing, you get to know *them* a bit better and they get to know *you* a bit better. I think a lot of them – well, one particular, I don’t know a couple, but one particular lecturer remembered me from the Open Day and they were like, “Hi I remember you. Can’t quite remember your name” whereas – he remembers people’s names very well and they’re very good at just generally recognising things, like “Oh don’t forget your hoody, I recognise it as yours” [laughing]. I don’t know – and that’s something I really like, if people remember your *name* and you as an *individual*, you feel a lot more involved and stuff, but I don’t think I have any particularly – I wouldn’t consider them, I would still consider them to be academic but academic because – but with *nice* people, who are just *nice* and understanding and stuff, and friendly, but they’re not *too* friendly, I don’t know.

I: [laughing] Okay so, now is the fun bit.

P: A fun bit? I’ve found this quite fun already.

I: Oh good!

P: We’re drawing pictures?

I: We are yeah, well *you* are [laughing].

P: Okay.

I: So, can I get you to draw your conception of a good relationship with a staff member?

P: Oh no, what do you *mean*?

I: [laughing] So it can be anything you want, any sort of visual representation, it can be abstract, it can be actual people, whatever you want. However, you see it [laughing].

P: I’m very confused. I’m going to need another biscuit for this. [pause for thinking] I don’t know [laughing]. Let’s go [pause for drawing]. I was going to draw me smaller but then I realised I’m big [laughing]. This is the chair situation. [pause for drawing]. There we go.

A picture containing whiteboard, text

Description automatically generated

I: Brilliant! So, what do we have here?

P: We have here: these are two people enjoying chatting about books [laughing] or just enjoying chatting about a topic that is interesting and, kind of, literary and still keeping it academic, but it’s just an enjoyable, in-depth conversation, I don’t know. Yeah, there we go.

I: Okay, cool. Thank you very much.

P: This is my cool bookshop, look at that [laughing]. I don’t know, it’s a bit, I don’t know.

I: [laughing]. No, it’s good, it’s good, I like it. Okay…

P: Okay good. I tried to make it vague [laughing].

I: Okay, so now, is the opposite, so a bad relationship.

P: So, a bad relationship? Alright I think I’ve got this [pause for drawing]. How can I make this look Orwellian? [laughing] [pause for drawing] That’s pretty Orwellian [laughing]. [Mumbling whilst drawing] Getting too political. I’ll put another person. I don’t know how to put the – Oh I know, I’ll just put them at a big table. [pause for drawing] There we go [laughing].

A picture containing whiteboard, object, text

Description automatically generated

I: Awesome, so what’s this then?

P: There’s not really an *individual* in there, everyone is just, sort of, the same sort of, cog in a machine type deal. No one’s an individual, no one looks very interested in what’s going on because they’re hunched over and just, sort of, going “Uhh” and there doesn’t seem to be much creativity going on. This lecturer, particularly, is just reading off a PowerPoint [laughing]. Yeah, I don’t know – yeah everyone looks disinterested and no one’s really an individual or things, even the lecturer [laughing]. I don’t know.

I: Awesome! Okay, this is the last one [laughing]. So, this one –

P: I can usually draw better than this but I’m just trying to do vague diagram type-things –

I: These are good! No, I like these [laughing]. Okay so this one is, your conceptualisation of your relationship with the university as a whole, so the institution itself.

P: Concept of what? How do you draw a relationship with an institution?

I: [laughing]

P: Really abstract ideas. I’m going to have to – hmm [pause for thinking] hmm. I’ll just do some drawing shall I [pause for drawing] [mumbling quietly] That’s the university. I’ll draw a tree. [pause for drawing] Nice tree. This represents the university. [pause for drawing] It’s going to be so abstract now.

I: [laughing] That’s good!

P: [laughing] I don’t know. [pause for drawing] There we go.

A picture containing text, linedrawing

Description automatically generated

I: Awesome!

P: So, this is generally the university. I drew things [removed for confidentiality], but it’s there. That’s the [removed for confidentiality] and a wall and a tree, I don’t know, and the wall is part of all the things inside and stuff like that. And I’m reading a book about it, there we go, this is a person, maybe me, and that’s a book. You can sort of see it’s a book. I don’t know, I like *learning* and I quite like just the university in *general*, so I think that’s what’s going on there. That’s just how I wanted to draw an abstract idea of my relationship with the university [laughing]. I don’t know, I like learning things and stuff and enjoying stuff, I don’t know, it’s a weird one.

I: It’s hard, isn’t it?

P: So, I drew an abstract picture to an abstract question. I don’t know what subconscious things this is supposed to show? [laughing]

I: Who knows, who knows! [laughing] Okay brilliant, thank you very much for that. Okay so there’s often a lot of encouragement for undergraduates to engage with different experiences that the university offers, such as joining societies and volunteering or getting involved with the SU. So, what are your thoughts on this?

I: I like that. I am a president of a society anyway, it’s the [removed for confidentiality] society, I like it, I think it’s a good way to socialise with people. Again, I help run the [removed for confidentiality], which isn’t a society, we don’t want it to be a society because societies are associated with the SU and [lowers voice] we don’t want the SU because they don’t like non-sport things. They’re very sport orientated and if you’re not a sport, you’re not really [makes a face]. The Student’s Union is very *bureaucratic*. I don’t think – and they – the SU probably cares – I thought a Student Union was meant to be helpful for when the university isn’t, but the Student Union is way, *way* less helpful, the university is *so* much more helpful than the Student’s Union and it’s very just sport orientated, which I’m not a sport person [sic]. If you are a sports person, it’s probably pretty good. If you’re a sports, going-out on socials person [sic]. But me who runs the [removed for confidentiality] society and has to, kind of, converse with them occasionally and be like, “Help us out” and they’re like, “Meh” [laughing]. But yeah, no I think it’s a good way to socialise and I was saying about the [removed for confidentiality] before I started ranting about the Student Union. I went to the [removed for confidentiality], it was organised, it wasn’t founded – I didn’t help found it, I sort of did because I’m a regular member that’s gone from basically the start. But I went to the [removed for confidentiality] having not really gone out all of my first year because I’m not that sort of person and it, sort of, opened me up a bit *socially* to talk with – meet new people, talk more just generally about things, have very interesting conversations about all sorts of stuff, meet a lot of people and again, the university is always like, “Oh you meet the people at university” and you’re like, “Alright”, but yeah I did meet a lot of people through the [removed for confidentiality] and became a lot more social and I think it’s very good and one of the students who founded it, who’s gone now, she’s finished, she graduated, she was very good at getting the best out of people and I think the [removed for confidentiality] really helped, sort of, get the best out of me from being a bit more social because people with similar interests and you, sort of, talk and then you meet other people through that. I became a lot more social through that. And I think yeah, societies and joining things with the same interests is a good way to meet other people with similar interests, and then through them, meet other people. By the end of it, you know random people in [location removed]. There we go [laughing].

I: Okay. Okay so [laughing] you have pretty much answered this already, but we’ll just touch on it again. So, what are your thoughts on the role of the SU in terms of engaging you as an undergraduate? [laughing]

P: [laughing] They’re not very helpful. In fact – so engaging with the SU is very much the *relating* thing that I was talking about earlier. That’s the engagement I think when I was thinking SU because I was trying to tailor it to this whole situation [laughing]. And they relate to people who like Sports and going out. The idea that the SU helps us with academic issues is probably *very* incorrect [laughing]. They – yeah and again, I think the people elected more care about – I don’t know, some of them I don’t know how long left university but they’ve just been working for the SU ever since and I’m like, “Alright”, and they don’t seem to care, they’re very, sort of, I don’t want to use bureaucratic again – administrative and, sort of, “Got to do these things” and “Oh you can’t spend your own budget, you have to request that we spend your budget for you, but we won’t order it for another 3 weeks and then, by the time you get it, you’re going to not get it in time. The point of getting the item has already passed” [laughing]. Because it’s the [removed for confidentiality] society, we ordered a [removed for confidentiality] as some good advertisement for when people come past at the Fresher’s Fair and sign up and then we found out they hadn’t even ordered it by the time – we asked for it 3 weeks in advance on *Amazon Prime* and then it was a week after Fresher’s Fair when they finally ordered it [laughing]. We use it at society nights now but the point of it’s gone. They’re not very helpful. They relate to people who do sports and drink, but people who actually – student activities, which should be represented better. I mean I like – I don’t want to, should I say? No, no. I like the Student Activities President, he’s *nice*, he’s *friendly*, [removed for confidentiality], I don’t know, but I know there was a lot of uproar when he was elected as Student Activities because he’s from a sports background. He’s not *that* bad, but again, the whole sabbatical team of the Student’s Union is all sports and going-out related as opposed to other interests that might be interesting to people. I want the [removed for confidentiality] society to be a bit more respected as well, I don’t feel we’re very respected, because we’re a small society that is, I don’t know…

I: So, would you say it’s quite clique-y, the SU?

P: Yeah! [pause] But I don’t know, I wouldn’t say it’s a clique. It’s only a clique because they’re work colleagues, like I suppose the sports team – they’re only clique-y – the only cliques that happen are the sabbatical team and people that work in the SU are, sort of, clique-y because they work in the SU and they work together. Societies themselves are clique-y but then, maybe a synonym for society is clique [laughing]. I don’t know. I know the sports societies can be a bit much. In my first year, when I went around the Fresher’s Fair, the [removed for confidentiality] literally picked me up and forced me to sign up for them just because I’m a big person, just because I’m tall and they were like, “Wow he’s massive”. The rugby team kept pestering me, like every rugby team member just kept pestering me, I just signed up just to make them happy in the end but I never actually responded, so that sort of thing. Yeah, I don’t know, but yeah, I probably have, I don’t know, you don’t notice it as much when you’re a member of a society but when you actually have to deal with them directly, it’s very irritating. I don’t think they engage well with people that aren’t sports or stereotypically university students. [laughing] Okay sorry about that [laughing].

I: That’s alright [laughing]. How much – this is the last question by the way – so how much of a valued member of the university do you consider yourself to be?

P: [pause] In the grand scheme of things, I don’t know, everyone in the – I find myself valued as a student, this is something I’d write, “Am I effective as a student?” and then my lecturers would be like, “Of course you are” so, I feel valued in *that* sense. In the grand scheme of a university, me as an individual, probably isn’t valued. If multiple me’s as an individual because that’s the student body, that’s valued. The university isn’t thinking [name of interviewee] [laughing] – isn’t thinking me should need this, this and this. They’re thinking as generalisations, like a person that might fit this description, the closest they could be thinking of me, is a generalisation sort of person that might fit this description and might like these things, might want this in the university, which is fine. But to answer your question, directly they’re not thinking of *me*, me, they’re thinking of someone *like* me. Yeah. But at the same time, I know a lot of people in the university, just generally, just from again, through being a bit more social and being – getting more social and stuff, I think they value me as a – I don’t know, I know somebody who works in the [removed for confidentiality] but I met him through another student friend but in a pub and I know him more as a person that I met in a pub as opposed to someone who works in the [removed for confidentiality] because I don’t talk to him when he’s at university, I only talk to him occasionally when I see him in a pub. But yeah, there’s definitely a *community* yeah – I don’t know if it’s [location removed] as a whole or the university which is basically [location removed], but a community-esque [sic] thing going on, so I feel valued within a *community* and to the people that I know personally, but as an *institution*, to counteract my abstract reading a book picture, I am not *specifically* valued. I’m not saying I’m not valued. I *am* valued but not *me*.

I: Yeah, I get what you’re saying yeah, definitely. Okay, cool well thank you very much. Is there anything you want to add that we haven’t talked about?

P: I can’t think of anything. I hope I’ve just been helpful for you and your research and things.

I: Yeah absolutely, I’ve got some really interesting things.

P: And I know I rambled and am very vague sometimes.

I: No not at all, it’s great honestly. Often when people ramble, they say the best things anyway [laughing].

P: Good.

**[End of Recording]**