

Transcript:

Episode Two: Working from home

Adnan: Hi everyone, my name is Adnan, I am one of the full time elected officers at the Students' Union, and I am your educational officer who looks after any of your academic concerns

Isaiah: And I am Isaiah, I am the academic representation officer at the student's union

Adnan: Sorry I just wanted to add that I'm currently at my sister's house, so don't be alarmed if you here any screaming kids in the background!

Isaiah: Well that kind of brings us to our first question, how are you finding working from home?

Adnan: Um, haha, you know what, I'm quite lucky in that I'm quite good at blocking out noise out and distraction out, and not everyone can focus like that, I'm well aware. But yeah personally, it's not been a huge issue no

Isaiah: Yeah, it's really odd, especially when it's sunny out. It's been quite nice though, being able to sit by a window and it be sunny for once. Do you think there are any positives for working at home at the minute?

Adnan: Over the past year and a half I've been picking up new books and not having the chance to get around to them, which has left me with a massive pile of books. They make me look like I'm well read but I'm really not, so now I've got the time to and luckily I'm getting the chance to get through quite a few of them. What I will say is, while that's good for me and I'm glad, there seems to be like this onus on people to be productive, to pick up a new hobby or skill. Don't be too hard on yourself to be honest, just take the time to sit back and chill

Isaiah: I keep telling myself that I'm going to read some of my books, but I've spent most of this time watching Star Wars!

Adnan: No that's great man, honestly.

Isaiah: And video games! At this point there's no point adding more productivity into what is already a hectic time. Have you any tips or advice for working from home?

Adnan: So it's easier said than done. I'm quite privileged that I am blessed with space in the home that I can isolate myself to other parts of the house. If you can find a space in the home that's just dedicated to work. Obviously that's easier said than done and there are people who won't be able to due to lack of space, and some people don't mind working on their bed, but personally I can't do that. I need to differentiate where I can wind down and chill and where I can work and be conventionally productive.



Isaiah: So we had some good advice from some of our course reps. Some said: “If you don’t have a space that is specifically for work, or you have to use the dining room table, or you have somewhere that’s entered regularly by family, you can talk to your family about the fact you need to do work.”

On rep suggested: “Make a deal with your parents about when you will do chores and when you will do studying” and things like that, which can help when it’s difficult to say that you’re not doing something immediately.

Adnan: Yeah it’s a really good point that. Establishing priorities and making people aware of the priorities. What I will say, is that sometimes even that is easier said than done, but it is a good point.

Isaiah: And actually, as we say about space, currently I am sat in my living room. This is where I work and this is where I don’t work. We have onus on the best way, but actually there isn’t just one way that’s effective to work. I’ve reverted back to final year study habits! A year ago tomorrow I handed in my dissertation, as I did then, I am working, studying and relaxing in all the same places.

Adnan: I’m glad you’re doing it your own way! There’s no one size fits all approach I suppose

Isaiah: Do you have any tips for students who are struggling with working from home? So maybe they don’t have a space to work that’s suitable or they have caring responsibilities or other circumstances that make it difficult to just get on and work.

Adnan: That’s a really good point. So just something to throw out, if you do have caring responsibilities, this is something we’ve raised to the University, is that they need to relax mitigating circumstances. So if this is you then do have a look at that, as they are now incorporating caring responsibilities, because obviously with schools closing and things like that, this is going to increase. So if you are a student with caring responsibilities then do look at that avenue. I guess with general tips what we spoke about before is a good point, whoever your living with, in a nice way make them aware that you’ve got things to do and let them know about time when not to disturb you.

Maintain dialogue, because if you do that and as that course rep said, make clear what you need, then that’s healthy and will prevent tension in the household from rising. But if you are a student with barriers that are preventing you from completing work effectively and efficiently then do take a look at mitigating circumstances because in light of everything the University has been working on relaxing that.

Isaiah: Am I right in saying that they are requiring less evidence for that as well now?



Adnan: That's right, yeah!

Isaiah: Yeah, so you don't need to have formal representation to outline those responsibilities, effectively you don't need proof for this. I think the other things that course reps sent in, because we did ask them about working from home and their tips, were definitely that you don't have to work during times that would be considered the normal working hours.

If you have kids, there's no shame in spending the day looking after them and making sure they're okay, especially if they're not in school or younger than school age, they'll be bouncing around. And taking time to yourself when you can, there's no shame in doing that.

Adnan: Completely agree! Fundamentally it is the University's responsibility to consider your caring responsibilities and your wellbeing as well, so don't think that's all on you as Isaiah said, just think of ways that work for you and what you want to do.

Isaiah: The last thing we were going to talk about are students struggling who may have lost part time jobs, maybe because the places they work are closed, like a café or a bar, or because they've had to go home due to everything that is going on.

This adds another layer of pressure, do you have any tips for students who have money worries, or who may still be trying to study and have the anxieties of meeting rent money, etc?

Adnan: Yeah, yeah that's a very important issue, several of you have actually emailed me with that issue. So I have raised this with the registrar, and basically there are a lot of you who have had to work to get by with living costs, and what the University is looking to do, again similar with the mitigation circumstances process, they're looking at the hardship fund and making it more accessible to those who maybe have lost their part time job, and it has put them in a position where they are unable to get by and pay living costs or they're living off very little for the next academic year. So if you are in this position look at the hardship fund. It won't necessarily be the best financial support if I'm honest but it will be something in helping you try and get by and paying your living costs and things like that.

Also, you might want to go home and get out of your contract early, so you might have already seen the letter that we co-signed with the University for students to send to their private letting providers. Some private letting providers have been really helpful whereas others have been more difficult. What I will say is reach out to the hardship fund, and myself and fellow officers are working really hard alongside the Leicester City Council to lobby and push letting agencies to do their bit in what is incredibly uncharted waters. And then as well as that we



have been trying to contact all the letting agencies that you guys have contracts with.

So make us aware of the ones you are having contact with, and we will try contact them directly, especially if they are being problematic.

Isaiah: If you are struggling with what food you have left in your cupboard and making up things, I know we have stuff on Facebook, one example to watch is Jack Monroe's Lockdown Larder, which focuses on what to do with tins you've had for months, and how to make good meals out of it.

Adnan: Is that the Leics Quarantine and Chill Facebook group?

Isaiah: Yes! We are trying to get staff to put up what they've been cooking, and students.

Adnan: Mia made a good point on the Instagram SU Live yesterday about an account called Simple Politics. They don't show any political views or angles, just give you the simple bullet points from each announcement and policy, I encourage you to follow them, they just factually tell you how it is. It lets you keep up with information that isn't too detrimental to you. Also keep sending in your concerns to the University too: covid19help@le.ac.uk.

Isaiah: Thank you for listening, that's all from us, and look out for more episodes in the upcoming weeks, released on SU social media! Thanks Adnan!

Adnan: That's alright, thanks for having me! Take care everyone!

