



University of Sussex

Sussex Centre for Language Studies

Academic Writing Guide – Home

James taking about his overall learning experience during the Foundation Year

Sue: Do you think you are less worried as a second year than other second years?

James: Yes

Sue: And is that because you're you, James? Or because of the Foundation year do you think?

James: Um... I think because of the Foundation. Yeah um, I think when I talk to other students there's, there is a sort of innate insecurity about their own level of not knowledge but ability to perform and I think even when I am thinking 'oh I'm not sure how to do this' I've also in my head got the thoughts of 'but I'll know how to figure out how to do this. I know how to find how to do this'. Like not confidence but reassurance.

Sue: Yeah, it's that sort of baseline of security – that it may be difficult but I know I can do this. Because that's what you wrote about really isn't it? That idea of evaluative judgment – being able to evaluate your own sense of where you can go, what you can do and how you might do it.

James: And I think also – and I don't know if this is just, me being me – but the way I view things that I can't do now is even if I'm thinking 'oh this is really difficult, I'm not sure if I'm gonna do well', I'm still thinking, 'but it's all been a learning process. Everything that I have or haven't been able to do from this assignment will just, once I get the feedback back, will just go on to the next one and it's constantly... 'I know that I'm not going to get 100% the first time, and that's okay with me', whereas with some people that's not okay for them, that they're not going to get 100%.

Sue: So, do you think that's just because that's you, and it kind of reflects your world view? Or do you think it's influenced in some way by the approach that you took in the Foundation year?

James: Definitely the Foundation year.

Sue: Can you say how or why?

James: I think it just the Foundation year just really impressed upon me the fact that it is learning, all of it. It's not learn this thing and then you can do everything; it's exploration and research and it's almost like it turned my whole degree from, gosh something I need to learn, to almost like a treasure hunt, where the clues are feedback and the assignments, and the degree at the end is just the Easter egg.

Sue: So you're more invested in the process than the final product?

James: Yeah.

Sue: And how does that feel, that being invested in the process?

James: It makes it a bit more of a roller coaster!

Sue: Emotionally?

James: Yeah. When I get my good grades back I'm really pleased with myself on a whole number of levels, um not just 'yeah I've got a good grade'. But when I don't do very well I'm

equally immediately thinking you know 'what did I slip up on? Where can I not slip up again? So it's, yeah my weekends are welcome but the weeks are busy. They're very, it's nice to have something to really get your teeth into because that's what it turns into. It turns into something that you're working for, not just working through

Sue: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So when you began the Foundation year, and thinking about the Academic Writing Guide, I think everybody begins by working *through* that don't they? At what point did it change to become a, 'I'm investing in this process, rather than working through these things that they've told me to work through'?

James: I think the big change was when we started working on the essay proper, I think second term when we started writing like the sentence outlines and the drafts, when all of these sort of almost you're-not-quite-sure-what-you're-why-you're-doing-them little tasks suddenly start to take a place in the sort of bigger picture of the of the essay, you think 'oh now I know how to read a question', but then suddenly it's 'oh now I know how to read *this* question' sort of thing.