It’s a Two-way Street: Informing Irish Pre-sessional EAP Programs with a Needs Analysis of Irish Higher Education

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Constance: hmmmm academic success because I not success how to link [pause] uhhhh practice it uhhhhhh [long pause] read more articles and learn the uh learn the good sentence and good words and remember it?

R: okay and why do you say that you're not a success

Constance: [sharp inhale] uhhhh the most important is is English @@@

R: alright and what else can you tell me what has been difficult about coming to Ireland

Constance: uhhmmm [long pause] uhh about the academic or the

R: everything

Constance: everything uhhh difficult to come here IELTS test

R: okay the IELTS test

Constance: yes yeah the IELTS um if we want to come here you have to six point six point five and [long pause] I remember the first time I had I had this exam I just get a score for five point five @ and so I because it's far away from the score I need so I just to I had a I had a class about the IELTS and the teachers um uh every every day I recited I recited the articles the essays the teachers think is very good I recite them and remember that every day so in my at the IELTS test I just to write the article I have remind and also also spoken and also the spoken [long pause] no no the spoken test speaking the speaking test because the IELTS test will have the list of the question uh so before the test uh the teachers will the teachers will ask me to prepare and remember all their question and their answers about their question [pause] so IELTS test is this way to pass it

R: it's just remember remember and then okay

Constance: @ yeah yeah

R: and how many times did you take the IELTS just two

Constance: noo! @@@ [holds up four fingers]

R: four time in how much time

Constance: huh?

R: in how many months

Constance: okay [whispers] six months

R: so four times in six months

Constance: yeah @@@

R: and and you went from a five point five to six point five just by remembering

Constance: yeah @@@ yeah @@@

R: well done @

Constance: nooo @@@
R: @@@ why do you say no @@@

Constance: this were crazy and uhm like the listening and the speaking uh like the listening have the IELTS test book uhhh my assignment just to listen all day and and and uh remember the word is also it's very are always in their exam and we have a book about your past exam of the IELTS and they and the many many people and the many teachers will collect collect them we will need to remember them [click]

R: okay so it's a law of just practice practice practice remember remember remember memorize and then on the test here you go okay

Constance: yeah! @@@

R: okay @ and do you think that IELTS prepared you for [institution 1]

Constance: [shakes head]

R: yeah you think the IELTS did a good job preparing for [institution 1]

Constance: it's good job?

R: well how similar is IELTS and [institution 1]

Constance: uhhhhh huh? is no no it's helpful it's hard to link collection collection them together I think yeah

R: yeah it's hard to connect them

Constance: yeah

R: yeah why do you say that

Constance: uhhhh in my memory I was just [long pause] uh if I if I can if I pass the IELTS I can enter the the school so IELTS just assignment just assignment for me @ but um [institution 1] um it's a good opportunity for me to practice my academic study and practice my English yeah

R: so it's different they're very different

Constance: yeah

R: yeah how how are they different

Constance: uh IELTS is not IELTS is unuseful for me

R: okay how so

Constance: @@ because we just to remember them but if we um [long pause] it's not a practical thing for us uh [pause] just like me uh if I pass the IELTS exam but like okay spoken spoken language not good also @

R: okay and what else has been difficult about coming to Ireland difficult

Constance: mmm difficult [click] ummmm [long pause] prepare my English

R: prepare your English did you take classes before coming to Ireland or

Constance: [long pause] oh class [pause] oh my my bachelor study
R: um well no did you take any sort of summer class or English for academic purposes before starting
Constance: uh IELTS class
R: just IELTS course
Constance: yeah yeah yeah because the [pause] the first the most imp- the most >no no
no< if I want to enter [institution 1] the first one I did to do it pass IELTS I just like these
R: yeah so all of your focus was okay just pass IELTS
Constance: yeah
R: I want to go to [institution 1]
Constance: yeah
R: okay alright and when you got to Ireland what did you find difficult
Constance: was difficult uuuhhh [long pause] uh hu hu write essay wait no write write the
report okay and uh it's difficult for us to communicate with [pause] other people yeah I
don't know why uh we also uh if we have class we just to the [nationality] sit together and
the [nationality] sit together it's very difficult for us to communicate with them
R: okay yeah so it's very separate
Constance: yeah maybe it's a different culture and [pause] uh it's hard for us to
communicate with them
R: yeah yeah okay alright and what has been easy in Ireland
Constance: as for me it's easy for me to suit this envi- evni- environment because in my
university I also travel in many many places I think it's a good way for me to to live in here
while cookery I can I can I can [pause] cook my food by myself and also do something by
myself I think I'm independent person
R: yeah okay so it's been very easy to be independent yeah and very good to be
independent
Constance: it’s good independent
R: okay for you it has been yeah
Constance: yeah
R: okay good I'm so what what type of preparation should international students take
before coming to [institution 1]
Constance: in my bachelors in my in my university
R: um yes or after University yeah so what should people do before coming to [institution] to make [institution] easier

Constance: [sharp inhale] I don't know @@@ uhh [long pause] I want to tell you a truth
R: you haven't had any presentation before@

Constance: yeah
R: okay and now you have to give presentations

Constance: no also because my my courses don't have the presentation just to just to listen
R: to lectures oh we- I we don't have this opportunities practice it and now I find some job

Constance: [long pause] uh I find some jobs and maybe I will get some interview opportunities [click] I it's very hard for me to show myself and prepare my presentation

R: okay um what do you think could make that easier

Constance: hmmm with me
Constance: hmmmmm @@@ I don’t know @@@ pass @@@@ pass this course @@@
R: skip it
R: ok that's ok I'm so if you could give advice to your professors to help international students yeah what would that advice be what would you tell them

Constance: hmm [long pause] the contents is the content about your advices um no no the advice the content what aspect
Constance: it's about what can professors do better to help international students

Constance: mmmmm [long pause] [click] [pause] give more times to communicate with

R: it's about what can professors do better to help international students

Constance: students in their lessons and uh maybe after the class the students we can send email and to
R: ask them the the homework and the thing we we don't realize and the lecturers need to

R: ask them the the homework and the thing we we don't realize and the lecturers need to

Constance: my [subject] teacher said @@@ he didn’t answer any our question
R: really
Constance: yeah
R: why
Constance: huh
R: why
Constance: whyyy [long pause] oh because this classes oh the lecture finished this classes in one week
R: okay so you only have them for one week
Constance: yeah one week every day we have the class and one week to finish it so just finish it we will need to prepare the exam so oh he- didn't answer us any question relate to us relate to practice bank practice bank test learn by ourself
R: so you have to learn all by yourself
Constance: yeah so sad
R: okay how do you feel about that
Constance: @@@@@ uhhhh aweee so sad @@ practice and remember the remember remember the the example of the test bank and fine and Google in the internet and how to use it how to practice a maybe a thing is good for me to practice in my exam
R: okay okay and so you wish that professors would answer questions
Constance: yeah
R: yeah okay right um and if you could give advice to future students so students who want to come to [institution 1] what would you tell them
Constance: anything is okay
R: yeah yeah anything
Constance: uhhhh the most important is practice the English @@ if well we if we haven’t practice English is difficult to uh learn your courses and communicate with others and second second what’s more uh I would tell them to bring some heavy coats
R: @@ because it's too cold here
Constance: yeah it's very cold and uh there [pause] I can find some [pause] I can find some very [pause] heavy coats in shopping center
R: okay yeah so bring heavy coats and learn English so those are the two things you would tell them
Constance: wait the second- th- the another things is bring a h- w- hot bottle
R: okay yeah a hot-water bottle yeah
Constance: yeah yeah hot water-bottle in here in hear I I didn't find any hot water bottle in here it just it no can I it looks like a hot water but actually it can’t you can’t keep the warm of the water
R: right right yeah
Constance: why @@@@
R: @@@ I don't know
Constance: @@@@@ why @@@ I bought a hot bottle water from the #unt
R: yeah
Constance: yeah from the shopping center here here and it looks like I can you can keep
R: the it can keep the heat in but actually it can’t work @@@
R: oh no @@ okay is there anything else that you would tell them
Constance: to bring @@ bring hot water bottle @@ and bring everything
R: okay bring everything @@
Constance: @@@@@ yeah so the Christmas I will I will go back home @@ I will t- I
R: would take everything @@ from home @@
R: @@ so you'll go with an empty suitcase and bring everything back
Constance: @@ @@ yeah my roommates and I have made a plan to bring what we need
to bring
R: right are you living with other [language] students
Constance: yeah yeah
R: yeah did you know them before coming
Constance: yeah yeah we find a house together
R: oh nice oh that's very nice
Constance: yeah
R: has that helped does it does it help you to live with people that you know
Constance: uhh oh yeah it's very convenient to uh because my roommates are is the same
subject for as for me so we can communicate the assignment and go to the class together
yeah
R: okay that's very good yeah good um if if [institution 1] were to create a summer
program for international students what should that program be like what should they teach
Constance: yeah like IELTS
R: like IELTS
Constance: yeah bec- uhhh [long pause] this year this year they didn’t offer IELTS lesson
R: no they didn't
Constance: yeah be- we uh if we I come here at this year but my first score my first score
of IELTS is five point five at that time I want to uh give up to to to I want to give up
I asked summer [pause] I asked summer
Constance: IELTS summer [pause] I asked summer
R: @ okay and so if if [institution 1] instead of IELTS if they had a different test what
should that test be like
Constance: mmmmm like IELTS
R: yeah
Constance: mmmm [pause] it can increase the spoken language test but [click] [long
pause] but and and this test uh if in if a if create if we created this this test we need to pass
it to come here
R: yes
Constance: wow yeah [long pause] if we creator more opportunity uh more contents about
their spoken language I think is very hard for [language] to do that @ and and [pause] we
many people don't pass this is exam to come here @
R: so if if [institution 1] had a three month or an eight-week summer program and at the
end you took a test and that has counted as IELTS so then you didn't have to take IELTS
only eight weeks here and then a test and then [institution 1] what should those eight weeks
look like what should you learn in those eight weeks
Constance: [gasp] mmmm [long pause] oh this way can uh I think this way will be more
practical uhhh as I say [pause] IELST just remember it @ and practice it remember and
remember the essay and remembered the the listening and the writing part [pause] it's not
practical for us to use in our daily life in our uni- university study with to I think remember
ability to um to write essay and how to know the how to know your work is more beautiful
and your sentence how to write is more good so hmmm [pause] maybe like that we will it’s
very benefit for students write essay and write and write a report
R: okay so write reports and write essays and so have content like during the year in
[institution 1] like same same things so essays reports what would you have liked to learn
before coming to [institution 1]
Constance: [click]
R: what would you have wanted to learn before coming to [institution 1] like if you if you
could have come to the summer program what would you wish the class taught
Constance: ummmm [long pause] I I suppose I give us some opportunity to uhh presenta-
maybe at least it it's necessary to create some presentation for us to show our self uh it's
aspect it's good for us to find job and communicate with others and it can teach us some
local sentence and how to write a formal essays by use the beautiful words in our stud- in
our in our study we just to remember some word #unt and what’s more and then I think it's
not informal to use in article yeah because I learned the EAP courses in in here um the
teacher [name] say it’s not formal to use in essay is that right
Constance: yes
Constance: [long pause] in our you know in my in primary and high school sturdy we
also write an essay #unt after [long pause] the contest #unt #unt what the first one is that
were small and in besides and blah blah and the last but not least okay just an article like
that
yeah no it’s different and so what kind of support does [institution 1] offer for
international students you’ve said English for academic purposes yeah and what else does
[institution 1] have for international students
Constance: hmmm hmhmhmhm [long pause] I think [long pause] library @ @ @ support
[long pause] ah the Sports Center
okay do you use it
Constance: no @
do you use it
Constance: no @ me either and what should [institution 1] have
give us more opportunity to [pause] practice the courses oh if we have the
chance to uh if there's school give us the oh if the school cooperate with some company
can give us give us chance to practice our knowledge in our intern I think it’s better to
practice it
mm-hmm okay all right it's a more practical yeah
yeah if we learn the [topic] knowledge we just write the essay and write an
exam I think oh if we we have work in the future or it's not useful
mmm okay yeah and so they should have like an internship or something
Constance: yeah
um so that is all of the questions that I have for you is there anything else that you want
to say or express
@how to practice my English @ improve my English @ @ @ how to
improve my English thank you
@ use it just like this talking talking talking
okay I can't find anyone to talk to me
why not
uh-huh well I always I always talk with my [nationality] roommates and my
language] classmates and Indian if we talk with them uhh maybe they [click] also to to
study and live together and we have the different group the different life environment so
um it's hard for us to [pause] play with them
R: yeah yeah and so that could be something do you think that [institution 1] could try and provide ways to help

Constance: yeah yeah

R: what would help like what would what would you want to help yeah

Constance: yeah you can open some club that we can communicate together and practice my English

R: yeah okay yeah is there anything else that you would want to say anything else that you want to express or say

Constance: no@@@

R: okay alright thank you so much

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Estí

R: yeah so first can you tell me what your strengths are academically so what are you good at

Estí: uhh academically hmm [pause] I think one of my stronger characteristics is my determination like if I set a goal I’m going to work towards that goal and um [click] I will not know probably will not change uhm during you know working towards achieving that and that relates to my other strength that I I think a lot before doing things so before th-

Estí: making a decision I think a lot I am very very thorough at examining all possibilities and once I set the goal I work towards you know that and I don't think of what if and you know what they make if I made a huge mistake I mean obviously all people do that and I will do that as well but not so much as to affect you know my does that make sense

R: yeah like you don't dwell on things if you have a goal in your mind it's just okay I need to get there

Estí: yeah yeah yeah yeah [pause] does that cover the question let me know what you think

R: no no it's good and um what would you say that your difficulties are academically

Estí: um is that the question for the current institution or a general one

R: um if the answer is different both

Estí: okay yeah so a general one is that I tend to [long pause] procrastinate [long pause] ummm yeah I do that uhm [pause] [click] I don't like [long pause] let me get my thoughts together [pause] yes I think that if I set the goal to have something ready by Thursday I might st- I mean even if I'm able to start working it one week before maybe I will not do that and then spend the whole weekend without any sleep you know you know there too I'm not going to change the goal I'm going to arrive there but I think that especially the last
two years I started procrastinating more than I used to and the other thing in the current institution is that because I'm not working on my first language yeah I think that's an obstacle sometimes oh it does not it's not that it does not allow me to do things but I realize that it takes more time to do things you know

R: right and so what would your strengths be in terms of English

Estí: strengths [long pause] uhm [long pause] strengths I don't know what to say I cannot think of any strength uhm I suppose [pause] that I try I always try to get better [long pause] I try to use the new words that I learn try to repeat them by writing down I have a vocabulary and phrase you know notebook that I but I take notes they say on this is a phrase to say that you know that I didn't know I write it down down there to use it I also try to fix my accent [long pause] yeah that's it

R: what would your difficulties be in terms of English

Estí: umm [long pause] the accent @ and that ever since I moved believe it or not ever since I moved into an English-speaking country I think that my English [pause] uhm deteriorate

R: really how so

Estí: I don't know I'm surprised I think I could @ speak better English @ when I was back in my country than I do here and I that- no the way that I speak now does not do my English classes and my teacher back in my country justice @ I don't know maybe it's the immersion in this environment that kinds of inhibits me to be relaxed and to you know be communicative uhm without thinking constantly what other people would think of my English skills I don't know maybe it's the academic environment that does that uhm to whatever everybody thinks is their weakest spot that it brings out your fears @ of not being good enough I don't I don't know but yeah

R: yeah so do you find yourself like you said being stressed out about what other people think of your English here more so than in [country]

Estí: yeah

R: is it constant or is it just kind of

Estí: no no no it's not constant and there are people that compliment my English uhm and there are you know and there are international students that have the same difficulty so it's not only me [pause] so also some people are more used to dealing with people from other countries speaking English as their second language uhm than others [long pause] more some people are more judgmental than others because of their personality and that's
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

okay if it's not this it's going to be something else know what I mean uhm but it comes and

goes no it's not constant no

R: but it definitely affects like confidence and that

Estí: of course of course yes and yeah and it's because the academic environment it's also
the place that we try to socialize and to make friends and we spend all of our days then um
sometimes I also for you but nobody here is going to really know who I am because we're
not able to speak in my like I mean I'm a different a slightly different person in my own
language and a slightly different person when you speak English you know so yeah

R: and it’s so um can you tell me about the work that's required of you as a PhD student so

what you actually have to do on a day-to-day basis

Estí: [exhale] lots of things things

R: @@ that look of fear

Estí: @@yeah let me think if I can [pause] put that into words so um do you mean in terms
of my PhD or or or as a PhD student

R: as a PhD student

Estí: so first of all I have to work to make money to do work not related to my PhD [long
pause] to survive you know second um I have to work on the PhD do you want me to
elaborate on that

R: yeah

Estí: uhm [pause] this is the work that this is a desktop work then there is work with people
so there is this part where you have to grow skills in networking in presenting and
promoting your research and that is not something that you do like um like a scheduled
activity you have to learn how to do that [pause] every minute that you stand in to this the
campus I’d say because never know who you're going to meet uhm [pause] and you have
to be always prepared to present briefly your research in an interesting way and to have
your ears and eyes open for people that do something that could be of interest and the and
you know create networking and coworker possibilities for you and that is something that I
never did before [pause] umm that does that answer your question so there are there
are three different categories of work every day for a PhD student and maybe I'm
forgetting maybe I’m forgetting something right now there whole administration that you
have to deal with yeah
Okay and did you take any modules here

Estí: Yes I did take the research methods modules that we have within the [school] and it's also compulsory for all first-year PhD students.

R: Okay and in that class what did you have to do

Estí: [Long pause] It was mostly presenting and discussing um it was not run by one one lecturer um we had three or four different people doing the module it was basically presenting discussing comparing different research methodologies how to use them and when to use them ummm in [discipline] research some people were more traditional so they presented we took notes that was it some people involved some activities uh to make it more interesting [pause] but to me it was a little bit boring hmm should I tell you this

R: Yeah why like why like why was it boring

Estí: I won't be identified

R: No no no like I won't even say the school like I basically in the interviews if anyone say a module name a professor name name of a company name of a school I just kind of edited out I just say name of school

Estí: Okay so [pause] I realized after the first so this module was was mostly so once per month it was not once per week maybe that's why it was so long uhm I realized that we're returning to the very very basics that for me were very basic things that um in order to to graduate in my bachelor in my undergraduate they were considered common ground but here they were not and I realized that they were not considered already known because in the PhD in our school [pause] maybe I was the only person that my background was in [discipline] so my undergraduate was in [discipline] and my postgraduate was in [discipline] while other people were coming from a range of disciplines and it was normal for them that they never did a consistent module of [discipline] research methods before now this is different because but in my country my home in univer- all the universities in [country] you cannot go to the PhD level in [discipline] without having at least the undergraduate or the postgraduate in [discipline] you know it's more restricted than the paths that you can take here in Ireland and I think the UK and States it's more broad you you're a lot more free to to change your path and I was not used to that so arriving here I thought that all these people are people like me they at least have one degree it’s a bit like specific in [discipline] that's not the case and that is why and that's actually good for the school that they didn't treat those people like that because they were not and they needed this background but for me [pause] [click] you know

R: It's kind of a waste of time if you know it

Estí: Yes
R: and you could have maybe taken a different module
Estí: yes yeah definitely
R: mm-hmm and did you have any assessment for this module
Estí: no ah yes no we did at the end of the the module we had to create a poster and present a poster like as what we would do in the conference so yeah
R: okay and was that like on your PhD project or was it a different
Estí: not on our PhD project oh actually as the module as time went by in the module all of us we were saying our methodologies and our philosophies of the research so every month we could relate a little bit more to what was being said you know so
R: alright yeah okay let's see so how would you currently evaluate your academic success so far so how do you feel that you're doing in [institution 1]
Estí: [long pause] on a scale from 1 to 10 @
R: yeah we'll do 1 to 10
Estí: do 1 to 10 [long pause] well I tried to [pause] value my effort and say that I am happy with where I am because I've tried a lot maybe it's not where I planned to be but still I worked very hard to get here [long pause] I would say six or seven [long pause] I feel that I'm a little bit behind then where I thought in the beginning of the PhD that I I should be at the beginning of the second year but there has been so many changes due to factors that you cannot possibly imagine of when you do your proposal @@ so one way yeah yeah medium let's say it's
Estí: yeah although so so in terms of I don't know but I'm not like I feel that it should I feel it should be like that does that make sense you know I’m not disappointed with myself maybe I don't feel it's my fault that I'm not where I thought I'd be you know or it’s [pause] one third my fault and 2/3 of factors that I cannot control @ does that make sense
R: mm-
Estí: they were looking for [long pause] I think they are looking for originality so not things that we've heard and read over and over and over again you know [pause] hmmm [long pause] and publishable material @
R: yeah and so how would your professors or do they communicate their expectations
Estí: [long pause] hmmm [long pause] I don't know how do they do that I'm trying to think of the module I think they are pretty clear about what it would be good for an early career researcher to do [pause] and like kind of like a piece of advice yeah
R: and so your supervisor is like how would your supervisor communicate what they expect?

Estí: umm my supervisor actually is very good at not being umm [long pause] not imposing things on me um once per two months we sit down and we look at the timeline that we last did two months ago and we say okay where are we now have we done what we needed to do what do we need to do next [click] so it's kind of co-constructing where do we want to go um but what did you ask me how he communicates his expectations

R: expectations so how do you know that okay I'm gonna hand in this chapter to him how do you know or what do you think he's looking for in that chapter for in the work

Estí: he definitely looks for clear arguments [long pause] and critical thinking so he doesn't look for very elaborate uh theoretical academic style but that actually has no essence I think he's looking for essence if that makes sense

R: yeah

Estí: and that's what I'm trying to do [pause] yeah and because I sometimes you know I've told him as well that writing in English slows me down and sometimes I stop and worry too much about the comma that I can spend two hours googling uh grammar rules and you know I'm terrified of making a mistake about the comma or a word he said don't worry about the commas write like the content is important to catch when you know to catch your how can I say that first we're going to look at the content and then the commas and everything we can work together but your thoughts is what you know needs to be put on paper first that helps take the pressure off [pause] sometimes

R: right and so in general what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]

Estí: PhD students

R: all students well let's do PhD first since that's I have zero experience with undergraduates [long pause] so I I can only imagine that they would need the same things but I don't really know about their problems PhD students need um substantial support that is support from the people that are are there to support them their supervisors the the people in the academic registry @ eh the people in the administration in their schools because [institution 1] has a problem with that @

R: can you expand on that @

Estí: well I think through my experience but also my discussions with fellow PhD students every week at least five people have a problem with administration that they take a lot of their time off in order to solve and a lot of times it's not solved properly and that has
become an everyday reality and that is not okay [pause] I consider myself I began to consider myself lucky that I don't have problems with my supervisor and that there is one specific lady the administration in our school that they always I always now go to her because she's very helpful but that's not the solution pick the one that you know is helpful and go to them all the time no you know what I mean but that's not the way things should work [pause] there are my students this year that have not been registered yet [pause] and this this creates a whole different problem that students are trying to solve and they spend a lot of time in order to solve it and in the end it it's not their problem to solve you know so there is this part of male organized have structures that can really support the students [pause] well financial help is very critical very critical I already know three students that dropped out because of financial problems and I've only begun my second year in [institution 1] and you know I can I can feel it too that if I wouldn't have to work it would be so much better [long pause] uhm yeah I think that's it am I forgetting something very crucial [long pause] no I think yeah support and financial support so support in general @

R: right and did you do your masters here

Estí: no

R: no okay so then how much of a factor does language play in academic success

Estí: [long pause] [exhale] it's a major factor uh I would say uh it's a major factor but trying if you want to get better you can get better uh [pause] yeah but it definitely [pause] sometimes I think that there are people that are very lucky if English is their first language and sometimes I think that I would be a much more good like a much better PhD student if I wrote my PhD in [language] of course that is there's absolutely no uh reason for thinking that [pause] because if I wrote my PhD in [language] nobody would be able to read it outside of [country] then we'll go to another discussion about the the privilege of doing academic work English and this immeasurable impact on networking and all of that yeah but I think that maybe it takes more effort but it’s not impossible to actually umm succeeded and there are many academic that English you know they are in English-speaking institutions and English was not their first language yeah that does not mean that nothing should be done about it because some people can overcome that by themselves @ but it should not be something that would stop people from trying you know yeah

R: and so what other factors influence academic success
Estí: [long pause] money @ well of course [pause] if your fees are paid if your
accommodation is paid if your day-to-day expenses are paid it's not certain that you will
succeed but of course it's easier it's easier it takes a lot of pressure off and you can get more
focused or you can use the time in order to do your research properly so yeah that is for me
that is a big factor also emotional support from your you know network of support friends
and family people that feel isolated obviously [pause] I know that I'm generalizing now but
I feel like you know for the majority of people it's it's a big factor to have people that
support them around them mmm to have a strong motive to not become demotivated so
that obviously relates to the previous ones yeah
so now I'm gonna switch to kind of um entry tools and preparation before you came to
[institution 1] so did you have any linguistic or academic separation before attending
[institution 1]
Estí: no
R: okay and did you have to take a standardized exam like IELTS TOEFL etc.
Estí: no
R: okay can I ask why not
Estí: because he already had a certificate of proficiency in English [pause] and they didn't
want me to take a standardized one that would be more recent because when I when I took
the exam for this certificate standardized tests were not as common as today it was before
2010
R: okay and so what was that exam like was it
Estí: that it was a uhm there was a reading part a speaking part a listening part and a use of
grammar part
R: was it Cambridge
Estí: yeah Cambridge Michigan
R: okay okay so you took this in high school or
Estí: yeah
R: okay and you have any opinions or feelings on that exam or other standardized exams
that are currently used
Estí: uhm before uh they let me know that I don't need to take the IELTS or the other one I
started studying on my own about the IELTS [pause] I found it pretty easy you know it's
standardized and that means that if you learn ten ways of saying that and with
like knowing the test is more important that knowing English@ in some ways and you can
learn a paragraph by heart in order to explain uh a statistic table [long pause] you know
other person that have taken language exams in three different languages that is French
English and German my my skills of taking a language test I consider them to to be really good because by studying specific things in order to succeed in the exam we get to succeed in the exam but not in what the exam “prepares” you for and I'm I'm doing this

R: yeah the quotations marks

Estí: yes yeah for example in the exam for uh I al- I also have a high certificate in French so officially I am capable of teaching French [pause] but I'm not and I know that I'm not right now maybe if I moved to France for five years after that I don't know but no um and in taking the exam I knew that in the writing part I had to use one form of this I don't know how to say it in English

R: but a certain grammar form

Estí: yes yeah so I knew I have learned my heart twenty forms of these 20 types of these 20 types of this and I would use like I would check the boxes that's not really you know learning the language but I knew that and my goal was to acquire@ the certificate and I did that because that's what you're paying for at the moment you know and that what is going [click] to look that's what you're going to put in your CV but [pause] so the test is one thing and I failed the IELTS in a sense because a lot of people sit exam in order to start their master degree so it's something that has to be done and they treat it that way uhm and they and they treat it that way and it shouldn't be treated that way and the test I don't know is it the same for everybody

R: [shakes head]

Estí: well maybe it shouldn’t you know we come from different linguistics background [click] you see that every [nationality] person that I know will make the same mistakes in English because we think in [language] and we translate it in English so we tend to do the same mistakes maybe I'm talking too much now what did you ask me what I feel

R: yeah that's but that's a very good explanation because my next question is going to be like how do you feel that like that exam that you took or the IELTS how adequately does it prepare you for life and [institution 1]

Estí: it doesn't it's the ticket to come to [institution 1] [long pause] maybe prepares you I don't know maybe I shouldn't be so you know rejecting@ everything now maybe it does prepare you in some ways or at the level that it's not enough [pause] umm [pause] yeah maybe I’m being too harsh now I feel I don’t [pause] maybe it's an easy way to evaluate and put people in categories [pause] place them like it's easy to to to control it's easy to you know it’s standardized it’s what standardized tests are for it’s the the same discussion in every field that there're standardized tests related to to students [click] it's measurable it's easy it's easy to apply in different settings but that blocks depth and one one reason why
we take those tests okay maybe you can take the test not to use it immediately but if you
take it in order to move to another country you're going to give more depth than that in
order to you know for the test to be meaningful does that make sense
R: and so that leads me to um what type of preparation should international students do
before coming to [institution 1]
Estí: [long pause] I had a very good English teacher really good um she acknowledged the
harsh reality of these exams and she would try to you know at the same time we were
preparing for the exam I would read a lot of books in English uhm yes she would she
would try to approach the language from the more meaningful point of view more
wholesome like it's a living thing it's a culture you know it's much more than tenses and
grammar that you have to learn by heart of course there is like how can we do that I don't
know language teachers could should be better okay that's not a very helpful thing to say I
mean it's true but that's cannot be a suggestion uhm what kind of [long pause] I don't know
if I don't know
R: that's fine
Estí: um maybe [institution 1] should be more prepared about international students about
[institution 1] I don't know
R: that was going to be my next set of questions actually @ if you could give advice to
professors and faculty in dealing with international students what would that advice be
Estí: prepare [institution 1] to accept international students but not only by accepting the
large number of international students uhm by creating a culture of internationalization in
the institution and that means mutual respect mutual cultural respect not bringing
people in and have the assumption that you have to this is the way we do things here you
have to find a way to adapt as soon as possible it's a two-way street in order to work
language courses um [long pause] yeah but I think that they are available
but that is that's a good one and I know people that have attended them and found them
helpful and um creating an atmosphere of internationalization also among the Irish
students so it's not like it should be at every level the board and the staff faculties the staff
the people in the staff and the student body yeah and one good way to
connect with the difficulties that international students go through is to become an
international student yourself so all those programs of mobility I found out because I was I
participated in one of them I was in France and then I went back to my home University
yeah placing yourself in in other people's shoes really works you start to see things that
you were not able to see as a member of the dominant culture [pause] so these programs of
R: yeah and so if you could give advice to an organization like [institution 1] who are creating a program to prepare students for university study what would that advice be

Estí: which kind of students

R: um well mostly international students

Estí: to prepare them for

R: [institution 1] so say like they were developing like a summer program so what what advice would you give them when they're creating that program like what do they need

Estí: they should former international students experiences [pause] yeah they should ask them and listen to them and see what the problems they faced what they were like [pause]

yeah

R: and if you could give advice to future students or students who are looking to come to [institution 1] what would that advice be

Estí: [long pause] it would be probably ehm [pause] to take advantage of everything the [institution 1] has to offer [pause] and actually [pause] be very proactive about finding out because there are many things but they are out there but nobody really tells you about them maybe connect with other students share a lot help each other out and yeah

R: and so you've mentioned some things in terms of support for students like you've mentioned the language classes but are you aware of any other support in your department or the wider University offered to international students

Estí: there is the global room uhhh there is yeah the language classes the global room the international students um um [pause]

R: the [students union]

Estí: yes and in my in my school now there there is a specific member of staff for looking after international students [pause] uhm they have meetings they had two already I was not able to go but I will go then um [pause] so there is the [students union] the global room the classes there is the society international students society [long pause] what else and then the same for all students like the career advisory service the counseling services

R: yeah I mean would you consider the support to be adequate or could it be improved

Estí: [long pause] they are obviously doing a good job [long pause] they could be improved though I think

R: how so
Estí: well [sigh] it doesn’t matter you can’t put a lot of you know [pause] support structures but if the culture of the institution does not change maybe if their hands are tied as well in terms of to to you know to reach their full potential you know [pause] I strongly believe that it is a matter of culture and it's all new it's been what 20 years of students started moving around the globe so in one way yeah it's justified [pause] but it can change and it should change.

R: okay so that's actually the last question I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Estí: nothing comes to mind now

R: okay and is there anything else that you'd like to say or express

Estí: [long pause] no

R: okay thank you

Fernanda

R: okay um so first could you tell me what your strengths are academically

Fernanda: what what I'm doing at the moment?

R: well your strengths like what are you good at

Fernanda: uh yeah I do like research so I am doing um a master's in [discipline] which includes [topic] and so on so I kind of like this portion I'm good on this yeah I'd say so

R: so like you good at the actual conducting of research

Fernanda: yeah uh yeah more than act as a [topic] as a trained one but like I’m better helping others and developing and research and so on

R: okay all right what about any difficulties or weaknesses academically

Fernanda: uh language definitely

R: language

Fernanda: yeah wr- wr- like writing is very difficult uhhm it's been since I started studying English and uhm much more when I think that I need to present a dissertation and so on say it just I with the assessments I've done until now I just find it very difficult to make the ideas clear but [pause] to try to express what I'm thinking [pause] okay so yeah yeah that's the the worse and eh speaking is also difficult when you think about like being uh surrounded by people I uhm sometimes struggle with that as well

R: okay so in writing making is it basically you have like the ideas in your head and you just can't find the right words the right right way to say it or why //is it

Fernanda: it seems| too simple
R: okay
Fernanda: okay when- when- whenever I'm reading [pause] I can understand most of the things if not is a word or another and so on I can understand in the context however when I am writing it seems I am a [pause] @child @ [pause] and that's just not for the level I'm trying for [pause] you know so yeah basically yeah
R: okay yeah and so can you tell me about the modules that you're taking what do you have to you for the modules
Fernanda: okay for this semester I'm basically doing um [module] uhm [module] and doing [module] and I am doing [module] as well so [module] is more like a legal stuff so understand the process and so on uh [module] is also the same [pause] but I have a practical activity as well try to work with companies uhm maybe the- the [module] is just about training training training and [module] is a module when you just think about solving problems in companies and for this one I have a [topic] practical exam and also written
R: okay yeah and so outside of the classroom is there a lot of reading is there a lot of preparation for the modules
Fernanda: I thought it would be more to be honest yeah I think I I I am studying in [institution 6] which is a small I mean is not big College in here and they are accepting loads of immigrants and because of this I can say that I mean I think they try to make your life easy somehow? and yeah if they give you material we have like [pause] you have preparation for the classes but it's not [pause] as much as I thought would be uh these students also don't participate as much I think they don't feel comfortable expressing their ideas [pause] okay in the first semester I thought it was worse [pause] and now that we know each other and we know that we are going to have problems expressing ideas we are developing better but it’s still a problem you know so
R: right okay and so you'll have to do a dissertation as well have you started on the dissertation
Fernanda: yeee uhm we had a research mythology uhhhh subject last semester? but we are dealing with that for next semester because we had like more uh #thoughtful subjects for this one right so we are not doing and for the feedback we got from them we had structural problems okay we because [pause] we were always comparing what we presented in our country to what we have in here and we couldn’t’- I know that is research so technically it's all the same but when you have to think in another language might get you might get confused with that and yeah I think most of the students [pause] including me we found it quite difficult [pause] so yeah
R: yeah so just a structure of conducting research and writing and
Fernanda: yeah as as a foreign student I I think we need some @attention or somehow who you know yeah to understand how it works? so uh I I'm always going to the to the seminars and so on in another colleges just get used to what people are dealing with and how they are approaching subjects and so on because it helps me to understand better how am I going to do this and this is a [pause] maybe the activity is not very explored? [pause] y- y you know whenever you have [pause] we have problems to understand even when you we you speak I think we have problems to understand and t- s- to show ideas [pause] okay so yeah
R: okay and so what is this what is the assessment like for your modules is it mainly written is a presentations group work
Fernanda: okay uhh these semester we have [pause] three written exams [pause] and [pause] two practical's yes so practical based [topic] you need to do a practical exam and they just put actors in there and they just act and we try to mediate um forrr commercial is the same but more like a business uh stuff and for the written exams so we have all the the readings that we are dealing with but it's more like for commercial is more about directives legislation constitution so on for workplace you have more uh uh business environment so we get lots of re- wr- writings for other authors and so on and for [module] is about pro-
R: okay and are you given the the guidelines and grading criteria before you have to do the assessments
Fernanda: yeah
R: okay
Fernanda: yeah we always get them [pause] I think bec- because they know we need to understand how we we are going to approach the exam so we asked that in the first semester because we didn't have them? and then they prepared for this on
R: okay all right and you find them helpful
Fernanda: yeah even if for the assessments it's very good because we have a like uhm we we really understand in which ones we need to work more to get a better grading so
R: okay and how do you feel that you're doing academically now so how would you evaluate your academic success
Fernanda: [sigh] [click] I [pause] I don't know @ I would think about it yeah I [click]
because I'm not 100% sure about the [pause] I'm not really interested in some of the subjects I'm not doing very well? [pause] okay because I I think whenever you choose a
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Fernanda: masters. you need to be aware what you're really doing? which was not my case I was trying to do a master's related to psychology and counseling and because I did fine arts at college and I wanted to change [pause] and I worked in museums before in my country with kids education and so on so I thought it would be good however I couldn't because I didn't have certain subjects [pause] okay so yeah [click] we all got into @#helping @#the point is like oh or you do a pre-master's and then you start or you find another course and then I found [discipline] and my research is related to [discipline] [pause] so I can put them together however I don't have any uhm legal uhm [click] [pause] I @don't @really have any legal aspects in my @qualification my previous ones so I don't really understand some procedures if you think about [module] [pause] all. about. Procedures and [module] so you have is very legal it's almost a court and if you don't have this uhm knowledge you might get stuck with some and in this sense I have had to work much more for instance in the readings I couldn't understand the first time ago I got a case law [pause] I couldn't read the case law. [pause] okay? III I asked my- on- it was one of the lecturers like I can't understand and could you go and read with me?

R: and did they?

Fernanda: yeah she did yeah she did yeah so she basically got is like is this your problem or is everyone thinking in the same way was like everyone's thinking in the same way but we just we can't @ so we had to go and like really learn how to read? [pause] which was to- go- I didn't think was important before? but it is. so you you need to like really fasten your eyes you know you need to understand very fast and get used to the words words that were not used to so I had to use dictionary like a lot of the beginning now I already know but um yeah like I I have a a room to improvement@ I need to work more on this that's it yeah

R: so how do you think that your professors are assessing academic success like what are they looking for when they're marking or grading

Fernanda: so they whenever like we have the the this the assessment they put a list what they want and yeah they have points for uhm for language and for how y- you assess the question? and we had problems with this as well we couldn't understand what they were willing to get from that so for instance oh just discuss something like or uh something like that we didn't know what it meant to be like what do y- wan- what do you want for that and they had to explain? in that sense because it’s not that clear sometimes but we are basically dealing with law we deal with directives really deal with Constitution so they want the datas you know [pause] that's what they want and yeah

R: yeah so did you guys feel comfortable going to them and saying hey this is not clear
Fernanda: yeah all the time. [pause] we never had this problem @because they they were very I don't know if it's like that in any college because for instance I did one course uhh in [institution x] uhhh was a jump start for [discipline] and I didn't feel comfortable in there I was there only no me and another girl you're the only ehmm [pause] @immigrants or or you know? so I felt very strang- I felt weird there I like I can't answer like I didn't want to talk I didn't want to ask anything but when you have more [pause] we you identify yourself with people are- s- around you you just feel more comfortable to ask [pause] I think

R: yeah and and the professor's where they are they generally responsive are they generally okay let's you know do this or putting aside time to answer questions

Fernanda: yeah even if they they are not we have one on- one of the see I don't know if she's a- I don't know what she @inside @the @college but like she helps us yeah with @probably @everything @you @know whenever you have a problem you just a message or email @ and even she helps you so yeah @@

R: she's like the person

Fernanda: @ yeah yeah and she's young as well so it’s easier sometimes because we feel it’s really comfortable is like is our age you know?@ it’s like the same world

R: so it's like going to a friend who's already done the course and being like um I don’t really understand this

Fernanda: exactly exactly that yeah yeah

R: all right yeah and so inside of the classroom um what is it like is there a lot of group work is it mainly the professor talking with the PowerPoint like how is the inside of the class structured

Fernanda: okay for th- for the practical activities we just train. All the time. so we don't have PowerPoints or anything like that just let you come with a scenario and in each prepare this and that's it uhhh but for the three subjects th- the we really do like [long pause] they don't need to prepare for that so like we do have like a teacher is explaining material and that's it we can't like we don't have room for like um other activities or like any practical activities yeah so yeah [pause] and mainly [pause] is that he they are in front of it just ex- explaining us yeah

R: and um so in general what would you say that students need to succeed at your institution

Fernanda: [exhale] it’s a very new course so we're trying to figure out together how it works [inhale] ehhmm I think uh be- being [click] aware since the beginning what we're doing there is very important so [inhale] in the fir- like the the first two weeks we have
planning for that and what we did and what we are trying to do is always follow what they were asking for and prepare this so uhm more than just go to the classes is come with these different perspectives is a better [pause] coming with so yeah I I think so and [click] as it is mixed course I think we can always add something sometimes we come with different arguments and that's very important for the college as well? ehh so I f- I find they're looking for [pause] [module] at other [module] maybe specifically [module] in here is very new so we are developing something that [pause] is is is I mean in the UK you have already but like in here is being developed so everyone is helping and looking for like yeah R: okay cool
Fernanda: I don’t know if I answered you or not @
R: no no you did no definitely and so you've kind of already touched on this but um how much of a factor this language play in academic success
Fernanda: yeah huge. @ it is problem @ um I [pause] don't know if we are prepared okay that's it's my from my perspective from my colleagues okay I don't know if ummmm in other colleges if because I I think we we I did Cambridge okay? most of my colleagues they didn't do any other exam they did a [pause] a college exam internal exam? [pause] and we see the difference. [pause] okay and it's not saying that's better is worse I just think that whenever you start cuz Cambridge's is very is about structure. so I had to read a lot so when I came for the first semester and I looked at material I didn't have any problems like in [long pause] I had prob- I had problems understanding but I didn't have problem with like the mat [pause] okay because I was doing this with time [pause] so you get used but like loa- loads of the other students they were not [click] and we can still see it like even we if we if we try you know whenever we have an interview we are failing. we don't know how to express ourselves I don't know if accent is a problem I don't think it is if you [pause] speak okay like if- you understand if you speak if you can work but like I do think that [pause] we like most of us is still feeling [pause] inferior because of language yes
R: okay and so you said that there's quite a difference between like people who have taken Cambridge and IELTS versus people who have taken the college exam
Fernanda: yeah
R: um besides reading what what main differences do you see and also what factors are as a general group are you guys having difficulties with
Fernanda: [inhale] so [pause] it's structuring sentences sentences like very difficult like if you because you have to write when you're doing those exams you kind of learn how to structure sentence yeah you know so even if you @forget because you're not doing any
more you see you know you know what is the subject know what is a verb you understand

the basics of that and whenever you have to write or wherever you have to speak [pause]
you do it more fluently? which doesn't happen when you just do the course the the internal

exam is is uhhm a multiple-choice exam you don't have a writing ehuhh you do have a

writing but it's very small writing and even the interview I think that very basic interview

so you're not assessed in like what really matters for you and you're going to a

masters exam- master's uhm program? [pause] and yeah basically that like listening I didn't

uh like none of us had problems of listening I think but writing and reading and

speaking is [pause] we're always mixing and everything is just messing everything up it

can be chaotic @@@

R: yeah what other factors do you think play in academic success so that could be things

inside of college outside of college uhm] I can give you examples of if you want

Fernanda: yeah please

R: um a lot of people will say things like uh having friends in their course or the way the

lecturer speaks um switching content area other people are saying housing finances etc.

Fernanda: yeah I think being @curious is very important because [click] [pause] um [click]
you need you need to find your way to see a problem okay and if you're always focusing

just one way or if you are always with the same friends that have the same background as

you won't see different and this is really related because [pause] you can't create or

you can't develop anything without thinking outside the box and this is like ridiculous to

say @ because I don't believe in outside the box or anything like that but like I do I do

think that you need to have different backgrounds different people around you and be

interested in what's around you and be in contact with culture and [pause] it plays a huge

role in making what academia like uh means to me at least and yeah I think finance is also

a huge problem and I- I- [pause] because most of the students they are with a small budget

they are like doing much more to get into

the same stage as the others so I think yeah yeah those two I think @I @don't @know

R: okay alright I'm so now I'm gonna go kind of towards I'm courses that you've done

before this course

Fernanda: yeah

R: and also the exam so Cambridge that you've taken um what kind of linguistic

preparation did you take before this course

Fernanda: before the master’s you mean

R: yeah before the master’s yeah
Fernanda: okay so I came here two years ago and I came to do an English course [pause] uhh and I was planning to go to Netherlands so I needed uh I was willing to do the IELTS at the beginning [pause] but I didn't find myself with the preparation for that I couldn't it was not my exam I think every everyone has a different type of mind so the exams need to be different because of they approach you have in your life so I really found myself with Cambridge and I prepared for that and I did so I did two courses for I did two English courses of six months each ehhh in [Country] before I came here I did one to one uh classes as well uhhh w- didn't prepare me but helped somehow? I could start like talking and so on uhm [pause] but I well what I do think helped a lot and it was not a course and what not not an activity and anything like that was talking like was like basically meeting people around [pause] and getting used to the way they were speaking [pause] okay and this is not course @obviously but like it helps a lot and that was the I just felt prepared to do a master's when I could really literally like understand different people from different countries uh native speakers or not and it's like okay so now I can go [pause] okay and it took me one year and a half  

R: okay yeah so it's more about being able to comprehend  

Fernanda: yeah  

R: the things around you and make sense of it and be able to add to it  

Fernanda: exactly but I did different courses as well I mean like I did like @an art course in here I I went like for for seminars I did this jumpstart which was also like from different backgrounds and people talking about completely different things? so I could develop I- I- ideas better you know  

R: yeah yeah and just for the English quickly where the courses exam preparation or were they general English or both  

Fernanda: yes so the first the first one was a general English so I started in intermediate and I went then I finish in advanced them and I went back I did advanced and then I could choose between IELTS and Cambridge  

R: okay  

Fernanda: so yeah I and then I chose Cambridge and I did like for exam preparation I just did like four months I think? [pause] and that was and that was sufficient and then you pass the exam  

Fernanda: yeah I mean I didn't get the @what @I @wanted but that’s fine I like I passed the exam @  

R: right yeah which basically the point of //it so  

Fernanda: no it’s not| @@@@@ [pause] I’m joking
R: for me it would be
Fernanda: no it is
R: but um so did you find the English courses to be helpful for your masters or was it
really just talking to people and doing the other courses like the arts course and the
jumpstart
Fernanda: [inhaled] it was when I arrived I when I [pause] when I arrived I was
afraid of speaking [pause] and uh I learned loads of grammar I started in um you know in
English school yeah yeah so is a good school and you know and that's not one of the best
ones but it is a formal school and they have they really prepare you [long pause] so
my other my friends they were doing like those talking things and cinema or you
know found it stupid and I was like and where is the grammar and ah no one likes
grammar yeah but what is the point you know you need you to learn you need to
understand how the language works because it's the same in your own language you know
so for me it helped like um the general course the general English course
they can be quite boring? I have to say yeah unfortunately much more I I don't think
they are prepared for those students that are coming at the moment we have old students okay we have people coming like I'm 25 but like
my class my classrooms I would have like people from like twenty-seven twenty-eight
thirty thirty-five forty years old they don't want to sit and have like a formal class it
work okay and like even like the activities they don't work people
are like going and pretending they're learning when truly I don't think they are? unless like
the teachers like mine ones they were very proactive so we could discuss what
we wanted and how we wanted to have the- these conducts but obviously I arrived in the
intermediate so I didn't arrive from the very beginning when the classes are basic
and from my point of view in my last course I thought about doing a third course and just
work with Cambridge but I was like I'm bored now because you already speak
and like one of my teachers he said yeah but like when you are at the beginning like yee
we- if you come here and you don't know how to say apple and then you learn how to say
apple is a huge improvement so every single every single day is a huge improvement
however when you're in this level it's just so small that you don't really know and
you can’t notice what you're doing so it's like oh I'm not learning anything when you're
truly and when you truly are you know so I don't know how it could be developed but I
think it needs to okay the wa- way of teaching for those that are coming now
because it's a different type of students not teenagers they yeah
R: yeah so kind of house having more progression for the students it kind of sounds like so
like having a teacher really being able to facilitate the learning even at the higher levels so
they don't feel stuck

Fernanda: yeah yeah I think so um you need to be more dynamic somehow and [pause] need I don't know how because we had this disagreement before with one of my teachers he was like what do you want so you know because if it’s boring what you could do and we start getting um material from we have Cambridge and then you have the preparation for teachers or I don't know the name it’s CP or something I don't know and they start giving us those materials but they were like completely high we couldn't understand any single word but it was perfect because at least we could arrive home was like [gasp] I don't know this and I don't know that you know and we had [pause] uh a practical activity when was a book [pause] ehm they have like small seminars [pause] so it's like it is listening and it's a listening activity so you [pause] you had to learn how to put the ideas in the paper so uh we had like 10 minutes audio we start like with three minutes audio and we finished with 10 minutes audio and then we had to do the same with our colleagues so uhh [pause] you know it is is a type of teaching you are teaching you don't see the professor during front of your time but you are doing the class as well so you have anot- is another type of preparation [pause] I think [pause] yeah [pause] I I @loved @that @

R: that sounds really interesting that’s a good idea and so do you remember your experience with Cambridge taking the test

Fernanda: oh terrible [pause] chaotic was chaotic because was raining? cats and dogs was just @cold like and they called me like [Fernanda] are you in the way and I was like yes because they knew you because was one day before the some some weather thing here in Ireland you know and I thought they were going to cancel the exam but as people could arrive and most of these students are coming by bus together or something like that they were going to take the exam so was I had lots of pressure @ [pause] you know? and uh for this I don't know I was I was quite nervous and [pause] then I start reading and everything I did until that day didn't work me like didn't help me [pause] okay I got I knew the- I knew what they're talking about I couldn't read [pause] I got so nervous because I was expecting that so much got so nervous I couldn't I was like I was looking at the watch I was trying to figure out how am I going to work with those @ and I couldn't. sooo I mean [pause] it was not too bad @ but mmm I did better exams [pause] when I was preparing and stuff yeah so um I don't know and they were lovely [pause] like they were to us like they were just helping very friendly but I don't know what happened
so it was about bad experience I I thought about doing it again but I was just so frustrated I was like I'm not doing now I'm just going to wait @

right I mean fair enough

Fernanda: yeah I just wait a little bit more

yeah and Cambridge lasts a lifetime as well

Fernanda: yes so that's yeah that's a good thing as well yeahh I think so I just I just yeah for it for the the speaking exam I also couldn't I I th-ought I couldn't understand one

question I was like I and I don't know what happened you know and the other guy who was doing with me he didn't understand as well so he started answer- answering I knew he was not doing what they were asking for but instead of speaking and asking if was that or not I just answer in the same way he was doing so yeah didn't work

yeah yeah do you think it was just the pressure of um kind of like a high stake

Fernanda: I believe it I think it is oh it was but I I stop- stopped my preparation one month before my exam [pause] because I had one one exam coming so I went there's like oh the next exam is in two weeks would you like to take this one or would you prefer taking the one and I said I'm taking this one the next one and they said like oh but you know you need some time blah blah blah but I was like yeah so might be better wait yeah he was like yeah I'd say that's better waiting [pause] at this first point I was ready [pause] one month later was not [pause] and I knew I was not so that that's where the the pressure came from [pause] because you know so I if I could choose today I would do all the- like all the preparation until the very end you know have like someone talking to me and correcting me and prepare me

yeah just so it's like fresh in your mind

Fernanda: yeah

right when you go in the exam

Fernanda: it's because I was doing this one month I was preparing myself but I wasn't it's not this was not the same. [pause] I yeah I lost the structure I knew I was losing something @ and then I you know @

and do you think that that preparation has helped you or that the exam has helped you in your studies now

Fernanda: yes definitely [pause] yeah everything like methodology for reading listening how to is spelling everything everything everything because it's just a @massive @work that you need to do [pause] somehow you learn somehow you learn. you see the results

yeah okay fair enough um so what type of preparation do you think international students should do before going into a master's program
Fernanda: [pause] I don't think they should do a general English course or anything like
that I would say that first [pause] if you can choose what you're doing you start reading
about it [pause] okay so it is very important to get used to what people are saying and uh
subjects that might be related to what you're j- studying and then yes like a Cambridge
IELTS or whatever you should do a very good exam preparation [pause] because then
you can apply this [pause] yeah and I think that's the formula at least like for me now I am
thinking about doing another masters [pause] so I am going to I'm looking for an- an
English course a more formal one and more academic one [pause] to help me with that
because I think that's like the most important thing [pause] you need to not you don't need
to know how to speak like in a pub you know you need to speak formally you need to have
structure with what you're saying and have vocab also
R: mm-hmm okay and if you could give advice to faculty and professors in your institution
to better support international students what would that advice be
Fernanda: push them more
R: push them more
Fernanda: yeah
R: in what way
Fernanda: like [pause] say what they're doing wrong okay like umm [pause] I don't know
if this is very bad of me my friends say that's it's not the b- better way [pause] the best way
sorry but I I don't think it is @ I like say that you're doing wrong you know I I need you to
read more I need you to learn more I need you to speak more I mean because [pause] if
the professors don't do this then outside no one is gonna do [pause] and if you think about
like oh they are they are not from here En- English is not their first language that's not
your problem as a professor [pause] should be them's problem I mean [pause] not that not
your problem I mean it is in certain way but like [pause] don't let them know [pause] you
are concerned about this because whenever they know you're concerned they're going to
use it against you like I teached before students always do this @ so they can't know your
weakness you know and somehow you need to be very strict with us in any you would do
it to any other student so just push them more
R: okay and if you could give advice to students who are our future students who are
looking to come to your institution what would that advice be
Fernanda: well [pause] research more @ ehhh I think [pause] yeah research more about
what you're looking for [pause] there's different types of of classmates @I @think and
[pause] I find it very difficult to just have [pause] immigrants in classrooms because they
are seeing the problem from the same point of view [pause] so [pause] try your like if
you're paying for course if you're looking for a course try to put yourself in a real situation where you are not going to have people speaking the same language as you and English is the only option so you need to communicate because I don't think it works I think it's very good that we have colleagues when we like ninety percent of these students are from different countries and I I was in a seminar this week if a guy from Pakistan and who was explaining us how China and Pakistan are having an agreement for transport and it was amazing you know but we also need [pause] to see the problem from your point of view like from Irish people [pause] and we don't have this in my college [pause] so uh I would look more and yeah R: all right I'm if you could give advice to organizations like language schools who are preparing international students what would that advice be Fernanda: they're not going to be prepared @@@ just make them know that they are not going to be prepared like and that's not like a huge problem as well [pause] okay because they are going to learn [pause] somehow because oh no yeah yeah you're speaking you are going to learn [pause] yes you are [pause] that's not what matters at the end [pause] okay you're going to learn don't freak [pause] I would say that that's the main thing because English schools that don't say that they because we need to celebrate every single improvement [pause] and I understand and I apprec I like it is real like every single word you learn and you know how to say it's just so good sometimes I'm with my boyfriend he say something like what is that again and it's like I just sad this to you just I he was like I forgot could you start again it's just so good and I don't mind anymore so whenever you understand that you are not going to be prepared [pause] and it's not a big thing just move on [pause] you will learn R: right okay so are you aware of any support the international students receive from your college like different types of supports like counseling language Student Union's etc. Fernanda: yeah we do have because an English school as well so they have a training for teachers in the afternoon [pause] so you could have classes for free while are they are training teachers and you have [pause] classes with the teachers are going to be teaching at schools that's just brilliant because they have a very good body of teachers uh for an English ehh school anyway but like I don't know [pause] any other activity I mean we have [name] and she's always in there we can always talk to her we have [pause] uhh one of the most he's a director as well I don't know I’m terrible with this but [name] is another one he is very supportive and much more an academic uh if you have an academic problem [name] is the one you go to find him because he has an expertise in education so we do have this I am trying to figure out how it's going to work I would answer your uh question
maybe better next year [pause] because what happens is we were supposed to take a master
that's one academic year so with no break for summertime but we didn't understand this
when we bought the course had a huge argument and then uhh we had a break so now we
are going into May next year so now I’m I was supposed to be doing like just my
dissertation and working it out instead of having subjects [pause] and because of the break
we didn't and now we are find quite difficult to have support for the research for instance I
had a proposal and I thought I thought grand I love what I'm looking and I just kept uh
reading and preparing material for that support me when I never had like um to do it
however one of my uhh lecturers just said to me Oh [Fernanda] just forget what you do is
not going to be a accepted for your course and I was like yeah but I started doing this like
in February like and I present this in May and now it's the same but like almost December
so I am reading since [pause] and I just love this and it's like yeah but that's not going to
work because of a year so it's better for me to say this now then you get at orientation next
year and uhh then say oh you can't [pause] you know so I don't know if we are going to
have this [pause] support until now we didn't have so yeah

R: okay

Fernanda: okay so we're looking for like I don't know about the dissertation like how it's
gonna be okay

R: alright so that's still a bit unclear

Fernanda: oh yeah

R: and yeah and so you’ve been saying that the course is quite new so it just kind of seems
like you and the professors are trying to figure out how it's gonna work what needs to be
//done

Fernanda: exactly]

R: timelines level of support etc.

Fernanda: yeah we are like the @trouble @ like uh we are the @trouble in the college @
like they have first first semester and for first group and they were uhh [pause] better than
us like because they didn't argue that much@ however we caused all the @troubles the
@college could@ yeah because we didn't understand and one of the they head director he
came to us one day and he said it was a misunderstanding I am uhh the academic
representative I was like well I'm sorry but you need to make clear that there is no
misunderstanding because [pause] it's easy for us to not understand what you’re saying it's
very easy. so you'll need to make clear absolutely clear you know no #underlines that we
know what is an academic year what it means how it goes how it doesn't go [pause] so
yeah so you know like [pause] because it was clear for them
R: mm-hmm but not for you guys

Fernanda: not for us [pause] so it's a it's a @communication @problem yeah you know

R: but not necessarily from your side

Fernanda: yes I think both sides were wrong to be honest like we could have been more um

to what they were saying and they could be more patient explain hm what was said

as well? [pause] which didn't happen so now [pause] now we have other problems you

know because now we have problems with immigration because they can accept or not

they need to provide a letter QQI need to accept the course this is going to be validate

again next year so you know one problem just cause so many other problems that you need

to deal with so was just so easy to say well let's just make what we are saying that this is an

academic year you understand what means

R: mm-hmm yeah

Fernanda: you know?

R: yeah yeah

Fernanda: communication @@

R: um would you say that because it's interesting that you mentioned well obviously the

//GNIB

Fernanda: yeah]

R: every international student knows about them but it's quite interesting that you you

mentioned the //QQI

Fernanda: yeah]

R: would you say that most international students would know about the QQI and the role

that they play in validation

Fernanda: no

R: no

Fernanda: no not at all I think we just [pause] learned about because we had this problem

R: okay

Fernanda: so um [pause] now that we are having problems with GNIB and everything we

like I had a meeting and I was like okay those are the problems we have [pause] because I

really don’t want to have any miscommunication anymore so yes we have a course that's

going to be provided >that's why you need to do that's what we need to present how can I

work with that are you going to have a meeting with them okay so just< [pause] tell us

what is happening because they don't understand the power they have and [pause] you

know yeah they don't they’re not interested at all no they don’t @@@ yeah so that’s it I

think
R: um so that's actually the questions that I have for you but um are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Fernanda: hmm [long pause] I think I know it is very subjective but like [pause] I don't know I don't know if you ask- I think you I don't know if I answered it anyway like how do you feel when you have to [pause] approach in ex- exam but like in daily activity with the preparation you had [pause] that would >I think I answered anyway< because I talk a lot @@@

R: I mean go ahead and answer it again just to yeah make sure that you have everything else and it's good for data as well

Fernanda: okay yeah because [pause] the first thought when I came here was like okay I need to learning English I need to develop my English [pause] but whenever you start studying and it is a general course you learn that is a way of thinking instead of just a way of communicating [pause] and because of this you start thinking a different way from your own language so if- I always say the same like how about the future you know the structure of future you have we have five futures [pause] you know? so for us future is something that is gonna happen, you know? yeah not necessarily in English [pause] so we what when we come when first comes like first cro- when I first came here was like okay I'm just going to develop English do an English exam then I'm going to do a master and that's gonna be like perfect [pause] and it's not. [pause] and it's just so amazing what we can do with language because of those preparations we are doing here that I wish I knew this before and I wish I don't know if everybody can understand this but it's so important [pause] for a country like Ireland who is receiving so many people to make people understand the power it has [pause] whenever we understand that's not just about communication [pause] it changed the way you think you think the way you see it change change colors you know change everything [pause] so I felt somehow I still feeling like amazed with the fact that I can [pause] express myself sometimes better? in English in some subjects um I'm better expressing myself in English I don't know how to say things in [language] if you ask me something very formal I don't [pause] you know? and [pause] I feel proud somehow [pause] because of them because of the teachers you had because of the Masters Masters develop they've developed me so much subjects like they were amazing I learned how to negotiate in English I don't know how to negotiate [language] [pause] you know? so [pause] is it a continuous learning. process. and that’s it

R: and is there anything else you’d like to express

Fernanda: Eh I don't no I'm okay @
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Jane

Jane: um do you mean terms like writing speaking or //I m-
Jane: just in general]
Jane: in general @ um I don't know I guess um I'm pretty organized I usually I never had
Jane: in uh uh a- an essay an assignment late so [pause] organization for sure and then um I
Jane: always do my work a hundred percent so I will always try to give my best and work as
Jane: hard as I can so um @I @don't know if that's what you wanted to hear @
Jane: yeah yeah definitely
Jane: @okay
Jane: and um and then in terms of English what would you say your strengths are
Jane: partly the fact that um first of all my school started English pretty early so I'm
Jane: from [Country] so um my school started school um when I was around seven years? seven
Jane: years old? and then they also I also had the help of my parents who lived the US before so
Jane: they were the ones who taught me how to properly speak English and really pushed me
Jane: forward to learn and write and everything about English
Jane: okay and what would you say your weaknesses academically are so in general first
Jane: uh in general umm [long pause] I even if I'm organized I do tend to do kind of last
Jane: minute-ish in my work so like I would do it like the week before the deadline or something
Jane: [pause] and um [long pause] in general [long pause] um I think that's probably my biggest
Jane: weakness actually
Jane: okay then in terms of English what would you say your weakness would be
Jane: I actually don't know any grammar rules so I just go with the flow and what
Jane: works and that was always my lowest grades in English because I don't know how do you
Jane: actually do @grammar @
Jane: okay yeah I probably coming from learning it from //your parents
Jane: yeah yeah| I learned how to speak in not really huh I mean it had to write it of course
Jane: but like more like just go with the flow that's it @
Jane: and so when did you first start learning English
Jane: um partly in school so when I was seven uh probably the first uhh >I mean< oh
Jane: actually I did it a little bit before I think? because my mom was having like English classes
Jane: at our house with my uh sister so that I have an older sister so her and her classmates were
Jane: doing English classes with my mom uh with my mom so I was kind of hanging around
when they were doing that I don't think I was like really participating but I was probably learning like a couple of things around

R: yeah you were like getting //exposure

Jane: yeah yeah| getting exposure to it

R: okay so how would you evaluate your current academic success at [institution 1] like do you think you're doing well or not

Jane: um yeah I'm doing pretty well like a- um I think uh for uh so I'm in the master’s degree at [institution 1] for eh [discipline] and so the first semester I got a 68? I believe?

over last year I was an Erasmus student [institution 1] and I was um for one year and

I also got like two point one so I think it's [pause] pretty good @compared @to @what I've @seen @around @like @around @[institution 1] so

R: okay um and so you're doing a masters now are you working on a dissertation

Jane: uh we just basically started like we had to hand out a proposal? research proposal two weeks ago so that's the it's ongoing @

Jane: ummm a lot of readings? um usually around three four readings per week per- per module per week and it's around like thirty forty pages long and then usually you have a group work and then a individual assignment and then the final exam

R: okay um and so you're doing a masters now are you working on a dissertation

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R: okay um and so you're doing a masters now are you working on a dissertation

Jane: uh we just basically started like we had to hand out a proposal? research proposal two weeks ago so that's the it's ongoing @

Jane: um and what kind of work do you think you'll have to do for that

Jane: um [pause] we are already have to do a lot of research about the literature uh around subjects and um we also had to prepare um methodology um what was it as well uh philosophy? around the dissertation as well so um afterwards what it will entail would be a lot more literature review and then also eh quantitative and qualitative studies and the whole writing @the @dissertation @ @just @have @to @do @it @yeah have to do it at some point

R: @ um and so can you tell me about the skills required for your modules so

Jane: um for our modules in general?

Jane: yeah

Jane: um okay so probably um a lot of um English level skills because like I know for other international students it's been a little it’s been harder to because they just don't have the Eng- Eng- level for the English so like they don't understand classes so [pause]

probably a good English level ehm writing skills as well because we do write a lot of assignments um and a bit of presentation skills like when you have to do oral presentations
so you have to know how to present and be clear and organized as well and um [pause]
probably th- yeah it's a lot about writing actually a lot about writing and reading
R: okay and what about as a research student so what general skills do you need for that
Jane: um a lot more organization because since it's spread over a five uh on five? month I
believe or something? so you do have to be a lot more organized um they do insist on
being critical so like um trying to really think about where you're reading the literature and
what you're thinking you know in reality? And try to get to reanalyze and re-think about
what you're seeing and what it actually means and being critical yeah
R: okay so can you tell me the general structure of your lectures so when you're in the
classroom what happens
Jane: okay so we usually starts with um [pause] with talking about the general subjects of
what we're going to talk about and then we going through kinda like all the readings that
we had to do today so what they were talking about and how it relates to theory and reality
and we usually end up with like a case study or discussion um around the subject of the
day
R: okay so is it more discussion based or is it more like the the professor giving a lecture
Jane: it kind of depends on the classes like the classes that I had last semester were a lot
more about just listen to the teacher and that's it for us the classes that I have this semester
are a lot more about discussion and um yeah yeah critical thinking etcetera
R: okay right and um you've described the form of assessment but how do your professors
assess academic success so when they're grading what do you think they're looking for
Jane: um [pause] probably the first thing would be uh clear thinking so like make sure that
everything that you explained where there is you know what the the literature would agree
on or a disagree on uh as long as you make sense and you arguments that's the basis of
everything and then um they do mention with the bibliography that has to be really
structured and respect everything umm correct English of course and I think what they say
is that they give a higher mark when they see that you were critical that you were thinking
about what you were writing and not just doing like a pre- basic presentation on it
R: okay and how do your professors communicate those expectations
Jane: [pause] hmm usually through the assignment guidelines so most of the assignments
we have a short PDF saying well that's what I'm expecting the number of words etc. etc.
and they do generally mention well here's why I'm here's what I'm expecting and how you
can get a good grade basically
R: okay and do you feel that those guidelines are helpful are they clear
Jane: yeah yeah usually it's really helpful it really helps in terms of like the structure of the assignments like how do I go around to and so the main correction basically um yeah and it's you should be very clear very straightforward and there's no usually need to ask for more precision it can happen like once a while but it's mostly like on a person-to-person basis not like a whole group

R: mm-hmm okay and so in general what do you feel students need to succeed at

[institution 1]

Jane: um definitely good reading skills @ because we do read a lot @ ehh and organization would probably be the first one because since you have so many readings and you need to prepare so much an advance for class you have to do it you know you have to you know deal with your time eh if not you're just gonna get caught up in uh all the work that you have to do

R: okay and how much of a factor do you feel that language plays in academic success

Jane: a huge a huge part of the economic success because as I've said um I have seen people struggle in my class because we're a very international class so we have people coming from Asia or India or wherever and I know for the especially for the Chinese people< that I've seen that they struggle a lot with understanding the teacher or understanding the guidelines the vocabulary that we use because they simply don't have the use of English back in their countries so yeah they do struggle a lot at the beginning

R: and do you feel or have you seen so you said they struggle a lot at the beginning do you feel that with time they've they're struggling less or /is it

Jane: yeah yeah yeah|| definitely throughout the semester you see them improve a lot like one of my friends she could barely hold the convers- not really uh hold a conversation but like she had to you know look up on the internet for a lot of translation for words and nowadays she can just have a normal conversation she doesn't have to look up for a lot of things and she some of them you can see in the way they write? so like in group assignments you can see that they improve the way they write and have a structure at the whole document because we also have the issue of um very different academic approach when it comes to writing assignments from country to country so some countries are not used to having to reference in the text and so it's a lot of learning process of how do you actually quote and reference in an assignment

R: okay so I'd be interested since you're doing a lot of group work with a lot of international people how do you guys go about finding common ground when it comes to writing one piece of text with a lot of different backgrounds
Jane: um it usually goes we assign different section of the assignments to different
persons like one person's in charge of this and this and this and then um one person is in
charge of editing the whole document at the end so that we can see that it runs smoothly
and that we don't have you know one way of writing in one way in a different way so I like
trying to make everything coherent I guess that's how it works
R: okay um all right and what other factors would you say plays into academic success so
this could be other academic factors it could be personal factors etc.
Jane: umm [pause] probably if you have other uh responsibilities outside of school so I
know that some people do work or have families in my uh master's degree so some people
have a lo- I guess less time outside of school to deal with all the work that we have to do
so when they do have to take care of everything else it's making a little bit harder for us to
organize if we have to do group works but one person is not available for the next two
weeks or something so that's usually what can #impact #the #work
R: um so before you came to [institution 1] did you take any specific linguistic or academic
preparation to prepare you for [institution 1]
Jane: no
R: okay and did you have to take an entry assessment so something like IELTS or TOEFL
Jane: uh I did take the TOEFL when I was in my second year of undergrad and I took the
IELTS eh as well after because I wanted to apply for English university so they want- they
didn't want the TOEFL anymore so we had to do the IELTS
R: okay um and so how do you feel about these entry assessments
Jane: um I felt like they are kinda complete like they do assess the four different categories
of technically any language so like speaking writing um reading and what is the last one?
R: writing //reading
Jane: listening]
R: yeah
Jane: yeah and so I feel like we do um kind of reflect better than all the tests that I've seen
around your level of English like for example in Spanish I had to do the test called the
blots? I think it's also for German or something and that has only had like listening and
reading eh comp- comprehension so no- nothing about speaking or writing and I thought
that was no way close to the level of Spanish that I had
R: okay and do you feel that those tests have accurately predicted how you have done in
[institution 1]
Jane: um [pause] I don't know if it's related to how well I've done and to be honest like I've
seen some people who had like a pretty high scores and um I'm I'm not sure if they had like
so many high grades and you know in exchange because like you can be really good at English when you take the test but it doesn't mean that you're gonna be really uh you know strict about your work in university so I think some people to- take the test go to university abroad but they use the exchange period as a time for holidays so they don't you know really care about the work at the [pause] universities so to me it's not really linked

R: okay um so what type of preparation do you feel that international students should take before coming to Trinity if they should take anything

Jane: definitely I would say have maybe done um classes in English before so that’s something that I know really helped is that my undergrad was in English so every classes that I took was in English and that means that when I got here I didn't have to struggle with the fact that I had to listen to you know courses in English for a long period of time or read for in English for a long period of time like I was already used to it and all of the vocabulary and all the writing done it was in English so it wasn't I wasn't you know still struggling trying to translate my thoughts from [language] to English I was already into the process

R: okay so having like content classes //in English

Jane: yeah]

R: before they //come

Jane: yeah yeah yeah| before coming

R: okay um so if you could give advice to faculty and professors in how to support and interact with international students what would that be

Jane: um in terms of English? or academic?

R: both

Jane: both?

R: yeah

Jane: so like in terms of English I feel like the some do try to say well try to go out with the people around in your class or like try to engage uh in societies for example um maybe it's only like the main professor that will try to talk about this not all the professors but they do try to say well if you engage with English-speaking students you will get better and better in terms of academic wise I would say they do uh but what I've seen is that they don't talk about the differences of the academic process between English-speaking countries and foreign countries so like we didn't have a class of uh how to reference how to quote how to anything that's something that I had in the previous exchange outside of [institution 1] like they had a Center where a any international students could go and say I just want to learn because I don't want to be accused of plagiarism and I know it exists in [institution 1] like
you can take a class uh but it's not something that the teachers talk about it's just about like
email that we received from the students skills um uh I don't remember the full name uh
it's not something that the teachers really do talk about like they just say oh well you can
go to uh the library website where they explain everything but they don't talk about the
workshop and actually making maybe maybe making it mandatory for international
students to do it
R: okay and if you could give advice to organizations so schools including language
schools and universities that are preparing international students to study at [institution 1]
what would that be
[long pause] um [pause] I don't really know because I've never used any
collaboration classes so I don't know what they really do umm maybe you could tell me
what they do
prepare which is probably the more common one where they prepare students to take
the standardized exams to get the correct score to get into University and then we have
English for academic purposes which would be usually summer programs which are
between like four to eight weeks and there they do also focusing on exam prep but also
things like how to write a longer essay etc.
Jane: okay I- I know in my undergrad they had um classes for progression for the
TOEFL or the uh IELTS um I personally never took this kind of classes but I know
from my friends who took it that they all said that it was kind of useless because it was
basically just very basic exercises and that they felt like it wasn't um hard enough or
like true enough to the reality that wasn't really prepare- um I mean it's kind of like
saying < well I prepare for a test it's great but it doesn't really relate to the reality of actually
it's- of being in English speaking schools [pause] so it's kind of like the disconnect between
the two so maybe if you try to I think it has to be a lot more about practicing so what you
were saying like doing long essays or presentation in English that would probably help a
lot more than just doing exercises like tick the box or the correct answer or something
R: okay and if you could give advice to future international students what would that be
Jane: um [long pause] probably make sure that you have the [pause] English level to go
abroad or [pause] I mean you do learn a lot when you once you're here so I know that it's
easy to say learn a lot about English when you're in a foreign country when people
don't speak English it's very hard um probably try to do >one thing that really helped me
with English< was reading books in English or watching TV shows in English with first
subtitles or without subtitles afterwards try to really get into hearing English all the time
and reading English all the time and try to write a little bit of in English if you can
probably will help

R: okay all right and um are you aware of any support the international students receive
from your department or from the wider College

Jane: umm [pause] I think I'm not really sure I think the Chinese students uh um I'm not
sure if it's just the Chinese or the others but I've heard about it from the Chinese students
that they did have English classes? I think at the beginning of this semester? also because
we learned that some of them didn't took the TOEFL or didn't have a TOEFL score uh high
enough to technically enter the master’s degree but they were you know accepted in the
Master's under the condition that they will take that they will take the TOEFL again in in
December so they had to have English classes in between [institution] classes

R: okay I know I know that you're just hearing it from other people but um did they feel
that support was adequate

Jane: [long pause] I didn't really get any feedback some English classes what would I
would say is that I did see that they improved a lot so I don't know if it's from interacting in
classes or outside of classes or if it's from the English classes in particular uh I do see that
they all improved a lot so maybe it's related

R: okay right um so that is actually all of the questions that I have for you but are there any
questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't

Jane: [long pause] no @ no I don't think so @

R: do you have anything that you'd like to add

Jane: yeah kind of like what was the the bigger aim? of this interview? like I am really
curious about it

R: um so basically what's the bigger aim of the interview is um so this Center runs the
English for academic purposes program at [institution] and so we have two different
programs we have a in-sessional program where two hours a week students can come and
take academic English classes and we have a summer program where it's for eight weeks
and students come and we prepare them for entering [institution] so my PhD is
redesigning that curriculum and and then also tracking the students to see how well that
curriculum works so my first step is talking to as many international students as possible to
see what's actually needed and then the curriculum is going to be designed based on that so
all of these interviews are basically seeing what the reality is from the students perspective
and what's actually important to learn and then I'll also be talking with faculty and seeing
what professors think needs to be taught and you know comparing again

Jane: okay that was very interesting @ thank you
R: okay so first I'm do you go here at [institution 1] or a different University
Jasmine: no here
R: here okay alright cool um so what would your strengths be academically what what like
what you're good at
Jasmine: yeah now I'm doing a research in the [discipline] and this means in um few words
basically and looking for the [topic] and the what's going on in the on the coast of Ireland I
mean the research is in Ireland so in the west coast okay
R: okay so what are you good at like what what makes you a good student basically
Jasmine: that's PhD I don't know well [long pause] it's complicated question @ @ @ I don't
know if I'm good student and I I mean I try to do my best and uh I think especially for a
PhD there are several tasks that you has to cover and it's really dependent on the topic of
your PhD I think is really specific it cannot be really generalized because what I notice
speaking with other student is this we have pretty different tasks for instance in my PhD I
need to be in the lab I need to be in the uh- I mean do like paper research theoretical
research and then practical research and in my case I think I feel that it's really complicated
to be a good student because you have to be sufficient in all the area and you have to
manage the time to do everything and if you have some lack like you’re in lab or in
methods of studying or in the field it's also so complicated for the supervisors to really
supervise you because it's not there [pause] I mean it can be useful in the theory but not in
the products not in a the lab not in so there are several things that so just with time I'm still
don't feel that I'm good at in time maybe I will improve and I'm trying to cover the my
lacks I think the area that I think I still have to something more
R: ok and what would you consider those areas that you do need to do something more
Jasmine: [click] well what I mean
R: yeah like what I'm basically like what difficulties do you have or what weaknesses do
you have
Jasmine: the difficulty that I have is uhhm umm that I think that is compared to the matter
that I because of course each each of us coming from different countries we have kind of
preparation and I think in my country that the the students are a little bit more follow and
what I understood for instance from [institution 1] I don't know if it’s said general thing<
is from [institution 1] or is a general things of Ireland that the students are a little bit give it
more free and this positive for some aspect but is negative when especially when the
R: and so in terms of English what would you say that you're good at in English
Jasmine: well this is another @@ I am thinking @ maybe in this speaking and in the understanding I arrived to the level that is yes quite good but in the writing especially is very complicated uhm because the writing I mean especially for Latin language so we are trying to keep the sentence really long I just did my confirmation and first of all the supervisor is Portuguese so he was looking my writing and say yeah I understand what you mean just because I'm Portuguese I have the same kind of [pause] thinking so but then if you try to think in with an English mind and try to see what you mean and it's exactly it write doesn't make an in English doesn't make any sense it does so but I don't know it maybe you know for sure you know there is a course that there would be in the next semester for international students and and academic English I don't know if it will be you will be involved
R: yeah
Jasmine: uh I decided to participate because and especially now I’m in the second year of PhD so yeah I I should start writing some paper I have enough data to do something so but then writing a paper is high high standards this so
R: yeah and so you're gonna take the course
Jasmine: yeah I will try it yeah
R: um so all right so you kind of covered a little bit about um as a research student what you are required to do have you taken any modules or any lectures here
Jasmine: ummmmm I did statistics last year but then I did that complete the exam because I was so busy with the field work and then I got time to to do the exam and in [institution 1] they are quite strict oh you do the exam exactly w-w-when they say otherwise you lost it >I didn't I didn't< know it okay I say ok I’ll do it September and they say no you can’t that's fine I mean anyway it was useful because I learned something I mean I don't really need statistic like I mean in my in I don't know if and for the other PhD is different but for mine I don't need uhm other credits from courses so if I want to do them then I'm free
R: ok but otherwise but it's not a requirement
Jasmine: no
R: okay alright and um so in that module that you did take what was the class like was it mainly the professor giving a lecture was there any practical component
Jasmine: yeah both yeah it was uhm uhm long course it was not a course actually it was not a module but three module that was like um it's the one of this called certificate yeah yeah and so in the first module it was like general theory and then the second and the third module it was also practice so so we did both theory exercise and lab lab work with ehm lab of statistics
R: hmm okay all right these um so what would you say that your supervisor expects of you how would he assess academic success or she
Jasmine: hmmm [long pause] well he expect that I'm showing some results at some point and I keep going with the research and doing [sigh] now he's quite happy about @@ the way I'm I’m proceeding umm [long pause] what do you want to know exactly
R: just like um well that's a good good as well uh like when you give him a chapter yeah
what is he looking for how does he know if it's a good chapter
Jasmine: hm [long pause] well it's quite it's good to to he reviewed everything in an accurate way and it- first of all because I'm international I notice that is looking for English and [long pause] English and then the contents I mean the first things is the English and the second things is the is the content and actually I'm glad that I'm internationally in this point of view because he has to be so focused on language he more focus on content I say this because when he corrects something from someone who is Irish he overlooked a little bit too much and then I notice that Irish people then they have more issues in the content just an observation I don't know if it's true or not but I think because he's so worried about the theory he notice better so I think is R: it's kind of an advantage in some way @
Jasmine: yeah @@
R: okay I mean I can see that um so how does your supervisor how does he communicate his expectations to you so how would you know //what
Jasmine: @@ I don't know| @@ this man @ this man is really complicated @@ I mean I have to try to guess because he is really fog if he say that is a learning process and I yet to arrive to the right conclusion by myself but the point is sometimes I'm asking for advice and after a while I learned that his answer I don't have to take his answer as true but maybe the answer is a joke and he want to me something different [sigh] so yeah it is not easy because sometimes [pause] yeah it's not clear at all in everything also small things also maybe I tell him oh I did this because I thought that you think oh no no I never do
whatever you want I don't have you don't have to do in this way but you show me that you prefer in this way no it's the way you think that I'm prefer I mean it is not clear but I think is that maybe the personal behavior on him that is not clear yeah so knowing the expectation that he has @

R: okay you just have to guess
Jasmine: try to get and try to to do that them if it’s wrong is wrong @@
R: okay so in general what do students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]
Jasmine: uhm [pause] well from my small experience until now until the confirmation I think the requirements are quite high and you have to show that you really know what you are doing and you have to convince people [long pause] but not convincing people just with a words because there are people that are just going around and try to be really secure and really proud of themselves but is not enough and I really appreciate it because this means sometimes I compare myself I say okay my English is not so good so when I'm also women talking about my research I cannot be great as an Irish because I think in [country] I have to present some topic in [language] of course I can use the best words and be really how to say like [long pause] pompous I don’t know if you should show something they're really great in the best way using the best world because my vocabulary in English is not at that level I always think of an Irish person is better so they can convince the professor better but then what I appreciate that it's not like that because especially in science they want to know if you understand what you are doing maybe if you know your research if you're aware about the method about the field or whatever and so I think this expectation high so it was really difficult in terms of um [pause] yeah convince them that my research is good but not in terms of language
R: right okay and um so speaking of language how much of a factor does language play in academic success
Jasmine: [sigh] I think that's quite important uhm [long pause] well first of all in an understanding of the paper sometimes especially with complicated paper with topic that you are not really in um then the English is another obstacle of course also also if you know the language but the man keeps tired I remember when I started I was really tired all day and headaches and hearing especially Irish that is not @@ really clear @@ so it's really um you have to become much more concentrated than normal because it's not something a language that is your mother that you just acquired without also if you're looking outside of the window and look at the stars and then in the meantime you acquire the information but in English in a really really clear English more or less I acquired information but in especially with Irish people miss [pause] so yes so the language is [long
R: okay and so what other factors would you say influences academic success
Jasmine: [long pause] hmm [pause] well hm I can give an example for instance eh being in
building I had a an issues at the beginning because uh I mean at the beginning until few
months ago @@ because I was in a Anatomy building I don't know if you know where it is
and it's really empty yes there is no one inside it's like ghost building so for an intern-
especially for an international person that is coming here Dublin is just enough complicate
it's so sad it's really really sad and then you see oh some people say oh but you are alone
so you will be concentrated no I mean it's worse @@ I've been depressed @ it's different
because you don't know no one and then is really complic- is there are two factor the fact
that is you are PhD student you're busy and then the other fact that this a city you're living
in a city and the city they are more complicated I mean I’m coming from [city] so I know
when you are in a small city is easier to get friends or know someone ok maybe tomorrow
we can have a coffee again but then in a city you know someone from another department
then it that person is busy there is no chance to meet that person again so I complain for
this and now I'm in another department so with people around so I think that make friends
rather be around other PhD student share your new works and issues is important too
having the lab that are working or suitable instrument to analyze your data what I didn't
have it at the beginning so I mean
R: okay that's my next question is gonna say okay do you have that here so
Jasmine: uhm no it was yeah this is another difference that I noticed from this one is from
Ireland to [country] for instance because I know [country] so well in [country] a professor
apply for project if he knows the project and if he has the instrument to do the project in
Ireland the professor apply for project because they get money @ they don't care about
what's going on later on it's not his their problem is the problem of the PhD
R: okay so it's kind of like alright bring on the PhD there you go figure it out
Jasmine: yeah and in some case uh uh it's nothing don’t w- don't work doesn't work in this
way because now I I find a way to analyze half of my parameters then the professor I mean
it's not bad I mean he try to figure out what to do and now we have an agreement with
French so I will get other data from there but the point is if you're not if the supervisor is
not completely aware about something when you apply then also if you sort in terms of
logistic then you don't sort up in terms of money because then you have to be some aware about money because you applied for project you can ask for more money and you didn't so it's just because it's not because there were not money because there are some big like organizations and research councils they have a lot of money if you have a good project you won the project probably if you ask for five thousand euro more no one complain it you know it just because you didn't because you were not aware but the prob- of course them you cannot tell this to the professor because they say oh what you say I mean of course it's confident @ @ @

R: yeah yeah
Jasmine: @@ of course of course you don't know who he is @ but I mean I didn't notice this issues only with my prof- I mean sometimes it's also the opposite they ask you for uhm a large amount of money and they then for the specific project they didn't need it uh it's just a way to work here
R: okay alright I'm so going kind of to talk about any entry tools that you had to take so standardized exams English classes etc. did you take any linguistic preparation before coming to [institution 1] like English courses IELTS preparation
Jasmine: I did uhm I went in [England] for six months during the master’s degree for an Erasmus placement and there I took the that was IELTS
R: okay yeah did you take a course for that or did you just take the exam
Jasmine: I take the course but I I not I don't like the English course
R: okay why not
Jasmine: ehmm I always find that that are not useful for my case because uhm just once I did a good training English course it was in [city] in England and I enjoyed the method of this professor because we were a class with different people and he tried to understand the level of each person try to create group with the same level and um make conversation between us and it was a good method to improve especially at the beginning then most of the course are the class are too mix it with two different level and if the level of the others is too low you don't under- you don't improve and if it's too high you don't understand so yeah so I often had this issue also then IELTS exercise I noticed that is not really that you can do it in in the class is more practice yourself because there is something I mean an understanding writing >maybe it was useful for the writing< because then I I wrote several sheet and then I sent to the professor that correct and is good had a proper correction because if I did the same with colleagues also English speakers but maybe they don't care and just yeah yeah it's fine but it's not fine because then the IELTS requirements are not really easy to
R: right and what kinds of what do you think about IELTS do you remember your experience taking it any feelings around it

R: mmm-hmm I did the is for academic because there are two so I did that one because I was looking for PhD uhm [long pause] well I think it was not easy @@ because I mean [exhale] well maybe it's what the exam has to do because it's uh for academics so it's supposed [pause] to be like I mean if some writing it were really we are like talking about [discipline-specific exam topic] in in the if you don't know I mean you should invent something and show that you have capacity but maybe someone knows the English but doesn't have the capacity so it's a bit weird and also then the speaking it was not in academic so it was also really weird because it was more normal that if you ask me a question like what do you think about climate change what do you think about uh I don't know TV- what TV news something like that but if you tell me what do you think about a person that is cycling between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. in the the garden in Phoenix park, why what what< I mean there's some question see when when you are difficult to an answer it's not because you don't know English is because the question is so weird the you like say what so what why are you asking me that so many people have this I noticed that they have this issues and also my oral I mean at the end I pass it but I received weird questions@@@

R: it's not necessarily that you didn't have the English it was just the question was so bizarre that you just didn't have the ideas

Jasmine: yeah sometimes it’s just like whoa@

R: right do you think that IELTS prepared you for study at [institution 1]

Jasmine: [shakes head] no @@

R: okay why not

Jasmine: well it's so practical way practical things that I mean as long as the the way how I did it is it was not the exam that prepared me to study here it was more maybe because I did the master in English it was a kind of base it was a of course in [country] so the requirement of English it was less but it was an exercise so it's not a small exam that prepare you it's a long long path I mean after 2 years that you're reading in English you cannot start a PhD in another language if you don't have a long hmmm what I know this also from I don't know if you ever spoke with Chinese people sometimes they got the IELTS but then maybe they just starting write- reading and writing in English and the communication is really low that just create group and stay by themselves and they are still doing PhD so I don't I think they can I don't know but I suppose they can be in difficulty with [pause] especially because they don't interact a lot with other English-speaking
R: mm-hmm yeah and so you said that you did your masters in English and that was in [country] so it was an English medium university or program

Jasmine: yes it was just a program in English

R: right and so what type of preparation do you think international students should take before coming to [institution 1] like what should they do to prepare

Jasmine: hmmm [cough] [long pause] first oh well this is really really personal uhm I think that is not enough for being a bachelor because that is not bachelor you call like four years but you don't have master and for some PhD is a bit complicated because you don't have any specialization and then the PhD maybe is really focused on one area and so I advise to a master to to do a PhD before especially if it's really specific at least you during the master you improve in working by yourself without with less supervision and just supervise two students from the two undergraduate and [pause] it's weird I really feel that they are like babies they are still so young and also the age is important so start a PhD when you are so young is not positive I mean I think the right age is between 25 26 27 I mean until 30 but not too young also because it has to be it's not only about the the knowledge so but this one's about how much you are mature and if you're coming from a different country you should be autonomous and yes be aware that to live alone there are several things [pause] I mean car I mean driving yes @@@ it’s important

R: well especially if you’re doing lab work on the west coast

Jasmine: yeah it’s important yes yeah sometimes professors yeah yeah if you have it is better and if you don't have it it's fine yeah but what is means that then someone asks us to take this responsibility for you if you don't have it so it’s better yeah I think that the good things in [institution 1] has to be be responsible on whole point of view

R: okay right so self-responsibility

Jasmine: @@ yes @@

R: okay um so if you could give advice to professor's to better support international students what would that advice be

Jasmine: [long pause] hmm [long pause] well creating uh um [sigh] rules and uhm of the department and of the [institution 1] because if we are not coming from [institution 1] we don't know [pause] many things so we should have an introduction from the supervisor or from someone to the department how is working [institution 1] everything even from the registration process to the payments to the ehm expenses and the other big issues I don't know what I notice that we discover everything by ourselves and we have so many issues [pause] and sometimes yeah I have on a colleague that she did everything in [institution 1] she knows more so this means that if you have experience in [institution 1]
before you know better the system but if you are coming from another university we
should have an introduction at least about general things the most important this is yeah
this would be helpful @@
R: yeah and so you mentioned um well finances and other issues can you kind of expand
on that like what are the other issues and how is it impacting the PhD
Jasmine: yeah yeah my huge issues is the expenses uhm [pause] because we have really
big expenses for each field work and the system will assist the to say the people that are
working yeah and the assist they don't are not really helpful they have specific time they
want to be okay I'm available just on Monday from 2:00 to 3:00 so it's not really easy to
deal with these people so the only the solution that basically most of us 90% of us are
doing is doing the payment by ourself using our debit credit card and then claiming back
the money uhhhh the issues is especially scientific subject we have really huge expenses
sometimes like thousand and you know the salary @@@isn’t so high@@ plus all the stuff of
Dublin accommodation transport and so on so is really uncomfortable sometimes and the
first time especially because now with time I'll try to save some money and opt to be
organized for fieldwork and then say ok I will claim later but at the beginning I have an
uncomfortable situation because I need 600 euro I didn't have it so I was feeling shame I I
know that I was right and then the professor was really kind and he gave me the money but
is stupid the system I mean is uncomfortable that the PhD student needs to go to the
supervisor and ask for money [pause] it was really bad and I mean we have these issues
continuously especially because last time I did a claim of one hundred one thousand two
hundred and I was basically with zero in my bank account and I was expected it arrived on
the next week and the @@@
R: it didn't
Jasmine: no so and I mean it's normal delays it's not the point of I mean I'm not
complaining about the delay of the system that is completely normal people I mean you do
a claim can take one two three weeks it's not it is wrong not this is wrong that I mean that
you have to do that the beginning so you should find another method because if you trust
me as a PhD you should trust that I use the money in a proper way and you should give me
like a paid card a credit card that I can use for field and also better because we can manage
the money directly we are more aware about what was going on with the money now I
don't have ideas all the time that I know I can't remember all the expenses that I had so I
have to go to supervisor ask him and is really uncomfortable because maybe if I ask too
much he say okay you are anxious but you know it’s if you don't know exactly how much
money you left you don't know how to manage the future and you should work
R: right right yeah okay and so then if you give advice to future students of [institution 1] what would that advice be
Jasmine: hmm [long pause] be patient @@
R: be patient okay @
Jasmine: @@@ yes @@ I don’t’ know @ be aware that there are many things that don't work prop-properly that the administration is a mess @@@ @ keep calm @@ you will figure out it in some way @@@ but there also I can say also the positive @ that most of the people are really kind so they try to find a solution but sometimes the the situation became really funny because also if the people of try the system is so weird with all the goodness that they have they don’t find solution @@@@@
R: okay so be patient be calm it'll work out but it might take a while
Jasmine: @@@ yeah @@@
R: okay all right um so then if you could give advice to organizations who are creating like summer programs to help prepare students for [institution 1] what would that advice be like what should they teach
Jasmine: hmmm [long pause] I don’t know that’s complicated [long pause] you mean in terms of language or
R: basically anything yeah
Jasmine: maybe it's I don't know for my maybe it would be enough have an in- in- a good introduction on the system and not I mean we have a kind of introduction with with the papers like read these read these that this is the rule but I mean how many of us really read that piece of shit like that like the books that they give us it's much more nicely if they just organize like a course of one day two days and they explain exactly and maybe explaining they also understand which are the lack and wh-what is missing and what is not explained for instance in in in all this book is not not mentioned at all the iexpenses so basically and actually there are some facility that exist right now but no one advice to do for instance in yeah oh in the college green they have this course about the iexpenses and they explain how it work the website and and finally I did it with one of my colleague so we register with it so but we discover after that we had issues so by my advice is if there is just a day where someone explained to the new PhD what's going on now how you have to move I mean what I noticed with my colleague is not only about having an issues or having maybe something that this is not working as you wish of course the system cannot work as me wish or him wish or whatever I mean each of us is different and we have different requirements but the point is [pause] I mean have an idea and not discover the issues with time it slowly slowly because if you don't know the issues then you have more
problem but if you know you are aware and you try to figure out it how to manage but I don't think it’s only a student problem actually most of the professor is I mean the administration is not clear for anyone @

R: yeah okay and so then in terms of English what would you like to see being taught

Jasmine: uh I don’t know but I expect I will improve I will gain something good from the course that I will do uhm I would like to have someone maybe especially in the writing and explain me why something is wrong because sometimes the professor change the sentence and I don't understand why I don't understand say yeah but that for me it was more uhm better it was better than the other way so he just changed it and sometimes mmm if I think about the past when I was writing in [nationality] it was the same that sometimes people don't correct because it's wrong but they correct because they think is better how they think so I want to separate the personal style with a correct English because maybe I I will develop a style that is mine and is not wrong so maybe it's when you are write at a certain level when you want to write a paper and want the professor they're just writing as his wish also because his way to talk is really complicated @ @ I want to develop something by myself with good advice also easy English but I still I mean I need someone that of course this mother tongue and tell me what is wrong and why

R: okay alright and so then are you aware of any support that international students receive from your department your college etc.

Jasmine: uhm department no the coll- I mean I've been here last year for the support uhm it was like for yeah for PhD student I want to psychologist just on hard my life so I use it

R: so you know you're aware of supports and that kind of stuff um and do you think the two supports are adequate or is there anything that could be done to make it better

Jasmine: hmmm in the department has to improve not these this one it was good also other people other colleagues they find that was great but the department is awful they don’t care

R: so what could the department do

Jasmine: @ hmm if we present some issues I think at least in my department is really hypocrisy the way they say oh present it and we try to sort it I present several issues last year no one give me any feedback and they just don’t care I I feel that when you present really small issues oh I I like the coffee machine in the kitchen oh tomorrow @ you have a new coffee machine but then when you present the real issues [pause] they don’t really care I don't know why what I understood in my specific case I think there is some overlap of department [pause] and sincerely I don't want I don't know and I don’t want understand what’s going on there but the point is I the student doesn't have to be involved
José:

in these issues so you have to find a way to help the student independent from internal issues of department @@

R: great okay um so that's actually all the questions I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Jasmine: hmm no

R: okay and is there anything else that you'd like to express

Jasmine: hmm now

R: okay thank you

José

R: okay um so the first thing is uh what would you consider your strengths to be academically

José: my strengths oh [exhale] [pause] I believe first of all like when you talk about my strengths what I have my best in academic I believe like first of all my base of the education that I received from my parents from my family okay so they we are two uh three brothers and one sister so since we were kids they were push us as much as they could to hm they did a lot of thought to give to us the best education schools and make sure we [pause] could be someone in the future you know so that's why I believe first of all it's the support that I got from my family and second because I'm kind of [pause] uhm [long pause] [exhale] uh I have this kind of things that I need to learn that I need to do something for myself and [pause] even all the challenge and difficult that I have because I feel sometimes not easy for me to learn things and there but even though I try to push myself as much as I can and when I start something try to finish it [pause] you know like [pause] so that's I believe my strength is kind of my the some energy that I have inside myself that say to myself do you can do it so that would be my strength eh yeah I would say my fam- my support for my family the culture where I come from plus my personal things

R: perfect and what would you say your difficulties or weaknesses are

José: Um [exhale] I just kind of I don't know how to explain it but I mean I try to em I don't know if I [pause] because like in my past I was when I was 15 years old I start study [discipline] there I did that for three years and but I never I I wasn't good enough it was very painful for me to learn the subject and I thought could be just because it's [discipline] because before I went to the [category] school I said to my dad look I don't want to go there I want to do [discipline] but I want to do it in another city and even though that time
was the school that my father thought would be better for us for me my brother my sister and there I when I went to do the test do the assessment test so [pause] to start it I just decide okay I want it now I don't know why but I really want it [pause] and for three years I felt very uh I wasn't feeling strong enough [pause] for the subject I discovered that I have something brought my brain to learn it I try I push myself as much as I can but even though it's not easy things that I learn [pause] like uhm that's I think my main weakness like I try to get the subject into my head but I can't I just can't I learn ehm for if I learn it now I will probably forget tomorrow so when I [pause] I even all these problems I finish the challenge because I didn't want a fail that was the main point not because I was enjoy it a lot but I said okay I started now I will finish it just because I was feeling like I just don't wanna fail that's it you know? even I I can I'm able now to have some conversation but I think it's still not the level that I wish to be like uhh maybe with amazing grammar and with some accent not like so I I say like I don't know how to point my strength in English but I'm really proud that if I if I [pause] think but if I try to see back what how I came to Ireland in 2010 and what I have developed [pause] about the language and to this time I can say yes I'm proud of myself you know? so but I I don't know like my strengths? @I don't @know [inhale] @I @just think like okay I have a I have a general English I think I I don't have a specific um something specific like okay uh let's talk about some specific subject so the structure of the language I haven't gone that deep eh deep to learn it? but I mean I can survive I can talk to people you know like trying to learning so try try to talk to English when there are people
around me that I think they can speak better or they will judge me uh and then that's making me feel very uncomfortable and then I cannot speak so I felt it very bad in a group interview that I went to a company especially with [Nationality] people with other kind of nationality it's easy to deal with that but when I I'm with beside [Nationality] they talk better Eng- they talk really good English they are confident I just won't myself I feel like ok but I don't speak too much you know but I don't try to speak uh and that's my weakness I think I don't feel confident with my language and now like R: and so that's interesting that you said it's especially when you're with [Nationality] people so people from the same country as you José: yes R: why is that so intimidating for you as opposed to other nationalities José: because I f- I would say I think it's something more kind of uhh [pause] culture because I mean [click] it's not just for English I can see that the time that I've spent in my country [pause] uh we feel uhm we care too much about everything how people's gonna think about you it's not just myself but we can see that the it it was the environment there we grow so here it's really cool to go to anywhere with your pajama paj- pajamas if you don't want to put on some better clothes but in [Country] it's not like that so I feel still feel this kind of things even if being a long time I can say because I was in [Country] like for the past six months and I feel it and now like about the judgment what people's gonna think about you so you try to uhh that's why I think I feel kind of uncomfortable about the English it's not just uhh that's why I think because it I I have faced problems like that when people try I I really appreciate when people try to correct me? when I'm speaking of course they know more? like why I'm not why I should not learn with them but some ways that they put it when I'm talking? they started off they start to make jokings and that way I think it's kind of I try to protect myself and say ok better don't [inhale] better first see what's going on around then you can try to talk something but because I faced it many times you know? R: yeah okay all right that makes sense um so thinking back so you did a bachelor's degree in //here in José: Yes|
R: in Ireland um so thinking back to that uh what kind of work did you have to do for your bachelors like what kind of modules reading etc. did you need to do José: you mean in college? Or what I need to do after college R: in college
José: in college. uhh [pause] basically was like we were study programming like Java python and SQL my sequel database so it wasn't it was kind of uhh when I started college and the first year was really cool because uhh in 1999 year 2000 between 1999 and 2001 I saw something about programming was C++ [inhale] when I took the challenge to be in college here to study technology I thought it'd be very difficult at beginning especially at beginning because of the language but it wasn't at the first year was so [pause] so was something really something really surprise me because when I was studying the basics of java the fundament of java I remember [pause] many things that I study in 2000 2012 about C++ so it was kind of similar to and there I was I got very excited and there I did a really great the first year was really great and uh I could help other peoples in my class because I was making so many questions and they said ok this guy knows what he's doing so because I was just too excited about it ehhhh [pause] then basically for 4 years we were learning Java. programming language and some network structure as well so we have different subjects and work to do you know like was kind of a lot of labs a lot of practical labs ehhh relate to the subject that we study in the week to be upload next week so I was really in for the first and the second year was ok but the third year gat- get it got very difficult and [pause] I don't know I just [pause] start to be like crazy and demotivated [pause] I wasn't more >I think because was getting very difficult and then I was feeling ok I'm not really [pause] interesting I'm not really interest for this subject anymore? because not because I [pause] >I think because I I they difficult how difficult it was coming and things I didn't know so I was tired working plus studying and so why was it difficult in starting in the third year so what made it so difficult José: I actually it's I don't know I think the subject itself I think was the third year was we were seeing something about Python? the third and fourth year and something was just block my brain to learn it you know like so the first year was java was get got I was java g- get my attention so from the third year I don't know if I was seeing the class will get smaller? and people were just give up the cause because they would think the same? oh it's getting difficult but ehhh [pause] I think it's kind of ummm I'd say not I I would- I wouldn't- I cannot point just one thing I think like it's kind of related to [clear throat] the pressure that we were having about working and I always worked a lot I I I was very hard work like waking up at quarter past five in the morning to be able to work at six then go to college then after college go to work again so was kind of ehhh [pause] this kind of pressure so I was getting tired with the subject and then ehhh [pause] I think is just the I I something that we were expecting like okay the first is the fundamentals then as I had
some base before it was okay for me but I didn't do computer before I did electronics so
the demands the main purpose wasn't a programming languag- programming so now was
programming that's why at beginning was okay but afterwards was //ver-
R: got difficult]
José: exactly yeah but um and I I I miss I there are there is something that my [pause]
family my brothers my friends they know is I'm not really [pause] ehh I think I'm not really
[click] [tap fingers] [long pause] a maths person so I'm not really a logical person I
mean I'm more kind of uhhh [pause] relate to humans to to to work with people instead just
being behind a computer trying to work out my technol- tech- technical skills so that I
think that's the most tha- that's the main point to feel like uhhh the course not for me the
pressure that they feel all those those problems relate to how to get ready for exams and
you know because basically from the technical skills that I I I don't feel it's for me. like
since I did my first course that I went to to college in business for four years [pause] there
that's what I think that's the main thing that made me feel this course is really difficult
R: what were the assessments like did you take like written exams did you write essays
where you giving presentations
José: yes uh presentations wr- ehh write- writing exams and labs as well a lot of labs so we
have to develop some codes at home in group and upload it so we we it's like we were
facing challenge like okay we have a problem how can you solve it use programming so
and uhh orders or um [click] all the practical labs like okay let's build a network here let's
work with those suits those #hobbies and ehhh let's make a internal uhh network for this
college for the college we were facing things like that and [pause] it was kind of [pause] it
was more kind of on the third year and the four- basically on the fourth year we were
working to find a project? [pause] so but uh on the third year we had a lot of practical say
labs with python and networks structure network so and [pause] was kind of difficult for
me to [pause] be able to show my technical skills that was difficult you know like not to be
part of a group because usually were spending ehh time in a group so wasn't individual
assignment but to be part of the group was okay but when you have to contribute with
some technical skills there was my problem not about the language because there was there
are [Nationality] ehh in the same group so but uh it's more kind of okay how can I be sure
about my technical skills how can I [pause] make some contribution contribution to the
group you know that was my biggest problem
R: okay and um what do you think your professors were looking for when they were
grading so how did they assess academic success
José: could you repeat please?
José: uhhh I think they were looking for basically technical skills I think @yeah I think they were looking for if you were able like we were working ehh [pause] also if you can manage your time to be able to upload your assessments on the time so usually they would give you a week to do it let's say then one day before the deadline they would say okay guys for those who is still working on this on the assess let's give you three more days but the mark's not gonna be the same so they were trying to make things work because they knew they knew it wasn't easy for many of us but uh I can say like the first class the first year we were like 150 students almost in the class we end up being 17 after four years so

José: mmh dropped out and some of them of course they just want to get the level seven so either they got a job before then they couldn't keep the course and then many of them just said that this course not for me like my best partner she was working with me the first year she was like oh my God how can you understand what this guy says the profess like I I could see her panic like she was like help me help me and she stopped in the first year she says no it's not for me and even though she was working technology before but it's she study business and so I could see like okay I know what I'm doing here if you compared to those people who never saw technology before and I've study something but I was expecting that as I did a great first year I was expected that the following years would be like decrease my my uh how to say my aye my my [exhale] my argg

José: @ my my not level uhhh my [pause] performance was going down you know after the second year then I said what's wrong? You know [pause] that was funny because I said to my dad the same thing that I told him in 2000 the first year electronic was fine the second year I start call him and said Dad I'm gonna cry it's not for me the third year please it's not for me but I was feeling the pressure because at that time he was paying college he was paying the school for me it was very expensive and he was doing his best to afford it this time it was myself was the fact that okay I want to stay in Ireland I see many opportunities if I finished this college [pause] and uh I it's my money it's my all thought that I've put on it so and I also the main thing that I told you I always find this kind of pressure okay how if I fail how I'm gonna be afterwards you know I feel this kind of I put
it myself this kind of pressure okay you cannot fail you cannot fail you know like that's
crazy

R: Okay so you kind of said that you could only think what um what your professors
expected of you did they give you guidelines did they give you kind of assessments or like
rubrics about how they were going to grade

José: yes a lot they they always put the grade the the the guidelines saying okay we are
gonna mark eh twenty percent for this th- th- this ehh [pause] topic 30 percent for technical
for the code itself and 40 percent for the the the functionality if you solve the problem so
we knew before and they all give me all the supports and they were very nice really open
for conversations and all the support that we need we found with >actually my< my class
my people who ehh stay our class was a very lucky one we got very good teachers
between 2013 and 2017

R: okay all right brilliant um so in general what would you say that students need to
succeed in your program or at the college that you went to

José: first of all I think [pause] like you have to be sure what do you want the first thing
like [pause] as I told you I have I didn't tell you but I started college because was
something that I could afford [pause] was something that we have this pressure from the
visa in Ireland so we we ehh the other thing that I thought okay [pause] it's can open doors
I can get opportunities because technology's totally on the top of the list about jobs in
Ireland and that because behind all the things was my [pause] goal was my wish was like
okay I would love to stay in Ireland after seven years I was almost I was four years here
actually because I did three years in English [pause] then on the third the fourth year said I
should start a college or I should just move on and go to another place but that time said no
look I like it let's try to do the college and the first year I thought was the great ehh the
great uhmm [click] the great decision that I took I said okay that was the best decision I
know that now I can see that I'm enjoying the course and they can see just to stay here in
the country make my life setup job you know think about something in the future [pause]
but uhh I think when you decide to do it you when you even there are something that you
really want you have to make sure if you are uhh if you really wanna pass through all those
pains that you are the way to to to get eh to bring the eh to to try to get in your life so
that was the problem because like okay my my goal was to stay in Ireland set myself in the
country but for that I had at that time I didn't have choice I said okay what I should do to
stay in Ireland I have just a technology I have to try to find a way to get a sponsor visa
[pause] study technology get a job so it was painful because I knew [pause] from a past
experience that technology not for me [click] I mean it's not not for me but I mean I knew
that was something that I was comfortable doing then I said okay love of technology

no [pause] ehh my experience in [Country] after my college my school in technology was working as a technician for six months in an internship and there I felt the pain I felt like oh that's horrible being behind a desk trying to fix things and you get so crazy because you can I get crazy because I said why it works like that I don't know and try to figure out but I don't know doesn't come to my brain why to work like that then my Dad was saying to me [José] go to do business go to do business stop your #rage technology I mean you have [click] we are in a city where we have 150 companies technology companies it's kind of 30,000 people live the city so if you do business those companies will n- always need someone to work in the uh sales or in uh HR and those copies are technology basics ehm [click] they are technology companies so you have a technology course which is gonna give you more chance when you have to go for an interview with other candidates so he was totally right you know I got my business and I was enjoying three and a half years before I came here in a technology company but I was on sales and even though they were requirement was you need to know something about technology you know so I think when you when the students and as I saw in my college here when you when you most of the students when you start 150 people they I think most of then they were with the same [pause] things at me okay I'm doing that because I don't have many choice [pause] because of my visa so let's do it but they didn't know how painful would be to get on the goal that they were expecting so they didn't just technology just because they love it they just because of or other things so they felt they couldn't finish the course I know so I think that so that's I think when you go to an academic studies when you go to do something you must be sure that okay is your goal really important for you to pass all the things we're gonna face or could you do something different and maybe to achieve the same goal that you want? You know so that's the point you know?

R: um so in general what do students need in order to achieve academic success or to do well at your college

José: well if you earn if you mean if you are meaning like uhh regard umm [click] regarding to knowledge? I didn't understand exactly the question

R: yeah well knowledge so whatever you consider to be success so either what do they need in order to graduate or what do they need in order to graduate and have a good experience

José: well I'd like first of all I believe you you of course you have to achieve the minimum uhh score that it's expecting for you to pass to get approved in your exams but I don't think it's just that it's enough to succeed you need to learn things you need to get as much as you
can from the course from the subjects and you have to identify what's is what's what so you
have to identify what's your excuse and what which path right because I did I T so we have
many choice many paths on the way that you can choose I wanna walk with it’s true
infrastructure or as a developer or just with BA plus I T so we have to identify while you
are really good enough and you are happy enough doing comfortable doing to succeed at
least in a professional way you know I believe but of course you have to get proved but
you get the minimum score marks to achieve to pass in your exams you know
R: okay and so how much of a factor does language play in academic success
José: sorry how //much?
R: how much| so how important is language in academic success
José: language?
R: yeah
José: like in Ireland I would say when you are abroad doing your English college I'd say
it's 100 percent important is the first thing at least for myself I you don't try to be in a
classroom if I cannot at least understand I don't know I can try to point out like 80% what
my lectures I'll say because the rest of that I can try at least to get support from my
classmates? and try to do some research by myself you know I used to record a class when
I was in college so I totally believe it's the main thing for so if you want to do a
foreign [pause] course or if you are in your country of course gonna be easy you know but
language a clear communication and that's the base for for the learning process
R: yeah and so what other factors impacts academic success and that could be things inside
of the college and outside
José: outside. yeah I think you must be very you have to have a very I don't know if that's
the word stable life? I mean you have to be very relaxed and focused while you were doing
college for that reason you cannot have any other issues outside college that you are gonna
bring to college like friends program or if you are share house housemates problems or if
you are working and probably failed work that can be a- a- a- that can block yourself when
you are in college pay attention what you were doing know like so I believe that's very
important and also if you are doing some course I believe if you have chance like >oh
sorry< like I had in [Country] ehhh when I was studying business was working the same
time so I was putting practice everything that I was uhh learning in the class so I believe if
you have chance during the course to get some to apply what you are doing in a real life?
professional life? it's totally a plus it’s of course it's gonna help you a lot and also I believe
that's the m- one of the main keys for succeed
R: all right so before you started doing your course um did you have any linguistic preparation before attending the college
José: yeah actually when I came to Dublin I had I just gotta speak li- a little English like I had no English at all @like @ so I did it three years the first year I went to in school which was general English there I got like 80 something like 89 percent of attendance which was kind of really good for for for me the second year I was working a lot so my attendance was really low like maybe 65 percent and I didn't [pause] ehh I didn't spend a lot of time studying or language because I was I was more I was more ehmm I was more interested to learn in the job like try to communicate with people without care about the grammar or any mistakes relate to that then on the third year when I decide okay maybe for from the fourth yeah I'm gonna go to college I need to be in a class I need to learn it because probably I will have some English test as an assessment test to get in college so I went to a class which for me as I as I learned on my second year how to communicate with people with my job I on the third year I felt completely much better in the class English class because I knew what I was doing there I could ask so many so much more to the lecturer and it was really good spend time there which which helped me a lot to go to college
R: okay and so that third year was that also General English
José: General English but I was more excited because uhh when I finished my first year I stopped on the pre-intermediate on the second year was kind of a waste time because I was more kind of okay let's do it in practice and the third year I finished uhh [exhale] advanced advanced I think it was advanced so yeah
R: brilliant um and so you said that that really helped you to go to college so do you feel that those three years really prepared you for college
José: well if you think about like my first school was amazing I when I was in [Country] I was planning very careful okay I don't want any [Nationality] in this in the class I don't want to talk in even [Language] if you don't know English I don't want it for me then I spent much more more eh more spend more money than at the average because I was looking for very good uh unt and a really good English school without any [Nationality] and I found it so and then I moved out to live with [Nationality] to get some support do everything you open a bank a account doing my stuff so I think like
Eehm I wasn't happy enough with my choices to go to college because like the English test that I did in college was uhh just uh a test that was applied by by the college but I would love to take a challenge to do IELTS I'm trying that's all my list for for maybe before the first semester of next year because I'd love to see like actually I did one of these tests when I was trying to get uhh a ahh scholarship to do some free course liking IT Tallaght the Institute of IT in Tallaght so I did and I was kind of surprised with the score that I got in the listening I think was better or grammar some of them I got enough score to get it but the other one I didn't but it wasn't that bad so I would love to get a chance to do the IELTS orrr somewhat similar to that to see which level of English I am at the moment you know like? so but I think the school helped in my case but maybe if I tried some other college like Trinity college or DBS maybe I wouldn't have the chance to be there you know my college was easy on this R: and so the exam that you had to take to get into college it was administered by the college José: yes R: um can you tell me more about that exam José: well it was four years ago five years ago but it was I remember was kind of big a lot of papers was more related to grammar and these kind of things and then we just had a very informal [pause] speaking with the [pause] [snap] the coordinator of the course and we uhh had to ha- to wait for the minimum score to get a place there so >I don't know if< approving mm honestly I don't know with the college was small I don't know if they were access to those things they just say okay you were approved but of course you could see in the class even it was a small college I can say to you like it was a really nice college like the things that we were studying the level of the professors that we had and we had cases like in my class uhhh a friend who on the third year he decided to go [Institution x] which was kind of okay that has a better standard than our college but when he was there he said no serious trust me stay there because it's really good the professors they are giving to us all the support the subjects the way that they are teaching it's really good so don't try to change it's not worth you know so and then we could see like we can measure that with the success guys and with the success of my classmates I've seen many of them working for companies they are really happy they are good doing what they know what to do and it all relates to the college you know like they wouldn't have those chances if they were not in class
R: all right yeah and um so what type of preparation would you suggest that international
students take before going into college
José: well I woul- I would suggest that like first try to be confident with as you are
international try to be confident with the language that's the first thing that you can [pause]
following in the course easily and asking much more questions gonna [pause] which which
is going to help you to learn faster and I think you should of course read about the scope of
the course like the old subj- eh what you are gonna have for the first year the second the
third what w- what are going to be the challenge try to do some research r- r- uh a small
research relate to those subjects at least you see while you can how if you like re- uh eh re-
regarding [click] what what's your feelings about the course and also try to at @least
spend time outside college study as much as you can you know like uh even if [click]
especially if you are not really very if you are not feeling the course is easy if uh if you are
having troubles many difficult like try to try to start research it get support from your
classmates who knows better who know more than you you know like then I think all those
things gonna help you at least [pause] keep the mind on the track @ @you @know @like
R: @ what do you wish that you had known before you started college
José: hmm here actually as I told you like I went to college my first goal was okay that's
would be a great chance to set myself in Ireland and remain the country and get some
opportunities when the course done you know at least to uuhhhm make my dreams true
and you know so I I think I knew in my case as I came from as I'm coming from uhh some
technical backgrounds which was related to everything that I was doing plus my work
experience was related I don't think I was kind of confused orrr with any doubt about the
course but ehm as I told you would be easy if my goal instead just say to my instead saying
like okay I want to stay in Ireland [pause] would be easier for me if I knew like okay I'm
really good enough and I'm really my skills match with the course that I'm choosing now
you know what I mean so it would be really really helpful if I was more if I was honest
with myself about what I was doing you know like so but as I told you I never thought
ehhh okay as my I always I think I I I I follow something that my Dad said to me when I
was doing when I was starting elect- electronic and telecommunication when I was fifteen
in the beginning I said to him look I don't think I want to do it I want to do computer
computer computer I want to do computer in another school I through the school and he
told me no look you won't do it you will you are going to do electronic and
telecommunication [pause] and there [long pause] I was said to him that look I don't think I
will be able to work as a technician like that but I am interested for computers so I should
do something more like that and no no no you'll go to that college okay and he said to me
something that's true [José] look it doesn't mean you are doing this course you are gonna work as a technician but this is gonna open many doors for you today you don't work just because you are it's like you can be like my brother my brother's engineer but he works in sales [pause] so when he said that to me or something like that's true because I mean when I finish the course I will be 18 I will gonna start my first job I'm gonna go for a group interview or interview with other candidates when I say what I have done that's a plus even they are not looking for something specific but that's a plus it shows to the employer that you have been doing something that you have ehh that the employee to the employer that you have been doing something that you have interest at least to learn things or you know face challenge that's it so and my Dad was right because of course the first course gave me a lot of chance to to start my professional life and when I try to do the college here I knew like [click] ehh of course it's something that I want ehh for to achieve my goals but I knew was something that was related with everything that I have done for the past 10 years like at least working plus business plus plus electronic so I wasn't expecting finish college saying okay I'm gonna be a great developer I but I was expecting finish college and say look I'm gonna go for an interview even if I okay I I I'm gonna work in a sales department with technology but it's sales I'm gonna work in an HR you know what I mean? so I was expected at least to say I don't need to do a college just to work a specific with that if I want to work with something more specific I can do a short course for six months learn some tool like let's learning ehhh Cisco how the moldings work okay I just pay some college some short cost for few months to learn h-specific how the equipment works you know what I mean so I wasn't expecting that in my course that's why I think I knew enough about what I was doing the choice that I was taking I was comfortable with that you know?

José: uhmm [clears throat] well [long pause] I think we we we had kind of really good support from the lectures they were like let's say about the language they were really open to speak slow and the and the try to use the accent that everyone could understand and uhhh I actually I don't remember the trouble about the language even we were 150 people in the class at the beginning I don't remember anybody having trouble to ask the lectures sorry I don't understand your English or I don't remember this kind of thing so I think they were kind of well prepared for international students maybe because they have been this in this situation for many years so I don't think you I can point something specifically but um eh [exhale] like I don't think I think it was everyone who was in the class they
knew English they were here at least for three years most of them like so I don't think we
had some I have something to help [pause] to to give you right now about this support for
international students yeah
R: um would you give them advice on just supporting students in general or do you think
that they just were very good at giving support in general as well
José: well like [long pause] all the time when I needed eh they were something that they
did was really cool I think was ehhh they provided as everybody was having trouble uh
with ehh Java programming in the first year they start doing some extra lab extra labs no
extra class support class on during the weekends
R: Oh nice
José: yes so but was crazy because we were 150 people and then only ten people would
attend in that I was attending all the year like especially the first year was attending as
much as I could and ehh that was really helpful because like you were during the week you
were with you were they were giving a lot of labs to be done for the next so the next weeks
and I knew like was really difficult to to to write the code and that was really helpful to be
the support class for that but what was the issue the the the problem was ehh they were
asking students why they were not attending if everyone was having trouble with the the
program language programming language and they said ehhh because they were
studying Monday to Friday and weekends most of them are working so that was a problem
that the college could sort it out they were trying the best for that no I can't outside extra
help that the students to do something in the end of that time the
deadline that we had so I as I was wo- as I wasn't working weekends for me was easy I was
there I could finish my labs and upload it on the time so I think they were give kind of for
the subject we would have a lot of support they would try the best I I'm really glad
for the lecturers that we have that we had so it was really cool
R: That's good to hear @
José: @yeah
R: so if you had advice to say organizations might be universities it might be language
schools that are designing summer programs to help prepare students for college what
would that advice be or what should be taught
José: well like for you mean students in general? or international students?
R: Um /both
José: both| yeah
R: well if it's different than I'd like to here for international students and then students in
general
José: mmhm [long pause] well like uhh I think like uh in the college that I went of course it's not big like as Trinity but we we see like these like open days in Trinity that you have chance to go there and talk with people from the department where you were interested on so I think this kind of thing is really cool when you are deciding if you are attending the college or not if you which course you are gonna attend if you if you have chance to open uhh many workshops for for ehh this this kind of uh this new students who are coming to your college and doing something like that to bring them to clarify what they want for the professional life would be great you know if they can get at least some previous a brief or what they expect see during the course if they attend it so I think workshops things like that would be very helpful you know like and [clear throat] even bring some uhh some companies who are related to to employee employers relate to what you are gonna study to talk during this workshop to show to the students and give to them some motivation to say look when you finish we have jobs [pause] you know? show cases of people who has done the college eh attend the course and how they are at the moment in the markets you know? things like that would be really mot- motivation for new students I think you know.

R: okay alright um anything else any other advice then?

José: yeah when you ask like which kind of advice could I give to lectures or to to to the coordinate like I know I think in Trinity they have it a bigger college it's more eh but for my college we small colleges in Ireland are like the one that I went eh it's kind of more difficult to when I were in [Country] doing electronic I remembered for the three years in the end of each year we had opportunity to visit very ehhh err I don't think if if it's not the word but you help me ehh a relevant or uhh very high standard companies okay? so in the end of the each year they they were they have a lot of partnerships in [Country] and we even we were traveling far away to other cities to see like uh I went to the Institute of the ehhh scientists Institute for the uhhh I don't know the space engineer in [Country] so you see how they put this satellite sound in space this kind of thing so the for for each year like was kind of okay the first year these companies suit those that used to like with not a lot of knowledge over the course but then every year they will get more ehh [click] and in different levels you'd be available to visit companies which would suit you for the subjects that we were watching for the years you know in in the end of the course you would with a lot of idea okay I can try to apply for this company this company this company that got my attention you know so things like that could be really good thing to do in Ireland as well you know?
R: yeah brilliant would you have any advice for future students of your college or like students who are looking to go to college in Ireland
José: [pause] yeah like [exhale] [pause] umm honestly @ I think I said @everything about like @language about motivation and maybe the more important is like I've been thinking a lot about this kind of things like the ehh past weeks the past day like ehh when you choose a college ehhh or uhh when you are uhh thinking what's happened to me is that like think about a professional career something like that ehh try to choose something try to think about the job which is gonna make you happy something that's gonna make you happy at least my case like before even money or everything that you are gonna I I uh like is what I want to find is something like okay I want to find a job that I see my value in this job that I may make some difference in people's life and plus the money is just the coin- it's just a consequence uhhh it's just something that actually consequence that is coming from all the thought that I've put uhh that I'm putting on that so like just choose something that you are really comfortable doing you it and you know it's going to be for you you know like so and you see theee see the results of something that you don- that have done you know so
R: yeah okay um so you've kind of touched on this by saying that they were offering support classes during the weekend but are you aware of any support that your college gave either at a department level or a college level for students
José: What do you mean like uhh department level college level
José: yeah like we have uhh they did something really nice I'm a really close to her actually today I was going to see her ehh a career adviser uhh for actually for I think now all the students can attend the workshops and get some support from her and she starts you send a lot of opportunity for internship working and even apply straight with her just some of opportunities she just say okay give me your CV then I will they will contact you for an interview I got interview through her so ehh I think this kind of thing is really valuable like uh when you are finish your course you are international you need someone she's Irish she works for QQI so you need someone who are who has a very who has a strong network and can put you in touch with those people because as you are international you have problems relate to your visa relate to language maybe you are not in the front of the queue so you need someone who can ehh employers can trust and give you the chance at least to reach the interview you know so I think those partnerships are really important and also if your college give you the chance to do a module like okay ehh the six
like the last six months you are gonna be in a workplace that'll be great no like at least you knew that you are gonna have a chance to apply what you have study
R: okay brilliant um so that would be pretty much the questions that I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask
José: No I think we have spoke around everything like and relate to international students college language @ yeah I think I've spoke everything that I was that I think about and like and um we aren't as I told you like this year has not been a very easier year for me so I'm still trying to find myself in all the situations uhhh things didn't work out as I was expecting the end of my college but it's some things outside college outside college was that I wasn't expecting soooo I'm trying [pause] to at least find some path now like the uhh course that I told you that I'm gonna do on Friday it's about resilience and some- something like that you know so yeah I think it's kind of it's never too late to start do something
R: I'm I mean just this is just now me being curious um but so you finished your course what last year?
José: November last
R: November last year. yeah. and so you've been looking for jobs and doing interviews
José: no I did an interview on last year before I got my graduate which was in November because I finished the course the course was done in June July they don't have a summer break but ehm [pause] ehh I went to [Country] in March May eh February I was in a hospital so March I was in the hospital so I completely imposs- eh no chance for me to do anything from March and so this year for me was a short year actually no so that's why I like now as I came came back to Ireland that I'm gonna try to see how that's why need meet my career adviser to see how I'm gonna [pause] explain this gap that I've done since my graduation and the time that I'm back to Ireland you know so yeah to restart doing something here so I'm just trying to do some extra course on [website] as [Institution 1] has paid that for us to at least update start doing things like that you know?  
R: yeah and so so you just said that [Institution 1] is is paying for the courses etc. or
José: for [website]? yes. on [website] and you get a certificate at the end of the course I was trying to do things relate to my CV my graduation things that could be a plus and what's useful as well for they have some recommendation for you when you like I work in [Institution 1] as a cleaner I was trying to see maybe in the future it can get some internal opportunity sometimes they just release internal opportunities for it staffs you know? so but uh [pause] I don't know like as we are near to Christmas now and I'm going to [Country] ehhh when I back have you have I think a better idea if I should back to study
R: yeah but well so it sounds like so you're working with [Institution 1] and [Institution 3] is still um helping you kind of like update your skills //etc.
José: yeah like
R: how\like how um because now you have okay the college that you did your your studies with and now you're working for a different educational institution who's still you know investing in you um so do you feel supported by both colleges
José: yeah that's I say like I'm still going to my college to speak with the career adviser because I feel like very comfortable with her she gave me a great support when I was building my LinkedIn my CV I was attending her workshops and in [Institution 1] I tried to get as much as I can from the intranet for things that as a staff for four years there I have so I go to library now I just discovered that all those course the training the free train- the train on [website] is free for staffs I'm gonna take the umm staff development course now this Friday so I try I remember like when I was in college and I got a job in [Institution 1] three four years ago and I knew some about uhh I knew things about those staff development course and they apply for that like three years ago I was so excited so that time and but it it costs for the department if you don't attend it's for free but if you don't go it was gonna cost I remember three years ago they just let me choose one right I apply for three cause they just let me no just just one because I don't think they knew me at that time so and I think it's great for staff like even because my department they don't give you a lot of information about it so you can see I don't know if because we are cleaners? but we don't or because we I I think because people they just don't have interest on that I've seen interests like the new cleaners they are from everywhere like especially [Nationality] and now those people they have interests should try to grow to do something else to get a knowledge but they [Institution 1] the cleaners that have been there for a long time fourteen fifteen years old ehh Irish they just don't care they don't talk about it I mean not they don't care maybe they don't need it anymore they in their life it's their choice so I when I was in [Institution 1] I discovered everything by myself like I want to create an email and uhh access the intranet check what what I have what they have for us you know everything so and uhh that's good because I've seen as a staff we have a great things and I did an interview for a Master's in [Institution 1] three years ago so yeah I I I was trying much used as much as I could as a staff you know like I said okay let's see because I knew if I got it if I if I got that Master's in [Institution 1] I would have a very great discount to
study there you know that was my second goal when I was I said okay I finish college and go straight to a Master's in [Institution 1] so

R: okay that's brilliant you like yeah cuz I didn't know all of that uh
José: yeah we have but my department we are very it's very restrict like we don't have this kind of information because they don't talk [pause] about it you know like they just don't maybe they think they are cleaners they don't want it but they forget because like sometimes you are a cleaner because you are [pause] not from here and that's the opportunity that you have even though like I've tried to change my my my way to think about because like [pause] uhh this was a great job this is a great job and I' really happy doing what I've done and a there was a job there gave me a lot of opportunities I mean about the time that I was working then time to go to college then everything was close to each other I could you know I could manage my time very well so and but there are other things that that some say I was just trying to see the job at before it's something like to pay the bills which I don't want to see it in this way anymore I I can see actually how important is this job for life because is something that we are doing because we are #produced you know like it's something like we are trying to fix a problem that we are creating >you know what I mean< so that's I'm saying I'm trying to uhh think a lot about everything in life and @ that's something really [long pause] nice
R: Ah that's nice do you have anything else you would like to express
José: No I think that's everything @

June

R: okay um so first can you tell me what your strengths are academically so what are you good at
June: ohh that's an interesting question I think they don't know I'm quite good at well I'm a [job] so what my work entails is to take a text and to try to understand it not through not only to other text but also to other disciplines so for instance now I'm trying to explain a concept using anthropology um so I think that my comparative skills are quite strong but I always fancy myself to be like a detective when I read a text or a novel and I think there is always something behind the text that has remained unexplored so I like to try to find out the new things that can be said about it and I think that generally I am quite good at that as well [pause] other things I don't know there are things that I would like to improve like leadership skills and being able to um work in a team better [pause] but no I think that the first two things are what I’m good at >I hope so< I don't know
R: and why do you say that you'd like to work in a team better

June: um I haven't done that a lot I've always being afraid of uh failing sooo most of the time I wouldn't participate in activities with other people just because I thought there is too much responsibility I'm not I wouldn't be capable of bringing the project to completion uh I tend to be quite shy and also [long pause] I become very paranoid I want people to like me but I'm never quite sure whether they like me or not so these kind of keeps me away from trying to engage with other people

R: right okay I so is there anything else that you would say um do you have difficulties with academically beyond what you've just described

June: umm well I don't [pause] no I don't think I have many difficulties language was a big uuh problem for me [pause] because I arrived here when I was 19 and my English was school English and I understood nothing absolutely nothing but I wanted to have this experience and I always wanted to study [discipline] and Irish as well so I knew that I had to become proficient in the language [pause] and when I enrolled in university I was surrounded by Irish students and I did try to participate and engage but I always had the sense that people could not understand me uh [pause] so that was a very big it was even cause of shame for me not being able to use the correct words I felt stupid [pause] and then progressively you know writing essays giving presentations in class you got better and better and better >I think you< there is a time when you reach a plateau [pause] and you're stuck with that level of English and you think I can do better I can do better and then when you get out of that plateau you don't even realize you just wake up one day and you're like oh I can speak better English than what I was able last year

R: yeah so did you start out doing undergraduate here

June: yeah

R: and so you've gone straight through undergraduate master's PhD

June: um I had a problem in getting into undergraduate in public universities [pause] just because there they go through the CAO so you need to send all the documentation through this big >I don't even know what it< is is a sort of institution and then you write your choices of University and according to the points you have you get into one course or the other and I tried twice [pause] but they couldn't quite calculate or convert my my points choices of University and according to the points you have you get into one course or the other and I tried twice [pause] but they couldn't quite calculate or convert my my points from the [country] uh system to the Irish system so my CAO came back blank both times it was very discouraging so I started in [institution 4] [pause] and I didn't have any problem because they just I just apply it and they accepted me and then after one year because I had good marks I tried to go to [institution 2] or [institution 1] and again the same problem [pause] emerged and they actually weren't like nobody told me you cannot jump from one
private university to a public ehh you need to just start everything all over again they told me after I had applied to the CAO so still I wasted 80 euros was 80 at the time just for this R: right @ and so eventually did the CEO or did it go through or how did you end up June: uh [institution 4] they because it's a private university you still have to get through CAO [pause] but they have a larger intake okay so your your actual score is not that important they will take you in and then it depends how you do during your first year uh if you do well you pass to second year if you don't you won’t R: okay alright alright and so in terms of language now what would you say your strengths are in terms of English June: I love to be articulated I love to learn new words [pause] I become very nervous and I have to speak in front of a large crowd uh I think everybody has that @ but when you don't when English is not your first language you are obsessed about making mistakes at least I am obsessed with that and people judging you for making those mistakes [pause] you also become very perceptive to other people making mistakes [long pause] so yeah likely my strength is the curiosity about the language and trying to improve it every day um and the weakness is the paranoia of not doing well R: okay I'm it so since you're kind of in this situation where you've gone through all of your secondary education here in Ireland um can you describe to me what some of your modules were like um so what did you have to do for your modules June: in undergrad R: um undergrad and masters and PhD if you’ve had June: I didn't have any module for my PhD yet I'm going to do it through the [academy] so at least it's something R: oh really ye ah June: @@@ it's confidential remember @@ R: @@ I know @@ well um to be honest it I I did the first introduction and it was the three-week module I didn't find it to be particularly useful but it was easy enough to pass like everyone passed I'm it's only three weeks so like it was better than taking 12 weeks I'm thought and the assignments wasn't really that much June: that’s that's very good R: so yeah @@ June: well I would like to do it primarily because I want to jump into industry R: yeah yeah and that it might help um I’ve heard that the leadership one is very good
June: the one in Belfast
R: yeah I've heard that's very very good so good
June: I really want to do that yeah so modules
R: yeah modules
June: um in my undergrad it was usually we had [long pause] I think we >okay I'm trying
to think about my first year< so we had three days a week six hours a day so and that went	two modules a day so six modules the first semester and I suppose six five or six modules	the second semester and it was like this every year now the modules I took um um
discipline] so they were quite diverse one from the other even though it was all related to	the arts [long pause] uh the assessment it really depended on the module most of the time it	was two essays one in midterm and one at the end of the term or one essay and an exam we
did not have exams during Christmas we only had exam at the end of the academic year	and then one presentation per module usually 10-15 minutes with a PowerPoint [long	pause] and exam wise maybe was three or four exams at the end of the year and that's it
then and of course the final thesis
R: right and so the exams for the exams were they like essay questions where they multiple	choice
June: um no they were open question soooo they would ask you for instance okay how did
did um [topic] revolutionized the technique used in um in [discipline] afterwards and
then you would have to answer you would have >like you didn’t have< a maximum words
to answer they would prep you out up just before you you would see the exams and the questions
were more or less similar to the one of the years before so there was nothing
R: okay so you could kind of prepare
June: yeah they would I’ve I’ve never never had a lecture like I’m going to have a question
that it's just completely new it would vary in the way they were put or in the details they
would want you to talk about but you would know you with a big chunks of history or
some particular novels you would really have to dig into to prepare after the exam
R: okay and was that the same for the master’s then
June: I have to say the master wasn't as challenging as my undergrad um we had eight
days a week so four classes a week well three classes and then there was the Monday
class which was more like they would teach you how to write an essay which I found
pretty useless [pause] uh not just because I already knew how to do it but also because you
wouldn't focus really on how to write an essay so a lot of my >there was one Irish person<
in that course and we were 12 in the class um and everybody who is not from an Anglo-
Irish university system was actively struggling with writing essays and preparing presentations. Presentation was a little bit better but essays was a disaster and that course is getting worse and worse because last year it was hugely problematic. They were not prepared for that type of task and the only feedback they would get back was you know read some essays around and do more research you wouldn't have constructive feedback so I don't know how many ended up passing. I remember in the first semester only two passed and everybody else was in serious trouble. and then I've heard from them well they have various problems one of these was they were trying to get in touch with their supervisor to ask how to maximize their research. The supervisor would get back at them saying it's your job. Fortunately did not have that problem and my supervisor was someone who would leave you a lot of space. You could whatever you wanted just submit at the deadline and that was fine and I like to have that space but I understand some people might have problems and struggle.

R: So let's see um inside of the lectures and modules what was the format was there a lot of group discussion was mainly the professor with the PowerPoint discussing etc.

June: I had the bit of a mix um my film classes where mostly watching it it was spent over three hours so we could watch an entire movie and then the lecturer would give a little bit of feedback on something some particular things you might have want to look at and then we had a class discussion now the feedback or the presentation was either at the beginning or at the end of the movie preferably at the beginning but I always thought he didn't want to spoil the movie too much um every other class was like I had more class discussions during my masters but in [institution 4] they never really had a problem in letting us speak and share our ideas they would more than having someone would ask a question they would sort of answer it straight away as other people it was a small class we were six so it was interesting to see other people perception or angles and they weren't that shy in sharing um we had other classes which were not theoretical at all for instance when we had class on how to project like how to create a discipline-specific project so we had to fund it go on projects all of these practical things and the last one was the editing class so we would use [create a discipline-specific project] so we had a class on um [discipline-specific] writing and that was mostly about watching short videos about short movies just to give us an idea what uh what we had to create and then test our story and talk about our story with others and then submit at the end of it it [discipline-specific writing] [pause] another class was about [discipline-specific project] so we would have to fund it go on [discipline-specific projects] all of these practical things and the last one was the editing class so we would use
I think it was pro something [discipline-specific software] I completely forgot it's been a
long time ago but yeah was all about editing and maximize our the way we wanted to
[narrate the story from a visual perspective]

R: okay that sounds really interesting

June: yeah I must say [institutions] as a school I was very satisfied with the way they
carried out things because it's a [institution] at the end of the day so a lot of things are
carried out with business in mind you make a movie but is not just an artistic creation you
need to think about your audience think about how to fund it and do it [pause] so I and I
really like that approach

R: and how does that differ from here or do you know are you able to kind of compare
June: well um here is much more it's much more theoretical it's less thinking about the
future is more thinking about the now it's like they they were very different courses but
even the [topic] courses they were much more practical they would actually teach you to
think critically and to ask yourself answer @ to ask yourself
important questions and try to answer them yourself or look up for an answer here was
more like yes you have a group discussion but the answers seem to be there already we
want you to say something specific uh rather than just go out and come up with innovative
creative answers or even accept the fact that there might be no right answer

R: right so now as a as a PhD student how would you evaluate your academic success so
how do you think you're doing at the moment

June: I think I'm doing well um I didn't expect to get to this point when I started when I
started I just thought it was going to be very easy peasy and I had a project I knew how to
carry it out and then the more I went on the more I realized that perhaps starting with a
preconception wasn’t the best way and I opened myself up to uncertainty [pause] I
started thinking is it's really as I said before it is really important to get a question like to
get an answer to this question that is the only answer possible [pause] and I answer no it's
not that important the important thing is to create the path so that maybe in the future other
people will be able to answer that question but at least I create a good a good question to
start with and my project is very theoretical um I took I'm taking a film which is the one of
[topic] which is quite popular it's been quite popular in the last 20 years the people seems
to get stuck in one place um so I'm trying to stop this fixation and obsession for that place
and steer the problem around and see what what comes out of it there is there is a lot of
resistance to that innovative ideas are not they don’t they’re not liked that much as they
required thinking

R: and resistance in what way like from who from where
June: I had these for instance during my confirmation um [long pause] it wasn't a disaster was just very mentally exhausting I was I stayed in two hours trying to defend my idea uh and my idea is very interdisciplinary and because I am a [job] I feel comfortable in that environment but my examiner is someone who would prefer specialization [pause] and of course when you don't see eye to eye um I think it's important to still keep the dialogue professional [pause] but probably he felt a bit uh destabilized by someone who would not accept the current affair we can say or the general state of things so we did did have a bit of an issue there he was very surprised when I told him that actually there are [discipline] departments around the world and I will not be out of work even if I do not rely on some [topic]

R: I mean so the end result of that confirmation report did you end up convincing him

June: he passed me he passed me @ so I they didn't he didn't tell me the result at the end so just didn't know what was going to be >in fairness< I did did agree with him at the end you wanted me to use a particular writer and because I was tired I was like yeah sure will do that okay and then of course I I didn't do it it's important to keep you you are a researcher you need to know you need to know what's the best approach and maybe it's a wrong approach and you can discuss that but I knew that this was a very wrong approach

R: right and so in terms of and so you face that resistance and you're still kind of continuing to resist that and are you still facing resistance from people in terms of your topic and your questions

June: mmmm well first of all resistance is not always negative ehm it pushes you to ask yourself okay if this is like if my subject is going to be a problem at the end of the day how can I find a way around it not to make it a problem eh it's a challenge so I did uh maybe you know I am just saying the confirmation was a disaster and that I hate my internal examiner but in reality it just motivated me motivated me more but there is resistance a lot of people in my field because they've been stuck on that particular author and on certain generalization to come across someone who does not comply with the status quo [pause] it's a bit problematic uh it challenges you to face the unknown and to face uncertainty I would like to like here in the [research institute] because virtually nobody is uh working on the same project it's much easier to get my ideas across and to get constructive input [long pause] but um in my in my school I'm not saying everybody my school it's just some people they they don't only resist to this type of project they resist to the idea that you can carry out an interdisciplinary um project and when when you're seriously focused on specialization everything that has to do with [topic] is either not understood or misunderstood or resisted um I’m not sane interdisciplinarity is better than specialization
they're both good and valid [long pause] but I prefer interdisciplinarity is it's more interesting

R: right and your supervisor than with your supervisor be quite supportive or would they kind of point out kind of challenges that you might face or like how does your supervisor respond

June: well I have two I used to have one and then I just decided that maybe another one was needed after the confirmation @ just because during the confirmation my supervisor did take the side of the examiner [pause] and it became apparent that even though he's interested in what I'm doing he just does not understand it the way I want so I found someone else and this second supervisor does see more eye-to-eye with me [pause] um so yeah um I'm not saying he my first supervisor is not supportive [pause] or is not interested it's just that he has other things to do [long pause] it happens the the thing I like about him is that he does give me a lot of free freedom is never very strict with deadlines he always says if I need more time to think things through I can do it [pause] and I really like that deadlines and then I kind of collapse into my oh my god I spent the last three months just researching and not writing and then I you write you know yourself you write ten thousand words in four days [long pause] but it's part of the game

R: yeah okay alright and um and so what do you think your supervisors or your professors expect of you like what are their expectations and how do they evaluate academic success

June: well I don't know because I never really cared about what they thought @@ I've I've gone into this theory very headstrong is like my idea it's my idea I want to carry it out to the end even if it's wrong and generally it's been it's been liked [pause] um but I don't think like I never actually asked myself how am I how my supervisors regard it’s a it’s a bit superfluous I would be more interesting in my peers so when I talk about my research with one of you guys if I see that you are really interested in that that excites me much more and validates me [pause] but my supervisors mm not really

R: okay and so outside as an undergrad and a masters what do you think the professors were looking for in terms of academic success like how were they were evaluating your exams your essays your presentations

June: mm well in my undergrad I was I was lucky because all my professors were smart uh people who really loved what they were doing the things they prized the most was creativity and thinking outside the box again it was a [institution] so certain things like innovation ability to carry out your own research not being afraid to express your idea were valued qualities here [long pause] I would for some of my lectures was the same they
wanted to see creativity they wanted to see something new they didn't just want you to
compare two texts that have been compared several times before you think they wanted
fresh ideas [pause] but not all of them I did I did a project on um on um I called it gaeltopia
it was about um seeing Western Ireland so the Gaeltacht as a sort of ghetto but also a
utopia this a turn of the [unt] I don't know how to pronounce it like [long pause] the turn of
the turn of the 20th century

June: it's easier when it's written it's a French word as well @

R: I don’t actually know what it is @

June: but yes so that was a bit of a daring either and it wasn't really appreciated so I was
just like oh well

R: yeah like did you end up getting a good mark or was it just they were like no

June: well they killed me in their comments but I still managed to get a 60 which I suppose
is a good mark

R: yeah I mean yes it's what it’s a two-two

June: yeah it's not a 40 I mean I would have been much more like ooooo if they had just
barely passed me but you know the thing that irritates me the most is not the low mark is
when you read the comments and it's clear that you didn't get the idea I wanted to to
express >which maybe is my fault< could be a language problem or it could be the fact that
I was just like seriously I wrote that essay in three days I deserved that mark [long pause]
but when I read the comment I just want the person to really to show that they read it they
understood it but they still want to point out that it's not a valid hypothesis

R: yeah and do you remember the comments on that essay

June: umm they were really different [sigh] so one of them was two lines just saying uh
that uh I still have that essay [pause] I just hol- held it closed just remind me that failure is
okay but one was like a very it was the kind of a comment I don't understand your point
that was the message the second one was every single page she picked out something that
was not historically or grammatically correct and she would just point to that [pause] for
every page and that's it [pause] so what I thought maybe I was just trying to convince
myself was okay they clearly did not get the idea but instead of but it was more of a
sensation I don't get where she wants to go instead of saying okay does she have a point or
she clearly does not have a point was more sort of I need to justify my mark being low or
being >it's not low< but like being like that's rather than giving constructive criticism also
I must say that I missed most of the classes because I found it very boring and so maybe
there was retaliation and I fully accept it
R: okay alright that’s interesting um so I guess in general what would you say students
need in order to succeed at [institution 1]
June: at [institution 1] @@@
R: yeah at [institution 1] @
June: @ well they need a lot @ @ @ I think they need more [pause] [click] they need to be
let me think about this [pause] they don’t need to be coddled but they don’t need to be ignored either everybody wants to be valued and feel part of of a community that
respect them and and think that they are important [pause] so they need to be given
responsibilities >within the limits of course< but they also need to feel that [pause] those responsibilities are not given to them just because they're given to them because it's part of their training and because what you want to get out of them is an excellent scholar not just scholar uh more training and not just training on um on um how to write better literature reviews or how to create a Photoshop presentation or how to write a poster um but also how to become better leaders how to work in a team um how to find confidence in what you're doing and not constantly being afraid of of failing [pause] the fear of failure should be addressed [pause] um the balance between your personal life and your career within [institution 1] should be discussed [pause] um there is a thing about mental illness as well which is not taking into consideration enough I mean how many times we come across an article that says that we are the one who are most vulnerable to this [long pause] but is anybody doing something about it? [pause] is your their sup- is your supervisor take into consideration that you're a human being and you are going through some tough shit in life [pause] and you don't know until you get to know that person but I mean you might think this person is completely normal their life is amazing and then you get to talk to them and they tell you you know I have this problem [pause] so you need to make supervisor more aware that [pause] they need to take care of their PhD students not just because they are PhD students but because they're human beings and they are your future in academia if you prepare a good student that does not that does not just reflect on the student it reflects on you so devote more time to them engage with them on a personal level [pause] I think what I find hilarious is that a lot of supervisors they're like oh I'm not the kind of parent and they don’t want to do parenting who said that you have to parent you need to be a mentor [pause] and you need to see the distinction [pause] and of course like [pause] you can say I don't want to take care of you on a personal level but if in the moment when you decide you want to take on a PhD student you need to you need to treat them well you need to listen to them to their problem and you need to have empathy and intelligent and emotional intelligence to connect with them [pause] because if you do that and it's
something that would take very very little from them okay it's it's part of your schedule you don't have to see them every week but when you see them it has to be quality time [pause] that will give them a lot more confidence that will teach them that it's okay to feel a certain way there is nothing wrong and this time will pass and you will find yourself in a better position in the future that if you miss a deadline is not the end of the world if you don't know a skill you can always uh learn it and you're here to learn you're not here to be the best uh early career researchers that ever was that's not the point of a PhD the point of a PhD is you need to train so in in the future you can do these things independently but for now we'll do this together so good mentoring is what would facilitate things a lot and as I said it's a small thing it can be having a cup of coffee together every now and then and just instead of talking about work talking about how you're doing do you need anything uh do you need to talk about anything do you need me to address you to someone who could help you who could help you perfection in some skill or could help you may be talking somethings through uhm it can be like not missing meetings or not rescheduling meeting continuously because then the person start thinking okay I have to meet with my supervisor and they are constantly scheduling [pause] do they really care about me or they just have to do this [pause] um correct things properly and not just half of it [pause] which is another thing that make you think you're valued instead of not being valued so all these small little things and encourage your student make them think positively uh teach them how they can turn a bad thought into a positive thought uh a challenge into an opportunity [pause] if you do this you don't need a lot of cushion a lot of mentoring because that person will finally reach uh a point when they can find the answer themselves when they need you a little bit less [pause] it's not a bad thing because they're able to walk with their feet but if you don't teach them how to walk you cannot expect them to do it themselves so I think these are some things that they need

R: how much of a factor do you think language is in academic success

June: mmm when I say from the perspective of someone who's extremely paranoid about my language skills um I'd say it's quite important at at our level [pause] lower levels [pause] yes but not as much lower levels you just need to convey an idea or even like you have let's say when you're in undergrad the only thing you need to do is prepare an essay and for that you can have a proofreader which you're covered and for presentation you just need to write a five minute presentation learn it by heart and deliver it that's what I was doing most of the times because I knew that otherwise I would end up in a loop especially during presentation when I would repeat myself because I was nervous [pause] and I didn't have mastery of the language at the PhD level is more important there is a stigma on
people who do not have a high level in English especially in English > other languages are < much more forgiving English in academia not that much so [pause] a lot of the time when someone is not proficient [pause] or cannot express themselves you don't have the patience of listening to them or you you don't think that they have your same intellectual capabilities and that's a big problem because of course English is sort of a lingua franca but is not the only language you need to give people time to adapt to actually master’s students in the [school] the master’s students are not selected for uh linguistic capability? they're selected because they need numbers and especially foreign student Asian students you would have a class at least half the Asian because they they pay non-EU fees and that goes into the school account or the faculty account so the more you can get in the better but are this students really prepared for the type of duties they have in the year or are you just are they just cash cows and a lot of the time you do think that their used only for their money I met some of the people the Asian students that were in my class years later and now they have a mastery of the language they are doing themselves PhDs or other masters but it’s just sad when you see that someone is introduced into a course [pause] we just read the with in mind just the fact that he brings in money and what other factors would you say impact and academic success and that could be things inside of [institution 1] outside of [institution 1]

June: um at the PhD level or a master level
R: um talk about both yeah
June: um it really depends what you're doing um when I was in [institution 4] we used to have field trips so when we had to write a review for for a movie [institution 4] would pay for us to go see this movie in the IFI I think this [pause] is not if the experience is nice but the fact that your university is paying for you makes you think ok they care about me you know they care about the fact that I'm getting trained [pause] here is just more like ok I’m in and out of the lecture um I don't really care what was going on the important is that is that I come in deliver my speech and I get paid for it and in [discipline] is a bigger and bigger problem every year because you don't have umm let’s see um you don't have a linked motif uh you just have individual lectures but they’re comparative in essence but they don't really teach you how to do it yourself it's quite confusing so maybe at a master level before you start the course just think it through because majority of courses in the [school] apart from [degree topic] they are not up to a good level and these reflects bad on the school it reflects bad on me because I graduated from the course so if people start saying oh these course was was really bad um like the feedbacks were non-existent uh I didn't learn anything then it does reflect negatively on me it shouldn't happen [pause] so
yeah and I would also remove all the [academic training department] thing from the human- for the Humanities because they don't cater for us they cater for business and Sciences but they get you in just because of they don't want discrimination to happen but you took it I don’t know if you took any of those classes
R: no I didn’t
June: uh don’t it uh they are they are three hours long and they are usually on how to write your CV how to write a literature review but you do get the sense that they’re not for you the area for someone is going to have a brilliant future in front of them in the industry but if you are from the humanities they're sort of like huh you're there we have to do it because otherwise people from the humanities would say that [academic training department] is discriminating but we don't really care about you
R: ok so what factors say outside of [institution 1] would impacts academic success if there's any
June: sorry can I just go back to the previous question um I also think that the school should take charge of making some courses compulsory the teaching course for first year should be compulsory now we have proposed it at the last school meetings and it seems like every time you propose something which would be beneficial for PhD students people are like oh that's going to take too much time we don't have time to organize it or we don't want to organize it [pause] uh but there should be certain things compulsory so that you're sure that everybody has the same opportunity when they start from the first year [long abuse] so what what was the other question
R: um so what things outside of [institution 1] do you think impacts academic success
June: [sigh] [pause] I think whatever is going on in your life [sigh] I think it would be wrong to think that a person does not have shit if you pardon the French uh going on in their life um the majority of time we don't see that but we don't want to see that [pause] but even small little things can impact hugely on how you do research >we're talking about in PhD terms< [pause] if you're not willing to take that into consideration and offer help then a person myself with a very small problem and that problem could become huge um [pause] I had [pause] had this problem last year because my house where I lived before was sold and I was completely broke so the only way I could remain in [institution 1] and study here was to live in a hostel [pause] eh and that is you know it's not an easy choice but is an essential choice because I knew if I went back to [country] for one year I would be miss out on so many chances I wouldn't have had the opportunity to be in the [research institute] or to have a job in library and I wanted to do
of course money was a big problem uh so I did that for one year it did bring a lot of good things in my life

R: you lived in a hostel for one year

June: in 65 hostels because I changed twice a week I needed to save money @@@ [sharp inhale] you know it was bad [emotional inflection] [long pause] but the alternative was go back

R: you just didn't have any extra cash [inhale] I try to see it as an opportunity

June: I think I handled it bad at the beginning< of the year like crying in the shower of the hostel every night but probably was just shock of the change and the fact that I was completely alone in Ireland didn't know anybody from the [research institute] didn't have any other PhD students who I could consider my friends my first year in PhD was very lonely but then you got better I met my boyfriend um I won a sort of hardship for being that poor [pause] so I think if you're willing to take on uh [pause] brave choices and you see them in a positive light that will help you not only to overcome it but also to get some benefits from it now this one is a small thing in comparison to what other people are going through um but you know when I did this uh I didn't like the only people who really cared where the people from the [research institute] uh my supervisor didn’t care [pause] it's not that he didn't care he was just like oh cool you're doing that okay uh I hope that he told that because he thinks I'm a very independent individual and I wouldn't just have um collapsed under the pressure of having to do that but still you know you want someone to worry about you uh even just to ask you if everything is okay because if you don't do the small little thing could become huge in the future [long pause] there is a big problem between let's talk about generations now because it's an important issue that to be addressed the previous generation of scholars and our professors they don't think like we do know some of them do but [pause] they they lived through a period well my right in your research was not like now when they didn't have to do the same things that we have to do now and when a lot of societal and cultural issues were not issues [pause] so for instance the mental health issue it's not perceived the same way from them than the way we perceive it and you can see there is a big gap they so they need to be more aware of certain things which is not mean it does not mean that they have to parent us of spoon feed us it just means that they need to understand that we're in a vulnerable position and we need help [pause] and sometimes just asking how you how you agh how are you or to ask if you want to talk about things can make a huge difference [pause] how many PhD students drop their their supervisor because their supervisor is not up to the level to actually help them [pause] and how diffic- like I I have the idea that the school
makes this very difficult it's sort of shame thing to do as if you really have to support your PhD supervisor even though they are not doing the same with you this is something that should change >hopefully in the future< because like if someone is not able to supervise they're not able to supervise they have other skills but supervision is not one of them and you should take that into consideration and prohibit them from taking PhD students because then you end up with >and I've seen like< when you enter the PhD community you see everything you see people who have bad supervisors and then they go to the counseling service and they uh this thing about antidepressant is [long pause] like I don't I don't understand it I think that I have one of the girls who just recently finished the PhD she had some trouble sleeping and that's what she was prescribed R: really June: yes and you know she she had a very rough last year not saying she didn't [pause] but I think that before you get yourself into that world of medication [pause] if this were sleeping problem you should really see someone who helps in a more natural way and you should have a supervisor who is aware of your problem and tries to instead of say like this is not my problem just go to the counseling service I don't care if you take these things it's you know it's not my problem someone who says can we talked about this before and maybe just find another way for you to [pause] feel better [pause] I'm not saying that some medications are not needed I'm saying for sleeping problems maybe not June: yeah antidepressants might not be the best solution for sleeping problem when stressed they didn't take it didn't end up taking it but they have a prescription for that I mean so like it has to be a medication that really helps not like something that might sort of help and probably this this sleeping problem was was partly due to bad supervision creates way more stress than it’s supposed to >I don’t know< I'm kind of going around the question that’s totally fine it's yeah I mean it's it's semi structured for a reason because things are supposed to kind of just come out and we talk about it yeah um also well my research doesn't just focus on language eh I’m basically taking it from an angle of you can’t really separate things from other things so yeah so don’t worry June: if you want if you want me to just talk about language R: no I don't let you just talk about language I want you just talk about whatever you want to talk about so yeah I'll cut you off if I think you're going too far off um so kind of going back to back to when you first came to Ireland when you were 19 did you have to take any standardized language exams to prove your level to get into University
June: yes so the ones that are required were the Cambridge certificate of English either an A in the advanced or C in the proficiency there was an IELTS maybe a six point five on the IELTS test and then in the TOEFL it was I don’t know I took the Cambridge one

R: okay alright and do you have any feelings about the Cambridge one do you remember taking it

June: oh my god it was terrible it was like seriously my brain was completely fried I took the advance in I arrived in August I took the advance in December which like I I was thrown into the advanced level of my I I took an English course they didn't have any space in the intermediate so they just put me in the advanced and I had no idea what was going on I seriously could not >no but that was helpful< because I couldn't speak I didn't know any of the words but having people around that would continuously speak and interact with me in different languages was very helpful challenging but very helpful and then I start preparing the advance it was a three-month course and meanwhile actually I didn't start working then so I took the advance and I passed with C and then I started working and I realized that my language improvement got like my language got better better just because I was interacting with a variety of people every day and I really needed to convey messages repeat the menu uh deal with problems so then I decided to take the proficiency but I wanted to make sure that I could also that I had a Plan B so I took the proficiency and the advance together [pause] and the funny thing is that I passed both of them with C and the advance I got C instead of B because my language assessment was really low and in the proficiency I got sixty which is the pass mark because my language skills they were considered really high that was the only thing that saved me and I found it hilarious because I took them one day apart from the other so how could my language be so low one day and so high on the other day it doesn't make any sense

R: right and were you taking it was just general English or was an exam preparation

June: uhm it's general English they usually what's they it’s been such a long time @@ what they do is you have one part is about filling gaps you have some words that are >they are not even used< in colloquial English like in lieu of uh or some

R: but like not only the exam but um the classes that you were taking the course

June: oh um

R: general was it marketed as general

June: no they were classes that were specifically done for the advanced or high proficiency the like it was the same language school they just got enough people to do the advanced course and then those people did the proficiency course as well [pause] so yeah it was
mostly doing exercises we had our own book to prepare for the exam and because these
exams were timed you would have to follow certain guidelines there are certain things that
are going to pop up then we were trained to know what to expect it's a bit unfair because
people who just take the exam without knowing that there are certain tricks are at a
disadvantage
R: right and do you think that the exam and the exam or the courses do you think that they
prepared you for academic study in Ireland
June: I think so yeah um [pause] I think that my first year in [institution 4] was a
particularly bad one @@ in terms of language [long pause] just because they didn't know
like I really wanted to participate I was so excited that I was finally doing the course
you've always dreamt of doing because I was dreaming to do it here in [institution 1] but
it's a different story [pause] but I was excited I wanted to talk [pause] and there was
something that stopped me even now sometimes when I look for a word I cannot find it or
had to repeat myself and or I hate that it makes me feel so insecure [click] but back then
maybe I wasn't that conscious that my English was bad @@ so I lived in blissful ignorance
but it did that it did help me out and our we had the one teacher he was always very nice
very supportive encouraging us all the time [pause] and that made the difference we want
someone who makes you feel it's okay if you make mistakes we all do and that you're
preparing an exam you're not preparing the rest of your life [pause] so yeah
R: and um let’s see where am I here and what type of preparation would suggest
international students do before coming to study at [institution 1]
they need to do more language assessment um [long pause] I understand is expensive
and I'm not saying they have to do a course but they need to know that in the moment
when they start a course in [institution 1] the level of language required is at least upper
intermediate if >not every subject< I cannot speak for the sciences I suppose if you are
good scientists you don't need strong language skills you need to be able to work in a lab
uh proficiently but if you're studying literature or history or English you need to have a
high level of language not- you don't have to be the best uh speaker in the world but you
need to be aware that you you have to make it you have to make yourself understood by
other people he has a work a little bit on your accent if your accent is very strong just try to
slow down [pause] and you need to have basic grammar [long pause] because you’re
missing out you're missing out on conversations with your with your classmates with your
peers that are valuable [pause] these conversations might give you idea for an essay they
may give you idea for a PhD in the future or they might help you find your perfect career
but if you don't have the language skill what you're going to end up doing is sticking up
with people who speak your own language and avoid the moments when when you have to engage with the rest of the group you miss out so yeah they need to be more strict with language assessment ideally someone could come here in Ireland a few months before and while they're doing the English course there are so many English schools around here they also have the opportunities to start engaging with native speakers after I I believe after six months your language skills from zero are at least at an intermediate upper intermediate

R: and so coming back to [institute 1] here so if you could give advice to faculty in helping and supporting international students what would that advice be so this is advice to the professors

June: hmmmm [pause] you need to be aware of the differences and of the problems that not speaking a language brings with it many times we we don't think about the emotional state of a person who does not speak our language we just say oh they should study more in truth it's more difficult than it seems like I like everybody in here or like in [institute 1] who is not a native speaker but speaks good English have started from zero so everybody can understand the difficulty of trying to um become fluent speakers [long pause] but a lot of professors because this is their first language they don't speak another language they don't understand uh the problems it brings with it [long pause] so more awareness more attention as well you cannot grad- like this is my personal opinion then of course you can but you cannot grade the essay of a non-native speaker the same way you grade the essay of someone who has spoken the language for their entire life you need to be sensitive to the difficulties of the first [pause] in comparison to the second if a non-native speaker makes the grammar mistake you need to point it out but I think you should be harsher on the person who speaks that language natively is but it's the same for every language I mean if you teach an Irish student [language] you cannot grade them super harshly just because they don't speak the language fluently you need to give them time to get acquainted to get familiar with the expressions idioms small things like in English you will be putting the S at the end of third person verbs [pause] which something that [nationality] people have a hard time um learning so you need to be sensitive also to what to the problems the different languages have with [#unt] and never take it for granted maybe they could have a training course on language sens- sensitivity

R: sensitivity and would the advice um I guess more generally would you have any more general advice or for professors and dealing with students in general not necessarily just international
June: [pause] yeah treat them more like human beings @ uh use them as a resource
because they are a resource maybe it's just my impression I always think they look at us as
if we were stupid uh useless uh non-um uncapable of being inside a community would not
with me very unwanted >I'm speaking for my school< and for the PhD students in our
school [pause] they [pause] well first of all we always had a problem with trying to get all
PhD students together because they wouldn't give us the names of all the PhD students
which makes sense if you think that they don't want you to create a group that might raise
issues and every time you do raise issues there is a lot of resistance there they don't want to
change old structures and think about the future [pause] it's a face I mean what they will
retire and we will be in power then we'll probably have other problems with the next
generation but I think embracing embracing a generation of new researchers as sources of
like as resources it doesn't hurt [pause] give them more responsibility teaching was
mean if you have a problem with the master why don't you take your PhD students who
might be interesting in recreating the course and give them these responsibilities ok for this
year you're going to work in a team and you're trying to look at the problems of these
master course and try to come up with innovative solutions this is very good for your CV if
you are a PhD student [pause] it's good for the master course [pause] because the PhD
students has more time than you do and it’s like okay the problems are this this this this
the solutions that we propose are this this this this but no PhD students are used to
filling gaps of lectures you don't want to teach um they are and that's that's @ about it @ at
least of PhDs that I know in our school but you could use them to do so much more [pause]
the [research institute] is a good it's a place where you get the majority of your
opportunities from my point of view [pause] because otherwise I would I wouldn't have
had any opportunity at all the only opportunity I got from my school was to review a book
and that's it no conferences no articles um and you are kept in severe isolation in there um
you are not stimulated in meeting your colleagues and sharing ideas and talk about yourself
[pause] so if you don't if you keep all of your PhD students separate the of course they
don't create community uh they are not aware of their rights as student which is a positive
thing for you especially in places where regulations are not followed to the letter or where
some problems could become a pain if someone brings it up [long pause] but you are not
helping you or your students in entering a discourse in being comfortable talking about
their topic with with their peers [pause] so

R: and if you could give advice to future students of //institution 1

June: don’t come
June: no I’m serious don't do it. Here. [pause] I know it sounds very harsh but first of all funding is **really** scarce uh if you want to get yourself into a PhD without funding either you know and you're 100% convinced that this is an investment for your future life and all of that money will come back to you but you **must** be certain or don't do it if you don't have funding [pause] I would rather go out have an honest job for few years think about your research and be passionate about your research so that when you enter your program you really know where you're going and you **want** to go there um and also you with the covert partially at least [pause] also perhaps starting a PhD when you're really young is not a great idea you're not fully formed [pause] um you're not mature enough to battle against some of the challenges and if you don't have a network that is there to support you uh like you see a lot of time students drop out or they lose interest for what they're doing and it's a pity [pause] nobody should be left behind so network maturity um passion for what you're doing [long pause] and don't rely too much on the fact that **[institution 1]** has a reputation because that reputation might be gone in the next few years just go in a university that's represent you better wherever you can find a supervisor who cares about you [long pause] **[institution 2]** is really good so R: I've also heard as well @@ June: @@ you see I think fundings it's something that can be solved but bad supervision is something that we create more and more and more problems you better have a good supervisor because a good supervisor knowing that you don't have fundings will give you alternatives but a bad supervisor they just will not care I know I seem to complain a lot about supervisions and people in the school [pause] but um [long pause] it's my impression that things are going that way and it's not a good impression [pause] I have also met supervisors of other students in how to are amazing in the [school] seems to really care about their students they meet every week they have actual meetings of PhD students from the same school everyyyyy one or two weeks where they have coffee together they have biscuits they can talk about the like they can have an exchange of how the week was this is something that should be fostered **every** school but of course the [school] probably is able to do it because they deal with [topic] so they know all the tricks [pause] but why not take um why not um look at other schools and the way they approach certain problems and try to learn something [pause] it could be a solution to a lot of problems but of course you need to find someone who is willing to take the time to do that R: um so if you could give advice to say [institution 1] were to develop a program like a summer program for students to come to prepare for their studies what would your advice be to the organizers of my program like what should it include what should they teach
June: these are international students right
R: um yeah typically that's what it would start out to be
June: and would you cater to a specific level of language or not
R: um so well I'll tell you what what has been approved and what I would like so what has
been approved it's a pre-sessional program for students who have a six or a five point five
IELTS and never to get to a six point five but instead of taking IELTS at the end they
would take our //assessment
June: IELTS is a very bad assessment
R: like we would develop a different assessment so that's what's been approved what I
would like to see is it open to anyone including native speakers to help acquaint people
with institution 1 expectations language etc. etc.
June: um I think having your own um assessment is very good because the IELTS I just
don't like it especially the part where you have to talk about technical things it
makes no sense it makes sense if you are specializing in that but if you specialize in
something completely different does it help you to know how to call uh a part of that
machine no it doesn’t so that's why I decided to take the Cambridge it is only language and
everybody has the same possibility you don't need to be specialized in something you just
need to know good English so I like the idea of of your own assessment um maybe to make
student comfortable have let them having presentation in front of a public so that they start
being able to learn how to convey an idea without being nervous and of course this
takes practice but it's a summer program so you would have three months um teach them
how to create a project from scratch and how to work in team ummm then [pause] can be
about projects I think would be the best project that has as a focus language so things that
you have to write like write it on a poster things um that you have to present so of course
you have a series of presentations [pause] so that you can make them feel comfortable
when they're going to do it later on you need to teach them to have a discussion so a lot of
the time is as simple as saying okay this is how you structure your argument during a
discussion this is your idea this is what another person could say and this is how you can
reiterate your idea [pause] a second time to pass it through or how you accept someone else
opinion [pause] debate so putting someone under pressure and having to push them to to
think and speak at the same time very quickly [pause] and think you need to get them out
there if you keep them in the same environment they will try to stick with people who
speak their own language it’s normal everybody does if you get them out there and you get
them to interact with people whose first language is English they will be forced to learn um
so yeah I think this could be of use
R: so the last question I have for you is are you aware of any support provided for international students either ask your department level or at the wider college level.

June: there is a global room the global room has something to do with international students no?

R: well yeah June: I'm not sure because I'm not uh I don't hang around with a lot of international students I don't see them as international because once they are in the [research institute] the differences are really they they are minimal you don't meet someone who has serious problems with the language and when you teach your classes most of these students are Irish or they have English as the first language so the interactions with them is not is not difficult and in case there is a linguistic interaction you know that this is not their first language so they [pause] so you try to simplify everything but apart from that I actually don't know of any support that is available [pause] societies probably? society would would give you that support [pause] but again it is true let’s say you speak French you go to the French society it's your brain telling you we're scared because everybody here is speaking a foreign language we need to be with people who can speak our own language so in a sense yes you go into a community they understand you and appreciate you and makes you feel valued and not alone but it does affect negative negatively on your on your language [pause] you can create like some sort of bodies but in experience take one person who does not speak language give them one person who's native and they don't speak the same language but that would help the person >even passive learning< itself I see with my boyfriend he's level is he's not at my level but being together I can see he picks up words words that di- I didn't mean to teach him but does start using them in the way he speaks [pause] or if he does not understand something he ask me so finding boyfriend is also very useful @ @ I'm not joking @ when I arrived here my first boyfriend was my English teacher and that helped me so much [long pause] well @ you can have a speed-dating event @ @ meet an Irish @@ there you go R: people would go to that they would actually go to that @@ June: I mean if you think about it if you're foreign you're super exotic here in Ireland I mean if your skin is one tone one tone darker you’re exotic um and it's good for you because you can meet someone who's a lovely person and thus help you learn a language why not get married with the person @@ there you go R: you’ve got all things covered @@ June: @@ yes speed dating is the way to go
R: so yeah so that's all the questions that I have for you but um are there any questions you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

June: mmmm well I didn't really like I didn't know what to expect I just thought you were going to ask me about my experience as an international student [pause] I'm happy it went like this I know I complained a lot I just think certain things should be addressed [long pause] I I always worry that maybe I didn't get the idea across properly that maybe there were some things that >one thing that I would appreciate< is if people when I started speaking would stop me if they don't understand where I'm going a lot of time we’re very polite we listen to a person and I do the same I listen to someone and I have no idea what they're saying but uh I still say yeah yeah you're perfectly right I I wish that someone would tell me you need to speak more slowly it's very confusing what you're saying you need to re-elaborate your thought because it would be >it sounds like someone< would offend me but it would be very helpful for me

R: so having probably less afraid to say wait a minute I don't quite understand what you're saying

June: yeah [pause] it depends on the person of course you need to know the person to know if you can stop them and say what? [pause] and of course the more you know the person the more you can tell them look I'm just a bit confused can you explain it to me again [pause] you wouldn't do this with strangers and of course I'm not saying that you have to correct a person all the time but maybe you'd let them know that they need to to do something to improve clarity I would want people to tell me

R: right well just so you know I understood everything

June: okay that’s good I'm happy @

R: um is there anything else that you'd like to express

June: no I just hope to I just hope to see some of the changes carried out [pause] I hope these summer projects will work well um [pause] especially because it would be beneficial for my school [long pause] and even make [institution] more appealing to international students knowing that they can take a course of three months before they start their uh their masters or it's for masters students I suppose

R: mainly yeah yeah

June: you don't get there aren't many international students at undergraduate level

R: no but there's also a year-round program for them a foundation program in [institution] so they have the option of coming for a full year before entry to undergraduate um so that's a bit different and that includes content and language and then whereas this with more just be language so I’d more masters PhD
June: I think it's a great idea I think it's much needed and the more people you can get on board [pause] the more beneficial it will be for for the different masters [school] really needs that they really really need it you just see that people are quite lost in that course takes away all the fun of discussing [topic] or exchanging ideas sounds sounds great

R: perfect than you

June: great it was it was very long

R: no that's a perfect that's great

Katie

R: all right so my first question for you is what do you think your strengths are academically

Katie: Oh Dear um I think a lot of what made my application successful getting into [institution 1] was um based on experience not necessarily the academics I mean not that my academics were poor but um I've worked for quite a few years after graduating for my undergrad degree so I think a lot of what I was able to kind of express to them was a lot of experience that I've had so um academically I guess if I go back far enough um I'm very analytical so I think I'm able to kind of like read through articles and textbooks and think really critically and I didn't really have to be taught too much how to do that um cuz I think that was a huge benefit and it continues to be because obviously like with postgraduate degree you're being asked to think really critically about the information you presented so um that's definitely a huge strength I think in the program that I'm in and um then just the field that I'm in too

R: what would any difficulties or weaknesses be in terms of academics

Katie: again kind of the same thing @ it's been a while since my undergrad um I graduated in 2008 so 10 years um and so I think trying to get back into the swing of things and get back into like the routine of me making sure that I'm really self-disciplined to sit down and actually study and make sure I go to the library yeah and then just kind of the differences between the [country] system and the system here is still taking a lot of adjustment one of the big ones um is you know in undergrad we were expected to buy all our textbooks and the teachers would you know assign specific things so that they knew that I'm gonna assign you two course books that are like the core information that we want you to have and then you can go to the library for supplemental things um but here it's kind of expected that everything you just get from the library and you don't buy your own books which is fine and saves me money but um we're finding it like in my course really difficult to to get the
materials that we need and it's always like a competition to see who has the book who can
get it out next to who’s on the next hold and 25 students sharing a single book for one of
our courses is really really difficult I’m finding so they're just kind of some of those
differences and expectations and I just got my first grades back for one of my um papers
that I wrote and so @ just remembering to look at it within the context of how it's graded
here and not look at the score that I got to be like that's a C you know like that's terrible
and I don't accept a grade like that but here it's a very good score so that's kind of kind of
adjusting to the differences

R: yeah I mean can you tell me more about those differences so things like the books and
not having enough books to go around and the grading scale um and you also touched on
expectations like what what
Katie: mm-hmm um well I think it's kind of a general difference between undergrad and
postgraduate work you're expected to do a lot more on your own um a lot of self-study
based on what you learn in class which is expected you know I kinda went into the master's
degree knowing it would be like that um so I don't think that's a major difference between
the two but definitely just kind of um the supports that are available I think it's easier to
access them at universities in the [country] and I think that [institution 1] has a ton of um
you know supports and accessibility things and um groups and societies and things like
that but so much of it runs during class time for me so like my my course is Monday
through Thursday pretty much all day in the classroom 10:00 to 6:00 every day um which
again is kind of expected and fine and I get Friday's off which is great but it really limits
what I'm able to do and how I'm able to kind of branch out within other interest areas here
which is kind of disappointing um also really hard to be coming from [country] where I
would have expected it in my undergrad I did work while I was in school to kind of help
offset the cost of it um and that's I'm finding really difficult to even like try and find the
time where I would put it in here um even though a lot of my Irish classmates do but then
also kind of just how to go about doing that there's not a lot of information about like here's
how you can like go job searching here are the things you need to get in order before you
do um and then I also have like some health um things too to try it so trying to navigate
that system was really difficult and almost made it so I was just thinking I didn't think I
would be able to come here because of um just how difficult it was to try and figure out
how I would get things covered or how I'm gonna get a particular medication and so we
have a global I don’t know if she's part of the global room I called her like our global
liaison as part of the [school] um who is incredible she was so helpful from the moment
that we um kind of accepted our position in the program like she was emailing all of us I
assume everybody but probably mostly just the international students to try and ask about just anything she should could do to help and she was instrumental in making sure that I could like tick all the boxes in order to even get on the plane to come over

R: that’s good to hear then that there’s someone

Katie: yeah no she’s incredible @@

R: brilliant yeah and so you the modules are obviously quite long or the days are quite long can you describe to me like what's required in the modules what is the day-to-day like here

Katie: um I think they've changed it recently from what I've heard last year um the classes were set up a little bit differently um this year they're set up in blocks so every class that I have is once a week for three hours a day which is really difficult to kind of adjust you it's a lot of time to sit and listen to the same subject and try to like keep your mind really active and attentive to like this really important information um then some lectures are really good about breaking up the time and like doing activities and things to kind of keep you engaged um and some of them aren't and so I think it's it's difficult and a couple of classes that I'm finding more challenging are ones that I know are really important @

like I do it a [topic] course and a [topic] course for the [discipline] program and those are hugely important and so like important to me because I'm not from Ireland so learning that in the Irish context is really important and both of those I'm finding the lecturers aren't very dynamic and it's really hard to sit for three hours and listen to something like [topic] @@

you know process it and be able to like absorb everything that I'm being um taught and so I find that kind of difficult like I said I think that last year they got feedback from the students where they had it I think a couple of times a week for an hour so a piece and they didn't like that for some reason and I don't know why @@ because I would prefer that um but I think it's kind of with the program they do take a lot of feedback from the students into consideration and I think at the end of um I'm not sure the end of the semester but definitely at the end of the year they try to get as much information from the students about their experience as possible and kind of adjust things accordingly um which is great and I think I don't know if that's like a common kind of [pause] uh method and [institution 1] if it's just the [department] @@ which I can totally see um our faculty is really great um really accommodating they're really responsive to the things that we have brought up as issues um we had a problem with one of the rooms that they assigned us it was in the [building] and you know faces that busy street with all those windows and so it would just be way too loud and none of us could like hear the lecturer and like having the discussions you couldn't hear somebody that's down at the other end of the room um and there were
really responsible about like changing things around kind of accommodating what they
could um so I'm trying to remember the question what was it sorry @@
R: um just like what the modules are like so is it mainly just lecture based discussion based
do you have any like practice or anything like that
Katie: um it's a professional course so the first semester is all lectures and then next
semester starting in January we'll have a professional placement at an agency within
Ireland um and the expectation for the [department] is that we have two in the master's
level um I think there are four in the undergrad and one has to be a [type] placement so
I've already met with the course director about where we'd like to go for next year and I
think I'm gonna try and do my [type] once so that's with like [organization] or with
[population] so um we've had speakers come in from each of these different areas to kind
of explain what it will be like for us when we're on our placements and I think they're
trying really hard to um help us understand like what it's going to entail and how intensive
it will be but also not to make it so intimidating that we know none of us want to do it
which is really good especially for this type of field for it you know what there's so much
pressure in [discipline] to be really competent right away and um they're doing a good job
of kind of like you're students you are going to be students when you're on this placement
so then we're not gonna just expect you to go out and do an assessment or like go to court
and argue why you think [situation] so
R: that's comforting that you won't have to do that @@ immediately
Katie: yes @@ thankfully we'll be able to watch somebody else doing it for the first
time @ so I think that's really good and then obviously in year 2 we would have part of
finishing our dissertations or our thesis and then um kind of the similar style again for a
semester would be teaching and then a second placement in the the last semester as well
and then when we graduate we have um the [government] credential right away so we can
practice as credentialed [job] right away
R: okay and um just out of curiosity is that credential is it transferable between countries or
Katie: um it's mainly Irish umm the degree it really I mean I don't I can't speak to any
other country um I mean most of the students that are international from our program
would be um [nationality] we have one Canadian and one from Saudi Arabia um and I
haven't talked to those two but what their expectations are about going back um I've looked
into it and it's it's a process definitely with the licensing boards back in [country] they'd
have to recognize my degree first of all and kind of find the equivalencies to make sure
that it matches up with all their standards um [discipline] is definitely I think an older
profession in [country] than it is here and so it’s more well established and they have more kind of expectations about what they want from [job] so the the credential is not transferable but once I get like the degree and that sort of thing kind of um transferred over with the equivalency then I can apply to be licensed in [country] at the master’s level what I'm finding kind of difficulty difficult is just um in [country] I think there's more variety with a Masters in [discipline] to kind of specialize in a particular area that they don't have here in Ireland so like I've kind of always been thinking [specialty] and that's not even it's not a thing in Ireland like they don't do it at all here so kind of adjusting to what is available here yeah and um what I could do with it in the long run R: okay all right and um so what are your assignments like for your modules and also for clinical like what are you actually assessed on Katie: um depending on the course I think the majority of our courses have like a fairly large paper due at the end of it and we um have a couple of courses that only ran for like five weeks um so we had like a group work course where we had to um create a group intervention and then roleplay in front of the class so that was part of it and we had to write a paper on the experience at the roleplay and why we justified doing what we did um and then write an individual assignment to kind of correspond to the group project um and I haven't got the results back but not one that was the first one we turned in and I'm really nervous about it just like the group um always @I @kind of just like it's not all entirely me being responsible so I have to like put a lot of trust in other people and just hope that it goes well the rest of them like I said it's mostly like a paper at the end of it I think our exams at the end of the year we have one um exam and it's two courses or two of the um I think they're on the same module like we have four modules and then each one is divided up into four five classes um and so it'll be two classes within that module for one exam um I mean it's like [topic] and then [topic] @ or something basically something@ that they can test on@ essentially um and so I'm not entirely sure how that one will go or like what the and I know it’s essay tests they’ve already given us an idea of what the questions may be and how to prepared for it but it's primarily the papers and then getting assessed for the ability to kind of think critically about the topic and do the readings that they assign but then also like the additional things and draw on other things and experiences and topical stuff to so and I mean I mean it's kind of basic what any other course may be but that's primarily what we’re being assessed on R: okay and how would you evaluate your current academic success
Katie: well I mean I got my grades yesterday so I think I'm great um we did a um presentation in one of our classes that got graded and um that was a a another group one and we scored really highly on it which is great and then the paper that I got back also is in the first class honor whatever that top level is which is really great you know like I saw a 78 and was like oh man that's just terrible to me but you know for here in our system I'm like that's a really good score and kind of adjusting my response to that number you know like I saw a 78 and was like oh man that's just terrible to me but you know for here in our system I'm like that's a really good score and kind of adjusting my response to that number.

R: yeah was that system explained to you when you first came

Katie: [click] not really I knew it would be different um and I had kind of looked up on my own um we talked about it I think in one of our classes but it's also my peers that we've talked about it hasn't been like presented by the university or by any of our professors at all so it's really just we talked about it together and like so I mean am I okay when I see something in the seventies and they're like no that's great you want that type of score so um

R: would it have helped if the professor's kind of said this is the grading score this is you know what is considered good here in etc.

Katie: I think it would have um we were given um a handbook for the program but it's like three hundred and something pages and I started to read it and got like 40 pages in and was like this is just no so anytime I have a question and they say it's in the handbook I do like a keyword search and try to find the information that I need cuz it's just it's way too much and how that's presented and they didn't it's not like they printed it and handed it to us so you can like physically go look through it it's you know I went and looked it up on the course website and found it so um I think it would have been helpful to have a little bit more of an introduction our first day of classes I was kind of expecting that you know like to meet the professors get the syllabus and kind of talk over the expectations for the year but it we really got tossed right in like we started our group project the very first day of class in August so it was really very intimidating situation because we don't know any each other we don't know you know like the expectation for the class or like really what we're doing and all of a sudden it's like here's your group project you're gonna turn this in at five weeks here's your group and get started it was really like we all were just really overwhelmed that very first day and I think I mean it we were able to adjust pretty quickly but I think it would have been nice to have you know a day or so of just getting to know the course and the lecturers things like that.

R: um and so you've already described a little bit of how you think or how you know that the professors are grading but how do you think that they're assessing academic success in general like what are their expectations for you as a student.
Katie: um definitely a lot of class discussion um especially in the classes where we're not having a formal assessment they talk a lot about like class participation and um we're supposed to really be able to engage with the topic and so they not that they asked a ton of questions but we try to volunteer as much discussion as we can um partially to break up the class a little bit so it's not just the pressure on the lecturer to just to be talking at us because that doesn't help them or us um so I think that's that's probably a big part of it um is how well you're able to kind of critically evaluate what's being presented to you and have a discussion or present your opinion and talk about it during class um [long pause] yeah I don't think that's really I mean in some of the classes that's really the only way that the professors are gonna know really anything about us individually before we turn in the paper and even then they may not be able to put us you know with faces to names their classes not that big I think there's 21 of us now so you know it shouldn't be that [pause] big but when you only see somebody you know once a week and maybe their lecturer style is to just stand up front and just really talk at you there's not a lot of individual um attention that's given

R: mm-hmm and are the expectations that they have are they communicated clearly to you do they verbally say yes is it all just in the handbook is it just kind of Katie: it's pretty much all in the handbook and when we ask questions more specifically they'll say oh that's in the handbook like one thing that you know for academic writing for me coming from [country] APA style was really the only method of like citation and referencing that I used in undergrad part of that you know could have been I was a [discipline] major in undergrad too so it was very much the style um and I don't know anything about that Harvard citation style so I've had to learn some of that they're um so far the professors that we've had have been fairly um neutral about that and kind of just say like stick to one style or the other you can do APA or Harvard as long as you stick to one of them um which is really nice because I haven't been @forced @to @change everything um but I think you know I'll probably run into professors that are a little bit more strict about sticking with Harvard and I will have to kind of modify things but um overall they'll say a lot oh that's in the handbook refer to the handbook you should have read that @three hundred @page @document @before class@@@

R: okay all right and so that's the in general um what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1] Katie: [click] um speaking as an international student it's a very frustrating experience to try and get here there's it felt like anyway there's so little communication that's done interdepartmentally that you know I would have a question and somebody would say um
"talk to the academic registry the academic registry would tell me to talk to some other department or talk to the [discipline] department or you know we don't do that here talk to someone else but never give me who I need to talk to or I go talk to that person they send me back to that academic registry it's very disjointed and was a really very frustrating experience especially doing it from overseas um the timeline also was not explained to me um when I was kind of applying for everything and kind of working on financial aid and that sort of thing you know in [country] I would have my financial aid and everything straightened out by like April May for the upcoming school year and here they didn't even put my application in until July and so that was so frustrating and so um just anxiety provoking to have a month to know whether or not I would have my loans approved in order to come you know and like to have this whole plan and to have given up on other um acceptances at universities in [country] in order to pursue this um and so it was a really difficult process and it was very frustrating to go through this so I think there should be I don't know just more coordination and more understanding of like all of the different areas that need to coordinate to make a student able to come here successfully um and I know I think there was I mean some extenuating circumstances I don't want to be a total jerk I know like the financial office in academic registry um lost an employee like right at the time when the applications were getting sent in for financial aid um and so it was you know down to one person I think that there should definitely be more than two people at all but then it was down to just one um and he did not really seem to have his stuff together that's really frustrating um and you know and then from from [country] were like my primary mode of communication was email because I couldn't really call with the time difference and then also just like trying to get a phone number which would even work was really frustrating and like I said I had like a bunch of other things that like made the decision to come and um how to get here really difficult with like the health stuff and so who I could ask to try and figure out how I would make that happen you know it was really limited and um like I said like our global ambassador [name] is fantastic and I just can't even imagine if I didn't have her in my department what I would have done I definitely wouldn't have gotten here um I probably would have given up after I got accepted and just went well I can't get insurance because I have this chronic health condition and nobody will accept me so that's not happening @ @ you know @ so I think there's definitely more that could be done to support international students coming um I think the orientation week that they did was way too generic um and it's it's nice to have an orientation week and I definitely you know like came here specifically because I was like oh an extra week to kind of like get things figured out and ask questions would be
wonderful um but the way that they kind of ran it um was very much how I would imagine an undergrad orientation where like you've never been to university before here's where we talked about like nightlife don't get an STD and make sure you're safe like it just was way too generic and a way to just not geared towards higher academics I think um and I think it would have been really helpful during that week to have like one or two days of orientation with your department specifically um you know like have a mixer or something where you're gonna be meeting your lectures and your professors and meeting your cohort um and your peers at that time rather than like the very first time that you meet them being thrown into a group project during class um so I think that would be really helpful um and then I think you know and again I think my experience with the [discipline] department is probably a lot different than somebody that's coming in for like biology or something where maybe the lecturers and the professors aren't quite as like person um centered and oriented to um kind of facilitate that experience so you know my experience may be you know better than some and you know potentially worse than others but it just um I think it would be helpful to kind of like facilitate the transition a little bit more.

R: so um so how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success

Katie: I mean I think it definitely has a huge component there's a lot of you know really funny experiences where the teacher will say something in class and I'll look at my peers and just like what and they'll have to explain it to me or like you know an acronym that they know really well here gets thrown out and I just like you know floored sometimes be difficult to make sure that I'm understanding it that concept correctly I don't think it's you know it's definitely not insurmountable for me because I speak this same language because I can look to my neighbor and I say hey what really quickly it gets resolved um the lecturers are not at all concerned about like different spellings and stuff which is one thing that I was like I'm gonna have to learn how to spell everything with u's put a u in color and behavior and all these words that they don't belong but they're not you know like they're not really worried about it and that's kind of like the referencing style too they're kind of like well pick one and stick to it if you're gonna go with the American spelling just stick to it throughout your essay don't you know try and go back and forth um which I think again you know might be more lenient in my program than in others or you know vice versa um I know with the student that's from Saudi Arabia in our class we've talked a few times just kind of about her experience um and she definitely finds it more difficult because her native language isn't English and she will talk about it sometimes where she's like I think in Arabic in my head like that's like the primary
language in my mind then like I have to translate it coming out and speaking so she doesn't talk a ton in class um which you know I can see is being really detrimental for the lecturers getting to know her and if what they're grading us on is our contribution during class if she's being graded you know potentially less than somebody who talks more because you know it's a little bit more difficult for her to like just even get her thoughts out um in in that environment so I think um for me personally it's probably not too much of an issue and if it is in the in the areas where I've noticed it um it gets you know kind of resolved pretty quickly but I think for somebody who doesn't have English as their native language it can be a huge barrier

R: and um one of their factors do you think play and academic success and and that could be things you're in [institution 1] and also outside of [institution 1]

Katie: um [pause] I think I mean the library hit stuff is incredible that they offer that um I haven't been able to take advantage of it because they're all during class times um really rarely they'll have something on the Friday and if it is it’s like at 8 in the morning and I’m not going to get up to go to that my one day off um and so I like I know that there's a lot of available options um unfortunately just with our program we're not really able to take advantage of it even just getting to the mailroom before they close at five o'clock it's not possible most days and so like everything that I put off during the week has to be done on Friday right which is frustrating and then um you know I think I think there's a lot that [institution 1] does to try and make sure that people are successful and part of like the International new incoming international students Facebook group and so there's a lot if that gets posted there the GSU is really helpful um the postgraduate advisory service is really great I definitely went to a couple of grad chats in the very beginning just to kind of like see what that you know could offer um and thankfully like I've lived overseas before but that can always be a really difficult transition for people so I think that there are a lot of opportunities for people to get the support that they need it just takes a lot to try and seek it out sometimes it's not always as available to um you know different programs possibly or what you're able to kind of incorporate into your schedule if you don't have kind of a typical school class schedule where you like you know like an hour every Monday Wednesday Friday and then the rest of the day you know or like two classes a day or something like that where they're two hours or something instead of everything being as blocked as ours

R: and I kind of want to go back to what you were saying that you've been working for quite a while and now you're coming back to academia and kind of what the transition has
been like and what you might be finding difficult because of being out of academia for so long
Katie: um it's been really challenging um to I don't know it's kind of weird is like to go backwards in my development because I'm like a fully functioning adult I had my own apartment I had a job you know like I paid my own insurance like I've been living out of my parents' house for a really long time um to suddenly being back to like I'm living off of loans I'm living in a dorm I'm sharing my kitchen like just a lot of just um really kind of interesting challenges to I go backwards and stuff where I'm like I never thought I'd have to like share my kitchen with more than a couple of people again in my life and now there's seven of us that share a kitchen and that's kind of horrible um so I think that's that's kind of a challenge um it's been a challenge um to go back to like the self-discipline of like making sure that I like really discipline myself like I need to spend a couple of hours doing reading and I need to go to the library so consistently and getting back into that habit has been really challenging um having been out so long I think um I've been thinking about going back to school for probably five years to be honest um and then like you know with health stuff like that all happened it just didn't happen um the timing wasn't right so um I think I was kind of preparing for it for a while but if you hadn't been maybe it would be a lot more difficult um our class is really great in like the demographics and how they're made up like I don't feel like I'm out of place with my age or that I'm like the only mature students because there are definitely a few you know like a little bit that are older than me and quite a few that are younger but um the age spread is pretty wide with the majority people being in their mid to late 20s anyway so I don't really feel too out of it where I might if I were in a program where the the channel really is to like go straight after undergrad into a master's into your doctorate um to get it done as quickly as possible which I think probably more in like the sciences and things where that's just kind of like the trajectory um but I think with [discipline] it's it tends to be a more varied group of people that go back for their master's degree um or higher so it's um I think that kind of helped the transition a little bit too I think the professors are really understanding and they really value the experience that we may have had in between um undergrad and now so I think that's really helpful as well you know like where are some programs having worked for five years after you get your BA in biology or something doesn't always mean that you're working in the field doesn't always mean that you're getting experience that's relevant towards what you want to pursue um particularly if like you want to do research or something but you were working in on @ @ I don’t know where @ lab I don’t know so I think that aspect of it is really beneficial for my particular field that makes it a lot
easier um and sometimes a lot better too because I can contribute a lot more to a conversation um based on you know the years that I worked with a particular population um that is really great for class discussion and really helps kind of like broaden a subject area a lot or like putting theory into practice so I think overall it's been both better and more difficult then it could be I mean it definitely could be worse it definitely could be better um but I think it's so far been a pretty easy transition

R: um and out of curiosity how has the transition been from the types of writing and the types of work that you've had to do in your job versus what you've had to do in your master's

Katie: um it's definitely different I think the type of writing that I would do in workplaces would be what um we would be doing in our placements next semester so I think it's really good to have that experience but it's not helpful as far as going back to writing essays um again and I think you know it would probably would benefit to to be sure that I have somebody like outside of myself or like my immediate cohort to like re-read through papers and things before I hand them in to make sure that they're being presented academically or that they're not um as concise as like a report or something that you would write for [workplace] or something like that where it really is like straight to the point and you do bullet points and you don't really expand on things as much um I think in some ways it was helpful because it definitely helps me write um more concisely I don't use as much like just kind of fluff as I might in undergrad to try and get to a particular word count I definitely am like I can cut things out where I need to now because I have have had that different type of writing style so I think in some ways that's been beneficial in other ways it's it gives me more anxiety after I turn something in to like I just am not really sure that I did it right um and again I haven't turned in a ton of papers yet it’s only been like 2 and a half um but you know we’ll when I get my grades back hopefully I’ll be OK @

R: so if you could give advice to faculty here at [institution 1] in supporting and helping and dealing with international students what would that advice be

Katie: what type of faculty like my department faculty

R: yes just from your experience yeah your professors basically

Katie: [pause] that's I mean it's kind of hard because I think my my professor is like my group is doing really well with it they're really responsive and they're really like open to just talking to us about issues and helping resolve problems which again they're [discipline] so it's kind of natural um I think [institution 1] at large I would definitely want to say it is not an easy process it really made me think very negatively about [institution 1] as a whole for it being an um elite University and the top in Ireland I just
have such a negative opinion about where it's at like my tiny little state school in [state]

like puts puts it to shame with like the administrative processes and like making it um easy

and transparent for me to understand like where my money was spent like I was just

recently told that my accommodation wasn't paid and then I go on my portal and look at it

and everything the way that it shows looks as though like my account has like a surplus of

you know a certain amount of money and I just like it I've been fighting with like the

accounting office and with AR and with my department because part of that was like

department funding for a scholarship and like I just can't there there was never any like

here's an outline of exactly all the fees that you paid here's how you paid it here's how

your loan dispersal was used here's how your you know funding from your scholarship was

used like that wasn't even given to me and I don't understand how that even happens

shouldn't I get like a pretty clear receipt about how thousands of Euros was spent in my

name and so it just like just really just basic things that I cannot understand how it's still

functioning the way that it is I don't get it um now I've talked about it with like other

students as well and like the library system you know it's there's so much information

about how great this library is and having it be like this repository and it's fantastic and yet

I can't get a book or I'm competing with 25 students only in my cohort you know

[discipline] students that anybody else who has access to this need it and I can never get a

book that I need because they have one copy in the library and it's just or you know like a

certain number of them are eBooks but they're only able to be read on library pcs that

doesn't benefit me if I'm not you know like thankfully I live on campus so I can like get

over here pretty quickly but if I'm not living on campus or like the people in my class

would don't and commute to the university if they don't if they can't get access to the book

and then they aren't living on campus can't get in to use a PC they're like it's just kind of

ridiculous um and for it to be you know a very prestigious school I expected a lot better um

sorry I know I have a lot of negative feedback for like a lot of it for a lot of it some of it has

been great a lot of it just has been such a struggle and a very unexpected need to do all of

this and try to figure out how it's all working and not being told clearly it's really

frustrating

R: yeah and um what advice would you give to future students or students who are looking

to come to [institution 1]

Katie: [long pause] consider all of your options really clearly um I mean looking back on it

I think I definitely came here more so for just like the dream of studying in Ireland then for

what the program can really do for me long-term um [pause] which I mean I’m definitely a

believer in like you know things happen for the reasons they're supposed to and there's
gonna be like a use for being here and I don't regret it at all because I love it um but you know I could have done a Masters in [discipline] in a year in [country] for less than what I'm paying here with the accommodation and everything and how expensive it is to live in Dublin um that I hadn't you know or like that I had looked at but I hadn't given as much credence because I was so like I really just want to go um so I think being more able to kind of like get into your head and analyze why you think that you want to go to [institution 1] and if you can get just as good of an education and a better experience somewhere else consider the possibility I guess.

R: mm-hmm okay and so that's actually all the questions I do have for you I'm like is there anything else that you would like to express.

Katie: gratitude for the people in my program um I really do I mean I do think the professors are great and I mean our experience is really good because they are so attentive and they’re willing to listen to us since I think that has ameliorated a ton of like the issues that I have had in frustration so yeah and I don’t know the [Department] should be like a model if other departments aren't doing as much for their student @@

R: alright thank you

Katrina

R: I'm first I'd like to know what you think your strengths are academically

Katrina: my strengths uhmm I think um [pause] it’s my knowledge to do networking because I'm communicative person so when people as well so I like people and I think this kind of characteristics help me to keep in graduate now and I I am doing master's degree in [discipline] when I have to study about [topic] and communication is very very important and I have a background in [country] in [discipline] organization so it it means help me because I like behavior human behavior so these kind of things help help me too much to understand about behavior of human so I think this kind of skills help me to to be like [pause] good in my college now

R: perfect and what would you say that your difficulties are academically

Katrina: uhmm I think it’s not about in English I thought at the first moment it was but and now I think about disrespect about I I believe because I meet foreign people and not person actually but because all my classes is completely foreign people so they they don’t have like a respectful for us because we are we are not Irish so I I feel it and everybody feel it as well because it's completely different I don't know if the another college because I have a lot of contacts with uh m different students but I think there it's completely disorganized so
Sometimes I feel like a messy you know because they don't answer us and sometimes it's embarrassed we had uhh mum uh uhm sad time when a director of my college we had complained because they didn't explain us about holidays and it was a one year of course and they didn't like explained very well for us how works but at the end when you return after holidays they said you are like a kids you know it's like a cake here you we offer it to you like a cake and now you just want to pick your piece so this is not like right and one girl of the the the my colleagues like say no with the like shake their hands and head and he said you are like a kids don't do this behavior in front everybody you know it's not it's completely unrespectful for us and for her as well she cried after because she was felt as weak I think it's not it's not like a English or to study but I think these means you know I think is it

R: yeah so like the disrespect coming from the professors and the people in charge
Katrina: yeah yeah
R: okay um uhm was this kind of something that you guys felt from the beginning or is it it developed
Katrina: develop
R: it developed and the beginning was super super nice because the teachers and professors was and the all the staff was was was open to suggestions and everything but then because we have like these kind of problems and was a big problem because it's to explain to you when you when you started they said you have like holidays for three month and everybody like you had a lot of plans for holidays because you don't plan your holidays in May you know you plan like in March February something like that and end of the classes they said Oh unfortunately we they have to to we had to give you classes on the holidays everybody was super super nervous because we booked like a lot of trips like some some people return home so was completely hard moment situation for us but they explained like you have this option to study now in summertime or you can study as normal and then you have like you can completely your dissertation next year until February was it but now they said you have to study to May so all the visas is to February so we don't have sure they don't have make sure and we don't have sure as well if the immigration will be allowed to give us we know is like fifteen month but we don't have sure if the immigration accept it you know if you have to pay again so there are a lot of uhh things we should think about it is so a lot you know it's like expectations and we are not in my country in our country so it's a little bit challenge to manage it so because of it was disrespectful for us I think so
R: uhm talking about the visa just because I know from talking with you before the interview uh so this past week when you went to the GNIB did they accept the course until May or
Katrina: yes
R: they did
Katrina: because uhh when I my visa expired last year in September so I I picked a different a different college but this college it doesn't accept me because of my English so I didn't got like a great uh evaluation so they said no so uhm but I got the the letter and I got the visa so I started a new college this year in February they accept my I I did the all the exams there blah blah blah and then I start in February so I didn't return to GNIB just for change it because I was afraid to pay again so you know was hard to take the appointment there so I thought it's okay I'm studying masters so I just send the the college the institution in my head it was okay but when I return now they said like you know you should like let us know about it I was like sorry because I was afraid and they talk and was okay because I am I'm my my right to ask it and was okay to May I’m student
//here
R: okay okay so they did accept it
Katrina: hopefully| yeah yeah but I think hopeful my friends and my colleagues we be okay to I think so I think so
R: I would hope so um all right and so then in terms of English what do you think your strengths are
Katrina: my listen I think I listen very well I can understand everything I can't sometimes I can't expression as I in my mother language but ehm it's okay it's okay like you can survive it's not the big challenge you know? so for me it's my listen I can understand everything [pause] is good
R: what would your weaknesses or difficulties be in English
Katrina: I think speak sometimes because depends of your emotional was were fluent but depends if you're super super nervous you can't like expression yourself as well like in a discussion or sometimes it never like happened to me but I listen like some student said oh my teacher said my English is terrible or my accent it's hard to understand but it was clear I was clear when I started there I say I have a strong accent it's okay and she said the director said it's okay like I can understand you you can understand me this is the important thing if you need to study more you have to study more so I thought it's okay I can change my accent oh could be better so I started to do uhm a teacher? a particular teacher who helped me a lot I stopped it now because it's @a @lot @of @assignments to
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

6961 do and exams but yes I did it before to to be easy for me actually for you for listening
6962 to understand me
6963 R: perfect um so can you tell me more about your your master's course now what are the
6964 modules like what kind of work do you have to do for it
6965 Katrina: okay weee study uh the first semester [topic] theory and practical as well we had
6966 [module] we had research [pause] and methodology and we uhmm [module] again like
6967 just [module] so like principles these kinds of things like legislation about it it was super
6968 [module] okay? @ @ in the first semester and now we learned about [module] and the
6969 difference between a commercial [topic] and ehhmm employment workplace and about
6970 [module] as well and the last one was [topic] theory as well two number two
6971 R: okay and do you have to do a lot of reading a lot of writings
6972 Katrina: yes. A lot actually because I wanted to read but a lot of [pause] colleagues didn’t
6973 need it as it I think it depends on the the student I'm I'm curious person so I wanted to
6974 really understand why they think this way so I'm not like accept just it's it's it’s it
6975 no I need to understand who who started to think about it when started to do [topic] who
6976 was the best or who is the better country to do it because we study like about eh European
6977 eh so why why why they use this methodology you know? so I wanted to read more so I
6978 spent my days in library when I'm studying because I like it. they asked it but you know
6979 @ many @ people don't read as as [pause] as the teacher ask so I like but I like to study
6980 more so I have to read a lot
6981 R: okay and when you're inside of the classroom what is that like is the teacher mainly
6982 giving a lecture with the PowerPoint is there a lot of group work
6983 Katrina: in the first semester we had a lot of uhmm [click] experiments as they had like a
6984 case and they separate the classes like one outside on- one part outside another part inside
6985 the professor gave us a case and secret case and uh goals as well to negotiate with the
6986 group outside was the same for them as well so we was in a arena? To dispute there and
6987 she checked us in in parts you know so was amazing the first semester for f- was super
6988 super uh nice because we talk English we was the evaluate in English and was super
6989 exciting and the second semester now is completely theory so theoretic so it's heavy so a
6990 lot of things about law and legislation so technically words so so have to study so for me
6991 I'm not don't have degree in law in my country so it's hard @ super@ because a challenge I
6992 have just study more and look after about words because even [language] I don't know so I
6993 have to looking for it in two dictionaries because I don't understand @ sometimes @ I
6994 @ have to ask my friend she's law she’s uh lawyer so I asked her what it means it
6995 @ because @ I @ look @ for @ in @ dictionary @ and @ I @ don’t @ understand and she no
it’s blah blah blah but now it’s more like [click] PowerPoints videos this semester is a little bit boring than first semester @

R: okay so what was or what is the form of assessment for your modules do you have to write essays exams practicals

Katrina: uhhmm yes we have a practicals exams as well for writing so we have four questions we uhm pick just two and we wr- we have to answer everything? And we have assignments essay we don’t have it but assignments we have a lot like four thousand four thousand words this this semester was four thousand words the last semester was more the semester was ok but we had a lot of reading to do so we happy because of it because like [click] but just one assignment so was perfect for four thousand words

R: yeah and so those four thousand-word assignments do they give you the topic or do you have to //choose

Katrina: noo| they gave you the topic so they they gave you but it’s different this is a good thing to do because in [country] I most I compare [country] because the most of my colleagues is from there so my my classes we have uh forty thir- people so two [pause] people are from [country]? but they don't go to the classes never just twice [pause] per year and one is from [country] and another one's from [country] and all the rest is [nationality] so like always we comparing like it's college and [country] methodologies so. here. the teacher gave to you uhh theme so you have to looking for a subject and they don't have like a structure like framework what I have to do you have to think about it in [country] we receive all the framework so we don't think about the framework he said I know it I need it it so all the things you have to do but in my case now I have to think how I wanted the words on on my paper you know so it's different it's completely different you have to study more because they don't have like oh these author is better or these books better for you study no. it's completely different so we don't have idea how is you know how the teacher wants it's a little bit hard and when you ask them they said this is is it I put in Moodle because we use like a Moodle internet< but and we put there so is it so just that they don’t explain a lot what do they want I think the culture Irish culture education but in [country] it's harder than here but they had like more framework that I have to do it’s easier there in this aspect because here >but I at the same time< you have freedom you have free options to write whatever you want you know so it's uh it’s different just it not better or worse it’s different

R: okay so you you said that in [country] it's harder even though so it's easier because you have the framework but how is it harder
Katrina: it's harder because you have a lot of work to do there a lot of assignments and we have a lot of e- exams is twice in the semester it's a hard hard and you have more subjects as well and we have to [clap] read some uhmm subjects before class soo and they explore more the the college brings like a lot of professionals to explain different points of view so the teacher usually is a completely academic and sometimes you need something from #actually to understand how works in business in real life you know? and we have a lot of assignments and exams and uhm you have to to go to the classes because if you miss any class you are completely disasters so it's really important you know I think it’s harder than here because sometime when you miss the classes it’s okay you know you can read the slides you can it’s you can survive you know? It’s a little bit harder because of it

R: um and so you said here the professor's kind of give you a theme and they say oh it's on Moodle um do they give you any other guidelines or grading criteria so do you know what and how you're going to be graded

Katrina: they have they have this is really clear but [pause] they had what did they want as a criteria as examinate your work but sometimes I wanted to discussing about this this theme so for example my teacher asked @ I have a girl who reading my work before I sent to to to submitted it in my my website and she said which subject is it [Katrina]? What she wants to do because this is means it's really really important to you you know if you don't understand it it's hard I don't know if w- she she can explain for these thematic so I said so welcome to my life because I I can't understand as well so I do my best so when I asked about something it's like disgusting about it I don't I don't want like oh you have it to do this framework no but guys you have like three or four options so we we talked about it was about [module] and we should to bring like three case is not available it's not like [click] uhhm I clicked about to to to [module] so she couldn't say uhh guys I wanted to definition about [topic] so bring to me the advance ad- advantages and disadvantages about this subjects and then you can bring about [pause] I don't know the cases and you can explain giving a example this kind of things but not. So was hard to understand what she wants to to know you know? so so I submit I don't know I don't have idea the last semester was the same I was good@@ was okay okay so yeah okay

R: alright so that leads me to my next question um how would you currently evaluate your own academic success so how do you feel that you're doing

Katrina: [sigh] I feel very very well it's a great for me I think because is a different language for me I study more I'm sure if it was in [country] or if I do in [language] >no [language] is a little bit hard for me now< but if I did it like in [language] at some time it's
okay I can read like #previews in weekend was okay I know I haven't been study two
weeks to these exams you it's easy subjects if you >it’s not easy< not at all because it’s
a different area from completely different subject so
I'm a [role] and I study [discipline] so now I study [discipline] so it's completely different a
lot of language so a lot of rules and some subjects you can’t like write whatever you want
it’s theory so you have to understand the authors so it's hard than than than [country] I
think if I was studying in [country] I used to work more as well as well but here because
completely different all the [topic] so I don't have any idea about how works here so
because of it I'm really really really happy because I was I think 70% on the the general so
was okay for me you know I didn’t I was like accepted in [name] college so I'm really
really happy maybe if I was studying like HR as as my area in [country] to work was okay
you know but these area is completely different so I’m really happy
R: okay and so you've touched on this a little bit um but what do you think your professors
look for so how do they assess academic success
Katrina: what do you mean like uh
R: like when they're grading how do they know that your essay is a first-class honors or a
second class or
Katrina: hmm I think the language it's really important they asked about uhmm vocabulary
so this is a disappointed to me because sometimes I use a lot of vocabularies in writing but
can't talk the same thing because I think English uhm it's easy to speak but
te time so you have to I think they check it you know how you you explain your ideas
how your organize your ideas this is really really important how you can express yourself
and your ideas there this is meaning like if you have really good or your medium or you
have like uhm I don't want to read it so I think you are good when you can express yourself
even in the exams as well sometimes I I draw there you know I do like some framework
there or explain I want to be as can you can be like clear you know from your idea it's
important I think so they looking for it some good communication on a paper and a great
vocabularies as well
R: okay alright and so in general what do students need to succeed at your college
Katrina: hmmm [long pause] I think it's university or college
it’s a huge opportunity to new different things and when you are different in my case as
well I bring some ideas completely different in my class because we have nurse there nurse
we have artists we have lawyers we have administrator like a business we have a different
knowledge is there so when you when it your professor something really really nice and
you have your a different point of the field you know so when a professor bring to me

ummm brings to me uhh information about [topic] in my point of view I will think about

text is cut off

how these [role] manage his or her emotions you know what I mean? I think this way my

text is cut off

friend behind me thought sometimes thinks sometimes how how uhh how the the

regulation or the law supports these professional and another one think about how they pay

about it how do they think about framework of works or blahblahblah so when you bring

your point of view in a class this is amazing this is a great opportunity to grow up together

you know because different points of view I think these opportunities really nice when you

I think this the professor expected as well the participating there so I think this different

because I remember the first semester was everybody was so exciting so when you bring

like the background there of all the Masters was they they had like a background so this is

help us to understand the different points of views so I think it's it

R: ok and so how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success

Katrina: hmmm [pause] it’s very import it’s very very very very important um [pause] but

when you means like when you you talk about it you mean like the accessible for for

everybody what do you mean

R: yeah we'll start with that

Katrina: @ uuhm it’s interesting I think last week I participated in um representative

classes like different people from different courses in my college we discussing about hmm

things about college and director was there just representative people there so I thought

[pause] was a lot of >all all the students was foreign< people as well so they spoke a

beautiful language better than a mine you know beautiful but everybody had a amazing

language but they don't had courage to started ma- master's degrees because most if you go

to my college [pause] all are Brazilians or Latin Americans like Venezuela Mexican um

Argentina so and most of [pause] Indians and African as well but they don't believe in their

their language you know they had a background in Brazil they had College in Brazil but

they said no I can't do masters and sometimes I thought it's because the language because

their confidence so so so low they don't believe them when I started this college I was

super super devastated because I tried IELTS and and beginning of the year I tried I didn't

prepare myself I was [pause] half I think half five or five something like that or four half

four I can't remember I didn't prepare for it you know to be IELTS to do IELTS you have

do uhhm prepare before because it's like it's exam so you have to training training

training but I did so I I started my course tryouts for six months and at the I didn't have

courage to do

R: why not
Katrina: confidence

R: so was it because of your experience

Katrina: uh-huh

R: in class or with the first exam

Katrina: yes because with the first exams nobody like if you think for somebody who was an upper intermediate to get this was okay when I got here four years ago I didn't can't speak anything so was amazed when you go after two years two years and a half when you try IELTS and you get this result it's okay if you train more okay but because of my my colleagues my class was super nice and passes and I thought ohh so my confidence was it's like psychology things you know it's like a behavioral so I thought I can't. so I not able to do it so I spend more 200 euros to try again you know no maybe maybe not so was frustrated so I try another one it's it's not TOEFL it's like hmm on a computer as well

R: uhmm Pearson PET

Katrina: PET was terrible too my grade was terrible I was study so much and my friend said why [Katrina] why you can't get it I say I don't know I think psychology think it maybe I have a problem with it was like because listen my friend works in a home care uhm you know a lot of the [nationality] with these kinds of things and foreign people as well she said she had like a a #scare this last weekend this is confidential so I can talk to you

R: yes this is confidential yeah

Katrina: so [pause] the guy it's a a a a lady when we have she's like disabled so you have to help her and sometimes the nurse goes there to uh the husband sometimes helped her and for sure she didn't have she didn’t have a good English because she got here eight month ago but she was able to help to change to clean some stuff just if you need to something so the guy said this girl you know this nurse is the worst nurse that I have met

her English is terrible for this supervise my friendly is a supervise and she said you don’t talk about it and he was like [pause] super unpolite and rude as well and he said you are terribly her English is terrible as well because you have like a grammar mistakes and he was like I don't want any [nationality] anymore I called the owner of the the company because this is unrespectful bla bla bla and off like [nationality] is terrible for it are terrible so we not accepted more [nationality] here bla bla imagine these girl [pause] you know she will finish her first year here eight months imagine this girl now in her English school [pause] and if she see her she was devastated she cried a lot because you come to a different country to learn English and it somebody like who speak this in English and said your language is terrible oh my goodness it's really hard to to survive it you know so to to
To I think this is the problem when you got here first of all because everybody wanted to be in Ireland most of people if you go to to a college any college they will say to you we want to be here because of the visa so the opportunity to started to work here it's by visa so I I wanted to stay here I need the visa so you need opportunity to study because this is the way so they spend a lot of money they sometimes don't organize their selves because if you put in your paper and first account everything is cheaper to do master but they thought no because my English not enough they had an amazing English in my college for graduate you know they spent like college they don't study like master degree they had amazing language then my friends as well in my my class but they don't believe and then because of the money as well they don't organize they pay it's not a lot of money but if you think I you study three years or four years if I pay everything now I can do my masters you know just one year and I having more choices to work and then someone like like me like some company liked it to me but they strategy so weak for them so I think the confidence for English is really really important I don't think I know my English is not perfect but you can understand me R: yeah I can understand you Katrina: and I can understand you so I think this is the main you know I know when I got here I couldn't speak hi or how are you but I'm I'm really glad I'm really happy I'm glad as well to see my my way my story so but I think the confidential sorry they confidence like so so low I think so okay and so you've mentioned quite a few other things in there which leads to my other question of what other factors impact academic success so you've spoken about jobs and money and things like that uhm so factors that impact academic success could be inside of the college and outside of the college Katrina: yeah uhm my college I can talk about my college my college don't prepare us for for work you know it’s lot of theory as I said before in my old college in [country] they brings us a lot of brought a lot of professionals to talk about real life so if you ask to to all my all my colleagues they said no idea how it works here you know I think I don't know if in undergraduate was the same but I feel they don't prepare you for a real life and this is this this is is a weakness because I know what I want and I have like a big background in [country] I have been working long time there so I know how I have to do after but we are afraid about it so I think is successful is when you finish your studies and you can or you can have an option to start your PhD the academic way or business or whatever you want and they don't have any option for us so they gave is like it is hard it's really hard to say it but I think this they they think they get
R: okay brilliant and so this is gonna be a yes um I was gonna ask if you've had any
linguistic preparation before attending your master’s program which you've said you have
um can you describe that preparation so can you describe your English language learning
story in //Ireland
Katrina: Oh my gosh @@
R: what happened| how was it how did you feel about it how do you feel about it
Katrina: so when I chose to come here I was in [country] I didn’t have any idea about
Ireland and we have a lot of influence about America so we thought to to @ the dream is to
speak as American person when I got there because is a influence it’s so so close so near
the culture is so similar and we got a lot of information from there so this is this is the
reality you know? we have you know and my sec- but the visa @ you @ know for
Americans for USA is a little bit hard I have a visa just for visit blahblahblah but I don’t
have visa to stay there for more than six months or whatever and it's restrictive options to
go to USA for au pair I was older that time but I wanted to study I had study in [country]
but any any any school works for me @@ I tried @everything you don’t have no idea
I tried like psychology ehhh schools for you can open your brain and learn different doesn’t
work I I I put in my mind I have to live this experience so when I got here I pay I booked

uhh houses of Irish of Irish family was amazing I couldn't speak anything but was good

this family is my friend until now and I started in really good school it was [name] school

and then I went to ummm different schools good as well but it's not a high school because

[language school] is really really good and it's ehm [language school] now is uhh like a

connection with [international language school] this school is the same I think? It's

[international language school] I think [international language school] [pause] bought this

school [language school] it's [name] before but I don't know is like I didn't have money to

pay like a really good school but I paid the medium school and then I start the middle

school is [name] school so first [language school] was amazing so I had amazing teachers

they use it like umm good didactics to st- to to teach us so was a amazing experience

amazing experience perfect and then moment at at the beginning was and then #was okay

because I had a great school then you like you expected more but come on you don't have

money to pay like the same price and then [language school] was a [pause] how do you say

is a methodology when you speaking now you repeat and speak

R: oh I know that one

Katrina: Callan Callan method so I had this one because I thought my pronunciation I think

was better was good as well [pause] and then I'm here so in Callan I had three months in

Callan but then I had the IELTS there was good but not [click] super good because it was

I think twenty people in the room it's like not twenty sometimes was twenty sometimes

he gave a lot of questions and short time and because uhm people work a lot so

teacher like you expected you have a plan and when this plan doesn't work how you can

like works for it so there there were different levels of English in IELTS as well but this

was my my my story about English was it

R: okay and do you feel that all of this preparation prepared you for your masters

Katrina: uhm for IELTS was was good because they training a lot to writing and the

vocabulary to writing as well and [pause] to speak because they speak and I answer was

super super good ways so was nice for for it so they prepared very well but I was I mean

because people wasn't the same level it's not the level for English but [click] how do you

say the same expectations you know the same goal so because when you have when you

really want to stay you really want to learn you work a lot but you can you you find like

time to study you know a few people had these behavior but another the most like they

don't care you know they just go there study I have a hard life blah blah blah victimism

you know I'm poor oh I’m Latin American so life so hard at work stay here blah but they
treat they travel a lot you know @ @ @ they drink a lot as well but time to study they don't want so they don't don't care about it doesn't matter I'm thinking my background was it and I went to church so I didn't understand anything there anything nothing but I stay there every Sunday I thought one day I will understand it so every day I went to to to church and then I started to do sport so I had to talk with my gym and then I sta- I I I I moved in a house when I had like a foreign people like American or German Germany or uhm different cultures and now I'm living with a French girl so I had a boyfriend as well it's helped a lot

Katrina: and was it I think was it

R: so it's interesting I think you're actually the first person that has brought up that you went to //church

Katrina: oooh

R: always does @

Katrina: @@ and was it I think was it

R: so I'm interested in that experience because you said you understood absolutely nothing and now you understand yeah

Katrina: uh-huh and it's a good it’s a good view because when I got there and all all the people went looking for me like said well how I can improve my English I say looking for a church [pause] whatever it is I don't want because I drink a lot I'm guilty blah blah that's things I say doesn't matter like there [pause] is a place when everybody accept this is the point you know I have for me it's really easy to speak for ten ten people or million people or whatever because of the church I had this background in [country] so I thought was a mathematic things if in [country] everybody accepted them so they can accept me here if I even I speak like wrong like the wrong way in the grammatically uhh mistakes they can understand me they accept me and this family my my host family they said you want to go in a church and say yes I wanna go and I went there was my first church and I stay there until now so in my first semester they know about how was hard to me to stay in Ireland and I needed to work and all the time asked oh are you looking for a work looking for a job looking for a job I didn't know speak like very well but @ @ I said I need. Work. @ @ and they understand so they gave me a a job uhh after 8 month looking for sorry to looking for uhh kids look after kids like a babies was easy was hard because you have to garda vetting here like uhh it's you had you have it to write the names of the babies and the the the parents as well [pause] [inhale] spelling. [long pause] spelling you know

R: the Irish names
Katrina: American names is so similar and all the movies you can you know you only
telling you you hear about American names and I have ideas and because in [country]
people like bring a lot of names so we so Ellen Jessica or whatever whatever will William
but mark but when you find Oisín Una or Ea- Eamon so hard to write so spelling was my
first challenge in a church and they had so passion to understand me or to said again or to
write and I bring the paper to my home my brought it I tried to write and memorize the
names you know because how you call the baby [long pause] for name so you have to you
know understand and if we if we speak like wrong way or you had some mistakes thing
they can’t understand you at all because is literally words so church for me was essential
and then when they thought [Katrina] your English is good do you want to give like a class
now like you want to be a teacher for four and five years old I say ookkaayy I can do it so I
prepare my class when I went there sometimes I I I I had some mistakes but I always
because of garda vetting always had to work with somebody with you usually was a Irish
or American or Canadian so was easy for me to to grow up these environment so church
was good good question because was a good environment to to learn English and I got
some confidence there too I said if they understand me so @
R: okay it is quite interesting because it sounds like it's very central to your story and kind
of becoming a part of the Irish community
Katrina: yeahhhh this is me and in my church there are a lot of foreign people but a lot of
Irish so Irish breakfast I participated there I worked in an event as working so I put myself
in challenge it's not hard but it challenge position so I have to stay uhh welcome to
everybody because you have like to welcome thing yeah so how you say for thing like
welcome so you have to say something so I put in in in hard positions to work even I I got
like it couldn’t understand anything they they talk but I say mmm yes yes any
[nationality] so just one [nationality] but that [nationality] just ignore me I'm so grateful for
her because she ignore me so [pause] I had opportunity to to have like more friends like
Irish friends or different nationality friends
R: yeah okay brilliant brilliant okay um let's see going back to well this is actually quite
related I would think um so what type of preparation should international students do
before going into a master's program
Katrina: before [long pause] I think IELTS would be great or Cambridge I’ve never studied
for Cambridge because I thought was super hard @@ it is actually it is but I think uhh
IELTS is the best option I think so that one the P PET it's okay but I think if I try one more
probably I got it you know because it's not so hard IETLS it’s a you it's human to
evaluation you to understand you you’re I don't know I like it this way I think so it's a good
because you work you learn a lot of words academic words there you know what I mean
like new linking phrases >linking phrases I think yeah< this is so important you know
when you when you write or you express yourself in academic way so I think Irish sorry
IELTS @@
R: alright brilliant so if you could give advice to faculty in your college to better support
international students what would that advice be
Katrina: [sigh] [long pause] um I think bring more people from for market from real life
who works [pause] because we don't have idea or they had support or talk about [pause]
jobs you know I think they are afraid because is not guaranteed to take a job but when they
sell to you just sell to a a course they said oh they pay very well you can receive but in the
middle of the course they don’t listen about jobs you know they don't talk about it just
academic things and I know if I have like studying if I if I had here in [institution 6]
probably I understand because I can understand it because it's completely academic you
know there are a lot of researches here PhDs masters they want it it's a work it's a work to
be researches like it's a work a real work like somebody who needs to do it but it like my
college is not like for research you know they don't want to go to PhD a teacher of mine
said you don't need to think about your master subjects that just they're easy subjects just to
finish it you know do you know what I mean you know they don't care about it just take
your certificate so I think my advice will be bring someone if you don't want like to be
academic way so bring someone from from real life you know from [job
exaples] who can speak to us like the real life [pause] I think was my advice because it's
so far the real life for us so far we don't have idea how [job] work here no idea I don't
I never I've never met a [job] do you know what I mean like [job] I’ve never me- I’m
I’m master's in [discipline] so [click] this is advice @
R: ok and if you could give advice to organizations um who would usually be either
colleges or language schools who are designing a summer program to prepare international
students for master's degrees what should they teach what would that advice be
Katrina: wow challenge @ uhmm first of all uhhh how you say I can’t under- I know this
word is Latin but I don't know if I can explain you in my case I like to be you know when
you teaching kids you have a lot of games you have these kind of things when you have it
you think for example in my first school my teacher we had like uhm first class about like
grammar boring but it was super important the second classes my teacher give us a lot of
vocabularies and games to learn about it I think if I plan a summer preparatory to masters I
would give the same way I think umm in the morning time talk about IELTS blah blah
but the second turn like a lot of games when you have to think [snap] quickly you
know like or seminars or workshops that students have to do about their subject so you will study I don't know master's degree in [pause] HR or IT or whatever because I imagine like a lot of different students for different areas so we have to give me a workshop about your area your future uh master degree so please let us how works there like you which thesis do you think about it because you don't have a long time to think about thesis so I start my master degrees already I thought about my thesis so I think maybe can stimulate they think about it so maybe II I would be like I would suggestion this kind of thing so theory but as well the opportunities they they bring something for them like in the core something like you really important for them because I think it these is the motivation to learn it's not just liking [long pause] to just study like Koreans Koreans just repeat all the time the same words it's so boring it’s so hard but it they enjoyed a lot these classes you know because I have a lot of Korean my class when you play there in a game whoa we discover like a different [pause] eh ways to different methodology you have to learn different things so you can [snapping] memory or memorize some words or things superfast different games so I think I would suggest it R: ok and if you could give advice to future students so future masters students what would that advice be

Katrina: [long pause] I give I think it’s give your best you know so even if you’re not in Trinity College or UCD or this DIT [pause] eh I think the college you’re in you are is the best because you are there whatever name what you can make your college to the best you know so okay like I'm not in Cambridge I’m not in Oxford I'm not in Harvard but I'm here so I’ll do my best to be the best course for me the best marks for me I think this is the advice you know I learned it if you are intern you never work as intern you have it to work at director because if you work as intern always people looking at to you as intern you know what I mean so if you are the the the ah my college is not great they think just a visa I I realized it in my college so I saying okay they think it's like it's just for visa it's not for me I want to learn I want to learn If I have like this opportunity I want to learn very well so I will read more and you understand more I go to events and I talk about it that that's it I think to be I'm the best way I'm the best too so I give the best I do the best so R: yeah exactly yeah yeah so are you aware of any support that international students receive from your college your department your professors

Katrina: umm you mean for what like psychology

R: yeah it could be anything from counseling to English to anything
Katrina: I know my college has like ummmm um free free free classes for English but I I never like know about like never like told us or send email about it I know because my friend knows she she told me once but because the life so [long pause]

R: yeah one thing another

Katrina: yeah so so like so so fast and the time flow so I never looking for it but psychology my my my college they didn't give the support but but I know when somebody has any problem about psychology things like behavior they had support because we have a friend of mine I think she was super sick there was sick but they [click]

R: no no no this as another college but this college one guy uhm lost his his brother and they said you don't need to study this year look after for you so take care yourself for one year you can pay like a psychology a counselor for you for this year if you don't able to start this semester you can stay there and then next year you you return you don't need to pay any more just like this year pay again but do you have this option if you wanted to stay in Ireland I know it's hard they said it so this is a good behavior but officially if they don't have the support I know because at least somebody told me it but no no no no no they don't have like clearly

R: like clearly explained this is where to go

Katrina: yesss we have somebody can listen to you blah blah blah no no no

R: Okay and do you think that they should have it officially do like what kinds of supports would be important for international students

Katrina: I think language is really really important and >but I don't know I think the language< but I don't know if everybody like want to do it you know because I'm here so I can do it these exams and exercise or whatever so I can do it I can manage it but I think offer it because it’s a free so free classes and and I have luck because my college is an English school as well so they can

R: have both

Katrina: yeah yeah so this is really and hmmm psychologist it's really good it’s really good because the weather doesn't help and you know the suicides is so high here and we have sad stories about [pause] people last year in my college like people who had cancer another one like disappear so I think this is psychology >maybe group< you know maybe not just like that's just for personally but in group maybe could be help maybe I think so

R: okay alright so that's all the questions that I have for you but are there any question and that you wish I had asked that I did not ask

Katrina: [long pause] hmmm [long pause] I think is it I think it’s good good questions so

R: and is there anything else that you would like to express
Katrina: thank you very much for listening @ thank you for inviting me I think is really important to your research I think people what I said I think we need these kind of people I'm not like real academic person but I really I really appreciate this job because I know how it's hard to put the empirical life and the academic life you know ehm [pause] in some way this will help us in future and because [pause] in 10 years Ireland will be completely different so they criticize sometimes my accent but in few years my accent will be huge here ya know as the same for Indian but a [nationality] especially for [nationality] there’s a lot of [nationality] a lot so I think uh one teacher of mine he studied in linguistics he said sometime some rules in English will be change because people use sometimes peoples

R: it's true it is true

Katrina: so maybe it change maybe some rules change me I don't know but I this is your work to try understand how it works and maybe to give umm theory for different students in the world and because English is very important for example global language it's not the biggest one but the global language so it's really important so thank you very much thank you

Kevin

Kevin: uh what do you mean by strengths

Kevin: oh well I should I'm I'm good at uhmm [pause] [topic] [topic] [pause] and [pause] relevant research well I'm working in the relevant field right now [pause] so [pause] that is what I can tell you about my myself

Kevin: [click] ummm [long pause] [click] my weaknesses should beee [long pause] well cannot cannot remember at this moment but the thing is uhhh what I what I understand that should study more that is that is what I can say

R: yeah okay and what do you say your strengths are in terms of English

Kevin: ummm [pause] well I born in an non-English speaking country so it was not as good as as a native speaker but uh by the education in our country education system wasn't it was not that good either and uhh but I developed my English skill by myself and then moved to [pause] other country for pursuing my English uhhh sorry in my bachelor degree
and master's degree which which were also in English so actually it's all about practice

R: and what would you say your weaknesses or difficulties are in English still

Kevin: still I don't know a lot of words [pause] that are being used so all that I'm when I

have heard any new word I google it [pause] and I try to remember

R: Okay brilliant and so can you tell me about the modules that you're taking currently

what kind of work do you have to do for those modules

Kevin: uhh currently I'm taking ummm a course in [institution 4] which is a higher

diploma in [discipline] and it is a full of programming uh prerequisite for this course is of

course you have to speak good English uh because all the teachers or more majority of the

teachers are native Irish and also uhhh you have to be good in calculations like

mathematics and a little bit of programming so [long pause] I thought that [pause] I have

those prerequisite and um then it'll be better or it will be great for my future carrier if I

pursue this course

R: Okay and so are you doing any research along with the modules or is it just module

based

Kevin: it is just module based so research will come as final project so at the end time I'm

the middle of this program

R: okay alright so alright and that research that you'll have to do like what's the length of it

what do you know the details of this or not

Kevin: yet I do not know the details but what I can understand is it should be uh since this

is [discipline] so it would be focused on the numbers from different dimensions ummm

[pause] well for example I can predict or I can work on what could be the housing price in

the next five years or something like that just uhhh you can I can say that predictive

modeling

R: okay and so can you tell me the general structure of your lectures and modules so what

happens inside of the class is it mainly a professor with the PowerPoint is it group work is

it on line is it how does it work

Kevin: uhh well teacher is giving the instruction on the [pause] PowerPoint and then

ummm then practical in class so so that you don't get stuck when you [pause] uh work on

the CA I mean umm homework or you don't get stuck on the final assignment or

something like that so it is kind of interactive and if you don't understand of course you can

unlock your teacher and teacher'll always explains

R: and can you tell me more about the assignments what kind of assignments and exams do

you have
Kevin: for example uh I can I can take an example from my previous assignment that I
had it was on [subject] so teacher gave us uhh two parts in it one is 80% one is 20% so
80% is the technical side [pause] how you build up a database and how do you query the
data whatever you need it [pause] and the 20% was just writing how you execute the
comments let's say [pause] if I want to get this uhh amount of students from this college in
this year then what I have to write down something like that so this is the kind of
instruction how I execute the uhh technical part
R: alright so as a combination of practice and writing
Kevin: yeah yeah
R: Alright perfect and um how would you evaluate your current academic success so are
you doing well are you struggling in the middle do you not know
Kevin: well uhh since I'm working as a full-time [pause] uhh employee [pause] and after
the work actually it is really challenging to focus on the [topic] courses so I'm not saying
that I'm struggling that I don't know anything I know of course but [pause] I have really
tired mind to focus on so this if if if you want to say that this is kind of area what I should
say okay this is the area that I am just kind of uhhh [pause] challenge- I see myself this
challenging that I have to focus more to get it done something like that
R: Okay and how do you professors assess academic success like what are they looking for
when they're grading
Kevin: [pause] uhh this sort of actually a lot of criteria uhh and based on that they are uhh
giving the points to the students or grading the paper and [pause] it is diff- differ-
ugh I mean how I can I say um the all teachers are unique so all of them have
their own approaches
R: and so do they communicate their expectations and the criteria before you start
the assignment or after the assignment or
Kevin: yes they do explain and of course um there are a lot of questions from the students
as well like how can I do this [pause] I don't have time or [pause] this is really good tight
to submit and teacher said that okay we can extend it
R: Okay so they're quiet flexible
Kevin: yeah [pause] well uh teacher know that this program is actually aimed for the
employees [pause] so all of the students are employees so teacher already
know that
R: So everyone's working full time and studying full time
Kevin: Yeah yeah yeah yeah
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

7551R: And can you give me some examples of what kinds of expectations they have so what
7552um what are some examples of the grading criteria
7553Kevin: [pause] uhhh [pause] actually I should say this is varies from course to course or
7554from teachers to teacher and uhhh [long pause] this is depending on the technical side
7555rating part and also there are some courses that uhh mmm assignments are based on 100%
7556uhhh not 100% let's say 50% of the uhh assignment uhh you have to submit uhh some
7557questions written questions something like that so actually it is very varying from teacher
7558to teacher
7559R: alright and so um I say in general what do students need in order to succeed at
7560[institution 4]
7561Kevin: [pause] uhh there are several uhh variables I should say uhh the teacher I have seen
7562that one teacher I can say that one teacher is giving the CA at the very end of the course
7563and give just only a few uhh few days to submit it [pause] but on the other hand he or she
7564should understand that all the students here are employee [pause] they have their um full-
7565time job they have their family they have their personal time as well [pause] so I should
7566say teacher have to be teachers have to be flexible [pause] uhh one teacher say that ok if
7567you submit after one week of the exam I don't mind there is no deadline and there is
7568another teacher say that like okay there is a deadline if you miss it two points minus each
7569day [long pause] sooo [pause] [click] >education should be flexible< not that strict so that
7570you feel comfortable to submit it and [pause] when you say that okay this is so hard I
7571cannot submit it within time I'll not do it [pause] I can bring an example from [Country]
7572because I studied in [Country] both of my bachelor and master's degree and I saw that how
7573flexible teachers were there so it doesn't mean that you can submit you that assignment
7574after the deadline of course you have to submit it within the dead- deadline uhh given
7575deadline but teachers were really flexible because they [pause] they give the assignment at
7576the at the very beginning of the lecture so that you have time three months’ time to or one
7577and a half or two months’ time to work on properly and umm yeah something like this so
7578what I see that if I compare [Country] to Ireland [Country] [long pause] [Country] is more
7579uhh flexible about these issues but Ireland I do not see that much flexible in everyone and
7580of course infrastructure I am not saying every institution in Ireland but I can say about the
7581[institution 4] that I am studying right now and [pause] their computer system actually
7582sucks frankly speaking because they are using the cheaper one and you know if you buy
7583something cheaper uhh for cheaper price you will get the quality like that so yeah [long
7584pause] so this is also one thing that they have to develop
7585R: right and um so how much of a factor does language play in academic success
Kevin: of course it's a vital uh a vital issue language I can give my example when I
started my bachelor degree in [Country] [pause] for the first semester it was really
challenging because my teachers were native English Native American so it was not that
easy to capture the language or the instruction of the lecture though I had
IELTS 6 band score but still it didn't help [pause] but after one semester it definitely
helped me to [pause] understand in the following semesters so it went fine so I should
say the environment is actually a good factor [pause] I mean whether you can be a @bad or
you @can @get @good yeah

R: Right and um so what other factors play in academic success so you've said the
environments and this could be things outside of university inside etc.

Kevin: [long pause] uhhh @ [long pause] I should say the flexibility I should I should
focus on flexibility it doesn't necessarily mean that okay uh uhhmm you can submit your
assignment after the deadline no [pause] it's of course everything has to be predefined
when to submit and of course it has to be given at the beginning of the lecture [pause] so I
should say the word the flexibility is the most important thing to do the development or for
the success

R: Okay did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before studying in [institution]
so you've mentioned IELTS you did umm you've done your bachelor's and master's in
English right? yeah so did you have any sort of preparation before going to [institution]
beyond that

Kevin: No for the language um I didn't have any preparation after my master's degree for
[institution] uhhh why why I didn't type this because I have been working in international
businesses like [institution] so [long pause] so these institutions are well English is the
main language doesn't matter where you work but so that's the reason that I I didn't need
any English

R: okay and then did um you have to submit a new IELTS to [institution]

Kevin: no [pause] because they uh can easily see that my instruction uh of the instruction
of my master's degree was in English so

R: so they waved it

Kevin: yes yeah

R: okay but you were mentioning that in your bachelors uh that you had to take IELTS for
that and that it didn't prepare you for the first term and can you express any other feelings
about the standardized exams

Kevin: no actually uh it was not a prerequisite but I I did it by myself it was not required
by the degree program uhh so [pause] but uhh still when I I took that I had six band score
and I started the lecture but still I thought that it was not good enough so one thing could be uhh uhhh practice I'm not saying that uhhh [pause] that this is the easy way to learn or it will accelerate your language skills no is as all over the environment that you were in R: Okay alright and so what type of preparation should international students take before going into Irish higher education Kevin: uhh [pause] from the students perspective I should say of course language is one thing that otherwise they they they would not able to carry out their ummm [pause] homeworks in the school because Ireland is English-speaking country so they have to be thing that they have to focus on but this is before they come to the Ireland but once they are uh in Ireland there are some [pause] something some rules some barriers that they cannot umm [pause] avoid which is kind of bureaucracy I should say so actually it's not necessarily the students that can avoid that can remove the barriers but also the Irish government should focus on this because I lived in [Country] and I see how flexible is this living there as a student as students we had to pay a very little amount of uh [pause] this application fee every year though [pause] it is also every year here in Ireland but the thing is they are paying huge amount of money and they're taking a long time to issue the residence permit here and of course another uh important issue is of course government of Ireland has to focus on this as well that uh housing is really bad for the students it is very expensive the communication is not in good system either so because of the communication I should say uh that housing is very expensive because you cannot go anywhere whoever wherever you want for example there are two luas line here which is the tram I should say one is a green one is red and you cannot get into the uhh uh green line with the red ticket and vice versa >which really doesn't make any sense so in [Country] when I lived there I used one card for bus tram train and uh uh [pause] all I mean all kinds of transportation one card was enough doesn't matter it didn't read in or if there is no classification this is [travel system] that's it you can go anywhere whenever you return the reason is at the same time you cannot travel with the luas uh both of the green line and red line you should go or take one line right? so this is also one thing the government has to focus to make it comfortable for the international students and of course they are coming from the other country the weather food people culture everything is different [pause] so if you think they know they will sort it out actually so you mean that you are not making your reputation good personally I will not recommend anyone to come to Ireland because it sucks
7655R: yeah alright and so if you could give advice to faculty so professors in dealing with
7656international students what would that advice be
7657Kevin: uh the advice would be to uh take the feedback from the international students from
7658every perspective well uh when I completed some um courses in [institution 4] I got the
7659uuh [pause] survey [pause] which they say how the teacher has the quality of the teaching
7660these and that blah blah blah but they never asked for anything else what could be done
7661better [long pause] they have the some um MCQ type questions you just click click click
7662and submit that's it this is what it should not be you cannot develop anything I'm not
7663talking about the universities of course the immigration as well uh they immigration as
7664well they have to take the feedback from the past applicants that to develop the situation so
7665this is wanted by the student and the administration should get feedback and they should
7666give the free space for the students what is going wrong [pause] what is not going right
7667something like that so that they can develop the situation >of course< it is depending on
7668them whether they are able or they are interested to solve the situation or not because I I
7669did I did not see that kind of mindset here
7670R: and if you could give advice too future students who are coming to Ireland and future
7671international students what advice would that be
7672Kevin: I would say that uhhh just ummm well nowadays everyone almost everyone has the
7673internet Facebook and email account so [pause] first step I should be search on the Google
7674how many population are there in that town because of course Ireland is English-speaking
7675country you're uhh [pause] I mean the jobs are easy [pause] easy here in Ireland to get uhh
7676whether in non-English speaking countries like I lived in [Country] so it was not easy that
7677easy so in terms of bring language they're kind of exempted but still they have to
7678understand what are the circumstances what is the living cost living because the most
7679important thing one distance is coming from the Africa Asia [pause] but I don't know about
7680Europe I think umm um most of the European students are subsidized by the by
7681their own government so I think it's not that problem for them
7682R: all right and are you aware of any support that [institution 4] gives to international
7683students and that could be financial linguistic academic etc.
7684Kevin: I think there are some supports in in [institution 4] but uh mmm I still I should say
7685this bureaucratic because I uhh send an email for one of my uhh umm course uhh grade I
7686said that hey this is what happened and then they just replied that okay you can navigate
7687the result from this page and go to top right whatever that was not my question actually
7688[pause] so [pause] and then I say that okay I asked again to another person and he or she
7689said that [pause] result already published so interestingly the thing is only two students set
Kristina: well another good thing is my re...
R: okay and um what would your difficulties be then
Kristina: um well...
R: your strengths are academically like what are you good at
Kristina: so if you think back yeah to everything in the master's program um what would you say
R: okay alright I'm and so that's kind of all the questions that I have for you but is there anything that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask
Kevin: [long pause] ummm [pause] I don't know what kind of uhh uhh support exactly the universities or institutions are providing in Ireland but of course they have to understand about the international students' perspective because Ireland is could be totally different who are coming especially from Asia and Africa so they have to provide some support well >that is what I felt< when I came to Ireland for a study so it was not easy to uhh uhh emm integrate with the system so that too I think they have to take more integration [pause] policy and the thing is if the immigration system is not good [pause] it doesn't help actually [pause] and I have heard a lot of students [pause] sorry so a lot of students moved out from Ireland because the immigration didn't allow me to stay they started here they work part time based [pause] they contributed to the economy they are not criminal [pause] but for the immigration [pause] the went back [pause] to their own country so the thing is Ireland lost a potential employee
R: Right and is there anything else that you would like to express or to say
Kevin: [long pause] uhh I would say again that the flexibility is the important thing that the administration and professors should focus on the students not harsh on the students >well they are not harsh I should say< but they have to be more understanding to the students uh issues yeah something like that
R: Alright brilliant thank you

Kristina

R: okay alright so um this most of the questions are going to be in relation to the master’s so if you think back yeah to everything in the master's program um what would you say your strengths are academically like what are you good at
Kristina: um well um for the speaking I think is easier and um I to be honest I a bit strong upon my writing
R: okay and um what would your difficulties be then
Kristina: well another good thing is my re- for reading is good thing I think I could say eh in my writing a difficulties eh it is like ehm I have to know more vocabularies and ehm the
orders from the some word because it has like exceptions and these type of things and this
is my weakest point I think

Kristina: yeah and then also the grammar structure yeah

R: mm-hmm okay under vocabulary would it be more about the context or would it be
having a wide range of vocabulary

Kristina: both

R: both

Kristina: yeah both yeah yeah I try to learn more words and this th- but sometimes you
know if you don’t practice a language that it will forget it

R: mm-hmm yeah okay and thinking of your modules um what did you need to do for your
modules both inside and outside of the class

Kristina: ehm I have to do plenty of reading and ehm for the new words I have to look up
and um search for the meaning and try to learn them yeah and it was a good help because it
makes me more easy to for understanding um for my writing for speaking also uh for
thinking I use phrase from the vocabulary

R: mm-hmm and so mainly you had to read for your modules

Kristina: eh

R: or what else like what was the work required from the modules

Kristina: oh reading and also thinking @ and listening yeah yeah

R: mm-hmm yeah okay and um as a research student yeah what did you have to do

Kristina: I have to research eh new books and new chapters related to the topic that I was
doing um @ as you know there is plenty of reading plenty of reading yeah I had to analyze
also there and got a lot informations and uh see that uh what the point what w- what I was
in agreement with such with some researchers #own and with some researchers what I wasn’t
agree so I had to take a decision in other words yeah

R: okay and so for the dissertation did you do data collection or was it more of a literature-
based dissertation

Kristina: both yeah both yes I had to do plenty of research and all of that yeah

R: can you explain that in detail like what did you need to do kind of step by step for your
dissertation

Kristina: mm well first of all I has to the um literature review and then hand it into the
supervisor had to analyze to to see them from my point of view and they um address me
what point what was the weakest point and I would point there for the dissertation and then
also I had to do plenty research and reading and once I had analyze and um I have to do my
comments about that point of about of what I was reading there you know

R: mm-hmm and did you find when you would go to the supervisor and they would give
feedback what was that like what was the general feedback how did you kind of
perceive the feedback and apply it

Kristina: well eh to be honest that I didn't have an appointment in person face to face with
my supervisor just was through email because she was very busy yeah and I la- I saw I had
a new supervisor for the last three weeks and um yes he was different person I had to face
to him and but I had to restructure my whole assignment the whole dissertation

Kristina: oh

Kristina: yes @@@ was nice @@@

R: okay so you had to restructure //everything

Kristina: yes his point of view| yeah because my another supervisor umm she left early so
but I couldn't have a meeting with her yeah it was a bit difficult to be honest because I
couldn't um show my point of view or get any feedback from her just through email it is
not easy to get um feedback yeah

R: yeah and when you made the switch from supervisors how did that feel what was that
process like

Kristina: uhh I really it was very it was hard for me because the new supervisor had
different point of view so he told me I you have to restructure your whole dissertation but
he was very kind person that he helped me that you have to do that he point me out things
that he has to take out what I have to include and he was meeting me every week for the
last three weeks so it was very nice a good help really yeah it was great to hear his point of
view he advice and yeah yeah yeah

R: okay so while it was hard that you had to restructure everything you had guidance

Kristina: yes exactly yeah he did that yes because it was three weeks just that so I had to
restructure the whole dissertation

R: mm-hmm okay great and I'm so going kind of back to the the lectures um what would
happen inside of the classroom of the lectures was it more the professor giving a lecture
with the PowerPoint was a group discussion things like that

Kristina: I I can say that it was uh great because it was a mix so that was um the lecturer
was giving the class on the blackboard that with a PowerPoint and they were also make us
uh to work in groups which is great yeah because we could share our point of view or ideas
or agreements or disagreements you know and discuss that yeah interesting yeah

R: okay and what was the form of assessment for your modules
Kristina: ehm the form of assessment was mm more uh um it was for writing ass-

assignments writing assignment yeah yeah ah yes and once it was uh yes and we had one

module that we have to visit a language school and then we had to write a report yeah

R: okay yeah and what was the process like when you had to write assignment

Kristina: hm @@ well um it was a lot of work @@ I’m sure of that @ because I had to

select all that eh I had to select the books uh the uhm the researchers and yeah and then I

have to read again and I have to well while I was uh reading I had to keep my notes and

then I have to come back and I had to write assignments and highlight the important point

R: and what did you feel that your professors expected from you so how did they assess

academic success

Kristina: oh that’s a good question actually um [pause] I think t- were very helpful and the

expect us that all students should do proper research we had to investigate and we had to

have a full knowledge for the subject that what we were doing for the module I’d say that

and this is the way of making sure that each one of us we had to have knowledge about that

and a lot of knowledge for with more researches #as #they #want #lots of um reference for

#about #the #topics yeah

R: and did they communicate those expectations during the module uh did they give you

guidelines etc.

Kristina: yes they were actually yeah um on the they time that we had the lessons they

were trying to communicate about the topics and to there was a lot of plenty of reading that

we had to do and also in the booklet that we got from the master I think we got plenty of

reference for the books and this this was well structured this way I could say that yeah

R: okay yeah and did you feel that those guidelines were helpful um like did they help

Kristina: yes absolutely yeah it was a big help because when you know already before we

start of course you know what are you going through yeah and what topics are you going

to touching each module yeah

R: okay yeah yeah and during the master’s I’m I know this is it was what three years ago

now um so how did you feel that you were doing academically during the masters

Kristina: wow @@ uh well [pause] I was doing good I could say that um I was um putting

all my effort that I could do it but once again I could I must say that I always I feel like that

language barrier it was always there it is not um a j- I can ask I can communicate in

English language about highly academically to be honest it for me it is not easy I struggled

at sometimes yeah

R: yeah could you describe that struggle a bit more
Kristina: ehm it is well that the problem it is that uh I don't not I don't use that words often
so when I am going it was my first time I did a master so I when use eh I had to get used to
new words there you know it is why I think I find a little bit difficult there yeah this is
more accommodated to a new words um plus the new environment everything that is
influencing that yeah in the beginning yeah
R: yeah and can you expand you said also adjusting to the new environment so what other
factors were influencing your academic success
Kristina: ehm well it was that um I did encouragement from the super- supervisor from the
lecturers they were well prepared professors that um that I really this make you more um
interesting to the research in the each each modules
R: and so you've touched on this a bit but I'm how much is a factor do you think language
plays in academic success so how important is language to doing well academically
language
Kristina: language do you mean
R: language like English
Kristina: ohhh okay @ um I think it is very it is important because it is the main language
that you have to do well for the rest of the time that you had to do your studies that if you
don't have a language you can’t do it or you will just you will struggle there
R: yeah and what other factors would impact academic success and that can be inside of
[institution 1] and outside of [institution 1]
Kristina: yeah well inside the [institution 1] well [pause] well I could from my friend so I
could see there was a reference that um they were saying for that Chinese girls that were
coming to the le- um the master here in [institution 1] they were saying that they were very
good grammatically but they couldn't understand while the the lecturers when they were
speaking because they ‘cause it was a bit fast for them so the adjustment I think to the new
environmental to the new uhhh social context it was one of them there and uh well from
outside could you repeat again the question please
R: yeah um what other factors impact academic success
Kristina: okay yes uh well in my case I could say that um I had to work also until
sometime I had to come for I have to do the master yes I think that was a limitation of time
also to do all things and there that yes
R: yeah and were you working full-time
Kristina: no part-time
R: part-time
Kristina: part-time I was working there
R: and were you working in the same city
Kristina: oh no I was working that time in [city]
R: okay so you are also commuting back and forth
Kristina: yes yeah ah yes yeah the commuting is also another point there yeah it takes time
that I always I had to be like two hours before because I uh take a train and then to come to
the bus yeah yeah
R: okay and how did you find that how did you balance all of that
Kristina: well eh to be honest in the first three weeks it was hard but then I got used
to that yeah I got yeah I think went into the routine and then that’s fine now I am doing this
it’s good it’s not too yeah yeah yeah @@
R: and so in general yeah what do students need to succeed at [institution 1]
Kristina: well [pause] I think they need to be committed [pause] to study um if they have
any doubt they got to look for help because they they can present different types of issues
like ehm missing home their families or this type of things that I’m telling from my exp-
experience because I am from a different country yes it can influence a lot of that and you
have uh a problem a family problem something it will impact emotionally a lot and then
you ca- can’t study I feel they should have that um student had to be like a relax about life
be #unt supports yeah
R: yeah so they need support they need to be able to know where to go
Kristina: absolutely yeah yes yeah in advance they have to know what they're going
through before they start because otherwise it just they go to such a course and make a uh
shock and then probably they will stop doing but once I think we know that whole
structure that it’s like you know already your master and know what you're going through
is and whatever comes you will would take easily that I think
R: mm-hmm yeah and so speaking of supports um were you aware of any support I given
to students especially international students in [institution 1]
Kristina: ehm yes well I did ehm I think it was uh four weeks ehm English course here
before I start the uh master’s yes
R: okay yeah yeah so there is English support it was there any other general support
Kristina: ehm yes I yes I felt uh more su- uh it was a center for uh looking for the supports
but to be honest I didn't acknowledge to them but yes I had a they were there are lot of
people and it's a smaller organization they can support you there yes but that to be honest I
don't have the information about that yeah
R: okay alright I'm so going towards your preparation um before coming to [institution 1]
hmm so you just mentioned that you took a four week course before coming um here at
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

7899[institution 1] and then also before we started the interview you were saying that you did a
7900 pre-master's course before coming um so how did you feel about this preparation
7901 Kristina: about English from course that I did
7902 R: yeah the courses you did the pre-masters and the four weeks course how did you feel
7903 about it
7904 Kristina: ohh well when I did a pre master it was a difficult there because it was the first
7905 time that I had to be a using the high language the high structures it was it was hard
7906 yeah and then when I did the the Masters um four weeks course uh yes it was it was good
7907 so yeah it help you that you connect to that what you're you're coming that to to go to
7908 uh college again and it’s a very good course for uh the international students yeah and
7909 you're able to meet few people there before you are going to your classroom there because
7910 I remember that and I did the course and then we met with three girls in the classroom
7911 there yeah yeah it’s interesting
7912 R: yeah and so did you feel that the the preparation adequately prepared you for the
7913 studies and [institution 1]
7914 Kristina: ehm [pause] well I think it is just well I think so yes uh because was um well I
7915 could say that it depends that you know because was a it was different students they are
7916 going for different fields so normally that we got here was general English that um
7917 learning vocabulary and um um show us how to write an assignment so that it’s so yeah
7918 R: so it did help was there anything that you felt could be improved
7919 Kristina: ehm [pause] yes uh I could say yes because it help us how to write the structure
7920 from assignment and and to have a base of what the structure [institution 1] was looking
7921 that um for expectations for the students it was a advice they could give us on advice on
7922 how we have to write our assignment and the marks for the college what about we are
7923 going to pass or not pass yeah
7924 R: yeah so it would it would have been good if they had presented that kind of information
7925 during the summer
7926 Kristina: no they did
7927 R: they did okay yeah what could they do better
7928 Kristina: uhh okay [pause] well we were working in groups together and doing discussions
7929 there yes yeah yes work I think so it is good work groups and contribute each one of ours
7930 for the topic we had to do that
7931 R: okay so you were working in groups
7932 Kristina: yes yeah
7933 R: yeah so what did they not do that they should have done
Kristina: okay @
R: because you've done a master's
Kristina: yeah
R: and so how could the summer program improve okay
Kristina: oh ok yeah @@ well ehm I think it was too short time I think that time it was that
because we had I think at the time we started I think at nine and then yes we finish at two
or three kind of that yeah it was short time I think
R: okay so more hours
Kristina: more yeah I think so yeah okay so @@ depends on the perspective of each
person but um probably that just more ehm more tech- more information about the
University and the help that they can provide maybe that maybe that yes I think so yeah
R: yeah and um so speaking of the entry assessment you also mentioned that you had taken
the IELTS before yeah um do you remember your experience with IELTS
Kristina: mm yes I did twice three times I think @@
R: okay can you can you describe that
Kristina: well um it was hard for me because when I came from home that I study English
for two years in a school a private school but uh it was a different reality when I came here
because I couldn’t interact in the language and uh it took me a while to get into the
language but uh when I decided to take the IELTS I didn't think it would be very hard it
would be hard so the first time that I took just I without uh prepare myself just to try it so
we have the scores there so I didn’t succeed so I think I had knowledge what I had to study
to improve and that and the second time I took a course here in [language school] I think so
I took the call for three months and they were guiding us in the for the um exam but uh it
was not enough to be honest that because normally it is just it was like uh help us to
increase of the vocabulary is but it this was not enough for exam because uh when you
going through the exam it's more analytical thing that you have to do it and you got to have
you um you have to write very fast because you have to write against the time and for your
listening also that this you don't have a chance sometimes it is so fast yeah yeah yeah I
remember did three times I remember like in the second time got five the five point five
and then I was able to deliver the master yeah
R: so why did you decide to do a pre-masters instead of studying more English and going
straight into the masters
Kristina: was a time when I got to [city] that they told me that I had to do the pre-master
before I do the master I was told that I was advised that
R: mm-hmm from [institution 1] or from a different University
Kristina: it was in [institution 2] yeah yeah they told me that was I was just beginner here I didn't have too much information at time there and um they told me that so it's also a bit shy when you're a beginner and so that I had to study that or were people were fluent in the language and just you are like you feel like a bit you won't be able to do that work to study yeah wh- actually was hard when I went to college yeah @ but it was fine after that then I think so that you adjust to that and it’s fine yeah

R: yeah so then you took the pre-masters there and what was that like

Kristina: oh wow the pre master it was like it was like get the preparing for the IELTS again but I ex- except it was one subject was remember it was a European cinema that we had to watch movies and then we had to write uh three assignments yeah it was interesting subject because because it was it focusing at the beginning of the cinema from France Italy America and another it was all cinema it was very it was interesting to be honest but uh at the end we had to write uh assignments there

R: yeah so it was dual it prepared you for the IELTS or IELTS type test and then you also took a content course

Kristina: yeah yeah exactly that yeah because it was more about ehhh let me remember sorry that it was like it more into English that for reading or filling out the gaps of the books and explain things like that yeah

R: okay yeah and then did you go on to a master's program at that University

Kristina: no no

R: that's when you came to [institution 1] that

Kristina: yeah well I came to [institution 1] after maybe seven years eight years a good while after that

R: yeah so what made you decide not to start after the pre-masters

Kristina: well ehm economically because I had to work to get money to pay for that fees there yeah because I support myself yeah yeah yeah so that was it yeah

R: okay and do you feel that the pre-masters did a good job preparing you for your eventual studies in the future

Kristina: yes actually yes it was ehm it makes me more uh interested in more do research about that career that I w- I am following yes

R: okay alright brilliant good um okay let's see what type of preparation do you think international students should do before coming to [institution 1]

Kristina: and you mean in the home so once they come when they arrive in the country
Kristina: @ okay I think so that um they have to study for the language and um research about the society they are going to go to study for maybe one year or three one or four year what how many years they have to study they have to research about that and to be ready that you know to get adjusted to the new environment there in other words how to be prepare emotionally there yeah and once they arrived to Ireland um I think that it’s a good help I come- some of them come could come to the English uh lessons that this may help that to get back to college I think yeah yeah um probably they have to research about what the un- university can offer for international students you know yeah

R: and what do you wish that you had known before coming to [institution 1] Kristina: ummm @ it’s a good question [pause] hmm I think so I knew already before I came to [institution 1] or I knew what I was going through there yeah yeah

R: yeah and do you feel that you knew that because you had done study in Ireland before and you had been living here or was it because you had researched a lot about [institution 1]

Kristina: I think so uh a bit of the things I because I had been studying here already I did a pre mastered already and as I tell you I had to write a few short assignments over there in [institution 2] and I um did also a research before coming to the College and for it on- one of the reason that I found out about our English course before come back to all the lessons yeah

R: okay and so what advice would you give to future students or students who are looking to come to [institution 1]

Kristina: hm well the advice I could say that [pause] they have to learn the language well this is very important you know and prepare them self emotionally which is a good thing because nice people in Ireland @@ yes and uh be committed to study yes I think they will enjoy the course what’s or whatever they are what study they are going to choose there

R: and do you have any specific tips for what to focus on in the language and also how to prepare themselves emotionally

Kristina: oh [long pause] not really no @ sorry no @@

R: so then if you give advice to faculty so to professors in supporting international students what would that be

Kristina: I think that they should understand a little bit more than that uh but more than I think and uh probably they to be honest I haven’t been very close to the lecturers there but prob- I am sure that if the international students will they will ask for help they will do it I think I am sure because they are very helpful people to be honest yeah yeah
R: yeah and what advice would you have to [institution 1] in better supporting international students
Kristina: I think they have um that for #each um things so that I'm not too informed about all the courses that they are offering on I am sure because I have had a few my friends they have the were um join to few groups I think so they have a lot of things I think that to be honest the organizations I just thought it is not I am not interested it is because because of that time I haven't been just looking into more activity they were doing that but I am sure they are offering a lot of things there yeah
R: yeah you just personally didn't have the time because you were commuting and working Kristina: yeah absolutely yeah yes I did also here the for the deaf languages I did also that and I found one of them before they started the year they have like a little tents there so I did also for there yes there were a lot of things that were offered in there yeah yeah I think it’s my lack of my short time it's didn’t make me to research opportunities there yeah
R: mm-hmm great and alright so those are the questions I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask
Kristina: hm well hm I think that your questionnaire is full it’s a good questions I think that it clear
R: um is there anything else that you would like to express Kristina: not really it’s it’s fine that yes yeah
R: I actually have another question that I just thought of um since it's rather unique that I'm interviewing someone that finished their studies um how do you feel looking back on your studies now like when you look back on your studies how do you feel
Kristina: oh um do you mean that before [institution 1] or before [institution 2] or when how long ago
R: um well I'd say [institution 1] so like when you look back on your time and [institution 1] yeah how do you feel
Kristina: yeah how do I feel that I did a good achievement @ @ @ yeah yeah it was a hard work but worth it in the end yeah
R: so hard work but worth it
Kristina: yes exactly yeah yeah I really enjoyed the course like that yeah yeah yeah it’s interesting @
R: and so you're still in the field of what you studied you're still you're still now you're working in that field
Kristina: yeah yeah yeah
R: um how did the course help you
Kristina: yes actually it help me more to local uh opportunities? for work because I um I finished the university as a [language] teacher and for literature in [country] so I came here I was always focused on teaching [language] for in schools like I did in [country] I was thinking of that but it was different when I came here so for the teaching council all I have to go through and yeah I am still in the process of that so to me to go into the for work in the public school public school it is not yet possi...possible yeah because I have to I need to submit a lot of requirements yeah yeah so but um it's fine for the moment yeah yeah but I will see what’s going on yeah
R: yeah but the master’s helped you kind of achieve certain things
Kristina: yes
R: like a step closer to being able to work in the schools or
Kristina: yes yes yeah exactly that yes actually yes at um the master gave me the opportunity to do more research I want on what I had to do my work and approach for more fields in my the work also that #meet I speak like you @ @ @
R: thank you so much
Laura
R: okay perfect okay so my first question for you is what would you consider to be your strengths academically
Laura: [exhale] good question I think I'm quite hardworking and I'm quite a fan of detailed work so like I think my strength is that I am also when I'm proofreading something for example I'd like look at like details and then find like the one missing comma or like something like that's quiet yeah one of my strengths
R: okay and what would you consider to be your weaknesses academically
Laura: hmmm [long pause] sometimes my time management? as I'm so much into details kind of like losing myself into details and then I'm like [pause] losing time for like the main main thing
R: okay and what would you consider to be your strengths in terms of English
Laura: [pause] hmm I'm quite confident using it this so like when I was speaking I'm not like thinking too much of words and stuff like I have a lot of practice so I'm just yeah I feel
Quite like normal speaking it's not like with other languages I learned but English is very kind of like flowing naturally

R: okay and do you think that that's um you said it compared to other languages that you've learned is it because you've you're using English a lot is it because you've learned it for a long time or why do you think there's such a difference between using English and other languages that you've learned

Laura: hmm I think combination of both like that's the language I learned the longest so I'm learning English like I started learning English [pause] almost 15 years ago? round about and I just in everyday life like in [country] like hearing English songs and sometimes watch English movies it's very [pause] around you and I also travel a lot and then like when I travel to like I don’t know Spain I don't speak Spanish so then I could make it in English with other people and like of course here also it's English every day the second explanation of I've learned it since a long time and I use it the most of all the languages I learned

R: okay cool and what would you say that your weaknesses or difficulties in terms of English is

Laura: I'm thinking to [language] sometimes so sometimes I say sentences or words that would make sense in [language] but don't make sense in English because it took me like three years to figure out that kettle is called kettle and not water cooker which would be like the [language] way of calling it a kettle and then I'm like oh this make totally sense then others are like no that's just wrong like

R: okay so it's just kind of like little things where it's almost a translation from [language] or just a [language] way of saying something

Laura: mm yeah it's mostly translating something from [language] and then I guess I started learning here at [institution 1] of course then I'm like oh I don't know this very academic words and stuff like that um I mean you can catch up with that and like the more papers and essays you write the better it also gets

R: okay so you're feeling more comfortable with that

Laura: yeah

R: and how long have you been here

Laura: umm sinceee August

R: okay are you sorry are you doing a masters or Erasmus

Laura: I'm doing the full master program here at the [discipline] school and there's only one year so it's all very squeezed but it's like full English of course
R: mm-hmm right and so can you describe to me the modules that you're doing and the work that's required for the modules

Laura: okay so I'm doing the [discipline] program and we have six modules um all from like [module topic] up to [module topic] and each module has usually two assignments as one individual and one group project and the individual ones are mostly either essays or also um reflective writings which was very new to me here because we don't do this kind of thing in [country] and the group projects are either presentations or also kind of essay

but I mean kind of put the parts together

R: mm-hmm okay and are you expected to do a lot of reading outside of class a lot of preparation for the actual lecture or is it more just focused on the assessment

Laura: mmm well I expected a lot of reading but not as much like I knew it's a Master’s program and as a master you have to like read a lot but then some lecturers just gave us a whole book to read within a week or something like that so that's more than I expected um and also the group project took a lot of time cause it’s always like we just got to know each other this semester so we had to gather around and like different cultures different people um so it just took a lot of time yeah I think the rest is like I mean they they warned us that the program is rigorous so @@

R: okay and and so the assessments the group projects and the individual assignments um what like what are you required to do do they give you the topic is it up to you to pick the topic is it something practical is it just go write an essay

Laura: it depends on the lecturer most of the time we can pick the topic we get a kind of frame like choose a topic within that area but usually we're free to choose any topic within the area um and then also depending on lecturer someone give us very clear instruction so like okay write this many words and like the style and whatever and then other lectures are [pause] very free like for one lecture we could either do a TED talk or a website or an essay like whatever we kind of wanted to do um but usually get kind of a frame and you can move within that frame

R: okay and so do they give you the guidelines and the rubric before completing your assessment or is it something that you see afterwards

Laura: um they give us the guideline before umm but they also open to changes as we had so many assignments we also talked to some lecturers whether they can change their um guidelines and make it for example like push the deadline behind or make it fewer word count something like that but yeah we usually got it in the even in the very first lecture or like within the first days or weeks
R: okay and was there a lot of opportunity to ask questions and discuss the assessment if
like about the guidelines and you had questions or anything like that
Laura: yeah yeah again depending on the lecturer but usually they're quite open for
questions and you can either come to them after the class or just write an email and then
ask them and then yeah they either give you like direct feedback within also a day and
some others are very slow @ but usually they're very open for questions
R: okay cool and so inside of the classroom what happens is it mainly a lecture style where
there's like a PowerPoint and the professor is lecturing is it group discussion class
Laura: um like the average class or again depends on lecturer is um mainly the lecturer
presents something but throughout the whole class we can ask questions and give our
opinion um and then some lecturers even take an extra time at the end of the class and say
okay now we have twenty minutes thirty minutes whatsoever time to discuss a certain topic
but usually they kind of present us the topics and the findings and then throughout the class
we can just give input what we think about it
R: okay um and so you're in a masters you'll have to do a dissertation do you know what's
required of you in terms of the dissertation
Laura: um most of it yes um we just had a dissertation like information session two weeks
ago um and also a dissertation is not completely new because we do dissertations in
[country] as well even for the bachelor um and it is also very similar kind of the
assignments like this is the word count and references and you can do literature view or
interviews and whatever like different kinds of um but of course as soon as I start
researching and stuff I will go into more detail also like read all these um information
papers but generally I know what we are expected to do
R: okay and so I know that you don't have any marks or any you may have some
Laura: yeah @ I have some @@
R: yeah the [discipline] school works a little bit differently since you have multiple
modules throughout but how do you feel that you're doing academically do you think
you're doing well poorly in the middle
Laura: mmm I think it's generally ok like some subjects are not as good as I wanted them
to be and others are better than I expected [pause] mmm and it's usually it's usually 60% of
your markets is individual and 40 are the groups um but you’re kind of like very dependent
whether you get up into a good or a bad group kind of um I think in general I mean being
at [institution 1] like @I'm @quite @satisfied so far um just have to get over this confusion
because the Irish rating system is completely different and then to figure this out oh
seventy here is like really really good right but it sounds not good like 70 out of hundred
you're like oh okay but then they're like oh no but that's really good so that's like a little confusing but um I mean I didn't get all my grades yet but I think so far I did not bad yeah
okay I know what do you think that your professors expect of you so when they're giving marks what are they looking for
Laura: um [pause] I think not of like not every lecture say that particularly but I think they all use this Bloomberg taxonomy so like think critically and evaluate things not only describe it but kind of use [pause] like references but then give your own thoughts and really kind of just create like your own idea about it then really climb up this Bloomberg taxonomy thing @
or okay and you said some say it directly and some don't um can you go into more detail about that
Laura: like one lecturer like every class you told us okay think about the Bloomberg taxonomy like a literally every class she was like Oh think about that like by the way Bloomberg and so on um and others didn't particularly mention this um how do you call it hmm [long pause] what’s the name for that like this kind of model but then within the module outline in the description they’re like Oh learning outcomes should be critically evaluate this and this or be able to use the knowledge and stuff so in an indirect way they also refer to this taxonomy
R: right um and so in general what would you say that students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]
Laura: in general or at a master’s level
R: um in general
Laura: in general hmm [long pause] that's a good question I mean like for international students like some English knowledge @@ um and yeah just the will to work hard yes at least at the Master’s level I don't know how the bachelors are but this is just a lot of work and like you should be willing to really [pause] go was the library very often @@
or okay so a lot of work a lot of work in the library okay and so you kind of mentioned language there but how much of a factor does language play in academic success
Laura: [pause] a lot I mean of course like an international student for me it's like another language so it’s not my mother language and as I told you already I'm like still thinking sometimes in a [language] way um but even if it's your mother language I mean there are a certain like even in [language] there are certain words that you only use in an academic way and then other words that you should not use in an academic paper um so yeah like
kind of the language you use you know like in your essays or in a presentation can also influence your mark quite a lot and um yeah you also have to just understand the readings you're reading so [pause] yes as long as you’re not like I don't know studying mathematics where it's all about numbers it's very very important factor

R: okay and what other factors would you say play an academic success and that could be things inside and outside of [institution 1]

Laura: yep umm [pause] also depending on the major but as I have like a [discipline] major and it’s very much about group projects and stuff um all the social skills are very important and also an international program um [pause] yeah like know something about other cultures could be important [pause] and umm what else just keeping balance is also very important because I like now is all the assignment time and you're kind of losing yourself in the library all the time um but they also balance between academic life and personal life is also important

R: okay alright and how have you found that balance or have you found that balance yet

Laura: ahhh the last weeks not so much @@ um I think I'm doing quite okay like I joined some societies? so then I'm like just like okay now I stop studying but I'm going to a society event and um I just like go out of library and like take a walk around the campus kind of um but it is hard to find a balance like for me personally because like so much like detailed and [pause] do your work um but yeah that's something I have to like do better for next semester but um yeah [pause] but the assignments are over now so now I can like balance @ yeah now I can like totally balanced all of @@ my personal life @

R: @ right yeah and I'm okay so I'm gonna move kind of more towards your experiences with preparation tools and standardized exams so before you came to [institution 1] did you have any linguistic preparation for academic language for helping you when you're studying in English

Laura: um well as part not only a preparation but as um um a what I have had to do was the TOEFL to get into [institution 1] um so like I had to do to get here but it was almost kind of a chance to refresh English as I'm haven’t like really studied grammar for years I just use it but then I was like oh yeah we can I use this word again or like I use this kind of in a wrong way because the grammar is this and this and then while I’m studying here I use a lot of these how do you call it like sheets with word suggestions so like oh you can like umm [pause] umm what's the image word for that [pause] I don't even know the [language] word currently like the same meaning but another word kind of thing

R: ah synonym
Laura: synonyms yeah um or these like fancy connection work hence due to like something
like that so I had like a list with all these fancy academic @words
R: yeah how did you find these lists was it online did someone give it to you
Laura: um both like you can just google for these sheets um but then also one lecturer here
gave us a list for the reflective writing so like phrases you can use for it reflective writing
because this is something new for like many of us so yeah and both I got them or just
searched for them
R: okay and you're finding them quite useful
Laura: I use them quite a lot because just I mean it is not my I'm not a native speaker
and then until a certain point I'm like writing and I'm like but now I need like another word
I'm using approach for 10 times already like I need another word now
R: right okay and um so did you take any classes to prepare you for the TOEFL exam or
Laura: no I had um my brother did a TOEFL a few years before me and I just used his old
book and went through all the [pause] ummm yeah the whole book so every chapter and
then there were like examples and tests that you could take before
R: okay and I'm how do you feel about the TOEFL exam
Laura: hmmm [long pause] I mean it was okay I passed quite good but it was kind of a
weird situation this is like this is the kind of the American way and then also at the test day
we weren't even allowed to take like a water bottle on our test so like the test situation
itself was a little bit weird but I mean the the umm the questions and everything is like
okay
R: and do you think that that exam helped to prepare you for [institution 1]
Laura: [pause] mmm until a certain amount like I think even without the TOEFL I would
have like do quite the same as I'm doing now but as I say it like just reviewing grammar a
little bit and just like get it back to your head [pause] was helpful
R: okay and what type of preparation do you think the international students should take
before coming to [institution 1]
Laura: mmm [long pause] do some reading [pause] as you mostly just just speak it or you
watch a moving in English or listen something but not many people read something in
English if it's not their native language you know I think that would be the most helpful
thing to do
R: okay thank you yeah and I'm what do you wish that you had known before coming to
[institution 1]
Laura: [exhale] hmm [long pause]I don't know a lot of things @ @ that a leap card wha-
like I don't know I could've picked up a leap card three days later and then I could have got
Laura: mm yeah kind of every student discount place @@ like sometimes I walk by restaurants because I’m like ahh so expensive and then a week later somebody tells me yeah they do have a student discount I'm like ah I could've gone like a week early already. thing like all these student discount they're probably more but I just cannot think about more than at the moment.

R: yeah okay perfect yeah um so this kind of the fun part so if you give advice to faculty and professors and to help support students better what would that advice be.

Laura: [pause] [sigh] replace the chairs in the library they're really uncomfortable umm [long pause] what else [pause] I think a kind of the introduction week was until a certain amount very helpful but then there were some workshops about things that like we don't need them yet for example like they already talked about the dissertation in that week I mean of course it's an important part but you get so much information that you kind of forget it already and then some other things you don't really get information about for example we got a library tour but then they were like oh yeah this is like this area and this area and then I think two weeks ago I was like because we like in [discipline] we use a lot of online journals so not many physical books but then I really needed a physical book and then I was like okay how can I get this book off of the shelf because it’s like a quite complicated system as there's so many books here so like the library tour would be more helpful if they also showed us that they're not only oh yeah here's the [name] building @

R: yeah but I with other plans so I have class or whatever umm so it would be like helpful to get information about that early on then a day before or like in the morning and then it’s like in the evening @@ it’s like but this might be like an Irish thing or [institution 1] I don’t know @@
R: yeah um and is there anything that your professors could do say like inside the
8349 classroom to better support international students
Laura: I think the professors themselves not really I mean it's not for internationals in
particular but I think for all the other students so for example with one lecturer and we
spend most of the time of the class figuring out what she wants from us um like most of the
lecturers their assignments were very clear but hers was quite confusing so we spend so
much time clarifying just the assignment and couldn't really spend time on the actual class
so um you just communicate your assignments more clear and then also some lecturers
detailed and really told us oh by the way Times New Roman font 12 or whatever and
others just didn't tell us and then we like had to get back to them and like oh like do you
want a particular font or a particular size whatever um so all those like clarification of
those minor things it's like just time-consuming and they just could like from the very
beginning be very clear about kind of everything and they don't have to like ask them
throughout your assignment like oh which font does she want like I don't know I like um
oh and but that's probably a [discipline] school problem the room situation is [pause] really
annoying [pause] so every week they changed the rooms and then we to like search the
rooms again or they were way too small way too big way too warm way too cold um I
think that's probably due to that the building is not finished yet and of what I heard they
took way more students than planned so they planned to take like 30 people but now we
are more than 70 in my class so you know the room situation is also something that should
be addressed
R: okay brilliant and if you could give advice to organizations that are creating like
summer programs to prepare international students what advice would that be like what
should be taught
Laura: @ soft skills and more soft skills @ yeah of course it depends on on the program
like if it's a summer school for [pause] I don’t know sport major then like of course they
don't teach them how to read an academic reference paper or if it's for biological you teach
them more biological stuff but like of course #academic subject but um yes soft skills are
just so important I think of course like as a [discipline] student is even more important but
generally in life [pause] and then like you think kind of oh we are all adults we should
know all this or this or like know how to behave but then you always end up like in a group
and then you can't believe what other people are doing kind of so yes soft skills that's just
R: okay can you give some examples or like situations that have come up
Laura: [sigh] um I like there was one um person in my group and like I mean it's okay of
course we like we all have other stuff to do out of the class and like the one group project
is just one project of 12 assignments out of like another or other stuff so it is understandable when somebody says hey I'm coming a little bit later or I can't make it or something but he just wouldn't say anything he just would come like an hour too late or just didn't came at all to our group meetings like just he never just never said why so we're always sitting there and we're like will he come will he not come like I don't know and like he's like 23 or something so like he should know that he should tell people when he’s late or something it was like you know frustrating

R: yeah so things just like communication time management all that kind of stuff
Laura: communication is also like a very key element yeah
Laura: be patient [pause] and [pause] find a good coffee place @@
R: I agree that's essential
Laura: @ yeah um but patience and understanding and empathy also was quite important
Laura: mmmm I think in general like those patience with yourself like sometimes you cannot be productive every day um then patience with other people as they like I mean they should tell you that they coming late but then again they have just maybe they have to work maybe or have some family things going on or whatever um but then just try to understand other people's situations and before you like start flaming them think about like ok situation might they be in and then maybe they just like one of my classmates she just lost her grandmother during the studies and then of course she couldn't just do so much and all the patience with the system I think there's [pause] throughout the whole world I think every university is like [pause] very [pause] crass it sounds quite negative but you know there are certain structures and then if you want to get this particular paper it just takes time even [country] we're like supposed to be very efficient but then you go to university in [country] [click] not very @ just very like slow and then you like just just wait for your paper you’ll get it take some time but R: right alright and so are you aware of any support that international students receive from your department or from the wider college
Laura: well they have quite a lot like not particularly for internationals but in general like there's a student to student um peer thing that you can just talk to other students and they are trying to listen to you as an international student but also as an Irish student you could go to the global room anytime and also talk to them or sit there and they have like TV programs in like every language then for graduate students there is I think every Friday a
app\ngrad chat from two professors and then you also can just go to them and then the GSU has
your stuff out @ umm yeah that's all like the kind of social thing and then you have
of course like library office workshops for academic literature review and how to use
EndNote and like many other things and then we have mmm what else do we have [pause]
I’m thinking of just tons of workshops about everything kind of
R: okay and so would you say that the support offered at [institution 1] is adequate or is
there anything that could be improved or added
Laura: mmm I think they have quite a lot like I haven't used much of it and I think that's
also another thing that I should do more next semester oh there's also like a career service
and then they can like review your CV umm I think they do offer quite a lot yeah the
Career Service was a little bit drowning at the beginning because um all the [discipline]
students they've very tight deadlines for training jobs so they had all like deadlines already
in October/November so then the Career Service was kind of like reviewing all of their
CV's and then you came like from another major and you were like can you review my CV
and they were like oh but we have to do like all the [discipline] students now so they might
need a little bit more staff for the Career Service but like in general I think it's quite quite
good
R: okay alright um so that's actually all the questions that I have for you um but are there
any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask
Laura: hmm not at the moment but let me think of a few more seconds [long pause] I think
you did ask that but like a little bit more like external factors a little bit because it's just
about so with the housing situation like I was quite lucky I got something very fast but
other students kind of like hopping from one hostel to another still so like something like
yeah external things can also like influence it quite a lot I think you kind of like a asked
that but not very like housing focused @ I don’t know if that’s like part of your I mean
main question
R: it is um you know other factors that could impact academic success um especially
things that [institution 1] might be able to improve on say by building more housing or
something like that so so you’d consider housing to be something that impacts it and
Laura: yes [pff] I think that's like I was quite lucky but then other students had real issues
and then some moved in but then I don’t know if you know about that but a lot of students
live in [student housing] and they had a big mold problem and they're just all moved in and
they had to move out again to another place then they fixed all the mold and then they
could move back again so they were like moving in and out in and out in and out and
others just couldn't find anything because it's so expensive and of course when you’re like when you're studying but then you're like I don't know even know where I sleep like tomorrow or next week that's like real stress and I mean I think they're building new student accommodation somewhere where is that no on [Street] I think next to the business building they're building something um but just not enough you know like that’s a real real issue in Dublin

R: yeah so is there anything else you would like to express to add
Laura: no I think it's nice
R: right alright thank you

Lena

R: all right um so my first question is so what are your strengths academically like what are you good at
Lena: umm [pause] in terms of reading for example I tend to read quickly and also understand it um easily if I read like the text of course it depends on the on the subject and difficulty of the text but I'm really proud that I can quickly read and understand it so I can I can spare a lot of time and when I’m preparing for an essay or something like that ummm [pause] [click] yeah in speaking um I think I'm a pretty fluent um but of course it's yeah it depends on on on on the day and also the subject as well um listening is also also one of my strengths and um yeah if you look at the communication skills in general um I think I am pretty strong in that as well
R: mm-hmm okay and what would you say your difficulties are then
Lena: umm it's definitely the writing uhhm because [pause] uhm it was a long time ago where I did when I did my undergrads or not long time ago four years ago so um I need to readjust my mindset about how to write an essay in an academic way and not just answering um like an email in a professional way so it's definitely an um issue at the moment? umm so yeah I would say the writing [pause] like writing a proper academic uh paper
R: and so can you tell me about the modules that you're taking so what do you have to do for them what are they like
Lena: yeah so I'm studying masters in [discipline] um so I may have related subjects so that's I have nothing to do with [topic] or [topic] or something like that so everything is is actually reading and writing papers so I have uh for some of this term I have yeah and I have umm [pause] uh yeah I have uhmm [module] I have researching [discipline] so it's
actually a very good subject to prepare for for the dissertation time um I have [module] uhm [module] and just general [discipline module] and uh next term I will have other other subjects focusing more on on [discipline] uhm and for all uh subjects or modules I have on- one individual essay uhm and then a group project which includes a presentation and also a report or an essay written um among four or five of us

R: and are you given the topics for your essays and for the group projects or is it more up to you to come up with it

Lena: um well it depends on uhm each module but it's usually given at least the the major frame whether it has to be related to [topic] or there is a statement and we have to argue or agree with that using [discipline] prac- practices or focusing on one particular practice we would like to focus on

R: and inside of the classroom what generally happens so are your professors lecturing with a PowerPoint is their group discussion do you talk about readings etc.

Lena: hmm again it depends but [pause] ehm like for example and I already had uh five modules? and [pause] only one was more like focusing on lecturing and just listening and all the others are mainly focusing on group work and an- in-class discussion so uh the professor's told us to to read everything back at home before lecture and then during a lecture we just talk and discuss and work in groups uh working on projects um and so on um in you know in [discipline] schools it's more important that we learn how to use theories in practice so I think that's the main purpose of that? compared to um humanities or arts or something like that

R: okay perfect and do you know much about what's going to be required of you in terms of your dissertation and research

Lena: um yes we had a few session about that but I think it's still the- there are some somethings which are still unclear but I think so far so good um we started to learn how to do to do a literature review and how to do the design and what to focus on which journals we have to use what's the preference of the program manager in terms of [pause] journal uh rankings and so on

R: okay alright right and okay and so how would you evaluate your current academic success how do you feel that you're doing in the course

Lena: um it's very stressful um as I mentioned it was four almost five years ago when I finished the my undergrad so for me it's a bit stressful too to get back to to the track and um and perform well in aca- in academics but uh so far so good I would say that of course I just started to write one of my essays this is the first one I am trying to do um and in terms of group project and in class discussion and and um yeah that's that's fine so far
R: and how do your professors assess academic success so what do they look for when they're grading
Lena: umm [pause] they look for a critical ummm thinking or umm yeah something like this we are not just reading and then copying and then writing but also stating our own opinion and then are you with with the given article and and so they are so looking for something new something innovative ummm even though it's really uhh [pause] given umm given area that we are studying? but still they are looking for something something extra something innovative and and yeah I would say critical thinking and and reflection [pause] um that's the main [pause] thing
R: and do you have access to the rubrics or guidelines before you complete it an assignment or like how do the professors communicate their expectations to you
Lena: um yeah I think in the first lecture [pause] I think majority of the professor's showed us the rubrics um and also one of the lecturers umm actually give feedback for our essay outline um [pause] and and the feedback was given based on the rubrics um so she didn't give us like specific [pause] uh opinion like this is good or not but just helping you know through the rubrics and um it actually it it helped some of the with some of the questions we had
R: okay and is there a lot of time for questions like do you have opportunities to ask about assignments dissertations etc.
Lena: um yeah so on the day when the umm the essay or the group project is given we have a couple questions but also afterwards through the class reps or or or after class we have the opportunity to discuss
R: perfect um and in general what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]
Lena: hm more time @@ more time definitely and also a bit more preparation for for academics um of course we have the orientation week but I don't think it's enough to be honest um I think we would need more time to to get back on track um I was surprised to see that majority of my classmates are [pause] coming with the same program that's as as I so they finished undergrad a couple of years back? um and coming from work [pause] we need we need to we need a like a transaction period to get back to to this academic environment so definitely I think we would need more time before jumping into writing essays and and and and doing research and so on
R: and can you expand on like what that time would include like what would you like to do in order to prepare
Lena: yeah so for example um we had the first lecture on theee [pause] 10th of September  
and today is the 22nd of October so within a month we already have to start to work on on  
an essay um even even though we never had a lecture on the specific area of [discipline]  
[click] so I would say that at least within the first one and a half month would be nice if  
we don't get any assignments or at least nothing um nothing serious um just do prepare a  
bit more [pause] because we cannot really focus on the studies because we have to focus  
on the assessment and that's what I'm lacking the focus on the studies and then the  
assessment is is another is another part of the term  
R: right yeah so more time basically just kind of settle in get the //lectures get used to  
Lena: settle in]  
R: the expectations and  
Lena: yeah exactly exactly and just to to practice a bit a bit more and and and widen our  
horizons and then and then do the assessment because we don't have written exams this  
semester so there is nothing like sitting down and studying we have to read constantly and  
and not focus on on a you know you know the day-to-day tasks  
R: okay and so how much of a factor does language play in academic success  
Lena: I think if I I think it's a lot um I can see that native speakers we have a lots of um  
students from the US for example I can see that they don't have the same difficulties as we  
do like non-native speakers um definitely the writing as I mentioned I'm also struggling  
with little bit for them it's very normal it's very very natural to to to write an essay for  
example um [click] the same with in-class discussion? uh [pause] like if someone is not  
confident with English then it seems that she or he doesn't know the particular subject or  
doesn't have any any any opinion about that it doesn't mean that it's just because um that  
given person has some some language barriers or yeah or cultural differences or something  
like that  
R: okay and so what other factors impact academic success and this could be inside or  
outside of [institution 1]  
Lena: hmm definitely personal issues can affect the results [pause] um [pause] yeah I  
would say I would say it's more the stress or or or the volume of work we have to do  
because if we would have more time we'd focus more on on the on the essays for example  
or on the projects so yeah I would say stress and also personal issues and and also yeah the  
work-life balance um we are we aren’t able to go to the gym and exercise and and do  
all the fun things but then we don't have the time so that also effects effects the the  
outcome of the studies
R: and so now I'm going to kind of switch to talking about preparation and entry
assessments before you came to [institution 1] so you said that you were working for
the past four years so did you take any linguistic or academic preparation before coming to
[institution 1]

Lena: um I did training before my undergrad because I studied in um in [country] in my
undergrad which is not my native country so I needed to take an IELTS before that and
yeah in like the last year of high school so I did preparations in Scotland for two months it
was a specific IELTS preparation course uh it was very intensive and at that time I think I
could score a six point five um so it helped me uh during during the undergrad because I
had the the English skills to to perform well umm and then after after I started to work I
needed to retake the IELTS um and for that I basically had @two two days of preparation
but again I was working in English so I didn’t really need to practice speaking or listening
or reading or something like that um so yeah so coming to [institution 1] I didn't take any
preparation

R: okay and I'm how do you feel about the IELTS any feelings at all

Lena: umm I think it's one of the best language tests which gives a a good overall or a good
overview about the students’ performance in English um [pause] I was working with
other umm language tests in my job and I think IELTS was the one which actually
reflected the students um proficiency well compared to others especially in speaking and
writing um so I definitely think that IELTS is is one of the one of the best ones

R: okay and do you think that the IELTS adequately prepared you for the demands of
studying in English

Lena: ummm [pause] I think so umm I cannot really talk about my studies at [institution 1]
because I think I had the language skills way before that but definitely um I experienced
that during undergrad students who came with another like Eng- English test they were a
bit weaker in writing particularly so I think IELTS prepares you well [pause] for the essay
writing and a structuring um long writing and also the the description of graphics and so on
so I think prepares you very well um reading as well um I think the um the difficulty of the
third reading in IELTS prepares you well for academic um texts umm so yeah
definitely

R: okay and so you've touched on this a little bit um but what type of preparation should
international students take before studying at [institution 1]

Lena: [click] ummm [pause] oh I think [exhale] like studying it in native environment is is
very essential um [pause] so if someone has opportunity to go to the UK or Ireland to
prepare for the IELTS I think it's the best also [click] learning from native speaker teachers

I think it's the key umm [click] to practice speaking and not just from another non-native speaker teacher um I have better experience with with that of course um a lot of reading um and also focusing on [pause] the um writing skills as well umm but yeah if someone has opportunity then then go abroad for a couple of weeks to to to practice and and be in that environment.

R: okay so if you could give advice to faculty so advice to your professors in dealing with international students what would that advice be

Lena: [pause] umm [pause] teach a bit more [pause] I think we get uh a lot of freedom in terms of preparation and self-study and I think we are here to learn from [pause] from the experts it sounds a bit cliche but I have the feeling that they just come into class um they give half an hour lecture and then we just have to discuss things um personally and also some of our other classmates discuss it that they would like to listen a bit more and of course there there should be a place and time for in-class discussion but uh definitely listening to them a bit more because they are the ones who are the researchers or or practitioners um so definitely I would recommend that and also as I mentioned before give a bit more time and for adjusting and so on.

R: okay and if you could give advice to organizations who are preparing international students are studying at [institution 1] so say like an organization did open some sort of preparation course what would that advice be

Lena: umm [pause] I remember when I was studying in the language school there was a lot of repetition so I was there for two months and then um there was a time when I didn't really progress with my studies um so definitely reduce the repetition a bit more and put a bit more pressure on students um I think that's why we are there um it's uh otherwise I think I think umm yeah I don't have lots of experience in lots of schools but so far um I have only had good experience with them so yeah it was a long time ago but yeah.

R: right yeah okay okay and if you could give advice to future [institution 1] students or students who are looking to come to [institution 1] what would that advice be

Lena: [pause] ah that's a very difficult question ummm [long pause] I don't know because I think it depends on the each individual what they need um but for for students who who have a gap between undergrad and post-grad definitely read academic reports or journals or books or something before that um because even though I understand a lot and I can read quickly and everything my my brain just needs to adjust to that text so um I think reading like a half a year before before joining a course would be would be beneficial yeah [pause] yeah at that's the only thing I can think of
Lena: that's what I really wish I had done and also um going back to the question what would I suggest for for the lectures or for the the school for the faculty is giving out the reading list before. the start is because again we are pressured a lot we have a lot of pressure on and besides um focusing on the essays and group projects and group meetings and dissertation and so on we have to read for every single lecture beforehand and there's just too much so if we would have umm given opportunity to read some of the books or some of the journal like articles before coming here I think that would be that would have been excellent so just going back to this

R: yeah yeah yeah that's brilliant yeah actually a few people have mentioned that

Lena: yeah exactly

R: and yeah I'm always just like ah that's such a good idea

Lena: yeah yeah I think some school do that in the UK so they give the reading lists before like during summer time

R: yeah yeah yeah it makes sense

Lena: yes

R: so are you aware of any support that international students receive from your department or the wider College

Lena: [pause] uhh I think within the [discipline] school we don't really have any support but within [institution 1] we have the the academic writing support thing? and also some other other support things so yeah we receive emails from them and so on so yeah yeah I think we have support yeah sure

R: do you have any experience using those

Lena: um no no no but would you recommend using it? Or @@@

R: @ well I don’t know I’m like yes sure but no because then if you had had experience I would have been like do you feel like do you think the support is adequate

Lena: yeah yeah no no but I might need to use it in the future but um I think like during postgrads I think we can assist each other among the classmates I think it's another level than than undergrads [pause] so I think that's why we never we never we are never using them but I might try it yeah @@@

R: and let's see um yeah so that's actually all the questions that I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Lena: umm maybe umm if there is any connection between [pause] uhm like the difficulty how can I rephrase that so if there if there is a student coming from let's say from a Western country? and from a more Eastern country if there is any any [pause] difference
between you know like how to handle academic performance yeah I don't know I don't know what I want to say with that but I don't know if you understand so so if you if you notice any differences between yeah students were coming from different areas what are they struggling with is it a difference [pause] problem they are they're experiencing or or something like that

R: would you like to answer that question @@

Lena: I think I think we do and I was wondering what the school could could done umm to to solve that issue or at least umm yeah maybe maybe different yeah there should be different focus there should be different assistance [inhale] I don't know I was just wondering about that um because I think we cannot really generalize you know like international students in general because uh I think we have difficulties like different difficulties um [pause] so I was wondering but what can it can be done [pause] for that

R: and so what kinds of differences have you noticed

Lena: umm it's definitely speaking and first of all presentation so there are some students who never presented before and definitely there should be some some some focus on that’s because we're a [discipline] school and probably when we graduate we have to do presentations and so on give our ideas um so definitely I think the school should should focus on that giving giving um some some extra lectures on it or some extra presentation skills lecture on that umm [pause] yeah that'll be it basically um yeah @

R: and is there anything else that you would like to express or to say

Lena: um no I don't think so umm [pause] I hope that I could answer the questions well

R: absolutely

Lena: um but ya no in general I think the the IELTS gives a good preparation for for academic perf- or for academics and umm but but it's not enough so definitely there should be some like a like a bridge between between just doing the IELTS and and jumping into the lectures um so yeah as I said giving more time or or yeah a little bit of time for adjustments

R: okay perfect

Lena: thank you

R: okay so my first question would be what would you describe as your strengths academically

Lucy

R: okay
Lucy: hmmm [long pause] I want to say humor but it's under an academic skill it's more something that made me go through academia I would say you know like kind of ability to take the piss of things but academic talking I would say it's that how I can write very easily I can write 20 pages in three hours so I mean I can read and write once have all the ideas like in two days I can write like an entire chapter.

R: and what would your difficulties be academically

Lucy: um being how would you say short like writing 70 pages for a chapter so yeah being concise and going to the point okay

R: and what would your strengths be in terms of English

Lucy: ummm [long pause] [whisper] good question [pause] I would say vocabulary but at the same time I don't know all the vocabulary [long pause] I'd say I- hmmm that's a good question oo that's good question uh so I'm taking time I'm trying to figure out [long pause] yeah I'd say it's more the vocabulary if I have to compare to the grammar or it'd be more like the fact that I'm able to read like fast yeah I read fast English to get it pretty fast yeah

R: and what would your difficulties be in terms of English

Lucy: grammar

R: grammar

Lucy: aand translation like my grammar I think in [language] translate in English sometimes you know makes my sentences a bit weird because it's in [language] it's completely perfect but when I translate it in English so sometimes that can have some like weird grammar mistakes

R: and so are you still translating like in your head

Lucy: no no I'm not doing this in a regular basis but sometimes when I was like a very important document right like for example when I was writing my um lay abstract for the IRC I had to sound like convincing and in [language] I know I'm convincing in my subject but in English way less cuz I less vocabulary and have less power to make like a grammar structure that would be very powerful so sometimes like I can think of the convincing in my head in [language] and then I have to translate them it's not like the sentence exactly but more the idea

R: right right okay yeah and so can you tell me about the work that's required of you as a research student

Lucy: the what sorry

R: the work that is required of you as a research student like what do you have to do on a day to day basis
Lucy: well I have to read books that loads of books I have to research second sources because my my main problem for my author is that they are very recent so there's not that many sources and those sources are not yet put in libraries properly so you know it’s like a random guy in China wrote an article on that so it's kind of having I mean finding a way to get access to that instead of paying for like the entire magazine 100 quid [pause] and I would say also like juggling between time for study and time for having money @ I mean time for working to raise the money and I think that most the thing that I'm doing every day because I'm in between the library between teaching and between the [research institute] studying so every day is kind of like this

R: okay and so have you taken any lectures or modules here

Lucy: yeah I took some modules by [academic training program] you know for how to teach how it was there was like thing that in first-year I don't if you did it it was a bit like in first year you it was they told you it was mandatory but it was not and it was a module where at [intuition 1] they explain to you how to do um a review how to use the library etc. most of it were useless but some of it were good advice and then I took um two tutorials in the [department] one on [topic] and one on [topic]

R: okay so can you tell me more about those modules like what was the work work required in those modules

Lucy: for the first module I was talking to you about it was more like workshops but it run as a module because wasn’t like randomly it was just like every week was every homework it was a session of two hours and during the two hour they were asking us to do stuff you know to do like teamwork or etc. like yeah I don't know what do you think is more important the conclusion or the introduction by pair of two try to have good argumentation and discuss stuff like this so how would you write a literary review and in groups you have to know how to present your research to a group that have no clue what you're doing and you get 30 seconds and then for the other modules the one on [topic] I had to do three essays but I just wrote to the teacher saying that I'm doing a PhD and I couldn't do them so she told me that just to do one and same for the one on [topic] they were kind of I’m I'm very good that looking miserable so people can help me

R: okay and it's so inside of those modules um what happened was it's like the teacher is just giving in PowerPoint was say interaction

Lucy: yeah it was actually about directions like the teacher would like for example like give us the material for the week after I mean like some [reading] to read and well the first one [topic] the teacher was a bit too lecturing if I may say cuz it was just an hour class and there was only like 15 minutes for discussion but it the other one was very good um it was
like just discussion so you could just not interrupt but the kind of participate all through
expose of the teacher so we had the text and she was explaining to us that some stuff but
we could at any point be like oh yes that would mean this oh this is this or I read about this
so it was very like kind of building up the knowledge together
R: okay and so how would you evaluate your current academic success like do you feel
you're doing well you're not so so
Lucy: ehhhh [long pause] I have a cynical I have a cynical answer for that
R: that’s fine
Lucy: I guess I'm doing well cuz I st- I’m getting through my nervous breakdowns pretty
easily but um no I think that conference wise and articles wise I'm doing good because I
already have 10 conferences done and 4 articles uh soon to be published because they’re
taking their time but at the same time I'm just at this point of my research when I'm
realizing that the ideas I had before I completely destroyed them with what I found and I'm
kind of like I have no clue like if you were to ask me now what's my research
about I would struggle because I'm not sure anymore exactly what [topic] is
because I looked too much into it you know what I mean so for me like I did good
as an academic but I'm also at the moment where I'm kind of doubting myself and my
subject
R: and so what do your professor or what does your supervisor look for when they are
evaluating your academic success
Lucy: uhh [long pause] for her is very important the publications for her that's like the
main thing conferences are good but she’s also pushing me to do loads of
conferences like she's always been the one to be like even if you don't have time to go to
the entire conference just go give your paper and fuck off even if your paper isn’t that great
just give it anyway because no one’s recording it and then you can still like change it if you
want to be published after so she's basically just like try it and you see it's more this and for
the chapters I'm submitting she's really looking into referencing second sources and
objectivity because I love my [topic] so I have problems of objectivity those are the main
three things that she looks for
R: okay and so how does your supervisor communicate those expectations is she very
straightforward
Lucy: yeah yeah she she has a lot of tact but she's a great supervisor I think because she's
able to have a lot of time but also to be very honest [pause] like she can actually say I don’t
think so like this quote I don't understand it that way which is good and her corrections are
kind of precise or you know exactly which means [pause] so she would correct it on the
paper and then we would meet for her to present to me her corrections [pause] so I know
exactly what she means and I'm not like just wondering [pause] especially because her
writing is very bad @

R: so you have both written and verbal and you can have a discussion ask questions
Lucy: yes and she's very available by emails or by text so um so it’s pretty unusual
R: okay what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]
Lucy: @@@ to go out of [institution 1] @@
R: @ can you expand on that @
Lucy: @@ no it's a joke no no I think they need they need a supervisor on their side
because no matter what [institution 1] is still going to be [institution 1] you can't
destroy the entire college with our problems and I guess like last term we saw that that
student movement can do stuff [pause] but I think that students are not able to get involved
for making things change if their supervisor is not on their side if the supervisor keeps
telling them oh no that it's not gonna change they're not gonna be willing to change things
like I know for example I'm a PhD rep this year because my supervisor told me that stuff
could be done that I could get involved in stuff could be done and she went to the meeting
of the [graduate students union] last year about the fees etc. so I think the most important
for a student to [pause] progress and be happy or fight to help them would make him or her
happy it's like a supervisor having uh a good supervisor
R: okay and so how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success
Lucy: what do you mean the language of [institution 1] or the language you study or
R: um both
Lucy: okay [pause] I think I can like I don't say that but I have to admit it if you don't have
English you're fucked [pause] can I say fucked?
R: yeah yeah yeah
Lucy: @@@ I’ve never been interviewed before so ummm [click] yeah because I think
that I mean you can be a great academic in [language] but right now you have so many you
know again it’s like traveling the world that I think that if you only had one language you
may be stuck because even if like I remember I went to Spain in this conference I was like
on [language] language but some people were presenting in Spanish [long pause] and I
guess it was great but I wasn't able to understand that so you feel a bit stupid because you
want to talk to them about their research but those- the problem was this person was not
speaking English he was speaking Spanish so we couldn't but we're like working on the
same thing so that's why I think that English is for important but also other languages
because it's not that because you speak English that you should just [pause] you’re an
English speaker I think it's always good to have a bit of a another language just for like personal skills but also academic skills because it helps you to understand how comparison works and to be more objective sometimes I think

R: and so what other factors um impact academic success and this could be things inside of [institution 1] outside of [institution 1]

Lucy: I would say the main thing is the inequality between students and the inequality between different topics like I think it's great for a student to get Google to pay them 100,000 euros a year to do some stupid research on internet but at the same time Google can you not just give him like twenty thousand that's already a lot and use like the eighty thousand euros for something else same for medicine I think that the main problem to have and by mental health I don’t mean you you necessarily really have to be happy in your head but you need to be able to say it that you can't that there's this problem and your supervisor should like know that should be able to understand that the college should be able to understand that because like both are kind of linked I guess but yeah I’d say that the difference of money and the difference of mental health issues

R: okay alright and do you think that those impact academic success more or less than language and things that people would typically consider to be the expectations of academic success

Lucy: hmmmm well the easy answer would be yes cuz I think mental health is more complicated to deal with than just not knowing a language but yeah I’m just thinking like when I first came to [institution 1] like I was doing my master and I uhh was in the class and I had some few classes mates and I was not understanding what they were saying so it was so hard and when you don’t understand the accent of the people you can’t really make friends and I think friends is related to mental health issues so I would say even if I still believe that money and mental health are maybe more important language is still a part of it so

R: so you can't really separate the two

Lucy: yeah because if you can’t speak you can't understand #unt

R: and so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before coming to [institution 1] so like did you take any courses for exams academic language

Lucy: well in [country] every time you study a language or literature you have linguistic classes it's mandatory so it's linguistic like meaning etymology a bit of the grammar how do words works how grammar works why is it like this all those things and also those
crazy words about the phonemes and whatever I don’t remember but like create a sentence
and I had it in [language] I had this in English and then when I wanted to apply at
[institution 1] I needed to pass the TOEFL so I passed the TOEFL
R: okay did you take any classes to prepare you for the TOEFL
Lucy: no no I didn’t prepare at all because people were like ah that's fine cuz when I did
the TOEFL was already one year I was in Ireland because the first year in [institution 1] I
was doing Erasmus so didn't really need the TOEFL and then when I apply it to do my
master and go away and I knew I wanted to go away you know I need to have a like
diploma saying that I could speak English so that’s why I passed the TOEFL also it was
like the cheapest one
R: and how do you feel about the TOEFL
Lucy: [long pause] I think the computer bases is shite [whisper] can I say shite
R: yes you can see whatever you want to say @
Lucy: @ uhmm because a computer can’t assess can’t assess human I mean like [long
pause] I believe the computers do it okay but it's different um because I just like remember
like I when I was talking it like I got the flu and I my the grade I got for the oral part of it
was very low was like I don’t know I don’t remember if they're ra- they rank on um
percent or whatever but would be like the the equivalent of 30 percent and I knew was
impossible because I I answered all the questions I was answering them but the
microphone wasn’t hearing my voice and so the headphones were not working that well so
I thought it was kind of like a bit weird [pause] but at same time is one thing I think it's
good with the TOEFL it's like it's only uh valid for three years and I think that's good
because it's true that if you don't practice in language you can lose a lot within like three
years or within two years so maybe three is a bit short for them it's like five years would be
good because it’s expensive so @ let's not make it too short but I think it's good it’s
not like you have it for your life @
R: Do you think that the TOEFL are adequately prepared to you for a studies in [institution
1] or adequately predicted your academic success
Lucy: no
R: how so or why not
Lucy: well in summary the TOEFL is kind of a basic [pause] it’s like the leaving cert you
have to pass it to do to do something later but if you just have it it's useless and if you don't
have it you're stuck so you have to pass it but I don't think he prepares you it just tells you
hey great you can speak English oh you can speak whatever language [pause] so and also
like for example [pause] it’s good and bad a thing like you know when you have to do the
questions it's gonna be random and you can have like a passage of each structure you can
scientific article and I got a scientific article I still don’t remember was talking about
[pause] because and I actually I took a picture of it and I showed it to friends of mine and
they didn't either so it's good because I guess you're comforted to know [pause] so they can
assess if you even if you're not in front of your main field you can still speak but the same
time I don't fucking care understanding like and article on the cancer among whales
[pause] because it was title so I'm like yeah great but you know like [pause] maybe
assessment stuff g- really I would say that TOEFL prepares you for university if it was
actually focused on your field
R: okay so if it were like more discipline specific
Lucy: exactly
R: okay what type of preparation do you think international students should undertake
before coming to [institution 1]
Lucy: Irish accent
R: Irish accent
Lucy: @@ no I'm joking but actually [long pause] once again I remember when I arrived
here the first time like the first month I was like ah I have no fucking clue what you're
speaking okay I mean I know you’re speaking English but you could speak any other
language I wouldn’t understand it neither like I would have no clue did you switch to
another language and also [long pause] how could I phrase that [pause] I think that but I
think is the same in every university [pause] but I would say it’s not because you’re paying
that you're getting something good I mean I know from an American student it's very
cheap so but for me in [country] it would be free or 200 400 if I'm not lucky so like my
thing was like well at least if I pay I’m going to have good quality services so I would be
like the preparation would be to like have a lot of um like [pause] I’m getting the rest of
my thoughts @ uhhhh [long pause] yeah it would be like the the English part would be like
I mean the language part will be like the accent and English properly and the second part it
would be the organization of the college [pause] because it's pretty different between like
[language] world Anglophone world etc. on how it’s organized so we yeah that would be it
R: okay so becoming familiar with both the language so the accent and the local dialect
basically even though it's not a uh and then also and then also how the unique institution
runs
Lucy: exactly and by this I also mean like the vocabulary they use like [name] term [name]
term uhh junior senior junior yeah I don’t even know those uh juniors freshman senior
freshmen junior sophister senior sophister I understood that only yesterday
R: I still don't know so
Lucy: yeah so if it's junior is the two first years and if it's seniors it's the two last year's
and freshman means new and sophister means old I understand see like you just like
making yourself like used to those terms so you know what's going on
R: um so if you could give advice to faculty in dealing with international students what
would that advice be
Lucy: [long pause] make sure that they find people to speak to but especially if I mean I
don't know if you're talking in general for every level or just more PhD
R: every level
Lucy: okay because for every level I would say make sure that the students is able to fit in
and I just have a look around see what's going on just pop in a class and just be like is
everything alright just because I was always very sociable but I had friends went to
Erasmus and they struggled a lot because of that are like oh I'm shy my accent they don't
understand I'm like okay my accent is bad if they don't understand they can ask you to
repeat you can ask them to repeat but I think it would be this and also at the PhD level even
more because as a PhD you don't have classes so very easily you can end up just being in
your house [pause] so for example places like the [research institute] I'm not saying it
because I'm an international student that would be a great way for like to favor-
how do you say that in English uh like to help ummm international because at least
you would be sure they’d meet people cuz they’re there whereas like Irish people they
already at the backgrounds they already have their friends or their family etc. so yeah
and if you could give advice to organizations who are preparing international students
before those students come to come to [institution 1] what would that advice be like if an
organization where to like create a program to prepare them
Lucy: mmhm [long pause] I think it would be to present the University not as it is on the
brochure and how it really is I’m sure alumni of [institution 1] everywhere so and I
think talking to an alumni is very useful because the person can tell you what she went
through but for real because she's saw it isn't like a brochure who looks like everything is
perfect I can say what is good is to be aware it's gonna be good but also bad so you'll have
the first months being like what the fuck did I do did I make a mistake etc. and also explain
that being homesick is normal [long pause] cuz so many people are like oh yeah I am
homesick but I can’t really talk about it because it’s ridiculous because I know I shouldn’t
anymore but well everyone’s got it and also maybe classes to force not to force them but to
make them practice their accents not saying that to improve it but they to be proud of them
there is one person told me that before I went to Erasmus in Erasmus and I think was
beautiful it's like think that every time you hear someone speaking broken English that
mean it speaks a second language at least [long pause] so don't criticize them you're just
fucking English speaker you just speak one language but like so like those kind of
sentences and kind of thing of making them reassured even if their accent is shite would
help someone through#

R: and if you could give advice to future students or prospective students of [institution 1]
what would that advice be
Lucy: don't come @@
R: @@ don’t come
Lucy: @@ your supervisor is going to love that @@ no it would be like really think
through the finances [long pause] and n- especially because now you have the crisis I mean
of all the places to live etc. in Dublin so so from my own view it would be really like think
for the finances and not for the first year like to know that you're gonna be there for a long
time it's a PhD four years six years if you're in undergrad you're going to a master after etc.
so just like see the big picture even if it’s hard you know when you're 18 to project yourself
but at least for the course you're doing [pause] and I would say also because you’re paying
take advantage of everything like go to societies we don't have this in [country] you don't
have societies so and I think it's a great thing because you can network you can make
friends maybe not friends but at least you’re with people and also used advisory services
the thing where they review your CV or LinkedIn etc. because you’re paying for that so
don't just go to class that would be this because like in [country] you're paying 300 so you
go to class that’s it but here if you're paying 6,000 I mean don't go just to class use the
entire place

R: are you aware of any support that's given to international students either in your
departments from supervisors in the wider University
Lucy: I know I mean from my experience I know [person] from the [department] was a
good person he was very like welcoming and telling us if you have problem you can drop
etc. drop by also someone called [name] in the [department] she's secretary she was very
nice because she always had cookies and teas in her office and she was really
understanding of the perils of administrations [pause] which is great because when I
arrived so basically in [language] universities it's never their fault whatever happens it's
your fault even if it's their fault obviously objectively and what happened is my university
forgot to sign and send them a document so [institution 1] yeah didn't have me on their
records I couldn't register I couldn't be a student and so my Erasmus was being broken and
I just arrived I paid my I found the place everything was gone and then [institution 1] said
you cannot be here can't study here so it was a bit of a problem and what was good it's like
this woman [name] she really kind of [pause] took care of me she said okay don't worry
we're gonna do that like just go to class random classes so you practice your English and
we'll see so I think that's good and I knew there was one other thing there's the society of
international students and I wasn't in it but I know that I had many friends who were there
and they had like trips around Ireland etc. that was very nice [pause] there's the Erasmus
group it was also pretty good [pause] maybe of them there [pause] and there's a global
room in the [building] it's pretty nice I know they have got some I mean at least when I
was in Erasmus they're like some homesick dinners where you cook something from your
country and you make it to try to other people so I had friends went there it is also free
food @@ I’m all about free stuff @@ yeah that’s what I’m saying we’re paying 6,000 get
the best you @ but yeah I had a friend who missed like bread and this Indian girl was like
oh but I love making bread and she was making [bread]
R: amazing
Lucy: yeah and my friends know how to do um I can’t remember those kind of pastries
they have in India and this [clap hands]
R: Oh chapati
Lucy: yeah yeah and just because this girl she loved chapatis she was homesick and stuff
so I think was good [pause] so yeah those two things are what I can think of
R: and do you think that the supports the [institution 1] has for international students do
you think that it's adequate
Lucy: [click] well if I had to compare it with [country] yes it is @ in [country] they don't
care like in [country] it's shocking we always wonder why no one wants to go to [country]
[long pause] uh I think it's adequate [pause] but once again I am not from Asia or Africa
I’m from [country] it’s kind of closer you know cultural culturally is very close so you
know catholic protestant and fast food and stuff I'm used to that but I don't [long pause]
know if someone from Asia let’s say who never left China before I don't know how would
they feel about that because I don’t have I mean I know some people that are from Asia
and be like they seem pretty but at the same time I didn't I don’t ever remember seeing like
many of Asian people or I'm gonna be cliche but black people coming from Africa or
South America whatever joining Erasmus parties or Erasmus groups so maybe there is not
done it would be more towards those people because once again [nationality] can use the
[bread] but that's not the end of the world you take a plane for 60 quid return and if you
come from Africa you don’t have the time to same China Japan where these countries I
sense it would be really very different [pause] that's why I said there's something that I think is good is for example [graduate students union] most of the members are like Irish because also America and also Indian and I think it's good because at least you don’t you’re not just in front of like those white dudes that are great because they're white and because they’re dudes you know I think that's pretty nice

R: okay so are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask
Lucy: [long pause] I thought something earlier what was it I was like ah yeah I want to talk about this but I don’t remember what it is [long pause] yeah I would like it's a it's not really a question it's more like a remark because so basically you you were talking about the language in [institution 1] etc. I think it would be good to make it like option for people to study Irish Gaelic because like there’s too much trying to keep it like a normal language and you see it on the signs and everything so that it's that's true when you're on Erasmus that you don’t really have this option because you know when you arrive in Ireland that you could have different reasons but if you'd have like Celtic culture it would be good cuz I remember I wanted to it they were like no you can’t so it'll be good to have that maybe you know Irish classes not in the will to be bilingual but to have an idea you know just like you know how do you say bus how to you say this the songs you know like the Irish songs that are in Irish every Irish people now but you don't [pause] I know bits because like in pubs when I’m drunk I’m just joining but I don't really know what it means I think it would be kind of like fun now you know like Irish culture class I don't know like something to for people that are interested in it or maybe there's a society for that I don’t know I guess there's the Irish society somewhere @ oh yeah that would be a thing also because they living in the country that we always talk about the fact that it's English-speaking but it's not only English-speaking [long pause] I don't remember if was it [name] no it’s [name] I met someone who is fighting for all the emails sent by [institution 1] to be sent in English and Irish

R: yeah it’d probably be [name] it sounds like
Lucy: no because you're you I mean because I thought maybe it was someone studying language but uh yeah I think she's doing this and even if I guess 90% of people will be not with the Irish well if the country chose to have Irish on their fucking signs and the lána took me like a while to know what it was but I know how to say bus in Irish let's put it on emails

R: anything else that you would like to express or say
Lucy: hm no
Mary

R: um so first could you tell me what your strengths are academically so what are you good at
Mary: in general? or
R: in general
Mary: [long pause] hmm [pause] I think um [pause] researching like uh a writing literature spotting [pause] what's relevant to my topic and structuring I think as well as a text [pause] if we're talking about language or writing an academic paper
R: right now it's just in general
Mary: well general many other things but anyway we start with this one probably
R: yeah but I'd also like to hear what like general like in general academically what are you good at cuz I will ask about language but this //a lot
Mary: but what do you define academically| what do you define academic
R: so it is like for some people it's time management for other people it's motivation for
some people it's determination it depends on the person
Mary: [pause] well [pause] because academic academically can be work in academia but also writing but there's some other things so the question is like really actually very vague
R: yeah
Mary: and so I can only do that picking from whatever can get my mind which is researching and um uh obviously [pause] my motivation as well in general that's human
quality not necessarily academic
R: yeah but that's fine yeah and so what would you define as researching like when you say researching is a strength was what does researching mean to you
Mary: well exactly the the exact thing I thought about it which doesn't mean that it's limited to that is when I'm looking for for um [pause] [click] the literature that support my argument? [pause] I think I'm particularly good at res- >well at least I feel< and I've been told that you know I I do good literature reviews because [pause] I learned how to structure how to look to- just look for the main topics how to understand what they are how to structure to the content and how to obviously search and support them in general
R: and what would your weaknesses or difficulties be in terms of academics
Mary: academic. in general.
R: mmh-m
Mary: [sigh] umm [long pause] I wouldn't call it a weakness [pause] but it's something that influences hugely on my performance academically and that is uh the fact that I
have to support myself so although I'm strongly motivated to research and to do what I'm doing because I want it at the same time a part of me a big part of me also wants a a adult life [pause] um so that influence is a lot on the time on focus the concentration that I put into the work and um [pause] and also the fact that I have to work you know in order to maintain myself but having to earn [pause] most of the money that I need monthly [pause] takes almost half of my more than half of my working time so my my my whatever academia research I'm doing is reduced to a couple of days [pause] together even so it's not that so yeah it's a problem and if it's mine it's not a say my own weakness but I think that is something that really im- im- impedes my whatever outcomes I could obtain which really really wreaks havoc academically so that's one thing.

R: okay and so in terms of language what would your strengths be

Mary: >language speaking language writing<

R: just language

Mary: >language in general or English language< no? language in general

R: well academic language since we're since we're here I would say English but if it's differs from an [language] I'd be interested in hearing that

Mary: [sigh] [long pause] well that's interesting um that you're putting in the [language 2] part in uhm and what was original strength or weakness?

R: strength

Mary: strength. in academic ehhhh writing?

R: no not writing in general language

Mary: academic language every language @ I'm sorry yeah we are tired for the record uhm my strength in terms of language [long pause] well I think my language never comes only just as a language whatever I do the language comes with many other things comes with mimic emotion orrr comes with [pause] uh empathy so my language is never just language pure language it always carry something of me and carries out something from the of the message I want to deliver whether it's writing or whether it's speaking both of them it doesn't really or whatever I do the language in general and looking at English [language] [long pause] uhhm there is much more depth into the use I make of [language] obviously because [language] became my second lang- uhm my mother tongue but I do think >no I was think no< both same thing academically in terms of language probably be more in [language] but still a lot lot less in [language] uhm let's add that second third language which is actually the mother tongue so you don't have to write academically in [language] I would have [pause] quite I'll be quite challenged in I don't I don't remember ever writing.
R: what would your difficulties be in terms of language
Mary: difficulties. [pause] [sigh] specific difficulties [sigh] well [pause] if um [pause] if
I'm in a relaxed environment I worry less about the perfection of the language I produce
when I use it as a second language or third language whatever but even my own language
given that the [language] it's less than the other languages now uhm [long pause] so yeah
that a difficulty would be that even though I know the concepts I still worry am I using the
right one am I >but it's< [pause] in this of course mostly in [pause] you know official
environments those environments where you need to focus uh you need to deliver a certain
message in a certain way because you feel the pressure obviously because and I
feel the pressure even I'm among non-native speakers and honestly because uhm [pause]
you know the perfection I'm looking it's not necessarily uh uhm provoked because of by
the others or by the standards the other's set it's also a standard I set to myself all the time
a desire another imposition I aim for that I love to speak the language well and ex-
express whatever feelings I have as best as possible so yeah difficulties like this is looking
back on my- uh using the right language that's the thing
R: okay and so I know that you've done both a masters and now you're doing a PhD so
right now I want you to focus on the modules that you've taken both as a master students
and a PhD student so what did you have to do for your modules what was the work
required in your modules
Mary: [long pause] [sigh] [long pause] thinking from where to start [long pause] well you
start from reading. reading the materials materials that you are given you have to do your
own home readings in order to obviously not only to not only after modules were or classes
were occurring but also before to prepare yourself that's the reading uhm then it's
obviously [pause] uhm writing assignments which is a part that you know very well
maybe deliver a couple of presentations [pause] engage with the knowledge
material and concepts theories so yeah
R: and can you tell me more about the assignment so what was the form of the assessment
how long were you given the questions etc.
Mary: [long pause] for assignment depends as well about of of the module some modules
would uhm would require more descriptive uhh uhhm [click] let's say [click] writing of the
whatever topic you choose so I remember one when I was describing a fact.
[pause] and basically there you were asked to [pause] show that you understood the fact
you know just to describe it in a certain way [pause] critically obviously [pause] >but not
as much critically because in this case was describing that thing [pause] and other other modules instead you are asked to in the assignments you asked to uhm [long pause] either choose a topic and uhm write an argument critically in favor or against that whatever topic you choose and support with literature and so forth [pause]

R: and so as a research student what is the work required of you as a research student

Mary: @oh @Jesus @ @what @kind @of @questions @@ @okay @ obviously now that you ask me like these into two part two is in [language] and them can't think of anything requirements but over like to sum up the huge amount of work is required to do it it's uh researching and and and writing the thesis [pause] obviously [pause] with arguments collecting data using methodology huge amount of work I don't know if you want something specifically to say

R: no I just want you to describe what you see as researching

Mary: I see see like the I see like a huge amount of work but I love doing it I just wish I had more time [pause] but essentially it's uh exploring um the literature or whatever research that has been done on a specific topic [pause] uh that topic uh most probably relates to your your aims and objectives and then you need to establish a methodology uh you to write you know argument and and collect data or whatever all this together [pause] a lot a huge amount of work

R: okay all right and so going back to the modules and the lectures what would happen inside of the classroom so how were the classes structured what did you do was there a professor lecturing was PowerPoint was it class discussion etc.

Mary: well. all of them. [pause] but not all the time in the same module like [pause] uh I say in part because uh like depends the modules teaching about but yeah unt was [module] performed general [topic] there wouldn't be any [pause] presentations there would be all these elements together but not in the same very few the modules would have had all this together

R: and so currently how would you evaluate your current academic success so how do you feel that you're doing

Mary: well uhm sincerly@ I think I'm going very well [exhale] @ but because I see well and I define well in a certain way [pause] however if I would look back at the standards or whatever I'm required to do I am behind with the work [pause] a little bit not that much but again because I know myself very well I know that when the moment comes and you know I know that I would be able to catch up with all that so [pause] I think over
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

all over all good the basis are there I just need to have more time to actually you know
deepen the knowledge that I have so time is always for me the matter of pressure
huge huge variable in my results but at the end I will succeed however this imply at some
points during the path the whatever program for how many years that I will have to work
and write non-stop for hours and hours to catch up with what I couldn't do in the moments
I had to work or other things so yeah

R: yeah so you said that you define well in a certain way how do you define well
Mary: well I defined well in terms of th- th- the as an
overall development so for me academia doesn't mean only producing the paper for me
academia means uh broadening ideas learning more about other things as well engaging
with people developing relationship which will and do to some extent contribute to that
knowledge that I need and even if not in this moment I know that subsequently they will so
my well is defined as more than operational way of dealing with an academic goal
and [pause] so yeah this is how I define like an overall scheme like overall [pause] and it's
broad it's not only that means it's not only to write a PhD and how the thesis is completed
and you know very well but so

R: right so how do your professors assess academic success so what are they looking for
Mary: in this case we're doing about PhD
R: yeah
Mary: >in this case a PhD< well. so I'm being told that what I'm doing
now that the spending process I'm doing now which which in this moment is not conveyed
it's something that others would do at the end [pause] so even if I
my academic success between commas or progress cannot be evaluated in a full-length text
elsewhere classic within the lines it's still evaluated as good because it's a different process
it's a different thesis so yeah
R: okay and so as a master's student how did your professors evaluate academic success
Mary: well obviously we were assessed with assignments generally uhh a
couple of them used assignments written assignments obviously and
presentations so it wasn't completely just final written product it was also a representation
which involved as well group work and collaborative but only probably one or actually
probably mostly only one or two modules would have had that I think
R: but what are the professors were looking for when they're grading so when they have
that four-thousand-word essay in their hands how do they decide this is academic success
Mary: so they'd look at the content if the content is relevant solidly sustained and
support they will look at uh it's a series of things they look at the presentation they look
at the use of literature they would look at uhm what is it I don't remember uh so there are four or five things that according to the grading system are looked at uhm [pause] I think only one out of six or seven assignments so I think only one so yeah we said structure argument literature uh presentation and I don't remember the other one in this moment but um and language is included? [pause] but not necessarily? and I was saying this probably only one in one assignment I've been >I can't remember what < well suggested to uhh >not to proof read the assignment but [pause] I must say that I wrote that assignment in two days so there was a reason for that so yeah we said structure argument literature uh presentation and I don't remember the other one in this moment but um and language is included? [pause] but not necessarily? and I was saying this probably only one in one assignment I've been >I can't remember what < well suggested to uhh >not to proof read the assignment but [pause] I must say that I wrote that assignment in two days so there was a reason for that R: yeah okay and how do your professors both in the Masters in the PhD how do they or did they communicate their expectations to the students R: [long pause] uhm [long pause] I'm afraid I don't have memory of that exactly [pause] but I can tell youuuu it's at the beginning you are told each of the aims of the module and [pause] you were told about the assignment [pause] and [pause] sometime probably after the third or fourth week there was probably there was like a workshop about writing assignments or exactly what they wanted assignments so there was in a way but uh [pause] a related section dedicated to what they wanted to have in the assignment or how they want to be construct to construct it or whatever something similar R: yeah and were you given rubrics or guidelines before completing the assignment Mary: [pause] [exhale] [pause] I do remember receiving the uh uhm th- completing the assignment in term of that topic? or in term of the structure because I remember one thing I remember receiving something uhm like how to write the assignment and you know talking a little bit [pause] probably the beginning [pause] not all the modules I think but there was anyway uh [pause] [click] whatever or sheet or mini workshop on how to design and introduction and uhm conclusion and argumentation and other thing and literature references included as well there was that yeah but for not all them at least not that I remember R: and do you remember if that was helpful and clear or Mary: well probably at that time I wasn't I wouldn't would- wouldn't have been able to actually know if it was clear or not because you know at the beginning you don't really know yourself although I did write a lot in English when I was doing my dissertation my undergraduate I did my dissertation in English [pause] so I I was aware [pause] anyway of the things [pause] but it did help maybe [pause] maybe to some extent but anyway when it comes to practice it's a bit more difficult when you have to space you have to find your literature your literature you have to yeah that is more researcher skill I think than an actual so it comes through practice in a certain way
R: okay right so now as a PhD student how would your supervisor or your professors express or communicate their expectations

Mary: well uhhm [long pause] [click] [pause] I'm struggling to decide which what- what exactly to say about it th- th- the means of communication th- th- the content and which aspect because your questions are pretty vague

R: yeah they're purposefully vague

Mary: yeah to choose the uh probably uh the importance [pause] uhmm [sigh] [pause] how do they communicate what I am expected to do

R: mm- hm

Mary: well first of all [pause] I think I'm expected to know was well what to do to some extent uhm and if I'm not if if I'm not expected completely to know what I'm doing I'm expected to work my way through it and understand how to do it because it's a PhD you are a researcher so you are [long pause] learning your way through it otherwise it wouldn't be a learning process I wouldn't be called student would be just full stop I think so certain where we are meant to learn what we're doing or by doing it [long pause] [inhale] but exactly exactly is expected uhm guided? [long pause] we we are never happy how much we are guided I think and we would always need more [pause] but I think I have a certain guidance [pause] and uh and that guidance um relates what to what to structure both uh content [long pause] again we would like more but uh in my case I think it's in so much of my own case because [pause] if I would request more guidance more assistant I would receive it [long pause] to some extent it's because I have my own time? because of the work and stuff I'm not requesting because I need to focus the [pause] so so this expectation what I'm expected to do it's well aware clear from the beginning [long pause] it's that maybe there is a certain flexibility freedom? in in in the the various steps of what is expected from me

R: great and so in general what do you think students need to succeed at [institution 1]

Mary: [long pause] well [pause] [click] I think they need possibility to [pause] engage to express I mean definitely need people to listen to what they the the enquiries even the most banal that they are you know unfortunately everyone is so busy [long pause] so [long pause] students [pause] struggle to find that [long pause] communication and fear >I feel fear< sometimes as saying this thing that may be seen as stupid because the others know everything and you know you don't know as a student something like that so I think it's [pause] so they would need more support [pause] uhh a more let's say open doors in a certain way [pause] whether whatever they have to say [pause] uhh complete guidance of what it means to be a researcher uhh and probably more support as well in in in how to be
a researcher in [pause] this environment specific environment which has it's specific road
and specific standards and so forth [pause] and uh language as well especially think-
thinking of international students language support is very important but I would say from
the beginning [pause] I would actually say prior to it [pause] then the in- the continuous I
would say as uhm uhm the continuous learning of the language yes complementing the
problem but like originally they should maybe students should receive >not necessarily just
international< also shou- should received you know a a a [pause] a training in what is to be
researcher [pause] whether it's a postgrad or a PhD [pause] and that includes were
academic writing researching skills critical thinking and so forth [pause] for sure [pause] I
had to [pause] I had some? of it although not as much as I should have had when I started
my postgraduate master's because I was coming from a different system a system where
[pause] [sigh] uh critical thinking is less taught [pause] hm in [country] there's a much
more pressure from the frontal frontal frontal teaching and more passive learning perhaps
so then it comes down that you have to yourself being a teacher learner you don't really
have that th- those two so I didn't have I don't think I had that many tools as a researcher at
the beginning so I had to kind of know a very very fast but it was possible because [pause]
I engage with the people around me the researchers colleagues they're experienced so that's
the thing when I say the overall [pause] it's the overall structure that is to have whatever
R: and so speaking of language so how much per factor does a language play and academic
success
Mary: [pause] [sharp exhale] quite a bit @@ huge bit I would say [pause] because uhmm
[pause] [pause] it's huge. [pause] that's it that's the answer language is huge it's huge it's not
complete [pause] [pause] it's not the only thing and you can have the language you want
perfection in language but if you don't have other skills [pause] you don't you can't manage
so it's a#toll that means the language in balance it's one of the most important
obviously but it doesn't come alone
R: okay so speaking of those other factors what other factors impact academic success and
that could be inside and outside of [institution 1]
Mary: [long pause] well [exhale] so I just said something earlier first of all uhm uhm
[pause] you come from different systems and different backgrounds so that's a big factor if
there's no adaptation to the new background uhm if there is no awareness and that you
don't have enough time to adapt to the new environment [pause] with [pause] all its [pause]
requirements and elements and so forth you will always run catch up catch up desperately
so [inhale] so so the difference or the the the not difference between the old and the new
[pause] but just how it is you need to you need to adapt to what it is to what the system is
then what else [exhale] as I said in an- most of it it comes from that from the differences from the system the critical thinking you need to know what is critical thinking you need to know how to support your arguments [pause] which is very common now in the normal communication but when it comes to writing in a different language [pause] and you cannot hope that you can actually express your opinion [pause] when you write something then it's a problem as I said the difference is huge [click] what else uhmm [pause] resources [pause] but actually knowing as well how to use those resources because you can have all the resources around you but if no one tells you or no one guides you no one's not actually that it must be someone to tell you what to do [pause] but a little bit of introduction? a little bit of as well [pause] effort in showing the learner why they should be investing that new thing or why they should learn how to use [software] and why you do those things yeah a little bit of more kind of careful attention? [pause] and in terms of exact language you are saying? probably? no? no no [pause] no no okay R: just other factors Mary: okay so other factors? yeah more factors? R: if you have more yeah @ Mary: I'm a bad respondent @ R: no you're not @ Mary: It's a respondent researcher uhmm [long pause] let me just think so it's [click] [long pause] well the most important thing is academics what is academic uh ph- the program that you undertake is [pause] to have the network around you [pause] and uhm and again to be trained how to make the most of the resources that you have [pause] and um and have people around you that are willing to to look into the things as you see them as well coming from a different background with your own perspective so a little bit of you know kind of meeting at halfway? Not completely imposing the new system? just allowing the person to express [pause] >okay giving a possibility< the person to learn what's here allowing the person to express what they already have as a wr- as a researcher you know knowledge R: okay all right so now I want to kind of switch to your experiences with entry and preparation tools the things before you came to [institution 1] Mary: yeah R: so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before coming to [institution 1] so that's courses like IELTS courses EAP uhm you've mentioned that you've written your undergraduate dissertation in English things like that
Mary: so [click] uhm I didn't [pause] take any international language test IELTS TOEFL something like that [pause] I went to an undergraduate in [country] and uhm [pause] which [long pause] was many of the modules were English medium [pause] then again I had I was lucky that I my supervisor was she was- what was important about her is that she she's she's a researcher not only academic [long pause] so her approach to [pause] writing and dissertation assignment was [long pause] very much as a researcher and this is what she taught [pause] I'm not really sure that was the curriculum I think a lot of her work was separate because what skills I got from [pause] working with her in my dissertation or attending her modules other colleagues did not get so I think that was her own sometimes include whatever that was her in #unt was her professional background that [pause] is also not even specific modules [pause] I did learn English many years and in university the focus was on writing so I did three year of university the undergraduate were on let's say academic English a good part? [pause] and then other aspects because the undergraduate was in [topic] there would have been uhm there's the academic part but also uhm English as a lingua franca and all those say openings that the language has in real life [pause] more [pause] but there was a good focus on academic English [pause] >but also other languages other language I learned [language] in when I was in undergraduate [pause] and uh [click] uhm [pause] three years and the third year was again very specific [language] so so I kind of learn how to transfer as well the skills from all the languages and learned [pause] so yeah and then the big thing was to communicate things written down in the dissertation in completely in English [pause] supervised by a uh [pause] my very famous [pause] supervisor [long pause] who uh like if you look now to my undergraduate dissertation [pause] you would see the the stamp of a researcher? [pause] but if you look at other colleagues [pause] you would see the stamp of descriptive or you know [long pause] the less critical thinking less argumentation all those those the the support so I think it's a lot because of this person in particular and [pause] her teaching ability R: and do you feel that um specifically undergraduate your experience with your supervisor and also the academic English experience did that adequately prepare you for studies here in Ireland Mary: [pause] I do think it prepared me more than it prepared others that took the tests [pause] because [pause] even if my English is even now not perfect [pause] and even if I still I'm still learning completely every single day I'm still learning things I did have those research skills that [pause] as I said others did not have [pause] that took them others who took tests and and and when you have to actually write your own academic paper or you research and actually when you're reading something the ability to extract main points uh
support that doesn't come just from reading perfectly English with the best English accent
it comes from [pause] knowing how to do it and that knowing how to do it it came to the
specific experience and I do think when I relate to other colleagues of mine who did better
than I did in English it maybe the took the C2 or whatever standard [pause] I finished with
C2 as well [long pause] but it doesn't really mean anything when you have to do your
subject so yeah I think the undergraduate prepared me and do think they that experience
prepared me more [pause] then maybe it just strategically for a test would have done
[pause] but that's my opinion
okay and so what type of preparation do you feel the international students should
undertake before studying in [institution 1]
well [exhale] [long pause] I do think that uhm [long pause] a preparation
of at least two three months [long pause] wait uhm why am I saying two two
months not because the time as you need this time to acquire the language you can acquire
everyone acquire- learn a language at their own speed but you need a time to engage with
uhm and even #unt suggests prior entry to uhm to your uhm university uhm in which
academic writing is taught but not necessarily as a uhm just as [pause] a rule of what you
should do but what it can be done uhm research skills. as I said also preparation into how
make use of the resources available [pause] uh in terms of language specific as I
said uhm academic writing critical thinking argumentation uh possibly through uhm
through [pause] you know projects [pause] so uhm [pause] less [pause] talk more active
learning own learning and uhm so it's a direction someone to direct [pause] towards
they teach how [pause] but also have the time >that's why I'm saying to two three
months have the time to engage. directly. yourself. and with these things and I'm so I'm
saying project as well I mean a lot because [long pause] bringing something [pause] to the
end [long pause] you know it's not only the the process >through to the end it's not the
end < it's a process but it's also the end of bring a project to the end makes you [pause] see
the whole picture what you will be expected to do and when you see what you can
do how you can do it so I would say having the time to engage with [pause] actual tasks
that you'll perform in them in your future whatever Master or whatever or undergraduate I
think it's very important so it's [pause] and and possibly with a bit of content as well of the
future uhm modules that the postgraduate or whatever course will be so maybe specific
as well specific language or specific language for the specific uhm you know
modules if [pause] if I would I would go to start in I don't know medicine a master in
medicine [pause] and I did all my preparations was in [country] until now I really need to
know the specific terms or uhm specific uhm structures not even the words because the
words you can look for them in the uhm dictionary whatever it's just the whole
thing the whole part and uhm again possibly [pause] with using the same assessment
between commas taught in that it will be used in their future so I think uhm >it comes to
me in [language]< uhm uh [pause] getting to into the the actual module before starting it
through the means of the language obviously and focusing on not only the
language bringing content as well language but also the whole thing so I would make the
preparation I would say I would suggest uhm like ideally I think would be to literally do a
mini program in a short period [pause] and be guided overall specifically language through
the language and about the language
R: alright and so if you could give advice to faculty and professors in in supporting
international students what would that advice be
Mary: well just #unt that's my advice my advice is to [pause] [sigh] put in place resources
and programs uhm language courses but as I said the the blueprints I just I was just talking
earlier [pause] of the overall picture that's the most important uhm [pause] and give them
the time to adapt to the system a new system before the things the actual course actual
module or also actual program starts
R: but what about when they're already in //[institution 1] ho
Mary: in [institution 1]? in [institution 1]?| for international students?
R: yes
Mary: so [pause] the first that came to my mind [pause] may may not be very relevant
[click] there should be bit more connection between the vario- various modules that are
thought they should not be taught in isolation and uhm there should be uh
communication within the whole program uhm for international obviously continuously
preparation in terms language in terms of academic language if they feel they need it but
also that's academic preparation when you start the preparation should not come in
isolation it should not just come as you know that or whatever it should be integrated into
the actual module so I think it should be a continuous [pause] continued support continued
preparation and then yeah [pause] active more dynamic possibly and nothing in isolation
R: and if you could give advice to future students more stude
Mary: how to prepare themselves
R: just advice in general
Mary: bring your flask of coffee @ so uhm [long pause] well my advice [long pause] my
advice is to look for real life experience [sigh] and uhm [long pause] but you see depends
depends on many aspects depends from where you come depends on who you are how you want it really if you are introverted person you will need a different advice if you are an open person there is different advice I really think this little bit little bit hard questions I I I can't give you like if to answer in a phrase would not not encompass everything I'm thinking could it would be just like the language tests that we are talking a little bit of what I'm thinking I would have different suggestions or advices for different students type of students but in order as an institution to be able to suggest or advise all the students that are all different would be to first put in place measures establish who is for who's coming and what overall defined them and try to adapt this uhm support for them so then for the students my advice would be to look for this support to the real experience and look for help in language learning as well again depends what level of language have- depended on so many things so this is not I can't give on advice because there are too many from my vision

Mary: what advice the most important is uh as soon as possible try to engage with the place with the people because that will then give you create a network human but also resour- resources language is very important however I would not be intimidated if the language is not perfect as long as you insist in pushing you as an international student to to interaction with environment so I think it's interaction because because the language learning or the learning in general of course when you actually have the possibility to apply it if you don't apply whether is in communication or written form you can't you don't know you are not actually able to say I've learned that you need to apply it so and what do you wish that you had known before coming to [institution 1] you see again because I was here before starting my postgraduate program so because I had this opportunity to immerse myself in the environment before coming to [institution 1]

Mary: I didn't came with I came here for so I came even come sorry with a with set of things with a set of expectations so for me was an exploration of my whole being and it was a great exploration experience and that experience that's why I'm saying the two three months in the person has of learner has possibility to to engage with those academics with those students with the environment with the resources with everything with whatever he or she has to do that part it's extremely useful and it makes
many many many many of many lacks you may have in the language and research skills and so forth because you’d have the time to catch up with what you don’t have and to adapt what you have to what you are required [long pause] what else [pause] more time in specific in specific in specific specific I think I had more researching skills no I mean I think I had them more awareness of the the pressure that I will [long pause] uh go through at the speed of assignments every you know whatever [pause] three assignments in less than a month or something like that and in fact that we were working full-time at that time was assignment three days or two days [pause] but well I can’t think that wasn’t aware because I was aware of that so it's me I push myself so probably I’m a different case of just don't know if I'm I I feel personally in like a different case from the standard whatever I mean a student that arrives here that doesn't have to pay his or her rent and you know I think it’s a bit different when you have your own life it requires it but I was aware of most of the things maybe a little bit more awareness [pause] of the- the- an own of expectations in terms of assign writing assignment writing not assignment writing th- those the the requirements what is expected what do they want how do they want probably that’s a little bit more a bit more clear and a bit more [pause] concrete [pause] more examples more and also kind of a little bit of a guidance to to to let you know to what extent they can deviate from what is they are required to do what is accepted what is not accepted so yeah that is what but again uhm I'm definitely not saying that [pause] that it can be done like that but that would have probably eased a little bit my [pause] whatever terrible you know constraints in my work a bit more awareness a bit more concrete with examples yes but again as I said I had the opportunity to see a lot of that before and that really enabled me as a full-time worker as a [age] years almost [gender] to actually uh with all the things that comes with to actually be able to complete the master in a year [pause] at that level [pause] was because I had that time and one hundred percent that if I would have came here uh if I had come here directly into the master [pause] that would have been a shock for me? [pause] and I wouldn't have I don't I'm not I never say never but I might not have been able to complete it [pause] which demonstrates that I was having so let's say having to work full-time blah blah blah blah [pause] and coming directly into the Master's without knowing people where are the resources uh I would have been like by the time of the first three assignments I would have been dead [pause] because I wouldn't have been able to write them at such speed or the things without actually having already knowledge of the resources available so that's my future advice.
Mary: [long pause] I know I know the wider college there is support? I never [pause] I never thought I know [click] I think it's not very much uhm obvious that support so I think [pause] it is there but you kind of don't know directly it's there [long pause] so a bit more support should be there >but there is I know there is uhm< association of international students and so forth [pause] but again as a stu- you need to also have the time to [pause] if you are a student who works that doesn't work and stuff like that maybe you are you have more time to engage with international societies or with the resources are available >in the department< I know there is um I know there isn't um [long pause] a uhm a support in terms of there isn't support in terms of >I don't know if there is< I don't I don't think there is really don't know but I don't think there is a support in terms of you psychological or or networking unless you create your own network in my school [long pause] I may be wrong I don't I may be wrong but in this moment I can't think of anything but maybe can't think of it because I've never accessed it or never went for it because I didn't need it or I didn't look for it because I couldn't because I was busy [pause] I know there is EAP English for academic purposes in sessional oh I remember [pause] I remember when I f- when I started my Master's I remember we we at the time we were told that there is this EAP and I remember it struck see it depends on me see it it struck me it was like 50 Euro [long pause] and I was like I can't because I wasn't able to pay the 50 euro because I was earning very little money which is ridiculous because 50 euro it's nothing if you think in the nowadays society the value of money [pause] I think was one specific teacher that made like him directly found it amazing he was amazing but I remember it was like wow 50 euro for an in-sessional EAP my God and I remember going and actually talking about it with some teacher that I already knew and said maybe I'll I'll maybe I'll join because I think something and I could improve there is something that needs something and I n- n- some I could I could improve there is something that needs improvement obviously and uhm but else and if I can I want to I want to take the classes with you because I knew already the person again the same thing knowing what you have it's so important uh being aware it's important on the resources other people because they are more similar to you whatever you [pause] it's human to have to come with preferences which are not preferences they're just simply there is that switch you got uhm and I remember the 50 euros and I remember that uhm [pause] I'm sure I would have gained more knowledge? [long pause] not it wouldn't have changed my life completely [pause] but some extra resources would have been helpful yes def- definitely especially working on the first assignment that was the first first one was a trauma [pause] the rest you get used to because you have done one so yeah I couldn't take the EAP because of because they were 50 euro [pause] for two classes or something like that [pause] but I remember...
that's all the questions I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask
Mary: [long pause] no I don't think I have any question no because first of all they were very vague you know this @@ and eh if I had something in mind in the beginning because of the vagueness I just lost myself in whatever I had to tell you the moment so maybe yeah there's so much to talk about when you talk about this again it's not just language like writing an assignment it's not just delivering the paper of 3,000 words it's your being in there personality your background what you learn what you studied how you learn just to work how you learn to express yourself how the topics blah blah oh there's so much behind it so so yeah this will be too much
Mary: thank you for listening to me for one hour @

Max

okay so um my first question is what are you studying at [institution 1]
Max: okay in [country] I mean [discipline] so here I am doing [discipline] two modules in [topic] and one in [topic]
R: okay are you a visiting student or Erasmus
Max: Erasmus for a semester
R: okay for one semester so this is your first and only semester here so far okay um so what are your strengths academically
Max: well I'd say my English level I mean for coming here uhm I have a certain like um historical uh school path cuz I in [country] I didn't go to university right after high school I did like two years of uhm studies that you can do to enter the best schools in [country] and I didn't have the school I wanted so I decided to go to university cos it's easier to get there but they assume that when you have done these two years you will have better skills in like comprehension and writing and it's easier for you to analyze stuff
R: mm-hmm okay and do you find that that's true it is easier for you or
Max: uhm I don't know if it's easier that I definitely see things that other students don't
but um at university they don't expect the same things and usually what the other
students see is enough
R: mm-hmm okay alright and what would you say your strengths are in terms of English
Max: uhm [long pause] I'd say that I I think I don't have a a academic English uhm I know
some colloquial words and that helps uhm in conversations yeah I'm not stuck with the
only things I've learned at school
R: okay right and what would you say your weaknesses are in terms of academics or
academically
Max: [sigh] [long pause] well I don't know if they answers the question or not but I would
say that I have some weakness in math because of my uh scholar path uhm I've always
chosen to do it [discipline] as a major and therefore the modules in math are less uh har-
yes less hard and therefore every time I try to go to something more uh mathematical I end
up being stuck because I didn't have the prerequisites to do so
R: okay yeah so just not having the background
Max: yeah @
R: yeah okay completely understand that same @ so what would you say your weaknesses
are in terms of English
Max: well I did get an exam on my English level for Erasmus purposes so that they can
see if there's a difference between before and after the Erasmus experiment and uh it was
saying that um um I have vocabulary and grammar that is like it was like C1 which is not
that good compared to that area a grade I had in comprehension and expression so yeah I
would say it's more this is the academic part of my English is not that good even though I
had really good teachers and I was in good schools but you had more English lessons than
the other students
R: okay so you did you get a C2 on everything else and then just
Max: uh I think I got a B2 in grammar and vocabulary and a C1 in the other stuff so um I
want to get C2 in comprehension and expression at least if I could get a C2 in grammar and
vocabulary it would be good but as six months abroad is not enough I think
R: it depends
Max: we’ll see @
R: yeah so in terms of [institution 1] how would you evaluate your current academic
success like do you feel that you're doing well do you feel that you're struggling
Max: um I am struggling because it's really different and I'm I'm struggling academically
because I had to miss a lot of lectures hours the first weeks because it was hard to get at my
schedule and it was hard to get registered and uhm my schedule was finally decided like two weeks ago maybe three weeks ago so basically there's some like a lecture some modules I've been to like one month after it started so you have to get into a group that is already formed with for the projects and this is more for [discipline] modules and for [discipline] one it's really hard because we don't do the tutorials the way they do so here you it's like an exam you get a paper you have to answer the questions you give it back and you are graded but this is not what tutorials mean to me like [pause] the teacher does some exercise and then you do some on your own but he has done some before he has shown you how to do it so it's really really hard to manage a [discipline] tutorial and the only thing I think I'm quite good at is [module] cos it's uh coding and even though I don't know the language I've already coded in another language and I have quite good marks so it's the only one I feel quite comfortable with.

R: ok alright um so can you tell me about the work that's required and your modules so like what do you have to do for your modules and tutorials

Max: yeah so in [topic] I think that you are required to do everything at home like understanding the proofs and finding exercise and doing them in [topic] I don't have a lot of things to do at home I have to learn how how do you write in R because I've never done this language before I'm not sure that the other students have to do something like that because the tutorial you you have to go to his tutorial you have two hours with him and he can help you and then you have two hours left to improve what you have done and send it to him so you don't have like a week to send it to him you have four hours so I don't think you have any homework specific homework you can always improve yourself but you don't have any tutorials or homework and then [topic] it's really different we have projects in almost every yeah almost every module except one that is [topic] so we have a homework like real one she sends us exercise and the solutions so we can really work on that and it's uh yeah it's a really [nationality] way of doing things the other ones we can have tutorials and we have to read some text in one of them I have to read a text and then we go on tutorial we do one exercise and we talk about the text and the other one we don't have any tutorials but just the project and the projects are it's very much [cough] I'm sorry especially like today from the snow to this

R: you're fine to me it's that time of year where it's like the weather is changing and especially like today from the snow to this

Max: it's since I've arrived in Ireland that I'm just coughing like that it's awful

R: yeah I know my first year here it was the same

Max: yeah you have to get used to it
R: yeah definitely I think like the first year you just stay sick and you eventually built up that immunity to the Irish weather.

Max: @@@

R: so can you tell me about the skills that are required in your modules so that would be anything from English to time management.

Max: I'd say that in [topic] you have to be really independent and a hard worker because I spend a lot of time searching for exercise then you spend a lot of time trying to solve them without any help. Yeah I think you have to be really tough and uh, I'm not finding the time to do this like as I told you um it's been only a month only two weeks that I have stable a balanced situation even ummm regarding my accommodation so I'm just starting to try to work properly and respond to what they are wanting from us so yeah you have to be really tough and independent in [topic] that wanting you just being attentive yeah uh they really explains us what we are going to need on tutorial um if you are at his lecture then you can manage the tutorial hmm [sigh] [topic] is really different like you have to [pause] they explained us theorems or theories and cases and examples and then we have to use this material and you do our own analysis um examples like this is really the projects or you have this material that is my lecture and then you have to create something with that and go further.

R: okay alright um and so can you describe the form of assessment in your modules is it exam based do you have to write essays you've mentioned group work quite a bit.

Max: umm I don't have a lot of essays just one module with one one essay so it's really not a lot uh except in one of my [topic] module it's like during tutorials [pause] yeah just have to give my code and statistics and [pause] yeah then I don't have to give everything like if I don't want to do something I mean it kind of make for example except group project I don't have to like like it's more for me then for the teacher.

R: right okay and and so do you have to take exams at the end.

Max: mm yeah I have one example like in [topic] in midterm it's [topic] and then we have final exams for everything except [topic] I think gives in [topic] I also have a project okay I don't know what it will be but I will have one yeah uh final exams are the biggest part of the grade final grade.

R: and do you know the structure of those exams like will you just have to solve problems or do you have to write anything.

Max: uhm it's still really blurry I know that in one of my [topic] module I will have like it's going to be three questions three topics and inside I am gonna have one question about
definition so it's learning by heart something and just giving it back and then more or less
using the proof to answer your question so this three times and he only counts one uh two
questions like the two best answers uhm but for the other ones I really don't know like
maybe just [topic] it's gonna be some exercise but it's pretty basic stuff and it's not that
hard so I can imagine it’s going to be some exercise on different topics and that's it and I
think that in uh [topic] I think that it's gonna be some [topic] exercise and then some
questions on the lecture I think or a reflection and analysis something like that
R: okay alright and so that brings us to what what do your professors expect so how do
they assess your academic success
Max: hmmm this is a good question because it's it sounds really different from [country]
like you are successful in [country] if you have really good marks and if you uhm come
from like low marks and goes to higher it's even better [pause] but I think it's kind of kind
of different here because um I was quite concerned with my uh I I there's only one module
where I have grades so far so I can't really know where I stand and the first marks were six
out of ten twice and then seven out of ten three times and the first time that I was quite
concerned because six out of ten is not a lot for us like having 12 out of 20 is not a good
mark in [country] you you don't consider it as a good mark so I sent him an email to know
if I can meet him and I have some feedbacks on that and he just told me that I was uhm I
wanted to do I wanted to make it 10 out of 10 but it's not the way it works and that every
tutorial is harder like you do the next one it's harder than the one before because we
have less information less help so uhm it's not that bad at least I can always improve so I
think that here they are searching for improvement and uh maybe hard working people
like if you don't have good marks but you still try you'll you are going to pass because here
is 40% and you pass so I think you know you can see it's really for improvements and not
have top marks
R: mm-hmm okay alright um so what would you say in general do students need in order
to succeed at [institution 1]
Max: uhmm [long pause] for a thing I think need they need money like really [long pause]
it's obviously you can't you can't be a good student here if you do not have any money
because everything is [pause] um more expensive I'm not just talking about the fees
because we don't have any feels for university obviously and I think [institution 1] is not
the most expensive university you can find but [pause] to you have a proper environment
to study you really need money you need to have a good room so find good
accommodation finding good accommodation without a lot of money it's really hard and
uh eating properly and doing some kind of sports can also be expensive uh well I know we
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Max: have the gymnasium here but if you want to do something else it's quite expensive and being a good student is eating well sleeping well working well and eating well I don't know if I said it so ehm yeah money is really in the center of everything maybe it's a thing in Ireland and then uh [pause] I think you really need to be major like before coming here university in [country] uhhh we know that we we say that you're left to yourself but that's not true like I can see it with tutorials our teacher are always behind us and always trying to make us do a homework even if you don't have done it at home you'll have some time at the beginning of the lecture to do it again or so and here it's not the case like you do everything really on your own the teacher has only 50 minutes for his lecture he might have 15 slides so he just go through it and you are really left alone

R: okay alright and so how much of a factor do you think the language plays in academic success

Max: mm [pause] it's not it's not an important factor for me cuz for the majority of my modules I really understand what is going on uhm I mean once you've understood once you know that the translation of some words like in [topic] you can follow uhm except one module I really don't understand the teacher I don't know if it's because he has Irish accent or if it's because the notions in [topic] are like I don't have a background on that or whatever I don't understand it but a sentence like won't know I just can pick some words so in this particular module language is essential because I stopped going to his lectures because I couldn't get a word but yeah in the other ones it's quite easy if you have a good level in English but the teachers really don't take into account that they have Erasmus students and I had to go and see teachers asking them to write down some words because I understand them and I understand the context but I don't know how to write how to write them and I think a lot of teachers are forgetting that they have Erasmus students in the lecture hall and it could be improved like I have a teacher in [country] he always writes words that he thinks are difficult sometimes even sentences that could be phrased in a certain way it could be hard to understand so it doesn't stop the lecture you just have to take a a pencil and write something on the board and without stopping speaking it's something that should be natural for teachers who have Erasmus students

R: okay alright and so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before attending [institution 1]

Max: no nothing I had um some lectures uhm English lectures but there are really better in [country] universities
R: okay alright and um you did not take an entry assessment right so you didn't take IELTS TOEFL
Max: @no

R: okay alright um I'm gonna skip all of that @ well in general what type of preparation do you think the international students should do before coming to [institution 1]
Max: hmm [long pause] I don't know it's it's really specific like I don't need to learn vocabulary for history or philosophy or those kind of uh uh subjects but I would have really needed something but in [topic] or even sometimes in [topic] but it's really specific so is it like doing some background in [topic] in English or is it just learning some vocabulary like a list of words I really don't know

R: so if you could give advice to the faculty and professors at [institution 1] on how to support and how to handle international students what would that advice be
Max: hm ah there's a lot there's a lot of things that could be improved um first of all when an Erasmus student send you an email like just read it like I've sent a lot of emails to teacher that I've never met to ask them can I follow your can I attend your tutorial um that day for these brackets I have answers like yes and when I go to academic registry they they tell me that this hour bracket doesn't exist so you didn't have read my email properly I also send emails like can I follow your course I've never done this subject before and I know that you have one in the first term so can I go on [second] term and I had answers like yes and then you go to the lecture and you see you don't have any perquisites to this so you know you can't be there and you go and ask the teacher and she tells you oh no we can't you can't like it's not possible and the the due date for the module enrollment was already

R: like already passed
Max: yeah so I had to like find a way to take it off like find a new module and this is a nightmare and we are Erasmus students we arrived two weeks ago and this is a lot of confusion that we really don't need so just like you maybe a little more careful when it comes to us to Erasmus students uhm and yeah maybe ask several times like during the first weeks uh is there an Erasmus student in this room so that you know if you have to uh check sometimes if people are following you or not if you see people frowning and they are Erasmus students maybe you should like stop and try to rephrase something because we won’t say excuse me yeah I didn't understand you [pause] and really when we have projects uh I think the best would be to mix to force people to mix because I have a teacher who says said try to be with the [institution 1] students and it's not possible because they don't want to mix I can understand them but um it would be better if maybe like the
groups are bigger but you take two [institution 1] students that want to be together and you add an Erasmus one because when you arrived in the second term second semester it's really hard to mix you don't know who is a Erasmus you don't know who is from [institution 1] you're just like here left alone if you didn't come to orientation day so it would be good teachers could like gather people and oh yeah I had a teacher that one that I saw in his office to explain me some things in the tutorials um he took one hour for me and he didn't ask me anything on the tutorial he basically asked me how things are going and it was really nice from him I think and I mean it's good to see that some teachers know it's hard and so they are um how do you say it they are concerned about you I think I'm the only Erasmus student in his lecture so maybe that's why you you can't do that if you have a lot of students but it would be good to show that you know it's hard R: mm-hmm okay and so if you could give advice to future students who are planning to come to [institution 1] what would that advice be Max: first of all umm I don't know how to say that maybe is each major has his own websites you don't understand that every f- I didn't understand that and when I was looking for the modules I could attend to I found some documents and they uh weren't dated so go through websites from the major like it’s [topic] dot [institution 1] and not just [institution 1] dot ie uhm the week maybe before your arrival check on [student portal] if the module exists when there are during the week R: yeah like what time and day Max: yeah like I would explain how to use [student portal] and I would explain that you can go to my timetables and then search for it for with the name of the module uh so that's you have a lot of a huge part of the Erasmus uhm uh how can I say that uh like the first weeks are gonna be easier also I'll show them how to find the lectures hall because you have them I had a kind of an array with all the modules and labs and where there they were but I couldn't understand the code for the places so I found someone really really nice that told me for every day what was was the building and where where it was but without him I couldn't find these places so yeah just check on [student portal] @ you can find a little map with the place of the lecture hall try not to like try to come earlier and find your accommodation uh here and not on the internet as I did and like I had some bad surprise the place was kind of like there were moisture everywhere so I had to move out and it took um like three weeks before finding something so try to come like during your uhm Christmas holidays even if you have exams after the Christmas holidays it will really help you when you come here for the second semester and uhm oh yeah ask for uhm at the academic registry they have some books with the modules you can follow but they didn't
tell me that and like the secretary in [discipline] gave me the one for [discipline] but like
she thought I already had that so she gave this to me really late and she told she told me
that there was one for every major so if I knew that before it would have really helped me
[pause] and you finally be prepared to not have any table in front of you uh so you be
prepared to not have lecture halls where you feel comfortable @ if you are a lefty you you
will find find some chairs but you have to know where exactly and yeah uh be prepares to
less than one hour lecture so it goes really fast and to have tutorials in a different way
Max: mmm-hmm are you a lefty
R: @yeah yeah I had some struggle the first days@ then they explained me it was the
first table on the left side in the huge halls and then I found some chairs in the small
classrooms but those chairs are um usually taken by right-handed people because there are
more comfortable@
R: that’s so annoying @ so what like what other factors because you've been talking a lot
about other factors like accommodation and mixing with students so what factors would
you say have the biggest impact on your academic success or your Erasmus experience
Max: [long pause] uhm [long pause] I don’t know how to say that um [long pause] the
support maybe I think we are not supported we are not enough supported I don’t know how
to say that I thought that when I would arrived in [institution 1] I would find someone with
I would sit and try to see what are the modules I can follow yeah like I think someone can
do that it will take one hour two hours but at least the student will be like on track uhm
directly you can ask every question you have and maybe you can have you can have a lot
of advices because [institution 1] is nothing like it's really different from universities in
[country] and there's a lot of things that are completely different and I've been lucky
because I found that you can have someone at the airport waiting for you so she explained
us a lot of things and then here I have a friend from those two years of uhm schools that I
did after high school so she was there and for the whole here so I met her and she
explained me a lot of things but I think it's something that should be done by someone
working for [institution 1] and uh regarding to your accommodation I also thought I would
have more supports I thought that it would like the [college accommodation services]
would be like really helpful but it just showed me the same things that was already doing
so yeah I was expecting for more support but I think it's something in [institution 1] like
you are expected to be really independent so just doing things by yourself@
R: and can you expand on the differences between [institution 1] and the universities and
[country]
Max: yep uhm first of all lectures hall like we have been here people don't take notes and
sometimes they come without any pen and this is incredible for us like we we all have a
computer and maybe we will use it but when you do [topic] you can't have a computer in
front of you you have to write things try to understand how they work and like lectures
here like some of them some [topic] lectures are um with slides so you really lose the
practical part of [topic] so I can understand that you don't have any tables because students
don't write because it's slides there's a lot of them so we're going through like really
quickly and then you're expected to go through them again and write something maybe at
home like the way you used to work you can do it at home but not at
college uh so yeah I was quite surprised not having enough space for my stuff I can't have
my computer and write so this is the first shocking thing uhm we don't have any student
space here like we don't have a lot of places to eat even though it's a huge university like
you just have one dining hall but then you don't have any room for eating with the
microwaves like that just one or this is incredible really uhm at least you have a huge a lot
of um libraries but a huge one for example for [discipline] it's a good thing I think that in
first you have less places to study like this it's not open so late and this is a good thing
having those things open [pause] what what is different also is how sports are how do you
say that uhm in [country] you can do sports like for free you can choose whatever you
want to do here you have to go to a society uhm you have the the gymnasium but it's like
it's not really free if you have to pay fees like it's free for me because I'm an Erasmus
students but the person paying fees are paying for the gymnasium so [pause] I don't think
doing to go to the gymnasium if it's not something that they used to do before
like in high school or something in [country] at least you can choose a sport and try it and
if you don't like it you can maybe go to another one and it's the teacher from the university
that do that like I did handball with a real teacher for other students and then he went on uh
Mondays to do some trainings for the this school the school uhm the students outside of the
school hours so it's really good [deep sigh] yeah I can understand that 50 minutes of
lessons it is better because you're more focused uhm [pause] but it hasn't been the case for
me like 50 minutes are going soooo quickly and the teacher have to talk really quickly so
basically uhm I'm more I'm not that focused because everything goes so fast my mind
sometimes just quit everything and I have to go back and try to understand at least when
the teacher have the time to explain himself uhm you also have the time to understand
what's going on and I can see that because one of my module is two hours long and she
gives us five minutes ten minutes between the two hours and it's really easier to follow her
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

and like she knows she has two hours so she takes her time and it's really easy to follow
her it's not the case for one hour lessons I think

R: alright and so are you well the theme of support um are you aware of any support that
international students receive either from professors your department [institution 1] as a
whole

Max: @ uh well I would say I don't remember the name of the this place like the
accommodation the it's not really society

R: yeah no I know exactly right it's like where you get your leap card and then it's yeah I
know exactly where you’re talking about

Max: yeah I went there when I had accommodation problems uhmmm I mean and I think
that maybe our coordinator should be any help like you should help us uhm I think that you
could go and see them if you have a problem uhm but I I I don't feel comfortable with
mine so like I have three coordinators but my major one I really I'm not comfortable with
him so I rather not go I would say that you have the places like healthcare and I've heard
recently about something like facilities like accommodation and facilities
something like that because I have a problem with my landlord and full-term students full-
year students I don't know how you call it uh told me that there was this thing that could
help me like finding an emergency accommodation and try to uhm make the future
students aware that the place where I stay is not that good

R: mm-hmm alright um and so your coordinators are they all here at [institution 1] or some
in [country] some here

Max: oh I have both so uhm I have one in [country] I have just one coordinator like I have
several persons to whom I have to refer but for different things like I have my coordinator
who helped me choosing the modules will help me with the uh document I had to send [institution 1] and also a teacher that has nothing to see with Erasmus she helped me
choosing the lectures because she knows better the like the like how do you call it like I
mean [discipline] so she knows what is done in the lecture so she helped me choosing
modules that are more or less the same and I had two other person I had to refer to one for
the bursary and yes both for bursaries like it's quite blurry in [country] you don't really
know those person except your coordinator and here I have three persons one for [topic]
one for [topic] and one for [topic] and I just discovered that whenever I arrived I didn't
know that before I thought that my [topic] coordinator would sign everything for me like I
thought I would come with my modules he signs that and it's okay and no I had to go find
the [topic] one and go find the [topic] one

R: okay alright so it wasn't very streamline
Max: no yeah a lot of surprises @ @ @
R: alright um let's see you so that's all the questions that I have for you um but are there any questions that you wish I have asked that I didn't
Max: uhm [deep sigh] I think this surprisingly covers everything [pause] uhm like for an hour I'm not I'm not sure what you're looking for I'm not sure what you want to do with these I don't know if it's just for a creating like an English uhm English module that you're forced to do before coming here or whatever [pause] but if I had to talk about my Erasmus experiment to someone and if I wanted to say everything I would have done it this way
R: mm-hmm okay oh yeah and is there anything else that you'd like to add
Max: uhm yeah maybe one thing [pause] uhhh like there is one orientation day I don't know how it is for uhm students coming to the first semester but for students coming in the second one [pause] few of us can go to this date because I have an exam this day and a lot of students have exams until like the third week of January [nationality] students and sometimes other nationalities so if something had to be done to help us on our English on how to uh uh adapt at [institution 1] it should it has to be done knowing that people won't be available all the same day like if you give some important information to some students you have to give the same to the other ones so I look gathering everyone is a good thing but if you can’t do this like just send an email with all your informations uh a video maybe because an email like you don't want to read that and sometimes it's hard to understand [pause] so maybe something like to explain everything that is coming to the an Erasmus student everything like accommodation how to register how to find your modules or your timetables everything should be gathered in one place and open to everyone so that you have every informations [pause] that’s it
R: okay alright brilliant thank you

Mike

R: all right so first I'd like you to talk about how would you evaluate or uh your current academic success or how do you feel that you're doing in your academic studies here at [institution 1]
Mike: at [institution 1]
R: yeah
Mike: [institution 1] is good University but I think that it's very far from the other universities the educational level and I think the the most advantage of [institution 1] is on
some uh some fields related to health and uh medicine but in the other fields [pause] no it's not really high rank University [pause] and [long pause] in my field [pause] it's not okay @

R: okay so how do you feel that you're doing personally

Mike: ehh I don't know about the educational system in other countries but compare with my country ehm the educational system is I think it's very weak eh for example eh if we want to pass a course eh can I say my country's name

R: yes

Mike: in [country] it eh every course has is 16 weeks and in each weeks we have two sessions each session is two house and eh compared with [institution 1] that is 12 weeks and one week off eleven week and in each week they have eh two courses each course is one house so it is near ehh half of the cour- half of the the time in [institution 1] is half of the time in my country for each course and because of that and also the lecturer don't really go into details and the exercises assignments are very very [pause] with the amount is very low and I think hmm the people don't the students don't get a good knowledge when they pass the course um they need more details I think in this way

R: okay and are you happy with how you are doing at [institution 1]

Mike: because I'm a PhD student it's not really related to take course because I don't for me is not important to be at [institution 1] or in South Africa because they're no different because this I do research the only things important for me is my supervisor and he is nice man it’s it’s okay for me because it's not really I cannot say something about [institution 1]

R: alright so what do you think your strengths are both in English and as a research student

Mike: ehhh it is possible to explain

R: so what are you good at in terms of English

Mike: okay [pause] I think yeah because are you in a country that the English is not uh our generally speaking language I think that uh reading and listening is my reading and listening is good because we can watch movies in my country and also read a lot of papers and books but about speaking and writing no it’s very bad because we don't ever experience because in my country we don't need to speak in English and also write something in English because of that these two points are very weak

R: okay can you tell me about the work that you have to do in your PhD

Mike: yes eh my project is in collaboration with a company and I should take sometimes in [institution 1] and sometime some days in that company name is it important

R: no the name’s not important
Mike: okay yes uh it's really it's a collaboration between the academic and industrial and I think it's a good Ph.D. should be a good PhD
R: okay so you have to talk with a lot of people
Mike: yes
R: um are you conducting experiments or
Mike: experiment means this is um hard work something like this
R: um yeah or can you go into detail about like on your everyday what is your schedule do you read articles do //you @@
Mike: good question| @ I like this question
R: do you do you go and look things up on the computer do you design something
Mike: okay eh [pause] my my days in Ireland divide into two days two kinds of days one when I want to go that company's [name] is very far from the city center it takes me four hours to go and back to my home yeah so I'm just honestly I'm getting my PhD in DART and bus @ I mean yes @@ I read eh uh @@@@ yes the days that I want to go to [company] ehm I try to keep my laptop with a full charge because I want to eh do something in the bus station @ also in bus if there is any free seats @ and at [company] we the most the main parts of the project at [company] is just to talking with each other with the other colleagues and find the good solution just brainstorming new idea and this kind of things ehh but in [institution 1] small research research means that reading papers eh just give new ideas and also do some simulation by laptop this kinds of things
R: alright perfect um let's see so I'm gonna skip that because you're not in any //modules Mike: I I am in module| but I don't get the course means that I'm I'm not finishing it R: ahh okay okay so can you tell me about that module Mike: mmmm so so what what’s is a general question R: so what do you have to do in the module Mike: the module is in mathematics uh related to mathematics and we are just attending the course [pause] every week two times a week and just I think it's just going to class and just read eh just the lecturer present ehhh some something based on the slides and we just see the slides without any assignments R: okay so there's no assignment Mike: not really you know and there is no any pressure to do some assignment if it also they give they give us just one assignment but there is no any pressure to do just do it or grade it R: okay is it like a math assignment
Mike: yes @
R: okay alright
Mike: and also in the [institution 1] there is not any the proposal and not check the present of the students but in my country we should go absolutely the class we cannot [pause] yeah if we from from if we don't go ten percent of the class we don't attend ten percent of the class then we fail on that course
R: and here they don't check
Mike: yes what about America
R: uh @ we well it depends on the class depends on the professor
Mike: yeah yeah this very good idea to just ask the students to come to university @@
R: @@ alright so um how does your supervisor assess academic success so how does he tell if you are doing a good job or not
Mike: [pause] how would he tell
R: well how so what is he looking for
Mike: mmmm is possible to explain
R: yeah so is he basing his his evaluation of your success on the writing that you produce on the meeting where you talk about your ideas
Mike: oh okay okay [pause] uh in my course in my field this is most important to produce something new [pause] give new ideas to improve the past ideas and I think the only assessment is based on what what is the result of my work yeah
R: okay great and how does your supervisor communicate his expectations
Mike: [long pause] he's a nice man he don't just don't talk eh with- uh he wants it means that how can you say that I'm just doing well or not something like this
R: yes
Mike: he's a nice one I think he- until know after four months he doesn't tell me anything about the progress but I said him that my progress is weak @@ um eh [pause] okay is okay I think just because he's from [country] I cannot understand his accent and sometimes just eh just I cannot understand what does he said that's what did he say
R: and and so when you told him that your progress was weak what was his response
Mike: [sigh] his response said that no it's okay it's this first stage but it's I think yeah he is okay his his statements isn’t true because compared with the courses just because I'm come from another country and my expectation is different [pause] they are just there from they expect I can just compare the courses between my country and here and I think that they just they don't want to just work hard because of that it is better to just me reduce my expectation from my PhD eh yeah I think it’s because of that probably because of this @@
R: okay so why do you feel that you're doing weak

Mike: sorry

R: so why do you feel that you're doing weakly

Mike: mmmm because the amount of progress is very low [pause] because comp- in [country] I just do research alone means my supervisor don't help me uh didn't help me

R: but here I he he is very welcoming every time I ask question he answer me also he check my codes everything he he’s great [pause] but I think that in this condition I should have better gain compared with what happened in my in [country] but it is not I cannot see this progress when I compare with what happened in [country]

R: okay and what are your expectations for the PhD you said you needed to reduce them so what are they

Mike: my expectation in PhD I think I need journals publications not conference journals good because my supervisor is very famous in the world and I think that I just come here honestly come here to Ireland just because of him [pause] without any reason I don't know why I'm in this country @@ but only the reason is is him and just because I lost anything that I have I had a great job in [country] with great salary but I come here to ehm just do something good in my life and I think that it is not what I want until now yeah because of that

R: alright um what would you say

Mike: it's become more personal @@

R: yeah that's okay that's fine though @ it’s um so well actually I'm interested in it's become like a counsellor @@

R: well alright so now I'm interested in I don't have to follow these questions that's the beauty of of interviews

Mike: yes @@

R: so you brought up an interesting point that you you gave up a lot in [country] to come here and up until now you don't feel like you've really done well here

Mike: yes

R: so what factors have impacted that feeling is this academically or is it

Mike: social [pause] both of them many factors if I want to just tell them without any categorize about the coding or something like this ehm the main important is Ireland is not really developed country yes you should absolutely sense it because compare it to America it's nothing yes it is like a village @@ also you compare with my country mmm yeah and the [nationality] people here is very the amount of them is very low uhm compared with social life is not really good here and also Irish people are nn-not really friendly and
R: okay so it's a lot of issues it’s economic it’s social it’s academic [institution 1] is not up
to what you thought it would be
Mike: yes and honestly before I coming here is I- I applied for another university @@@@
and then come here for interview
R: yes okay alright and so what would you say in general do students need to succeed at
[institution 1] to do well at [institution 1]
Mike: of course of course here eh I think the most important things in [institution 1] that is
the students can speak in English is that they understand English it is very good I think it's
very good advantage because they can easily read paper for me read a paper maybe takes
one day or two days but I think for them two hours any because of that they should have a
lot of progress but no here I don't uh students I think don't really like eh studying [pause]
yes they want to just go to bars @ @ @ not all of them I talk in general for here because
absolutely [unt] a lot the students but in general I don't think so they they don't take care
about studying
R: okay is that international students uh Irish students both
Mike: in my field the number of Irish students is very low I just I will talk about my field
so all of them are fro- not all often 60 or 70% are from India they are good they're good I
think but about Irish not really yeah [pause] I'm very pessimist @ about things in this
country
R: @ I can tell that's fine
Mike: @@ okay
R: yeah okay alright um so I keep going back to the personal life because it's just very
interesting um I don’t know I just want you to expand more on on why you have such a
pessimist pessimistic feeling about Ireland and about [institution 1]
Mike: mmmm because when I compare ehm condition here with my country and also with
my other friends that are around the world America Canada uh Sweden Germany and
compare with them I think that the condition for here for international students is not really
good
R: okay how so

Mike: for example compare with my country I think that many things that my country is like North Korea honestly but we are very developed compared with Ireland I don't have never been in another country in Europe or America or Canada but compared with Ireland we are so developed because of that I am really upset and also my friends in [country] said me that why you are going to Ireland they are just making fun of me because I have a good grades and I can go to better universities and because of that yes I think it was a big mistakes for me to come here yes @

R: okay um can you give examples of how the condition for international students here is not so good like specific

Mike: [big sigh] I cannot say talk about all the international because I could talk about just about my nationality because the number of [nationality] people is very low here because there is a main reason there are two uh main reasons one is the economical because it's not really in my field it is good but not really in all fields and also eh about the getting permanent residency here it's very hard to get residency after nine years means that the PhD is not considered as part of your residency and it is a very bad point for for [nationality] because they want to go out and um yes go out to go outside of [country] to go in better eh country in a better company something like this because of that yes for [nationality] it's not good situation @

R: okay alright um so going back to linguistics um

Mike: @@ counsellor do you have any advice for me @@

R: @@ no because it's the same for the United States for the visa

Mike: really

R: yeah but for for me being here so

Mike: but you don't need to get a residency of Ireland if you want to stay here for example

R: mhm I do I need it

Mike: okay just leave this country as soon as possible @@ if by any chance this this interview be published and I will I think I will fired from Ireland @@

R: @@ no no

Mike: @ they will kill me @@

R: @@ no no they won’t alright so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before attending [institution 1] so things like academic English

Mike: @ yes yes in general for my study I started studying English when I was [pause] six or seven years old but honestly I hate English @ sorry about that @@ and always my
mother send me to ehm to just private schools to learn English but I don't go there because
all @ when I just attend the course just I sit there and don't attend the lecture and it is very
bad point because I'm in trouble here because of English @@ and after that when I just
finish >in [country] in during a bachelor and master we don't the lecturer don't uhh
present anything in English all in [language] after that I think that if I want to continue my
study I need to get TOEFL or IELTS and after that it takes a lot of time for me to prepare
for this courses going to took to private ehh classes and it takes a lot of time because at the
same time I need to work and also studying and because my major is not eh English it is
very hard for me to just focus in one field that is very different from my background
because of that yeah it was very hard to get TOEFL

R: and so and so you got TOEFL um how how do you feel about the TOEFL
Mike: because I think that because TOEFL is eh before I deciding that should I study for
TOEFL or IELTS you think that because TOEFL is for America then they have good
standards is better than England about IELTS and then I choose TOEFL ehh in TOEFL I'm
very surprised about can I just speak about the four skills in TOEFL is it important for you
R: mmhm yeah
Mike: yeah the in reading in just reading part it's very good but the very interesting thing
that they ask students to know some very very uncommon words for example I cannot
even remember them because as I want to study them for TOEFL if you don't know that
the name of eh these kind of things very very uncommon words about some some creatures
that live in the sea and something like this if you don't know the words then you cannot get
higher score in reading [pause] and about listening listening is okay but sometimes they
don't just the the listening part is the accent is the British and it is not fair because when
someone wants to get TOEFL they prepare it for American accent not for English accent
this part is I think it's not good and eh also about @ the other part speaking oh speaking is
terrible one minute or 45 seconds just to speak about something it's very hard for someone
also I think it's very hard for someone that eh the American- English is his native language
because should prepare two reason something like even the structure it's very hard this part
is very hard and the reading and writing writing is also very hard because you need to write
something in a very short time and also sometimes it's very hard to understand what is the
sentence what is the question what you want to do okay it’s yes it’s hard
R: okay do you feel that the tests and the classes that you took prepared you for the
academic work at [institution 1]
Mike: [long pause] academic
R: so do you feel that
Mike: not really academic but generally yes but not academic purpose for example I ascend your course here EAP and it’s is very different from what I learned in [country] because you you give us some technical terms and this kind of things is very good for academic
R: okay can you expand on that a little bit more
Mike: mmm yes for example about the last session you talk about ehh rheme and theme and when I was writing I cannot even under- I cannot take care about this kind of things because I didn't know before attend that course and after that now when I then I am writing something then I take care about that the two sentence should be connected to each other and I should consider the rheme theme rheme theme these kinds of uh patterns in my writing for exam- that in that session is very useful for me and also the other sessions @@
R: @@ but and that's not something that you had in [country] so what were the classes like there
Mike: no in [country] the the major courses are just trying to prepare students to get higher score in TOEFL and IELTS it's very ridiculous if I want to explain what happen in [country] there's something there are some guys in China I think you have never seen hear something like this they they ex- estimate the questions of the next TOEFL have you ever seen here
R: yes
Mike: okay and in [country] just uh for example in [city] I attend them the famous courses I think it was one of the very famous teachers in my country and he's just working in these questions okay the next session this question will come okay I give you the reasons you should talk about this kinds of >if you give< if you had this question then you should talk about these reasons and something like that they're not focused on eh improving the English it’s to getting more score in TOEFL and IELTS
R: so this is the fun part um so if you could give advice to professors here at [institution 1] about dealing with international students what would it be
Mike: [pause] @@@ don't hire international students @@
R: don't hire international students @ why
Mike: @@ because of the life condition here @@ I’m I'm not me someone else is talking @@
R: @@ no that's fine
Mike: @@ just you can uh feel eh better than me because you come from America I think it's not comparable with America Ireland yes
R: mmm
Mike: you're thinking about absolutely it's not comparable
R: mmm
Mike: @@ why you don’t say something @@ Jessica this is not fair @@ you @@
R: @@ this is not my interview @@
Mike: @@ no it’s not fair okay you should I wanted I wanted to make you say
something that after that I can then you cannot publish this interview @@
R: @@ no I I can still publish it umm @@
Mike: @@
R: @@ but I'm trying not to influence you @@ so so tell me what else would you tell
alright besides not hiring international students because life here is horrible for
international students
Mike: @@
R: what would you tell professor
Mike: okay for example in my case I eh talked with my professor one week ago about the
condition of PhD students in another countries in Europe not about American or Canada
Canada and I said that for example their salary is very high [pause] they have reward at the
end of the week uh end of the year it's like an employee a real employee they have the
health insurance their salaries increase will be increased during the years and also the PhD
is part of their residency and these are very good benefit is not very small things it’s very
big things it’s as important as PhD maybe more than the PhD
R: alright so if you could give advice to organizations like the one that I work for giving
English for academic purposes or the ones back in [country] that were teaching to pass the
standardized exams if you could give us advice for preparing students to study at university
what would that be
Mike: okay [long pause] I just I just write something for your course your class EAP but
it's nothing related to this question [pause] I think it's better to prepare students just not
focusing on reading and listening is I think more important than reading and listening is
speaking and writing it's very very important especially speaking because if they cannot
communicate with the other students it would be very hard for them because they should
present something and they may they make them ehh they confid- confidential
Mike: no I don't know confiden-
R: confidentiality or
Mike: confidence
Mike: confidence yes because they it will decrease the confidence and they because and they they will not really easy eh present something it's always for me is afraid of presenting something because speaking is very hard yes and I just when I'm speaking I lose my grammar I cannot think about the grammar what's the grammatical point I'm using what are what are the mistakes that I am doing @ I'm making this kind of thing yes it's better to focus on speaking and writing my opinion because reading reading and listening is something eh by by by yourself we can improve it no without not without teacher but a little bit independent of uh the teacher

R: alright and I want to hear you have written

Mike: okay it's uh this I prepare for your course especially as I attend it [pause] I think this courses is not really interests is not really good for international students like me that English is their English is not good because I think that eh for me just they are I think twelve people attend your class around and me and the Italian guy are just only people that English is not just we don’t then the our major is science not teaching English yeah and isn't it is not fair for us and for them also because when we are in a team group in a team work ehh for them they want to focus on the ehm what you said what you class techniques but for me in my case is very it's very hard for me to understand some verbs that you write it's for its different aspects because they are more professional should be because they are studying English and the variance is variance is general question yes in mathematic we have some variance

R: yeah like the levels

Mike: the difference between people is very high and it's not good it is good for ehhh me because I learn from them but I think it's not good for them because they cannot learn something from me okay [long pause] eh maybe boring for them eh speaking and writing this I said [long pause] oh and it's very good to have for you uh uh that want to prepare these courses it’s better to have absolutely you should have this but uh just for saying something have a long term vision about these courses because for example for me learning English during the four years as a PhD student here I think it's more than important than the PhD because it's very important if if I can just improve my English then win after these four years [pause] if you have I think there is no any long term vision in these courses when you planning these courses yes am I right

R: yeah there's not much @@

Mike: @@ you said yes oh a good one @@

R: @@ well I mean I have to be honest the way that it it is structured it's um term-by-term
Mike: because yeah because it's in university it's easy for students to attend the courses and also it is very cheap [pause] for me I want to just come to just attend this courses every semester this is long term is improving gradually beside my studying my PhD [pause] but for example if I each semester I come to academic for English writing something like this it’s not really good something every time go to the same class

R: right you want progression you want to be able to go

Mike: so maybe just if you change your names okay maybe but it's good because English is a very very vast and there is a lot of things to learn and in four years you can never just I can never just uh cover you know ten percent of it but yes it's very good to just have it's also for something like um some entertainment to just come to class learn because I see my friends [nationality] friends their English is not good but they are not trying to improve it it's very good for other people yeah

R: okay so you'd like to see levels first of all

Mike: yeah something like this

R: so having levels and then also that way you can go through your four years having different content and moving up levels

Mike: yes but we want the same teacher

R: okay @ @ @

Mike: @ @ @

R: @ @ I'll pass that to my supervisor

Mike: @ @ I can write an email to her

R: @ @ sure

Mike: @ @ honestly I attend a lot of courses in English but I hate them but this I think it's only courses that I liked because the class is very different from what happened in [country] the teacher just stand here and just read reads something write something on blackboard it’s not really interactive between teacher there is no any as ac- connection between teacher and students >like other courses in [institution 1]< the teacher says something and the students just writing it's not like this you’re very energetic and you try- and I think that you want to just um learn students something something it's very good also this motivates students to learn something

R: alright glad to hear that @ so let's go back um if you could give advice to future students of [institution 1] what would it be

Mike: @ @ but [institution 1] is a good University but the students should take care about the what major they want to continue in [institution 1] in which level eh for PhD is not related [institution 1] is not something that they should eh take care about it because it's
just supervisor is important in this part but in master I'm not agree for someone to come here to get master if you want if he if he wants or if they want they want to continue their studies get PhD the master is here not is terrible for cont- for continuing study but for just getting a master and then go to work is good because it stations one not one year 9 months in my country it takes three years to get master’s yes

R: wow is is that why you think that the Masters here is terrible so

Mike: yes because maybe this I'm just I'm not really it's not fair to say in this way because I don't know about the other countries and their programs maybe it's very common here because in [country] our educational systems based on American system I think maybe in America is like is two or three years master yes

R: yes

Mike: it's very good because is America @ @ @

R: alright @ @ @ so let's see you have talked about this question

Mike: [info cut for anonymity] I asked my friends who studied in America and asked them about educational system and is the same as in [country] and because of that for us it's very good to go to America because is very similarity

R: okay

Mike: [info cut for anonymity]

R: so actually you've answered pretty much all of my questions so I have a question for you now well I'm yeah do you have any questions that you wish I have asked but I didn't ask you

Mike: mm about

R: anything very broad

Mike: @@ okay [long pause] let me know [long pause] I can't remember anything

R: okay do you have anything else that you want to add to the interview

Mike: mmm not to the interview I think this the course academic for writing is great and I'm very happy to attend this course and Jessica is very great @ @@ she is very great teacher @ @ @

R: it sounds like I'm forcing you to say this @ @ @

Mike: @@ @ @ @ @ @ @ I will say this but it’s honestly because it's all the only course I have ever taken English because I want interested to continue it @ @ @ not going outside for playing football not going to course yeah @ @ @ I think that everything is okay but is it better to do be continuous next next term next uh higher levels or different fields is very good in this way for international student and also it's better to decrease the variety of the students I think it would be good for students because they can see their uh
progress without compare with the others always they are better than for example me and
seeing the progress very hard it's important
R: alright perfect thank you so much...[recording turned back on with permission] okay so
so go ahead and say what what you were just saying
Mike: for someone who hear this interview @ I am not that guy that talking I'm another
one don't fire me from Ireland before I find a new PhD position eh if
want to say why I'm disappointed to stay in Ireland one of the main reason is one is uh
residency problem the other one is the because it's very expensive country and the life
condition is not really correlated with this uh expensive something the uh I get
the my salary is 60% or 70% of our salaries is just for renting a room as I'm currently
living a room in an Irish family and it's very hard for students in in my age to just to stay in
a room and uh also about the transportation system it is not really good and if I the the
company I working with it is very far from the city center and I just have one option to go
there and it is sus and if this busses comes every 30 minutes or 20 minutes and it takes two
hours to go there and two hours to come back and it's very expensive and here I just spent
10 euro or something like it every day when I want to go to that company eh it's a very bad
part of it and also one problem [pause] they are not really active people they go home just
after sunset is about 6:00 p.m. it's not really active city you cannot see people at night on
the street [pause] yeah these are the best things and a major bad thing they drive on the	right is terrible I think is this is in just in the world of two countries drive on the right
England and Ireland
Mike: okay that's not country it’s very big it’s a continent yeah it's very hard for
international people also because they cannot drive
Mike: okay
Mike: I talk about a lot of disadvantages in Ireland I just remember it's weather is also very
bad it’s like hell we are living in the hell no I'm joking but they have a lot of water we don't have these kinds of water in [country] this is good advantages of this country they don't have desert yes do you want to continue
@ @ @
R: well yes @ @ @
Mike: they don’t have sunny beaches @ @ @
R: well okay so going back you were before we turned back on the interview you were saying that most of your money goes towards rent and so you're not able to save
Mike: yes
R: and can you expand
Mike: yes because the amount of money that I get from [institution 1] I just spend all of them a lot of them I think 80 percent just on the money on the for renting a room and also in transportation system so I don't have any save here if some some problem happened to me if I want to go for example another country any chance that I need money I cannot eh just trust on what I am saving because I don't have any save also the problem is that people here don't have any private health insurance and eh treatment is here is very expensive for example if you want to see a GP takes at least 50 euro and it's not really fair with the amount of money you you are given during their PhD
R: and so all of that does that impact your work on the PhD
Mike: of course of course when when you have a lot of things to a lot of problems you should think about them then you cannot focus on your work and absolutely it decrease the performance and it's it is not really ehh small problem it's very big problem because we need to focus on your work because [institution 1] is just paying money for us to eh publish something or do something do research but this money is not really good for doing research and I think that it is a bad game for both sides for students and for [institution 1] both of them are not really use this uh deal
R: okay and can I ask are you getting funding for how many years
Mike: four years
R: four years okay alright so and that covers the whole length of your PhD
Mike: whole
R: so it covers all of your PhD
Mike: yes of course all four years
R: okay do you have anything else to add
Mike: no thank you for this interview and please don't publish some parts of it @@
R: no no we won't get you in trouble so
Mike: okay

Mona Lisa

R: all right so um I was wondering if you can tell me how sorry what your strengths are in terms of academics so what are you good at
Mona Lisa: well um in my country I was working as a researcher and as well as a professor in universities umm I think research is good specifically in [language] I’m going to say I I I write well I think I can say you know in my country I have publications as well here I
started to publish um but it’s a little more complicated um I understand very well uh the
research you know that logic and I think I have good ideas and I think I’m a I’m creative
yeah
R: and what would you say your strengths are in terms of English language
Mona Lisa: well it's important to say for me uh the English uh has been a process um when
I came here uh my English was very basic and I was doing the PhD at the same time so I
can see these things perhaps now @@ more um I read a lot so I think my comprehension is
better now @ um um perhaps more the reading this this skill is better uh I can say if
perhaps my speaking or I don't know but because that that is a process yea for me yeah still
yeah @
R: yeah and so how long have you been here three
Mona Lisa: three years
R: three years yeah okay all right and and so what would you say that your weaknesses in
in terms of academics are
Mona Lisa: academic in general hmm I think you know academic is very big area @ eh
and I think you know that is related I have to be more organized um because sometimes
that's the problem um I have too many information I don’t know exactly how include these
here I now develop better strategies uhm you know in English because I can say the
writing is a problem for me I my supervisors always checking checking and say it's never
enough never enough now I can see my improvements but I have to work a lot on that so
hm that’s hm that is the thing even um sometime I feel overwhelming with this yeah
R: and so when your professors were saying it's not enough it's not enough what
specifically wasn't enough
Mona Lisa: eh they say the way that I use the words or sometimes eh you know there are
different logic in my language than in English so sometimes it's different logic and that
sometimes eh is complicated for them to understand exactly what this paragra- paragraph
is really what is the point is you know so I always thinking and I try to organize the
phrases differences different but uh this is this is the process I improve it yeah
R: right yeah okay all right so how would you evaluate your current academic success
Mona Lisa: how
R: yeah so do you think you're doing well do you think you know
Mona Lisa: well already you know after three years I can see got better fortunately you
know I almost finished I'm writing everything I I you know I finish my research and I
could that I I could do that so um you know the logistic was good I did a translation of the
program I working online interventions I I was working with the translators you know this
is this is related and yes you know I work with you know that perhaps a little hm more 
things because my research is in my country so I have to translate the documents in two 
languages always and work with with people I had my [role] there so 10 people there and 
the coordinators of the project and um I think these logistics is part of this good you know 
things for me in the research um yeah and I'm persistent and I I try to to do the things well 
you know I don't know now I I had my first publication already that was this month so that 
that is for me you know I don't know that that says something that is not bad @@ yeah I 
wrote two papers more I'm writing another one and I think that's that's a indication 

R: okay yeah so did you have to take any modules here during your PhD 
Mona Lisa: um there is some the minimal credit the minimal credits? are 10 credits and the 
school offer a seminar and I took this seminar yeah 
R: can you tell me about the seminar like what did you have to do in it 
Mona Lisa: well basically attend a seminar and at the end the evaluation was a um um a 
essay related with my topic ummm I don't know exactly how they evaluated this because 
we never received a feedback not only me all the people in my office 
I already I'm taking a diplomate in stats I'm finishing this and the exam will be hm in May 
so I it depend I think if I take this exam or not because I'm finishing so my priority is my 
thesis so yeah 
R: and so the exam for the stats is that like you have to go to the exam hall and take a 
written exam or is there any sort of essay presentation 
Mona Lisa: no the stats is writing yeah exam even is hard because is three days exam three 
hours a days each day it's include all the is one year diplomate so include all the modules 
and this is not multiple eh answers so yeah 
R: so can you tell me the the certificate that you've been taking what are the modules like 
when you go to the modules how are they run what is the work you're required to do 
for them 
Mona Lisa: the seminar that I do before it was really the professor explained specific um 
topics about research um systematic how how to make a systematic review or meta-
analysis or um some stats as well hm neuroscience include but most of the seminars were 
were professor talk about something that is really no really interactions with others or yeah 
no activities active activities I don't know yeah 
R: yeah and for the statistics 
Mona Lisa: and statistics yeah is almost the same yeah I even expect more more active um 
activities but not and I think that that’s is good for that you know but no it's more
explanations even sometimes is too much you know they emph- the emphasis is more mathematical so sometimes the professor is explain one equation all the class so it's not really well I am disappointed with this diplomate I expect more you know perhaps more more work in lab sometimes there are some labs eh using MATLAB but I don't use MATLAB I use SPSS so you know hmm it was okay it's good for the examples and pr- how understand better the exercise but ehm I don't find this very useful eh in my career already or in my research yeah unfortunately yeah

R: yeah and so what did you have to do outside of the classroom for the statistics modules Mona Lisa: ehm you know really study uh independent time study uh because there are so many topics even for the exam yes you have to study if you want to pass the exam yeah R: all right and how would you study was it reading just going over the examples again was at working out examples

Mona Lisa: well sometimes eh no all of the modules at the end the professors explain ehm various exams and eh exercise so they they explained and they give um material for that so I studied with that material sometimes because now@ all@ my@ focus@ is the the thesis so yes even the group study like I couldn't go because I'm busy now but eh that's the plan you know yeah

R: okay yeah and so can you tell me about the skills that are required of you as a research student

Mona Lisa: umm I think that stats is is important um as well knowing you stats qualitative analysis I think is is relevant um and all of the skills English writing speaking @@ ehm yeah are important yeah

R: okay um so how do you feel that your professors assess academic success so like what do they look for in your work when they're grading or when they're giving feedback

Mona Lisa: ehm well I can say these more from my supervisors more than my professors here this circumstances is you know I as a PhD I work more with my supervisors and they read directly my work so to say what is the what they expect

R: yeah what they expect

Mona Lisa: mm-hmm I think a deep comprehension of the topic usually hmm um now I have pressures at to publish ehm so and even I decided to eh start papers start to write papers because they pay more attention @@ and read more when it's a paper because eh their name is there I have two supervisors so the feedback I think is quite good eh they really read the paragraph and they eh suggest you know eh topics or even some suggestion in English or they even say change some something but I learn from the- from that so it’s eh it's useful yes I think and and I think is not the question I think because you say what
they expect you know I think they say yeah comprehension about the topic how I explain eh the process and the concepts yeah yeah

R: okay yeah all right and so in general what do you feel that students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]

Mona Lisa: oh well um persistence passion yeah hmm well this conversation I I even had with other students because usually they expectation is higher um and I have my master degree I have a another degree in my country a specialization that one hour one year uhh and I think there was a little more eh strict in that way but I think that's the the that the situation with PhDs is free so you have I think part of this is organize your time well you know and strategies how organize time because nobody from the college provides you know more support because sometimes you feel very lonely there academically but did you have you are disciplined and you have and you are very organized and you know exactly what do you want and what did you do that is has success or yeah

R: okay right and so how much of a factor does language play in success at [institution 1]

Mona Lisa: the language I think is everything I can say for me I think I my process was specifically I think is not common here because I even I took the IELTS at the same time I was starting and even in academic registry said this so strange you because I am at the beginning here without all the requirements so and at the beginning even for that reason my communication was little so I can't communicate well and I can't understand everything well so that's that's is language and that affect me really a lot because eh obviously uhm I can't express my worries or perhaps at the beginning nobody understand me very well and I don't understand everybody well so it's so important and even as a PhD eh you need a very good language skills in general you know to speak well you know in conferences or writing all of these is part of the the process yeah

R: okay alright um and what other factors um either so we've talked a lot about things like time management etc. but are there any other factors that you can identify that has impacted your academic success

Mona Lisa: hmm well of course um you have good comprehension reading comprehension I think that's specifically for humanities social science that is so important because we need you know uh analyze very well concepts and uh understand very well this is more than analysis even critical thinking is so important this is even part of the thing with my supervisors we need this discussion need more discussion or ehm critical thinking ehm so
this is I think this is very important perhaps in humanities specifically with these things
concepts and these but in general is not accept everything or or you know copy other things
this is more yeah
R: okay alright so um so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before coming to [institution 1]
Mona Lisa: when you say linguistic preparation what does this mean
R: it would be like English classes basically or specifically either general English or IELTS
preparation or English for academic purposes
Mona Lisa: well I said my situation was very special I was uh studying English in the States eh [city] specifically eh only two months uh before in my country I took some classes but at the same time I was doing a lot of things so I think was more umm it was better for me when I was in [city] um and then here I was ehm learning English eh at the same time I was doing my PhD uh my first year six months the first six months I was and I was this did the classes he was more emphasis in in in IELTS yeah
Mona Lisa: no here I said no hear in [institution 1] in a private institution
R: in a private insti
Mona Lisa: yeah I mean this then I took the module here the academic puros- purpose for writing and speaking eh yes that was eh in like first year but first was in a private institute
R: right yeah and so how do you feel about that preparation so do you feel first let's talk about the private institute here in Ireland um how do you feel about that preparation did it help you um did it not
Mona Lisa: no it really help me you know that I was in that period very I you know I need I need to pass the IELTS in that period so I I felt pressure a lot um but I can say most of the students eh who study English in Ireland English is not a priority for them so most of them finish all the the their basic English courses they attend IELTS but they didn't want to really pay a lot of attention about this so I was the the few people that who really wants to pass the the IELTS so it was a little no not good at the beginning mmm I decided to even take the classes in the in the afternoon because less people and more personal eh training ehm we did umm how do you say training and apply all the program all the exam and it was very useful what is this the the world ehh simulations it was very very helpful and even all writing speaking and they gave eh this course you know so it was good but in that period was more personal three or four people and I think that for me was better I took
I'm going to say it was very challenging for me but well, I passed. yeah um I did the IELTS classes and then the IELTS exam did actually help you prepare for the work in [institution 1].

Mona Lisa: okay IELTS um [click] in some ways yes in some ways yes mm yeah because it's the the readings is comprehensions comprehension is so important but sometimes you know there's so many details that are not necessary hmm you know find the word a specific word in you know if this is a scanning I understand but I think part of the problem with IELTS you know you have very short time to do a lot of things I know this is part of the skills that they looking for you know it is to be eh fast and at the same time find these things eh but there are so many factors um [click] there that is not necessary you know sometimes even for example in listening or writing or not in eh reading you found the actual word but but the word eh it was not in past participle or a specific eh you know characteristic and you fail you know it's very very restricting this I understand but I think the most important is you understand the context you know and there are so many tricky question that is that sometimes you have you know any sort eh chart and eh and I understand that idea comprehension but it's sometimes so so specific I think it's better perhaps more general you know if you understand it the the text and you eh really know what is this because at the end you can't read all the text you are you always the focus is in the questions but not really worried what does this in the the text I thinking about re-re-re-reading that I wa- was that was a little tricky for me ehm my writing even it was not bad ehm mas- that was more reading I think writing is fine in IELTS eh there are two two tasks in academic and I know very well and um yeah perhaps for some students because the first task is it's more description a statistic description and perhaps for some people that it's not really necessary because not the skill that they need I don't know and the second one is I think it's very useful I think this is this really eh um show that you have the skill or not you know the free essay with the specific topic and it's good because even this is the essays that you have to do here you know in college you know in short period in short moment short time but is all of these things yeah yeah and listening in my view as well is tricky too eh sometimes as well is very specific um and it's not necessary that you don't listen that well so in my view these two eh tasks wr- listening and reading is good to to check a little more yeah.

R: okay and so can you tell me about the classes that you took here at [institution 1] so you said that you took the speaking and the writing

Mona Lisa: ehhh oral presentations it was and wr- writing
R: okay yeah um so how did you feel about those classes in terms of preparation
Mona Lisa: but are going to read my answer no my experience was I I had higher
expectations no really ehm as strict very free you know and they never really checked your
work your writing so I feel like I felt like that ehm the material was good was useful the
activity was I I even like I felt like when I started my general English you know with
dynamic theories that perhaps here in [institution 1] is not say dynamic theories in that way
eh perhaps more emphasis in writing for example in a specific essay or specific even the
necessities that we have so I eh in that moment I was writing a paper I was very stru-
struggle with this and the professor unf- unfortunately he was not useful and helpful for me
so I think that's um important yeah it was more ehm games really and I think we don't
need games you know we are in different level yeah yeah
R: all right and so I'm not gonna ask you if you feel that that helped you prepare you
because you kind of answered that there but let's see you've done some of that so what type
of preparation do you think now that you're at a great advantage you've done all of
different types of preparation and you're in your third year so looking back uh what would
you say what type of preparation should international students take before coming to
[institution 1]
Mona Lisa: hmmm oh wow that is big ehm I think some activities in IELTS are good you
know eh more writing writing I think is very important skill hmm and eh emphasis in uh
develop our writing better vocabulary because sometimes that's uh the problem even
still a problem sometimes eh because it's all different academic writing than the rest of of
this so eh I think that's important mmm [pause] yeah mmm yeah wr- and readings in that
way you know more academic eh perspective um I think part of the problems here is
people finish the college before a master their bachelor perhaps there are not many
strategies eh in study in general uh study strategies you know more hm critical thinking it’s
called it’s right critical this I think that's what very important but perhaps the most
important because this is say the main of the studies specifically in a a PhD eh is is the the
ability to discuss something in a deep way so yeah I don't know exactly what is the
strategies for that perhaps you know in my case I I started to learn more about this here
by myself @@@ yeah
R: yeah can you identify the ones that you've kind of developed or that you've learned
about
Mona Lisa: uh critical skills uh critical
R: yeah study skills study strategies like what have what have you gotten better at
Mona Lisa: now I can read better the papers before I don't know what I start to read you know I read but now it's it's scan the paper and what is the information that I really need what is the methodology and I understand that the methodologies um the discussion section I think I can uh uh identify this faster now hm I'm more aware about my mistakes before not really @@ also I think that is very important and I really think my writings is improving despite my supervisors’ @thinking @@ but yeah yeah I I feel better in this way yeah I have improve my speaking as well @@ is confidence I think that part that is part of the develop confident specifically if you speak another language when I came here I lost my confident you know I in my country I ha- I was working professionally as a profession so many areas and here because of English I felt I felt and I feel sometimes that I am I'm not the same person perhaps you read about the different personalities depend in languages I can@ see @@ this already III ma- I find me different in English you know I’m not the same social person for example so this is a skill that is important to be aware because you really never realize this before and and nobody says this so I think it's important yeah yeah R: okay so these are some of the fun questions I think um if you could give advice to faculty at [institution 1] in dealing with international students what would it be Mona Lisa: hmmm I think it's important to give more strategies more practical strategies for students I I think the courses that the faculty first writing and all of them are really relevant but um but perhaps eh firstly focus for the necessities because I think that is very important mmh perhaps eh yeah found eh to find relevant of readings relevant eh examples for students um I know it's complicated because there are so many areas um but eh perhaps is is is even at the beginning the school can can evaluate the students and what is the level you know it's not as highest but it's different you know what is the level of writing for this group before start or at the beg- you know the first class and this is good for the professor to start with the strategies so perhaps for example he identify specific patterns or something and um yeah perhaps more rigorously because it's not games is different you know we expect perhaps more st-structure more even evaluation why not because this is part of this we are here because we want to improve you know so so it's not uh I think sometimes it's something that I realize in Ireland people are really nice always but sometimes so nice and it's not what b- what really we need sometimes is good that people say things very directly and you know exactly what happen my supervisors already says something directing @@ but at the beginning no so I thought that this was fine but no really so I don't know perhaps is part of the culture @@ because eh you know I was studying in the States and I can see completely different there people was more direct and I
prefer this ‘cause I know okay that's the problem here you you don’t know exactly what is
a problem because people is so kind and don't want to be rude with you and you h- at the
end you don’t even as a student and I think this is not good you know in my view yes
yeah
R: okay um and so if you could give advice to prospective students or future students what
would that be
Mona Lisa: ehhmm future students um [click] oh I don't know [pause] perhaps eh is good
that they know that this is the things not really rigorous that you think @@ um eh that
is important as well enjoy the life in college ‘cause I spent too much time in these things
for example and I couldn’t enjoy @@ the time here for that reason so perhaps this is part of
life and perhaps this is the best way to learn a a language even I thinking about
international students ummm yeah well so enjoy as well the college and and perhaps
because I realize this now you work your work depend on your um [click] #worries as well
only in some ways so perhaps if you um ask to you you your supervisor I’m thinking of
PhD students that uh you know pressure more @@ or they give more eh strategies they
usually do that but this is depend on you
R: okay and so are you aware of any support that international students receive from your
department your professors or from the wider college
Mona Lisa: ehm [click] I am the [discipline] school [discipline] yeah and ehm it's it’s fine
but not @@ there are not too many international students in in my school yeah as a PhD I
recently uh yeah a girl from Turkey is there but it's this year before I was only almost the
only bilingual @@ student there and I think no so many people understand me the issues
with my language and it was a for me was an adaptation and a lot of things and I feel really
isolated for the reason because hm ‘cause nobody >it’s funny because it's [discipline]
School of [discipline]< mmm so perhaps more eh and and as well that's happen with any
PhD student you don't have uh an induction or a proper induction so you came here
and you don't know exactly what you to do what to do so perhaps more emphasis in
this you know you can say my school they they did a a induction but I think was very
@very general um so um there are not many issues for international students in my
School eh I think the Counseling Center here offers some support eh I even use the service
sometimes and I found this useful but I think any school eh perhaps have to do something
uh about it ‘cause that is part of the success of the school and the students mm yeah
R: okay and um first are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask you
Mona Lisa: ehhhm [pause] not really I think it’s it’s yes yes you ask the that are yeah
okay and is there anything else that you'd like to add
Mona Lisa: ehm [click] no I think I say anything anything no everything @@@

R: all right perfect thank you so much

Nadia

R: um so how would you evaluate your current academic success here at [institution 1]

Nadia: to evaluate in in which aspects

R: so just how do you feel that you're doing

Nadia: well hmmm to be honest I haven't got the re- got the results from the essay papers that we submitted the last term so so far I cannot evaluate correctly but basically I feel that I'm progressing because I can feel the challenges and also I sense the difficulty in actually by taking lectures or reading through some academic papers or references uhm the fact that I felt the difficulty actually means I'm progressing that's what I felt during the postgraduate study and I think is after the second term I might get a clearer picture of what I'm doing right now how how I did how well I did in the master program

R: mm-hmm okay alright I'm and so what would you say your strengths are

Nadia: my strengths you mean in terms of academic skills or generally

R: yeah knowing let's say academic skills for right now

Nadia: [sigh] ah I think is uhm as an international students my overall English language proficiency might actually give me some advantages comparing with non-native speakers and the way that I practice English when I studied undergraduates program is I tried to think in English I think it mattered a lot because instead of thinking your original your first language actually you can actually get a lot of that advantages by thinking in English or when you write so when you speak thinking in English actually gives you great edge uhm so that's actually just uh comparing with international students but comparing with my classmates or yeah comparing with my classmates I think my uhm strengths can be that I focus on academic study and also I am strongly committed to attending study and in free time actually I devote a lot of time to to extensive reading and also to make preparation for lectures in advance so basically it's uh my strong commitment to the academic study makes a difference

R: okay and what do you think your strengths are

Nadia: in terms of English in terms of English I think it is [long pause] my aware- my bilingual cultural awareness I think because I've talked with a lot of foreigners native speakers and I remembered that when I graduated from university I conducted an interviewing in the [organization] the interviewer spoked uh made a comment about my
Englishes he mentioned that instead of just talking or conveying information I actually I'm more of a polite English speaker which is very different from most of my counterparts in [country] and I value the norms that actually when you speak we communicate with native speakers I think that actually sets me asset when comparing to my classmates basically that's the oral advantage when it comes to the writing parts I think I have some advantage to some degrees after graduation I have done some translation for several years so actually most of the time I need to write English I need to think in English and practice English a lot of most of the time so the time or the efforts that I put into written work actually uh will benefit me a lot during academic study in [institution 1] because I noticed some students who after after graduation they actually they haven't done a lot of work that's associated with the written or oral English so my constant exposure to written or or oral English actually makes a difference that's what I think

R: and what do you think your weaknesses would be then

Nadia: my weakness is although I have achieved some certain level of written writing ability but my academic thinking mind actually I think it is it needs to be improved that is I've never actually got a clear picture about international how I mean- to study in an international community is quite different from what I experienced as a college student because you your language it's not it's not your native mother tongue so on one hand you have to actually constantly improve your language level to prove yourself competent in your academic study on the other hand the way teaching and learning are delivered is so different so I think [pause] I need to make progress in both aspects one is to constantly improve the language level uhm associated with academic study and the second one is to to change your mind when it comes to academic studying a global community I think both aspects actually a challenges for most international students

R: ok um so can you tell me about the work required in your module so like what do you need to do

Nadia: uhhh the modules that I have taken so far are basically most of the time there- quite theoretical except the two modules which is very practical it inquires requires us to you actually to not only achieve some theoretical level about [topic] but also you have to prep- so practically involve yourself in [topic] so that module both modules which is [topic] practice one and two are highly practical uhm but in both modules those practical modules I need to counsel and come with up some ideas about practical [topic] so that's highly practical but the other modules are quite theoretical so to qualify to actually to keep up to keep the pace with our lectures lecturers in class I need uhm to do a lot of intensive reading like our teacher actually will provide us a list of references that you need to read in order to
understand some terminologies or some theoretical concepts in class so basically is one is
you have to do a lot of extensive reading before and after class in order to actually expands
your visions about the this single module because what the teacher what the lecturer uh
acquainted us in with some theories in the class is far more sufficient to actually build help
us sort of clear framework about either [topics]
R: okay and so I don't know if you'll quite be able to answer this because you're just
starting with your dissertation but um can you tell me what you think or what the work is
required as a research student
Nadia: as a research students okay I haven't done that but in my opinion I think is as a
research students is so diff- it's definitely different from writing an academic essay so you
need actually first of things you might actually have to to talk a lot of research to come up
with a plausible research question or topic to start your dissertation and once the topic is
finalized you have to done tons of researches to gather useful information and to seek to
through the use of information and eventually actually select the most useful information
what they come up with in methods based on the information to proceed with your
dissertations at different stages so to be a researcher or to actually do well in your
dissertation upon the completion of postgraduate study uh some fine qualities like hm
researching abilities is quite the the prerequisite another one might be you have to to be
very creative and also to be a critical thinker because you are bound to raise a lot of re-
searchers will references about the fields of you the chosen field of your dissertation so
you need to be very critical it doesn't mean you have to criticize the references but you
have to be very selective I mean you have to to actually to make sure that those
references are in favor of your opinion or others against you but you have to make com-
comparisons constantly and also in the meantime you might actually know what you
are doing at various stages of your dissertation and uh manage or to be very organized
that's what I can say about the preparation of dissertation
R: ok and so can you tell me about the skills that are required in your module so either in
the class or outside of the class
Nadia: okay skills so the general skills I think is the first one is to to just the ability to
organize your academic study matters a lot because it's so different from uh our the the
university study back in [country] because the teacher back in back in [country] well
during our high school the teacher always guides you give you a lot of instructions about
management your study or the work we have to put into your study now here at
[institution 1] hmm we have a joke that like you are currently doing a postgraduate study in
[language] the [language] character that means research by yourself so we need translated
into [language] you so basically the skills what I mention is the ability to organize your academic study matters a lot and second one is you have to be a creative thinker because you cannot just follow step by step sometimes you have to think outside of the box and to be creative I right now I really realize the importance of being creativity being creative because that means you think out outside of the box and you actually can see a lot of different things in the same time and that gives you a lot of possibilities and and options that actually can set you apart from your classmates that’s general skills other academic skills like reading and writing write uhm what I find really important is reading and the writing are the important skills that I’ve found because you can choose you can choose not to speak in class or outside of the class it doesn't matter whether you speak or not as long as you can listen okay listen matters to listen to the lectures is important but on the other hand the success of your academic study actually is decided by your own work after class so being able to read and being able to write those two skills in my opinion are the most important because we have a lot of academic references or readings available online or in the library so the way you read or the efficiency of your reading actually can decide the depth of your thinking and the writing skill it’s decides how you do well on your term essay and eventually in your dissertation because the writing skills can actually help you translate your thoughts into words that actually can help other people to recognize your academic literacy or the level that you have achieved a thorough academic study at [institution 1]

R: okay brilliant and so can you describe the general structure of your lectures and modules so like what happens inside of the class

Nadia: uh what happens inside of the class so basically is our except the two practical modules I mentioned is quite different and what happening classes we discuss so the first term is the practical practice one is we conduct evaluate uh we do microteaching and also we went to observe classes in a local school and we evaluate our performances in group session or individually conducted by our lecturer in the second term is in the first six weeks we create a curriculum in groups and then from week 7 or week 8 we go to teach separately in a local school our other modules which are very theoretical is our teacher our lecturers actually uhm familiarize or introduces topics or key concepts about the module through presentation through group work or through workshops to help us understand the key concepts about that module and sometimes students or we are required to do presentation in groups through group work so basically that’s the structures and in all those modules after class so we have to do a lot of reading yeah that’s the general structures
R: okay um so what do you think your professors assess so how do they assess academic success so what do they look for when they're grading so I know you haven't received your grades yet but what do you think

Nadia: yeah well actually in last term before we proceeded to our to the writing of our academic essay two our professors actually have already mentioned the principles or the key points they would look at our academic essay for example the would actually [pause] they are not expecting some earth-shattering thoughts that the originality of our ideas presented in the academic essay matters and besides that how you structure your academic essay like the structure of your academic essay or the contents are very important too besides the some minor aspects of academic essay like some linguistic aspects is your grammar and your formats some minor points that I cannot remember right now is what I remembered is the originality of your ideas and the how you structure your essay and how you present your contents in your academic essay those aspects significantly decide the grade you are going to receive or the yeah

R: alright and so how do you professors communicate those expectations so you said two of them told you do they tell you verbally or did they give it in a written form or

Nadia: oh they actually one professor actually showed us some the grades of previous students and attached to this their comments like if the students final grade is two one then they would say your content is excellent but sometimes you made some grammatic errors like that they verbally told us and in the meantime they have uploaded to those comments onto the blackboard where every students can have access to the other professor actually told us in written form the that professor is hmm he actually printed out some specific requirements about our academic essay and in the meantime other details about the read-about the structure of the essay has been detailed in that document so both verbally and written

R: written okay and your other professors

Nadia: oh the other professor is actually the structure has been outlined for us so we basically just follow the headings the professor provide us and put our thoughts in an organized way that's that's that's okay yeah

R: alright and so in general what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]

Nadia: uhm so far I think to succeed in [institution 1] well at least I mean it is it is perfect that you can actually excel in both four aspects of your of English as as an international students but right now we cannot achieve a balanced situation so what I would suggest is students who come to study at [institution 1] at least can actually have sufficient skills in
reading and writing those two skills are very very important because you don't need to
actually speak in the classroom or or outside of the class as long as you can actually um
absorb knowledge and then trans- translate your thoughts into words that count that counts
a lot but to improve your student experiences as an international student here so being able
to communicate effectively with non-native speakers or native speakers is also important to
yeah but doesn't mean listening is not important I mean listening and speaking are
important but not as important as reading and writing when it comes to the success of
academic study in a global community because when you are acting as a student the
abilities to read and write outrank the ability to listen and to speak
R: okay and so how much would you say a fact uh how much of a factor would you say
that language plays in academic success
Nadia: well I I would agree that that language plays a major part in academic study
because if English is my native language then I wouldn't worry about so reading some
academic references I know some key concepts still will pose some challenges but at at
least language will not be a barrier when it comes to reading when it comes to writing
when it comes to listening and speaking so language actually challenges of students when
it comes to academic study for example in the class in the class when non-native speakers
want to answer questions because answering questions in the class can actually improve
student experiences definitely so if a non-native speaker wants to answer questions he or
she has to actually think how how I'm going to answer questions and am I going to actually
embarrass myself in front of other native speakers or not or am I going to actually
make some grammatic errors or not so those concerns actually just prevent these non-
native speaker from answering questions and eventually or gradually the student will just
stop thinking about answering questions so if this speaker is a native speaker she or he
doesn't have to concern about the linguistic uhm [pause] accuracy at all so he's just jump
and then answer questions so a lot of lot of situations actually are associated with language
with the ability of answering questions in a correct way when it comes to academic study
so I would say language plays a very significant part in academic study because when you
are a comfort fluent speaker without any concern about your linguistic abilities you
actually you naturally can perform better than other students who constantly worried about
their linguistic abilities in academic study
R: okay and what other factors do you think affects um academic success
Nadia: well uhm according to my experience as international students other factors matter
to like whether you're happy with your [pause] with the place you are living because I have
classmates who actually felt very upset about everything happening in his or her place like
the landlady or landlord is not nice and so the place where you live the happiness the level of happiness actually um about your accommodation influences your academic performances sometimes also these social relations with your classmates and also the financial trouble when a financial concern you have as international students in a foreign country counts to because a very beginning I arrived here I didn't expect the the the price it's so different [pause] it is expensive to live here so so actually and it can it takes time for you to accept ok it's different from living your country at it is different to live the prices are so differences financial trouble financial concerns and some social relations with your your relationship with you and between you and your classmates and between you and your professors and sometimes if some can some can be very extreme they talk about politics and everything just goes to goes beyond control so those things matter to you

R: alright so do you have any linguistic or academic preparation before coming to [institution 1]

Nadia: before coming to [institution 1] uh no not not at all it's just when I took when I took the IELTS I just took it without any preparation ah yeah nope

R: um so how do you feel about the IELTS

Nadia: IELTS okay actually I studied I studied the master program at [institution 1] in September 2017 and I began to apply for the program in March 2017 and I took my IELTS in January 2017 and I actually register for the exam in December 2016 so barely I had a little time to prepare for this exam but I know I wouldn't do a bad job in this exam because I have actually as I earlier I mentioned I have continually continuously studied English and every day I did work associated that requires the major thing what you write in English but the thing is what surprised me is I didn't get any chance to practice writing for IELTS that is why the score for IELTS for for writing is just well out of my expectation I mean the pattern there's a pattern for IELTS writing after I realized after I finished the IELTS exam and I was informed by some of my friends who took IELTS before they mentioned you have to you absolutely have to practice writing for IELTS otherwise although you can actually can do you can do a good job in your work in your work but you can’t do a good job in the part of writing because you have to just to to know the pattern of writing in IELTS there is a pattern to uhm some some writing articles about draw a map you have to explain how the map works and also some pie charts a lot of different kinds of writing prompts I think so yes other parts is I except except writing other ok I felt ok with the rest parts of IELTS exam but overall I felt that taking an IELTS exam was quite tiring because I I remember that day I spent nearly 6 hours from getting up to the exam
venue and then after finishing the exam it was very exhaustive so for students who needs to take IELTS per month once per month it takes a lot of courage so I told my friends that it’s better to just pass the exam or meet the language requirement of your applied university once maximum just twice because third time we cannot afford to actually take IELTS a third time it's exhausting and taking IELTS twice or a third time it just to put you under enormous pressure

R: and how do you feel about IELTS being used as an indicator of your English level for University

Nadia: uhm well if there's a chance to take another language language test I would suggest with that too I would suggest [pause] but we don't have an option but basically now thinking IELTS IELTS score used as an indicator for as an entry University study it's not very scientific I think because a lot of students uhm in my country a lot of students they have done a lot of preparation before taking IELTS they take classes they take the VIP classes and sometimes the students could not meet the language requirement and even for those students for some students who have met the language requirement based on the IELTS score uh I don't think they have the ability or the they have achieved the language level to actually succeed in their future academic study because IELTS like IELTS reading you don't need to finish you don't need to actually try to read the articles you just have to look at the questions and then pinpoint the key information and then answer based on the chunk of information that you have located well if such abilities turns out I mean those abilities actually you used to in IELTS rating well it just turned out to be so irrelevant when it comes to actual academic reading and also the their the writing I think writing plays a major part in academic study too so the writing skills required by reflected by IELTS exam and not very authentic I mean [pause] what kinds of academic modules were asked you to actually to describe a pie chart well except this SPSS sometimes we're just to require you to to present information statistical statistical information like that but the ability the writing ability is reflected from IELTS exam are not very useful in real world academic study uhm listening I think listening part is authentic sometimes yeah it's authentic because it it's a little bit challenging actually as far as I am concerned because the when I remember when I did the listening part sometimes I have to really try to catch up the space that the pace of the listening to the speaker uhm well this part actually can reflect students listening skills other parts like reading listening reading and writing both skills are not really actually tested students skills required by academic study but these oral part I think is uhm it shows students authentic or real world oral proficiency it can actually because you have to talk with a speaker in front of you and sometimes you might get cold
feet but it is understand but because sometimes when you answer questions in in front of a bunch of classmates from different nations you will get cold feet so the way you react in front of a speaker in IELTS exam is quite similar to the way you answer questions in front of a bunch of classmates so I think the IELTS to some degree can reflect your students language proficiency but it cannot be in a strong for the sole indicator of students proficiency when comes to the admission of university study and also ahh sometimes students who after they apply for University they spend every single day of their time preparing for the exam and most of the time the actually just do exercises do the IELTS exam exercises and also they they ask they take classes where teachers actually tell them the pattern or they predicts exam based on their previous experiences to ask the students to make preparation for the specific pattern and sometimes they just get high scores like that so IELTS score are not they are not very scientific or cannot reflect the students academic skills in terms of both four aspects yeah

Nadia: can I make a suggestion I think IELTS can be an indicator of student's academic skills in terms of the four parts of English in the meantime I think is the university action can should interview them either through skype or after they register for the program they should conduct a face to face interview to actually to measure the students overall proficiency well you cannot actually accurately assess students overall proficient though let's say fifteen minutes interview but you can actually get a general picture a real picture a truer picture the IELTS score

R: alright

Nadia: oh one is we might have to learn to read extensively more intensively that's that's something that I've never done before and uh if some students or if some prospective students ask me what kind of preparation they should do before coming to [institution 1] I would suggest for one this you have read so much as much as you can and also once you have finished a certain amount of reading then you have to try to read critically I mean you have to actually learn the ability to to extract some thoughts from the author and also you have to actually learn the ability reading ability it counts a lots so and the second one this is write writing ability so trying to write as much as you can because when you write sometimes you actually can spot can actually realize you're unable to write smoothly as you expect sometimes when we expect when we organize ideas in our mind we we just to feel well we can so the ideas that you have in your mind is cannot be actually translated smooth flowing
into your writing if you don't practice enough so both skills writing and reading as I mentioned so those skills the students have to make enough preparation in terms of reading and writing uh third one is uhm you have to actually make some adjustments mentally because [pause] it is inevitable that the educational system here at [institution 1] or in foreign country or in Western countries is different from their own homeland for me uhm I actually talked to with some students with some friends who studied in in the UK or in the US they actually permission to the challenges how challenging it is to study in a foreign country but I didn't expect the amount of challenges that I will eventually encounter as an international student in foreign country so even though you are familiar with the challenges how challenging it is to studying a foreign country but the real challenges actually at beyond of expectation sometimes so try to prepare for for the challenges mentally and physically I mean sometimes sometimes students they just get cold feet constantly and they will just keep up or they fell pessimistic so aside from the the actual academic skills students have to make adjustments mentally that's very important because when you are studying in an international school you have to you to not only prove yourself competent in the classroom you have to always cope with other challenges apart from academic challenges

R: alright and so if you could give advice to faculty though to professors in dealing with the international student what would it be

Nadia: uhm I would just suggest this one is uhm in terms of admission the faculty actually have to to take cultural implication into consideration I know different countries have different educational systems for example in [country] students during undergraduate study they don't write much for me take me as an example when I was the undergraduate student I studied in the specialty of [discipline] I didn't write much officially speaking I only wrote one graduation paper which is seven thousand words after the completion of my four-year undergraduate study and I had six months to prepare for this graduation paper so the amount of work that have I did as an undergraduate student as an undergraduate student for academic writing is not enough and after graduation as when I started to work I didn't get any chance to write academic papers so I guess for me or for a lot of students coming from my country they didn't have enough training more the the thinking methods for academic study for academic writing or for academic reading I think both skills have not gained enough attention in the education in the university educational system in my country well I would guess that's the picture in some other countries where English is not instruct English is not the instructional language so to prepare students for the incoming academic challenges once they get into [institution 1] the
students to assess the oral proficiency they have also ask students to actually submit some academic sample to at least get a picture of students writing skills I remember I applied for another university in Ireland uh they actually not only conduct oral interview but also requested me to submit an academic paper uhm sometim- at a time I don't I didn't know why they would take so much time to actually uh invest so much time into to the admission of one student one single student I guess they did with other students too but then I realized that the way they through oral interview and the assessments of the students’ academic paper just a sample uhm they actually get the idea the possibility of the students whether the student can succeed in their future academic study but without those preparation [institution 1] might don't get the real picture of students overall proficiency that's one suggest so that's before before admission so if they actually admit- eventually admit this student to the program the student chose it might be preferable that the student that [institution 1] actually can start to send messages to encourage students to use the free time they have before coming to Ireland to make some preparation in term in terms of reading and the writing because the moment we actually commence our postgraduate study information about the preparation of dissertation has been disseminated amongst us and it can be a little bit overwhelming but if students actually can start to to do some research in their home country and prepare themselves in terms of academic reading and the writing I think they might come here with greater confidence and the possibility of them to succeed in academic study will be increased cuz confidence how you feel I mean whether you feel confident or what not when you go through your postgraduate program matters a lot because well if sometimes two people are equally capable let’s say equally capable but one is more confident than the other so the chances for the first one the one who is confident to succeed is it's so much better than the the other one so that's the second one is mi- information might be sent to to potential to the perspective or the admitted students about the preparation they might need in order to succeed to better succeed in academic study and after students come to here to study like uh some support like the EAP courses that I have taken they have that I have that I have been taking really helpful I think because it provides ongoing support for international students in terms of academic writing and also oral uh fluency but I prefer these supports from for academic writing these aspects is what I really need where some students might need support from oral fluency so it’s understandable so basically we have three stages that is before admission and after admission between admission and registration and then the third one might after the registration through from registration to completion yeah
R: okay brilliant um and so then so you mentioned between registration and actually commencing your studies so there's a lot of organizations that are now running summer programs to help prepare students yeah so if you were to give advice to one of these organizations on how to prepare students or or anything about running some sort of summer program to help students before they go into university what would that advice be

Nadia: actually I know some programs some organizations they offer specialized a summer program to basically to help students improve their academic skills or study skills so uh I know they are doing a great job about helping students to to improve their academic studies I even know some students who have not achieved the language level for their program they can actually take these programs and after successful completion of these programs student can just go straight to take their degree programs uhm I don't know the actual operation of those summer programs but I don't know whether they provide a simulation like uh before taking the actual undergraduate or postgraduate program students can actually get a real picture about the lectures or the structure of their lectures they are going to take like during the summer program some real lectures can be presented to students for their program they can get a real picture like how I’m going to what kind of lectures I might encounter in future lecture lectures or how the lecture is what kind of challenges I might encounter in future lecture lectures or how the lecture is what kind of requirements that I have to meet in order to actually do well in academic study so I don't know whether those kinds of simulation simulation lectures can be provided or not uhm second is those summer programs I know some the requirements I don't know there is a requirement for the summer programs or not or whether there's requirement for the summer program or not I know some universities provide summer programs like if you if your current IELTS is six point five then you can take this high level summer program where if you're sc- if you're IELTS program um IELTS score is below six well you can take the the other intensive programs or not uhm I would like to actually suggest use the pre-assessment for this summer program not only can be not only based on the IELTS but also should based on the their um performances based on their performances after they register for the summer program because as I mentioned the IELTS is not a true indicator of students’ academic skills or language skills so the those summer programs actually the admission for the summer programs are based on students IELTS but summer programs should also be suggested to measure or to assess students oral fluency or writing skills after they begin to take the programs that’s where I can come with at this point

R: that's brilliant all right um alright well I'd say that's all of the questions that I have for you um but I'd like to ask are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't
Nadia: uhm let me think [long pause] can I ask is mm what is the the ultimate purpose of your PhD dissertation

R: so essentially what I'm doing is I'm trying to get as many international students my goal is like 300 to take my questionnaire at [institution 1] and interview students and then also I have a questionnaire and interviews for faculty for professors and then I've also I'm looking at literature and at other institutions EAP curriculums and I'm taking everything that I found from all of the questionnaires interviews and the literature and I'm designing an English for academic purposes summer program for [institution 1] and then I will implement that this summer and the students who take that program I will actually have follow-up interviews and questionnaires all through next year to see how they do and then with the grades and the assessments so that I can correlate them with IELTS so I'll have two different groups those who went through the the preparation that I've designed based on all of my findings and those who have not had preparation and see if the summer program does a better job at preparing students than IELTS that's the big picture

Nadia: okay that's that's very interesting uhm because there's no such kind of EAP courses available right now in [country]

R: that's brilliant cuz currently the [nationality] market I mean an increasing number of students actually right now decide to study or are preparing to study abroad I mean the UK or the United States or European countries including Island basically the preparation they receive is just an intensive training for IELTS TOEFL TOEIC SAT GMET those kinds of standardized tests other academic supports there aren’t so many kind of courses available here I think as much attention has been given to the preparation of standardized tests like IELTS and the TOEFL a little attention has been given to the support of or the training of students’ academic skills which actually the the key skills they are going to need to succeed in their academic study they just focus on getting the entry getting the chance to study in a foreign country or study in their dream university but they have not devoted as much as they have these should to the skills once the commence study in foreign country yeah

R: okay alright is there anything else you'd like to add or

Nadia: are are you going to actually to ask a lot of background information about the students language learning experiences
R: uhm not as much no uhm simply because the point to the interviews for me is more to see what students need at [institution 1] so things like I've been asking like what skills do you need or you know what's required and your modules etc. um so that's kind of what I'm looking at rather than the influence of previous language education on success now

Nadia: but you're going to actually going to decide to whether an EAP no the summer program can help students do better do a better job in their academics study right

R: well I'm going to try and design a program to address the challenges of students yeah that they will face in [institution 1]

Nadia: oh that program is different from some of the summer program right a little bit different

R: yeah yeah yeah

Nadia: that's that's that's really what international students’ needs well if this programs that actually they designed to target students international students concerns before they study the postgraduate or the undergraduate programs that will make really huge difference I think yeah

R: cool alright thank you so much

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Natalia

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R: okay so um can you tell me how would you evaluate your current academic success like do you think you're doing well do you think you're not doing well do you know

Natalia: okay well I don't really know because I have been graded only once I have submitted two essays but I have my grade only for the first essay and the second one will be graded maybe march so it's a long time to wait um I did one presentation but it wasn't assessed so I also don't know um what I did I just went to my coordinator and asked directly do you think I'm okay @@ because I'm nervous and I also wanted to make sure that I am at the right place right now and he said yeah I think you're doing fine but what you have to do is to focus on your dissertation because that's the most important part and this part@ is@ something@ that I'm struggling with because uh it takes more time than you thought it would and plus [pause] whenever you try to uh talk with your supervisor you think you're on the right track but then he sends you the comments and it turns out you have to rewrite like everything so I'm not I'm not really sure I think I'm doing okay but I could have put a little bit more effort

R: okay and what would you say your strengths are

Natalia: in terms of academic
R: in terms of academic yep
Natalia: okay well [pause] first I think I don't really struggle with making arguments with
making myself clear because it's not difficult to uh phrase the sentences etc. etc. so I think
speaking part is more or less fine [pause] uh except sometimes I get shy and I just don't
really want to talk to anybody @ but that's another point umm maybe another thing is that
I'm very um aware of language structures of grammar syntaxes etcetera etcetera so
whenever I I write something it doesn't really take much time but I need somebody to
proofread it just in case just to be sure
R: and what were your weaknesses be in academic terms
Natalia: okay good question @@ I'm gonna try to remember what I put into the
questionnaire @@@@@ I think paraphrasing is one of the things I'm struggling because
sometimes I'm just getting lazy like I don't really want to find any synonyms @ that’s
really perfectly @ I don't want to bother like I just want @to @take and put it into my
essay@ then no you have to do it and then it takes a long time because I'm always thinking
and rethinking like did I do it fine oh no maybe should be more academic or maybe I
should opt for another word or something like and you spend you waste basically like
hours and hours just to make sure it's perfect or it’s kind of perfectionist problem as well
and time management thing is awful like I have no idea how to set the goals like okay I'm
going to write 500 words and by the end of the week I will have like say 1,000 something
something no. I I never do that @and @I'm @writing only when I have inspiration over
coffee somewhere and uh that's why I usually submit my essays really late like maybe one
hour before and I'm super stressed and I think if I could improve that part that would
improve general writing skill I think
R: okay um and so in terms of English what would your strengths be
Natalia: [inhale] well I think based on the exam tests that I've taken I have advanced level
so [pause] the strengths would be maybe I am aware of all of the skills I know what is
reading for the gist what is reading for details how to read quicker about listening I think I
kind of catch other accents I catch the intonation and you know uh basically [pause] maybe
good listening skills also help you with the lectures because you you're not struggling you
understand everything and that's a very good point because you're a student abroad and you
know first you’re really nervous what if I just go to the lecture and I'm like blank but thank
God it did not happen [pause] yeah
R: okay and what about your weaknesses in terms of English
Natalia: lack of self-confidence because sometimes [pause] well I heard some people say
that you kind of sound American and I also heard some people say that no actually we can
hear [language] accent etcetera etcetera and it's like sometimes these people will put you down and you're like okay so why would I even bother like why would I even try to improve myself to improve my pronunciation to work on the skills if like I will never be at the same level as native speaker so because of that I think you start uh [click] being like what self-come so you see like right now I forgot it words well I mean just you you become really shy and you're just really you don't want to participate in discussions because about just because you're not too- @@ ahh see like right now I forgot a word you you become really shy and you don’t really want to participate in discussions just because you’re not too confident in yourself

R: mm-hmm um can I ask if most of the comments that you're referring to are they coming from native speakers non-native speakers both

Natalia: [long pause] oh well usually native speakers it's like 80 percent mmm 20 percent I think would be uh non-native speakers [country] maybe Polish or German @@ [pause]

who else @@

R: @@ you have like list

Natalia: @@ I hate you @@ umm no I mean uh mostly it's native speakers because I think it counts like their opinion is the one I would listen to ehm but like whenever I was at school university I was exposed to [language] speakers and so at that time I had to listen to what they think and get the feedback and okay I have to work on this this and that so it's kind of good criticism because uh it came from the professors and teachers and not just random people so I could trust this

R: okay so the comments are mostly coming from professors and teachers rather than your peers

Natalia: if that are in non-native speakers yes if there are native speakers they can be professors or it can be my friends or somebody who lives at the same res- at the residence or say just you meet someone in a pub and they're like oh your English is so great and somebody will be like yeah nah nah sure yeah mhm get out @

R: okay all right so going back to academic can you tell me about the work that's required in your modules like what do you have to do for them

Natalia: basically first we have lectures ehm I think it's maybe 40 hours all together and then uh at the beginning the professors tell us about the requirements like say you have to submit an essay after every module so I have five modules and five essays um one time there was an exception because they told us we're going to do presentations and a lot of people kind of freaked out @because @it @never @happened before but then they said it's not going to be assessed so and still it was really brilliant the way how people it was a
group project so it was like maybe four people in one group and then everybody said the
WhatsApp group and everybody was collaborating and everybody was meeting and
discussing things and you know it’s not like oh it's not gonna be graded so forget about it
no everybody put a lot of effort into it and so it kind of makes me you know f-feel that
everything you do here is very important and you shouldn't just you know close your eyes
and do whatever you should really think and reflect and and try your best because
somehow I feel that the professors they are assessing you like just in in their heads like
yeah okay this is a good student yeah you you know
okay and as a research student what kind of work are you required to do
I am required to do a dissertation twenty thousand words on a topic that you
choose yourself umm I have to provide either qualitative or quantitative research so
it's kind of the methodology is up to you so you can choose and I don't think I have to
defend uh it it's just a submission of the hardcopy and [long pause] probably yeah both
hardcopy and softcopy and then it will be assessed by external examiner's as well so we
will find out about the results only in a couple of months so
okay and what kinds of skills are required in your modules so what do you need in order
to be successful
I would say critical reading critical writing are the key ones uh the professor's
always stress this because it's not enough if you just read the article you have to extract
actually what is important and what is not and also give your opinion about it and about
critical writing @@ well it goes without saying that you cannot provide a good paper if
you did not reflect on it if you did not mmm make counter arguments or found another
point of view so that would be just descriptive and description is one of the points that will
be uh well [pause] they will deduct the percentages if you just do the description uhm
[pause] plus I think maybe participation in discussions is also important so it's kind of
speaking and also it's not just sharing your experience it's also thinking why is it happening
and how can you connect it with a [theory] with what we do with what happens in the
lecture so it's not just uhm [pause] like peer talk during in the class it's more than that
okay and what kinds of skills are required as a research student
[pause] well hmmm [pause] everything that already was mentioned plus [pause] I
think that every student has to be uhhh creative at some point umm maybe a little bit
innovative and brave I would say because sometimes we want to write about something but
we're not sure and this is the best place to push yourself and try it out because for example
even with my presentation I wanted to start with a joke and I didn't know if that would be
okay because this is still academic environment and I still did it and when I when I put the
slide on everybody laughed and it kind of made the atmosphere more likeable and friendly and then I was whew @ how I'm going to deliver my presentation I'm more confident about myself and yeah so sometimes you have to take risks as well and kind of believe in yourself and this is more socio-economic factors because not everything comes from your mind a lot of things comes from your social background the way you can communicate with people maybe the way you feel people as well probably is that the right time to do it can I do it it's like assessing yourself your strengths and weaknesses maybe if you just push too hard you're gonna you know just break down and that's not what you want so sometimes you just have to you know think what other skills in my life is it like uh teamwork like asking for help like working together collaboratively or is it may uhh individual work but well whatever works for you so you kind of just implementing your own set of skills into academic environment as well

R: okay and going back to your lectures so when you're inside of the lecture room what is the general structure so like what happens in the classroom

Natalia: it depends on the lecture umm we have lecturers that would just put on the slides and talk for one hour then we have a break and then maybe another two hours and that's it and sometimes we have the professors who uhh group us in pairs and we do peer discussions or we have this one amazing exercise it was about emotional intelligence and the professor put different emotions on board like say anger or love jealousy whatever and we kind of had to come up with as many adjectives as we can associate with this emotion and then it was great because we had to relate to our own experiences to remember like what do we feel and then we had to use active listening skill because everybody was telling about the experiences and uhm one person was supposed to look for the gestures another one for body language in general and the third person had to listen to the facts and then the group had to present like what did they find out etc. etc.

so it was pretty interesting because in the context you kind of understand emotional intelligence is very recent it's not so well researched but with this kind of advice you get an idea what it is because it's hard to explain academically it's more about empathy and people feelings

R: right all right and um how do your professors assess academic success so when they're looking at your work that you've submitted or they're evaluating your essays your dissertation your work what are they looking for

Natalia: I think number one will be the structure if you follow the guidelines everybody has a handbook a guidebook something @@ and I think the first thing they take a look at this references did you reference it ummm in the right order did you use the right font etc.
etc. uh did you put every person you've mentioned and the references because what happens with me sometimes I forget and I'm like eh they they will not know it is but they do unfortunately the second thing I suppose they want to see the table of contents with a clear understanding what are you gonna write about uh they want to see that there is an introduction and conclusion and the main part and it's all narrowed down and I think logic and the way you linked the paragraphs so [pause] this second thing would be maybe what kind of questions are you researching so does it really follow the topic uh does all of this make any sense by the end of the paper are you in the same place or did you go further or deeper or maybe in the wrong direction so I think it's about logic coherency and structure.

R: alright and how do your professors communicate their expectations and assignment requirements to you

Natalia: pretty clear yeah they start with it I think they make sure we know how many words we have to write sometimes umm they give us the list with the ready-made topics sometimes they say it's up to you but you will have to confer- confirm it with us so you will have to send an email because sometimes you want to write about something but that's not uhhh within the limits of this module umm we sometimes have webinars and uh you just log in the blackboard and they just run this short sessions what is required from the assignment because sometimes during the lectures just don't have enough time to cover it and I think they also put the slides on the blackboard and it has like the requirements page so they have all of the criteria written down so we're supposed to look through and follow like what is required step by step.

R: ok

Natalia: okay and the sea so in general what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1] patience resilience it's that it's fine.

Natalia: I could not just help myself umm well basically when we all come here our first semester you never know okay so now I'm in the big university what is gonna happen you just don't know anything and I think [pause] when it comes to the second semester you realize uhh [pause] that it's just it just takes time so you have to know if you want to succeed you need to take like baby steps and it's not happening in one night so you cannot just wake up one morning and right a perfect 100% perfect essay no it doesn't happen so probably successful students they're the ones who take time who go back and they reflect okay so last time I did this right but I didn't do this right and and then that's what you take it to your second essay and then the third essay so it's kind of always reflecting like one step forward two steps back something like that I think.
R: okay and how much of a factor does language play in academic success
Natalia: it does play a huge part but it's not everything [pause] for example I [pause] am friends with French or Chinese people and I can catch some mistakes sometimes even in the class or and I just came and took conclusion that it doesn't really matter what matters is um how much a person can [pause] use the skills they have now and are they willing to grow within the university because uh some people they come to an English-speaking country and they spend six months or one year and there is no progress and there are students who came with a say intermediate level and in three months their level spiked and it matters but your own motivation and willingness to improve and learn matters more
R: okay so besides motivation and language what other factors play into academic success
Natalia: [long pause] mm hm mm [pause] @ I have been speaking so much of her skills and factors I don't know what you had to be honest I think [pause] maybe I I would say that there are a lot of people who are afraid to ask for help or advice for example even you're not sure about something that's going around your modules or you're not sure about your dissertation some people they're not willing to send an email maybe ask the professor about something they're just afraid I don't know um so maybe another factor would be just to be open and communicative and we you will be surprised that people actually meet your halfway and they're willing to help and you know they even if it takes maybe five hours to respond but they still respond@ and then you know they are ready to support you so there is support and if you need it you have to ask for it you don't have to be afraid
R: brilliant um so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before attending [institution 1]
Natalia: ehm well in my university when I was doing my bachelor's I was doing linguistics but still um I thought it wasn't really enough if I want to consider studying in university abroad so when I was googling what kind of documents I need I came across IELTS it was the first time I heard about this exam and then I took the two months preparation and I just realized that preparation is kind of important not not because it's about language it's just about like even the structure and everything um and after I passed the IELTS and I found out that I enrolled in [institution 1] and was accepted I was really really happy but then because I didn't know what kind of work I'm gonna be doing here I didn't really do anything I was thinking maybe writing essays will be something like IELTS you know writing part or maybe I wasn't sure and because I wasn't sure I wasn't really doing anything yeah it's when I came here when I started
R: okay um and so do you think that that preparation well first how do you feel about the
preparation that you had um so you were saying you didn't really do anything between the
preparation and enrolling in university but did that preparation actually help prepare you
for [institution 1]

Natalia: [pause] I don't really know @ because in the set of context it like oh my country
we have different approach for studying and for lectures and everything so what did not
prepare me was that professors here use communicate and interactive approach a lot so
how can you prepare for that I mean @@ and for in in terms of writing again like I I don't
really think even if you kind of google in the University website the guidelines and
everything you read through it but then you still don't get any idea it's just I I don't really
think it helps I think you need to be uhh exposed to it in the classroom like every day or
every week you know when you do it distantly and you don't know about the
expectations I really think it's kind of a waste of time

R: okay and so you said that you took the entry assessment of IELTS before being
accepted to [institution 1] so how do you feel about this entry assessment

Natalia: you mean the grade or

R: just the test in general or the grade that you got anything that comes up about it

Natalia: okay hmm when I was passing my exam I had a cold @@ I was there with a fever
and I remember one of my professors told me that when you actually catch a slight cold
you are more concentrated [pause] and I was shocked because I like I was really scared
about the listening part because they only uh played the recording once and if you miss it
so that's it goodbye @@ and I think I was sitting there putting my hands like in my head
and I was like no I have to do this I absolutely have to do this right now and the level
of my concentration was so high I I kind of I gained like sss- a huge score just for the
listening and I was so happy that it was one of the things that even we did it in preparation
classes and everything and I was like average you know and then during the exam like I
don't know what happened I just did it and then umm the writing part was like one of the
most like [pause] struggling parts as well and and when I was writing uh this there there's
like this two tasks I remember the first one I did okay but the second one I was really
struggling with it because I had I didn't have so much time and I did not get a very good
high score but then listening and reading and whatever took a lot of concentration at the
beginning yeah it worked really well and at the end I think the cold and I was tired and I
was really stressed and ugh

R: and do you feel the fact entry assessment accurately predicted how you would do in
University
Natalia: um well University accepts people with I think band score six point zero and I gained eight point zero so I was really overwhelmed and happy because I knew that's the good score to be in university I think it should be more than enough so I think I didn't really have any anticipation anxiety like stress about it

R: okay alright and what type of preparation do you think international students should undertake before studying at [institution 1]

Natalia: that's very good question I was thinking about it uhh because I said I think preparation is a waste of time but then again ummmmm here in September/October that you serve the months when you kind of get used to the city that country the accents so it's kind of a bit too much um so I think if that would be like a summer course maybe like one month’s one and a half I don’t know and if if we could just get an idea like okay so your problem is that everybody's in different modules< and different programs somebody does law somebody to economics so nobody can tell okay in your module you're gonna be doing this this and that but like if we could just get an idea that okay guys academic writing is not IELTS forget about IELTS and then if we could start with um I don't know like small things [pause] may be changing our perception of it maybe at first not even doing all of this paraphrasing summary things but then kind of getting into this gradually you know so that ahhhh so this is how we will be doing that because when you come to the evening classes here like EAP classes my first class I was completely shocked I didn’t know that was required because sometimes the professors they try to make themselves clear but then without practice you're like hmmm so practice that’s I think could be implemented in the course

R: okay so if you could give advice to faculty so your professors your supervisors if you could give advice to them in dealing with international students what would that advice be

Natalia: [pause] good question [pause] hard question hmm [pause] well what our department does I think our coordinator oh he kind of tries to meet one-to-one with students to talk through things um when I first came here I had a huge problem because I came on the 15th of September and it turns out my semester has started at 8 or 9 or 8 September and I was like @no it can't be I missed two lectures already and uh he emailed me himself and he suggested with me and talk and then he said don't worry you didn't actually miss anything with just introduction you know just getting to know each other etc. so this is your timetable this is your reading list this is how things work here and I was so glad I think that's what um coordinators need to do in the future like try and and talk just try and talk like how are you getting a lot because that's what we need um I know that there
There are a lot of students who are struggling and what they need is just 30 minutes with a person who can say no to you will do it absolutely because from where I stand from my position I think you're doing great and you know we just need this kind of support.

R: and if you could give advice to organizations like our EAP program or even private schools that are preparing international students for studying at [institution 1] what would it be?

Natalia: hm [pause] I have no idea @@@@ I think what what is already being done is more than enough I don't know what can this organization do more honestly because they are organizing the classes the teachers are very good and I don't know no @ not really

R: okay alright um if you could give advice to prospective students what would it be

Natalia: @ okay what advice undergrad or post grad @@

R: @@ um alright will do will do everyone undergrad @@ well no since since you're a postgrad will do everyone postgrad because you probably you might have more experience

Natalia: @@ well I mean when students are undergrads huh @@ there's a lot of advice coming up and if that's uhh well with postgrads I think I would say please try to find as many hobbies and activities as you can that make you happy because with the workload with everything going on you will have to take time and rest and usually just lying in your bed and watching a TV series doesn't help to recover and I remember [pause] in the global room in there was um a guy I don't know where his neighbor he was organizing the trips it could be hiking and it could be just walking somewhere in the suburbs of Dublin and that's how students could get out of Dublin get out of the city and at the same time you know meet new people and just get a little bit of exercise and it was great it was absolutely great like you get back and you're so full of energy and you're like yeah yeah yeah great because a lot of students they think oh I'm gonna come there and I'm gonna study study study and study more but that doesn't work because everybody needs balance so I would say think about what kind of activities you could take up in this country because maybe what you used to do in your home country doesn't apply here so with me it was trying something new like I know there's a rifle club in [institution 1] so I went there I tried it it was like oh [gasp] I cannot believe I liked it and yeah I think it's more about another side of you the thing you're gonna recover during your studies rather than something in terms of academic thing because you will get so much advice from your peers somebody who graduated maybe PhD students you will get that advice in time like every day yeah.
R: okay and does your advice differ for international students or
Natalia: well [pause] not really no um [sigh] [pause] but like Irish students that I've met
here they kind of pursue more laid-back lifestyle I think they don't they don't stress out that
much as we are so even if they do all of these things for them it's easier they already live in
their home country they already know English so [pause] they don’t really have that
much level of stress and [inhale] I think it's less applicable but still applicable yeah
R: okay perfect um let's see so are you aware of any support that international students
receive from the University
Natalia: yeah I am aware of student counseling and I'm aware of drop by sessions I'm
actually participated in coping with anxiety workshop depression workshop and [pause] I
don't remember if I went to anything else but I am aware because they are
sending emails [pause] so it's it's a very good uhm like what's the word haha not the
correspondence like they kind of the university itself makes sure that students know
R: okay and so do you think that the support is adequate
Natalia: it depends ehm I never tried how's it called one-to-one student
R: oh the student to student
Natalia: yes student to student I've never tried this but uh the workshops that I went to they
kind of they don't go very deep so if you have any problems and maybe you might
want to go to a psychologist or something if it's really serious but if you're just an average
student and you're you know a little bit lazy or you just don't really know how to uhh do
time management or whatever I think they're really helpful
R: okay alright and let's see so that's all I have for you but are there any questions that you
wish I had asked that I didn't ask
Natalia: @
R: @ it's always the hardest question of the interview
Natalia: @ yeah it is [long pause] well you asked me about skills that are required in
academic environment you asked me about how the college system could be improved in
terms of additional support groups and classes and EAP so no not really
R: okay do you have anything else to add
Natalia: I am just hoping I’m going to survive @
R: you will @
Natalia: no you know to be honest I mean whatever students come here first [pause] they
they're not really sure if they they're gonna get it done because they homesickness you're in
like right now I'm halfway through so it's another five months and it's over and like at this
time you're thinking [pause] it's either the times gonna fly and they're gonna be really busy
and then you're gonna be finished and wow one day you wake up and you just hold your
certificate that you graduated or it's gonna be a lot of sleepless nights that you cry and
you're like I can't do this anymore so at this time I think plus winter plus the weather cold
everything everything [clears throat] I think at this time it's really important to get in touch
with your friends and maybe just socialize a bit more because when you find out that other
people go through the same thing as you it's much easier it's not just you it's like 5,000
other students who go through the same thing and they all graduate and you know that's
just a good thought to finish with I think

R: okay perfect thank you

Nicole

R: okay um so first could you tell me what your strengths are academically
Nicole: sorry
R: so what are your strengths academically like what are you good at
Nicole: my strengths I think like uh I’m better at uh reading than speaking English yeah
R: so reading and is there anything else that you would say that you're very good at that
Nicole: I think uh [long pause] when I'm like doing something I am uh I always pay much
attention to it and I uh [pause] it's uh it's not that easy uh no it's not like I won't be
distracted by things like when I'm putting my heart to do something
R: yeah and what would your difficulties be then
Nicole: uh I'm not a native speaker of English so I have to uh spend much more time than
always do some planning so the most important things I will do them first and then like uh
I'm not good at like do many things together so I have to plan in advance and after plan-
after planning these things I can do things in order uh according to their importance
R: mm-hmm okay and what would your difficulties be then
Nicole: uh I'm not a native speaker of English so I have to uh spend much more time than
others when I'm like doing the readings and some assignments something like that uhh and
I think because also because I'm doing uh a course that uh I'm not doing this in my
undergraduate degree so it may be harder
R: yeah and what did you do in your undergraduate
Nicole: uh my undergraduate degree is about [topic]

R: okay alright and so now you're doing [topic]

Nicole: yeah

R: so slightly different um so can you tell me about the modules that you're taking right now in your course so what do you need to do for your modules

Nicole: uh by modules you mean different classes

R: //the classes

Nicole: classes yeah| uh I have to uh do some readings and writing uh some assignments

R: mm-hmm okay

Nicole: yeah basically

R: alright yeah so just reading and writing basically um okay um the assignments can you tell me more about the assignments

Nicole: so I have to uh write something like um I don't know how to call them like uh just some assignments I have to write about uh 4,000 words for each of them each course need to like I have to write an assignment for each of the course- the modules

R: mm-hmm okay and so it's 4,000 words and are you given um are you giving guidelines rubrics are you giving the question

Nicole: uhh basically the lecturer will uh tell us we should try something about the course what we the topic should be what we've learned in this module and uh I think we have something like we have some choice in the writing of the assignment

R: mm-hmm okay so it's a lot of freedom

Nicole: yeah

R: okay and and can you tell me about the lectures so when you are inside of the classroom what happens

Nicole: uhh like each modules have they they@ they are different because some in some modules uhh the lecturer uhh he or she were just like he speaks all the time@ and we don't have much time to question him or express our opinion something like that and other teachers they may spend more time like uh asking us what do you think and do you think I'm like teaching uhh you can follow up do you think something like that

R: mm-hmm okay so some are more kind of engaging you know wanting discussion while others are more like PowerPoint speak

Nicole: yeah

R: okay all right um and so in your modules is the only form of assessment the writing or do you have other types of assessment
Nicole: yeah some uh some courses we have uh a graded assignment but not for every
week just some we will may like submit some writing assignments but very short and we
don't have to do that every week
R: okay
Nicole: but uh the assignments that 4,000 word one that uh takes up the main part of the
final result
R: okay and so I know that you haven't submitted your assignments yet but um how would
you evaluate your current academic success so how do you feel that you're doing in your
course
Nicole: hm I think like uh I've tried to do some self-study in this discipline when I was in
my undergraduate degree but I find it difficult because because there fairly nobody I can
talk to I can discuss with I can like share some information uh so I find it difficult but now
uhm I have like my teachers and my classmates to talk about and I find it's like easier but
also harder because I know much more than before and I find like more I don't
R: okay@
Nicole: @@
R: so it's like the more you learn the more you realize you don't know
Nicole: yeah @
R: okay so but do you feel like you're you're doing well
Nicole: I think I'm doing okay yeah but I don't think uhhh I [pause] I'm the one like
knows best about what's being taught in the class but I think I'm doing okay yeah@
R: okay and what do you think your professors look for when they are grading so how do
they evaluate academic success
Nicole: [inhale] [long pause] no not all of them have like have talked much about
the assignment yet because it's only like halfway of the first term so maybe it will@
still have they will tell us later @
R: okay so a lot of them haven't
Nicole: yeah
R: okay all right and those of them that have communicated do they give you like a piece
of paper do they talk about it in class
Nicole: hmm they didn't give us examples something like that but they say did they say like I can find some uhh papers written by eh students from uh previous years but they didn't just give us and say these days exams or something like that they say you should find go find for yourself if you want to like use them uhh reference @

R: okay so they say they are out there but you go find them

Nicole: yeah

R: okay all right interesting all right um so in general what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]

Nicole: I think they should they should uh they should be good at like uh thin- thinking independently because like you can't just uh accept what the teacher told you what's the textbook says you should like develop your own opinion because like uh at the end of this program we have to uh write a dissertation and that should be uh like a product of our own thinking

R: okay and so how much of a factor does language play in academic success

Nicole: uhh I think it is a very important role yeah because uhh for me like I'm not a native speaker of English but I have to read in English write English and my uh assignments and dissertations should all be English yeah

R: okay

Nicole: I think that it's very important that like I should use English

R: okay and so what other factors impact academic success and this could be things inside of [institution 1] or outside of [institution 1]

Nicole: uhh factors could you give me some examples like

R: yeah so a lot of other people have said things like motivation and housing finances

Nicole: yeah so a lot of other people have said things like motivation and housing finances

R: and so how do you find the peer pressure at [institution 1]

Nicole: uhhh I think [click] like for me it has advantages and disadvantages because my advantages is uhh they will like uhhh maybe sometimes I just don't want to study@ but I know I just know from like uh different sources that like my classmates they didn't relax@ they@ just@ like uh they just like they still doing some readings like or studied during the weekends I@ won't@ be@ play@ that@ hard@ and like uhh this is the advantage but is also the disadvantage because sometimes this will make me feel nervous like uhh when I’m @playing @and they’re still studying@ I will@ feel guilty @@@@@
R: do you often feel guilty like does that often happen
Nicole: @@ uhhhh @not that much@
R: not that much@ are you usually in the library
Nicole: I spent like much time in the library but I will also find some time to relax
R: okay and how much time do you spend at the library is it like weekends weekdays all
day
Nicole: uhh I I I like uh I go to library mainly on weekdays because I think time to relax on
like at the weekend but I will also go to the library if I find I can catch up with the readings
the assignments I will also go to the library
Nicole: mm-hmm okay all right so it depends on how much pressure you're feeling
R: okay all right um and so before you came to [institution 1] did you have any linguistic
preparations so did you take things like IELTS classes EAP classes
Nicole: I didn't take classes but I took the exam
R: okay so you didn't take classes but only the exam
Nicole: yeah
R: um and so how do you feel about that exam
Nicole: I [long pause] find it very [click] I don't know how to say it [pause] it confuses me
like I think I like do a lot of exercises but I just like can't improve like maybe one part of
the exam I just don't quite know why
R: okay yeah so and so do you feel that that exam has prepared you for your studies and
[institution 1]
Nicole: not that much I think yeah because I I didn't prepare that hard@ for the exam so I
think maybe it's more important like I uhh I learn something when I'm uhh like um I
intended to study [topic] so maybe I'd learn new words through my study in this field not
like because when I'm uhh preparing for the language exam I have to memorize many
words but most of them I don't think I will use them in the future
R: okay yes so you don't see much of a connection between what was on the exam and
what you're doing
Nicole: yeah yeah
R: okay any other feelings about the exam
Nicole: yeah I [pause] after I've like got the results uh of the exam and I used it to apply for
[institution 1] and I like they've accepted me and I thought I like uh I'm ready for studying
at [institution 1] and living in Dublin but after I came here I find like there is still many
things that's not included in the exam but I will use them in real life like uh in on campus or off campus

R: yeah and can you give examples of those things

Nicole: uhh for example like uhh [long pause] the [pause] I don’t know it's the the day after I came here I have to go out and find something to eat and I'm standing in a convenience store and they have some sandwiches but I have to I have to tell them what like what fillings in the sandwiches @@@ that I'm going to choose but I just can't name it I keep saying this can you please give me this and this and this I don't know how to say them in English

R: mm-hmm okay so it was even day-to-day thing

Nicole: yeah

R: yeah okay very um do you feel that you've improved since you've been here

Nicole: of course @@ because like I know that something I can’t named name them like in English and after I go home I will check in the dictionary in the internet and the next time I should know and I should know how to say them in English

R: okay all right so a lot of it it sounds like it's just experience of being here that has helped

Nicole: yeah

R: okay alright I'm so what type of preparation should international students do before coming to [institution 1]

Nicole: uhhh you mean like just for the language part or everything

R: everything

Nicole: Oh everything yeah I think maybe like uhm for me I'm not a native speaker of English and for others students like who aren't who were not exposed to English that much before I I think they should maybe like uh spend some time in English English speaking country for a time I think that will be better like yeah and [pause] uhh [pause] also I think mmm maybe [pause] because I'm here for my master study uhh I've already my undergraduate degree before so although there are different in the college education in [country] and in Ireland I think they're I've actually anyway I've done something about like something academic@ before but like if students come here uh to for undergraduate study I think like uhh it may be more difficult I think

R: okay yeah yeah and can you tell me more about the differences between the study in [country] in the study here

Nicole: yeah umm in [country] uhh [long pause] uhh I think that like my teachers they just keep like [pause] they used to uh at least in my college like the teachers use similar materials for every year@ @ they don't change that much and they don't like
they don’t have that much interaction with the students and yeah like we we uh we study
mainly like [pause] by ourselves I mean I also studied by myself here but in a different
way like uhh [pause] I study like independently I think I don't know how to say that
right now but I’ve got like some guidance from the teachers but in back in [country] in
my undergraduate study I don't think they are much more like they're that much
connections between teachers and students
R: so they're much more like removed or much more like hands-off
Nicole: yeah
R: yeah okay all right um so talking about teachers if you could give advice to professors
my [institution 1] in dealing and helping international students what would that be
Nicole: uhh [pause] I've only know about like @three or four professors so far but some of
them they I think they are more considerable? like they will write down things they think
students may not know if they are like non-native speakers of English but others feel like
they don't think that much yeah and some teachers they speak very fast@ and they may
have some dialects and this uh more is difficult for international students and some of them
they speak like slow- slowly relative
R: yeah okay hmm so kind of a how they talk and then also what they write down so that
you can see it not just here okay
Nicole: yeah
R: all right and if you could give advice to organizations who create preparation programs
for international students what would that be
Nicole: uhhh I think they should uh give some uh specific preparation for different
programs the students are going to take like if you are going to do a science program then
you should have different preparation from students work doing uh arts humanities for that
I think
R: okay yes and if you could give advice to future students of [institution 1] or students
who are looking to come to [institution 1] what would that advice be
Nicole: [long pause] uhh I don't know how to answer that question can I skip that @ @
you can if you want to yeah or like pretend that someone like a friend from
[country]
Nicole: yeah
R: is like oh I want to come to [institution 1] what would you tell them
Nicole: okay so uuhh
R: you can skip it if you want
Nicole: yeah I know like I will tell her or him that like [institution 1] has many international students so you have chance to know about different cultures but only if you are willing to do that like some of my classmates they only talk to students from the same country they don't want to talk with others I don’t think that's good I think people should always like move out of your comfort zone

R: yeah okay all right that's good advice yeah and so are you aware of any support the international students receive either from your department or from the wider college

Nicole: um you mean the um the support from school like for international students

R: yeah

Nicole: I know I've heard that there is a support [pause] or something like that but I've never I haven't been there yes so I can’t say I know but I've heard of that

R: okay so you've heard of it but you haven't gone okay

Nicole: yeah I can't say something about this but I just know they have some kind of support

R: okay so you know it exists

Nicole: yeah

R: yeah okay all right um and are you aware of anything else that the college offers international students to help them in their studies

Nicole: [long pause]

R: like any well yeah um well just anything that would make life easier in [institution 1] that um it could be things like organizations classes programs things like that

Nicole: [long pause]

R: or is it kind of the same you know it exists but you haven't

Nicole: yeah I think

R: ok alright cool alright so um that's actually all of the questions that I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Nicole: ehh I thought like when you talking about the language examination I thought you will ask me you more about that but you just @@ move on to other questions @@

R: okay okay do you have anything else to say about the language examination like how I guess I would ask what kind of exam should students take to get into [institution 1]

Nicole: [long pause]

R: so if you could design an exam a language exam what would it be like

Nicole: I think like the exam uhh should also cover the main aspects as in TOEFL and some other languages examinations but it will it should also like consider what programs the students are going to take [pause] yeah because like if you are going to do history I
R: okay yeah and do you have anything else that you would like to say about the exam or
Nicole: I just think the examination like [pause] like these examinations they don't they
do tell the schools wh- like the students has uh they [pause] I don’t know they they
do tell the schools about the students’ performance in English but I don't think
students who like have the highest score in the examination they are really that good in
English yeah
R: okay so you feel like it's kind of a mismatch
Nicole: yeah and because um I took the TOEFL examination for two times I think and I've
got it's 30 in each part of the examination and I got 30 in reading for both times it seems
that I'm good at reading but I still find it difficult the way I'm doing reading for my
current program
R: mm-hmm right okay yeah and what would you say is difficult about the reading for
your current program
Nicole: ehhh because like I have different textbooks to read for my modules and I find
some of the books they are written in a reader friendly way like I can see the main points
very easily and they are the sentences are written like they don't have much they don't have
many clauses like it’s very short it's relatively short but not that short but they are they
they're more like they're easier to read but other books they may be not
R: okay okay
Nicole: I sh- I will like I may like read a sentence for several times to know what is talking
about
R: mm-hmm okay and so is there anything else that you would like to express or say
Nicole: oh about the examination like the language examination uh I [pause] like my weak
point of the examination is the speaking part yeah and like uh [long pause] I think like I've
read something on the internet about how to excel@ in the speaking part of a language
examination and they say like you should use some uh templates@ like memorize them@
and you will like have high score in that section but I didn't have much time to prepare for
the examination like so I didn't have much training for that but I don't think that's good
because like uhh you are goi- if I'm going to study in an English-speaking country I don't
use this those templates like in daily communication or for like uh academic purpose I
think yeah
R: okay great
Nicole: and and the materials in the language examination I think they some of them I think they some of them are like boring @@ they always talk about like certain topics yeah

R: yeah okay anything else about any topic that you would like to say

Nicole: uhh [sigh] [long pause] @@ @ I can't think of any for now

R: okay all right perfect all right thank you so much

Noémie

R: okay so first of all can you tell me what you think your strengths are academically so what are you good at

Noémie: um I think it’s more reading because when you read I think you have like more time when you struggle with the word or whether you struggle with a particular formal paragraph I think you have some time and you can think or research or look at the Internet if you don't know the translation I think definitely reading and I think speaking also uh [pause] because people I feel here even in the academic uh environment people are really friendly and even they lecturer sometimes when you're not sure about what you're saying or even you're q- when you're questions it's not really clear they always try to understand you and I think yeah reading and listening and reading yeah reading listening and speaking uh [pause] because re- uh re- uh yeah listening also because I think it also depends on the accent I feel like sometime the Irish accent or a certain lecturer when they speak really fast it can be difficult but I think if just like since I arrived I arrived like in beginning of the term and uhm since then I feel I have improved a lot in listening you kind of get used to the accent and and I think I have improved in it but before before arriving in [institution 1] I think it was more reading and speaking but now I think it was also like listening uhm more and yeah I think yeah writing skills are really difficult to develop and to improve because we don't have that much assessment like I have an assessment like for the end of November to [discipline] essays but it's like you don't have any practice before so it's like he- it's one and you have to work a lot on it more than the others because you didn't practice that much even if you take your notes but it's not uhm it's not formal writing so it's more about the structure of the of the sentences the structure of the essays also that you have to learn really quickly alright so I think this is more huge huge weakness about like I think in English

R: okay and so can you tell me about the modules that you're taking so what kind of work is required for it
Noémie: so I'm taking [course] so it's a [multiple disciplines] and I have a lot of readings to do @@ really a lot I didn't go through all of it @@ like @most @other @students so I think I'm quite the same as the the naive speakers because like we sometimes we don't have that time to do everything uhm so reading a lot uhm also taking a lot of notes of course related to readings uhm and to write they are they want us to write essays for example in [disciplines] I think I've got after at which one or two for the final exam so I think basically what they what they want from us is uh a lot readings researching so readings and writing so yeah

R: so inside of the lecture um when you're in class what happens inside of the class is it more a professor giving a lecture with the PowerPoint is there group discussion group work

Noémie: it's really like lecturer giving a talking we don't really I don't really work in groups we don't have any group assessment or so since the beginning uh of the term I didn't worked in groups so I don't think we're gonna have some uhm it's only really like individual assessments ummm and during tutorials or lectures during lectures it's really like the lecturer most of the time use PowerPoints and speak about the materials but in tutorials it's more uhmm a discussion so you have to participate ask questions give your opinion so I really enjoy it because it helps us it tells me to articulate my ideas in a formal way because when you're taking that when you're talking in everyday life you don't use the same vocabulary for example in the [discipline] tutorial when you have to use the [discipline] vocabulary so it helps me like to to use the vocabulary that I've read for example in preparing the the lectures uhm and to reuse this vocabulary and to try to understand if I have really understand the concept so I think it really helps the tutorials uhm to use this vocabulary and to try to uh to >and I think it's gonna help< me when I'm going to write the essays because I had already during the tutorials use the vocabulary like academics more academic style and so yeah that’s it

R: and so your assessment you've said there is a lot of essays and then you also said there's exams

Noémie: yeah I have a MCQ I have a I am going to have like MCQs in [topics] so basically it's really just uh I think it's it will be easier than essays for me but I'm really not used to it because like I'm [nationality] and in [country] we don't have MCQ at all I really don't like MCQs so I'm kind of used to to write a lot but in a formal academic [language] way so it's really different from the English one so I have to learn how to write an essay because in [language] is all dissertation form so it's kind of difficult also to see how to organize an essay in English compared to what I am used to but MCQ is little less simple
for me because you can uhm you just have to read basically but at the same time it's tricky
because you cannot uhm justify your answers and I'm used to that I'm used to even if you
have a an answer that is basically not the answer that the per- that the the lecturer was
waiting for if you justify it it can be relevant and accurate but in MCQ you cannot so and at
the same time it's a simple it's a more simple from for me but at the same time I think it
will be kind of difficult at the beginning because I'm not used to this kind of assessment
R: yeah um and so how would you evaluate your current academic success so you don't
have any grades back but how do you feel that you're doing
Noémie: on on on on 10 or how do you like
R: yeah okay well let's do out of 10 but then I'm also gonna ask you to like expand on like
why you feel like
Noémie: @@ okay so I succeed in some area and not in others uhm so I feel like most
students I'm struggling with time management and with like managing all the readings
[pause] but I think uhm I don't really know like I think it's difficult to judge what you're
doing since you I didn't have any assessment so it's more like I'm studying kind of for
myself I have no one to tell me if I'm doing in the right way or not uhmm but I think in in
readings and what they are waiting for that what they asked us to do for every lecture
they upload the reading they ask us to do I think I'm quite I'm quite well I think I've I've
done not everything but that's fine I think I’m in the norm you like more students yeah I I I
don't really know I think it's very difficult to judge some to judge and maybe it's there is a
lack of feedback about it because like it has been we are in October say two months almost
two months and we don't know no one knows if we do it the right way or not so yeah
maybe I think sometimes it's it's kind of stressful because you don't know if if it's right or
not @ so yeah I think it's for a difficulty to judge @@ actually currently so I think I will
see after my exams @@ but for now no I I I must admit I don't know really @any @idea
R: yeah I'm so what do you think professors are looking for when they're grading when
they're marking when they're assessing success
Noémie: I think the looking for independent learning they always say or this these words
but I think it's true they want us to be independent in the fact that we are reading and we
are researching about the topic that we are interesting in also the topic that we are less
interesting but like the important topics and I think they're waiting for us to to to be critical
about what we we are reading for example in [discipline] our lecturer always say when you
read something does it convince you or not so always when you have to read something
you always have to critics and try to understand them for arguments and against arguments
like the thesis of the author and I think it's uhm it's really interesting because they ask you
all your own point of view about what you read what you learn uhm and they yeah I think they want from us critical thinking to be to be free thinker it's difficult @ but they want us to develop our own opinion and to when we face difficulties when we face theses that we don't understand or what when we find that thesis convincing or not they want us to research and to find arguments to to develop our own own opinions and I feel like most of the lecturer are really open open-minded about what we think if it's based on evidence and arguments so I feel free in the way that they really want they they make us uhm free about our research topic even if we are just undergraduate I feel they they want to to to love what we do you know to love what we are studying and they they push us to to to learn what we're interesting in so I think yeah they wait for they they want from us critical thinking and to research on our own when we don't understand something but also to ask questions [pause] most of the lecture I always have like come to our office hours if you don't if you have some questions and most of the students don't go because like because we are in university a lot of students feel like you don't have the right to ask questions but at the same time you can and I went to the for example [professor’s] office hours and I think it helps a lot to realize that lecturers are really uh wants us to succeed so they want us to understand what we're talking about and some some sometimes a lot of students forget that R: and so how do your professors communicate their expectations and assessment requirements to you Noémie: yeah it was I think most of my yeah every every lecturer at the beginning of the term has made kind of module outline explaining the different form of assessments the percentage that is going to represent in our grades so you think it's really helpful because from the beginning from the start we knew what we the assessment will be so but at the the same time yeah it depends just @one lecturer in [discipline] he was not very clear but what was waiting for it was what he wanted from us but like now it's clear at the beginning we were like we don't know what we're going to be assessed anyway @ @ @ but it's one lecturer but no I think the others are really clear try to make it fear from the start the assessment the date of the assessments most of them so yeah do they always say from the start which is going to happen to us @ R: okay and so in general uh what do you think students need to succeed at [institution 1] Noémie: [long pause] yeah difficult question @ what do we need to succeed at [institution 1] hmm maybe guidelines about how to study on our own because I feel sometimes it's difficult especially for some time for international students I feel um at the beginning for example I struggled at the beginning I was completely exhausted after every day of of class
and I couldn't I couldn't study I was completely exhausted because following classes in
English was >even if I enjoyed it it< was a lot of kind of overwhelming because it was a
lot of new new things new classes new country new student life so as an international at
the beginning was really exhausted exhausting but at the same time I feel like we were
kind of lost most of the students international students but also native speaker students
because we don't know how to study on our own what is really even if we know the
assessments we don't really know how it's gonna be you know we know that for example
that we were going to have an MCQ in [discipline] or that we were going to have and an
discussion to write in [discipline] but we did not have them we didn’t know really what they
were waiting wanted from it like concretely what they wanted in the essay or so it's kind of
difficult but I feel at the beginning to you know what to do what not to do uhm and I think
yeah maybe guidelines about how to @survive the the first weeks because we take kind of
bad habits and then we realize they are bad habits so we try to change them but we have
accumulated a lot of lot of uhm readings that we didn't do for examples and yeah I feel
maybe maybe make it clear that we have to @study from the beginning because most of
the students started to really study after two or three weeks of college so we are maybe
maybe guidelines about how to study on your own and yeah @ @ @
R: okay and so how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success
Noémie: almost all of it I think we've if you don't understand what the lecturer is talking
about it's really difficult and I fell on privileged because for example in the subjects I'm
taking it’s really difficult and I fell on privileged because for example in the subjects I'm
points that we have been through for the first part of the term so it was really really helpful
because I had an idea of what they were talking about so even if when the language was a
barrier even if when so for example in [discipline] I didn't know the vocabulary that they
were using I could refer to my knowledge in [language] and kind of see the translation on
the links in [topic] I had since I in [country] you the last year of high school you study
[topic] it was really really helpful and I’m really happy that I have studied that last year
because I think when you know the uhm the kind of the main points of the subjects well
you know what you what you're talking about then why you have a kind of vague idea
about the subject the topic I think it really helps you to get over the language difficulties
and to focus on the parts that are more difficult and so you can for example when in
module was talking about a particular topic I knew I could refer to my knowledge make
links even if it was well with [language] more knowledge it really helps me to follow more
easily the classes and I think I think it really helped me because sometimes it’s very
difficult to arrive in a academic language kind of classes and to follow of the classes and
with a really specific vocabulary and knowing more having read before about this topics
even if it's in your mother language I think it really really helps me and I think I didn’t
@like you know I think I went through it and I enjoyed it because I was not completely
lost because I had some background knowledge that helps to build your then your English
knowledge but language is the most important things because if you don't understand what
they're talking about you just give up really easy and yeah I have a Chinese friends he
told me like he for example in [discipline] that if he didn't have the background knowledge
about the Western culture for example when I our [topic] lecturer made references about
Greek mythology he was like I didn't understand anything because he didn't have this this
completely lost and he couldn't get the idea of what the lecturer was was explaining and
developing because he didn't have this background knowledge but I had it so since I had it
I could follow his idea and get what he meant but he couldn't so that's why I think it really
really helps to have the basics knowledge about the topic that you're going to study
R: yeah yeah and so what other factors plays an academic success and so that could be
inside or outside of [institution 1]
Noémie: uhm I think for example um my I don't have the stress about the fees because my
parents are afford the to pay the fees for my accommodation and and studies fees and I
think it's it's really it’s a relief of stress because for compared to other students that that
have the stress of loans or that have to work in order to pay the the fees I think it's more
stressful learning it could have I think it could have really negative consequences to the
academic success because it's a lot more pressure their grades on the how they going to
spend to study but at the same time if they don't rest then they are going to @burn out you
know I think it's it's yeah it's really I feel privileged because of it because I don't have this
stress and I think it helps me to more focus on my study and enjoy it more and I think if
you enjoying more you don't see that much at the time passing by studying so I think it
really helps to don't have this this pressure of concerning money and living house so I have
her student accommodation also and I'm very lucky because I live surrounded by other
students that have that go through the same struggles so if I struggle about topic if I have
questions I just have to to ask someone uhm so I think it really helps because when you're
when you face academic struggles related to writing an essay or not being able to find a
book that uh you have to read or these kind of things I think it really helps to be
surrounded by students to know that even if you fail at an exam it's not the end of your life
because @hopefully @I @will not fail but I have this this flexibility of knowing that I can
get over it and I it's I'm not going to to have to pay for it in a way that I cannot afford
like since I have the support of my family and I am surrounded by other the students I think it really helps to get through difficulties or through personal struggles

R: okay perfect so now I'm going to kind of switch to your experiences with entry assessments and preparation tools so did you take any entry assessment before being accepted to [institution 1] so things like IELTS TOEFL

Noémie: yeah I took the IELTS uhmmm let me think I think it was one year ago yeah just after I've done the CAO application form I think I have done it in October or December and they asked me to have the IELTS so I think I have done it yeah in December so didn't have that much time to prepare because CAO asked you to post the results before certain dates and so I wanted to take the exam really quickly in order if I didn't have the grades high enough I would have the time to pass it a second time before the deadline of CAO uh I just passed it once @@ I got the grades that I wanted even if I uh I don't remember exactly but in writings I think I got like six point five I was really disappointed by it because I feel it was the most difficult part of the IELTS to prepare to practice all the others I've worked with online resources former online resources that I found by the IELTS and when you pass the IELTS they give you an access to a website managed by IELTS where they give you access to a lot of former exams and so I could train I watched video on YouTube when they show students preparing for the speaking test so I could prepare also see what they were wanting for me I've trained also with them recording myself because like I think there is one one one the one that you have two minutes to prepare a speech of one minutes something like that that so I think I've done it one or twice so every every part of the IELTS is except for the writing part I could practice on my own reading I found a lot of resources online speaking yeah I watched videos on YouTube so speaking reading and listening I've I've listened to like I watch movies I listen to the radio not that much more movies and listen to former former text test but for writing it was is really really difficult because I didn't even if I try to do the assessments my own by looking at the at the topic that they were for- of the former test I didn't have anyone to grade my work or to told me to tell me this is not right you have to they are not wanting for that or and I think it was the most stressful part of the IELTS because I really didn't know if it was right or not even if I looked on the online you know on on sample I just didn't know what to do so I think it was really difficult to prepare and to pass because you have only one hour and you have to write one one one short essay and one about a graph I think you have to depict the graph
to depict a graph and I've never done that before so writing an essay was not that bad but I feel like about the graph it was awful and I feel like if I have to do it this year I'm gonna ask my classmates how to do it because I have no idea how you can the depict a graph because in school I've never done that so I don't have the vocabulary or a way of presenting it so yeah I also I think the most difficult for me were the writing part

R: okay and um do you feel that the IELTS has done a good job of preparing you for

Noémie: uhmm I think in a way yes because it helps you to see your weaknesses and your strengths and for example for the speaking part of the IELTS uhm I think I got like 8.5 or 9 and it gave it gave me a lot of confidence about the fact that I could speak and I think in preparing in preparing for the tests maybe it helped me to work on my listening and reading skills in a limited time so maybe for that for the writing skills I don't think that much because because I didn't have any feedback I think it didn't help it didn't help me that much

R: um and so what type of preparation should international students take before coming to

Noémie: I think writing really a kind of help about writing skills I think I wish I I don't regret but I think I should have practiced more writing ex- writing for example try write more try to #unt to tried to see how an essay structured how to write an essay try to write one in a short time for example for at the end of the year I'm going to have like to write in two hours two [discipline] essays and that kind of scares me because for example in [country] you have like [discipline] questions and you have four hours to write it and I have two questions in two one hour just for one question it's kind of really scary because I've never done that in such short time and I feel yeah definitely writing uh international students I think should listen you know before coming I think it's it's better to kind of go into the language so try to read newspaper but it's not that difficult that I feel a lot of students have done it international students when you speak with international students with some of my friends they say I've watched movies or lots of watching Netflix or movie so the kind of use to the language speaking or listening and reading most of them get kind of get used to it because since you have a lot of readings to do you have to do it so even if at the beginning of it's kind of difficult with with the time I think you improve really really quickly uhm but writing I think we don't write that much as I said I think like you write your notes but you should most international students I think we struggle in academic writing so really I think we should try to write essays before really about a topic really like in real condition like you have a limited time you have to do it maybe first of all
like try to write an essay as the best as we can so maybe not in a limited time and then in a limited time period uh because I think I'm gonna be @com- I'm gonna be @
kind of lost I'm going to try to do it with I'm gonna ask maybe some my classmates to to kind of join all together and try to do something like that you know giving us one question one hour and try to to see what we came up with come up with what we were able to come up with but I feel yeah it's kind of difficult to know where we are going in terms of writing essays and academic writings definitely to work on that on writing skills
R: right and so if you could give advice to faculty and professors in dealing with international students what would that advice be
Noémie: [long pause] maybe being more specific but what they are what they want from us because they give kind of yeah the type of assessment that we're gonna do but like more specific uh particular guidelines for example in an essay that they are wanting from they are wanted from us critical thinking but what does it mean to critical thinking because like for example in [discipline] lecturers said it the like one week ago he said here critical thinking you see are you convinced or not by the arguments of the author or the thesis so I was like okay that now that makes sense but maybe at the beginning of the year it would have helped me when I took notes for example about some readings that we have to do because in the beginning for example like I didn't took readings took notes about readings in the way that I took them right now because I didn't questions for example the the author's thesis I just wrote down the author's thesis and I feel like maybe more having kind of compulsory courses to explain that how to take notes and to to really use what they are wanting for is for example having kind of uhm tutorial about what is critical thinking but for compulsory for all students because I feel we we don't know what does that mean what does that really mean and yeah I think and for particularly for international students more explaining us what does that mean to write an essay in a particular field not just saying you have to write an essay but really explaining what does it mean and what does that mean to be to have critical thinking in different fields because it's different and the lecturers kind of assumed that we know the differences between the different topics but we don't sometimes you feel like you have to to
questioned the [discipline] for example arguments or thesis the same way that [discipline] one but it’s not you have to question it in different ways so I fell sometimes you you forgot you forget that it's different topic so you have to apply different method maybe being more yea specific about really giving examples I think it helps sometimes to give example about what they are wanting from us yeah I think giving examples about essay samples or yeah I think giving essay samples could really help international students as well as native students native speaker students uh but international students definitely @@ if we could read some essay samples I think it could definitely help us to understand what what the form what structure what kind of work is they wanted from it

R: yeah and so if you could give advice to future students or students who are looking to come to [institution 1] what would that advice be

Noémie: mmm try to read uhm newspaper about the field that you're going to study to get more familiar with a with the vocabulary for example in [discipline] we use [newspaper] uhm I think definitely tried to read newspaper or readings about that use academic vocabulary because that helps to get to be to be more familiar before from beginning the beginning the the difficult readings and sometimes it takes a lot more time to read readings where you don’t know all of the vocabulary but if you have kind of read it before you can get the meaning by the context and you it's it's quicker to read so I think definitely read try to get to read academic paper and before and to write to write I think uhh to write essays to try to understand how it works to really look at the at the topic that they are going to go through and try to see which topic they are interested in and maybe the mo- which topic they are most interested in and try to give a look at it uh for example if they were passionate about [person] try to look on the internet like what [person] talk talked about and try to get more family over the ideas I think definitely try to understand what is going on in their in their course to get more yeah to get more familiar with the vocabulary and try to see how you write an essays I think trying to practice essay or to write at least a little bit even if it's not essay to write maybe everyday a little bit uh to practice just writing skills to get used to show argument you ideas all right about anything that comes to your mind but just write in English I think because it helps when you're write you realize that for example you're missing this vocabulary so you're gonna look about it or even like that you don't remember this grammar rule so you have to look at that so definitely writing and reading and then yeah I think speaking and listening it's more skill that you you acquire really easily because since you are just surrounded by native speaker you kind of when you don't understand and when you cannot express your ideas are you accumulate a lot of frustration here so you want to learn really quickly or really faster so I think it helps to improve but
writing and reading it’s on your own so you are kind of the own judge of your work so I think beginning before it's really an advantage

R: okay and so are you aware of any support the international students receive from your department or from the wider College

Noémie: uhm I knew that I've heard that we can I'm taking the English for academic purposes course that I've really enjoyed it @ that I really enjoy yeah and I knew about that but I don't know how I think it was during freshers week we had a kind of course orientation when the the man I don’t know maybe was a lecturer I have no idea don't remember and he talked about the fact that we could go to the help center that there were math help class in order to help you that where they were and English for academic purpose and I was like yeah that's for me and it was really really really cheap I was really surprised by that and I think it's will help student to do it and then I I speak about it because I knew another [nationality] student and she was yeah I've never heard about that in so I told her about what what was it about and the it was only like 50 euros for one term so it's really like I think most of the students can afford it I think it helps us a lot of international students to do it and it's a really good incentive I think for most of the students so I knew about the English for academic purpose and and yeah I think it's a really I think it's kind of an amazing help for international students because you feel like for example he said [name] I don't remember his name it’s [name] but I don't know his his family name anyway he told us that he going to read our essays and I will I felt so more confident for example for my [discipline] essay that I have to write for at the end of November I was kind of freaking out about the idea of writing my essays and don't know if I was going to do it right or not and since now I know that he's saying he is going to read them and to tell me to give me a feedback about it to tell me that I have made an terrible grammar mistake in paragraph three I'm gonna be feel more confident you know when I'm going to post it and send it to my lecturer no my tutor and I think it really helps me to to enjoy the writing of my essays @even if it's not always enjoyable@ I feel more confident because I know he's going to read it and to tell me if I have done like horrible grammar mistakes of or if the structure is not the structure that they are wanted for me so I think it's really like an amazing help and even though I've talked about one of my former teacher in in [country] as she told me yeah it's amazing to be in your studying in college and to know that someone is going to help you and give you feedback before you are going to be grade on your work to give you feedback about if you're doing the right way or not and I feel a lot of students don't know about it so I'm trying to talk a lot about it since I really like it and I feel that it's actually great idea and it
really give help to international students to give confidence about writing skills in which we don't have any feedback before the graded assessment so it kind of really is a lot of pressure about one assessment because you know since you know you're going to have feedback before being graded you I feel less stressed about it because yeah so yeah

R: so would you have any suggestions for the support like how it could be improved what could be added anything like that

Noémie: mmm I found it really great@ really good job@ the uhm what could be added no I feel it's really he is it always clear you make us really like I think it really depends also on the teacher but he really makes us feel confident when you talk and make us feel comfortable and when we ask question nobody is scared on ask a question and I think what should we keep is really the the small size of the groups because we kind of we know each other and really helps you to have a good atmosphere and whenever there is good atmosphere is easier to speak and to to me to be to just speak about what we think or to ask questions and I think it's it's a good thing the presentation that we have to do and he recorded us for example with with we've done um a presentation about three objects that best represented us and I felt even if everyone was kind of nervous it really helped us to talk about ourselves and to be recorded for it and I think it's a really great way to improve and I feel that because I've took it even if it's like two hours every week and sometimes I wish I could use these two hours to do readings@ um I really enjoy it because it's a place where you are in small groups and you don't have that much small groups you know even if in tutorials you are like 20 I think it's a really small groups when you feel comfortable when you don't feel your judged or and I think it really helps you to to speak more to to take confidence I think he- it helps me a lot through the term like the beginning of the term to to just enjoy the language and yeah

R: okay so actually that's all of the questions that I have for you know um but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask question

Noémie: [long pause] good question uhm let me think [long pause] I think it's pretty right uhm yeah I think yeah the main point I think about you know I think about when we arrived at [institution 1] the most difficult point is writing skills writing skills because like when we prepare for English test we don't really know how to to prepare for writings and maybe more trying to work on writing skills because yeah in English for academic purposes class we we talk about linking words and maybe more practicing before doing our essays maybe doing little I don't know giving a little like introduction or conclusion to write about a random topic to the students in order for us who practice before having to write the essays I don't know if we have the time I only must have students our first
graduate in my English forget amorphous class but I think most of the students are postgraduate in my class I think maybe most of them don't have the time but maybe just few lines to practice maybe before the big essay that we're going to write maybe could help because we're talking about it we're improving on our speaking skills and we're talking about writing skills but we're not really practicing maybe practicing a little bit before yeah before the essay

R: okay anything else that you would like to say or express

Noémie: no I don’t think so

R: okay brilliant

Nono

R: okay so um I want to know how you feel that you are doing in your academic studies so do you feel that you're doing well or are you struggling

Nono: uhm I think I feel more like academically I can like my working PhD okay in the lab but you know like so if you have lab work and you have get samples you you just busy all the day full time from sometimes from nine to five full day just do the with the lab the equipment but with sometimes the speaking it's not like they're some like the in the lunchtime I feel like with my colleague I can talk and I can speak but I feel I like mainly just like I don't speak too much to English speakers so I don’t know @

R: okay and what would you say that your strengths are

Nono: uhhh in my like

R: so first academically so in general yeah

Nono: okay academically I think I can work uhh as maybe full time in the lab I interested really in the lab but I'm afraid from the just because I'm not English speaking uh speaker I feel like I afraid from the presentation I afraid from like to give a talk to the public but in the same time I want to improve my this my my skills in this uhh career I don’t know like it's I feel like struggle when my supervisor even now you have presentation like few few weeks I know I want to know in advance you know like one month before or three weeks so I prepare myself I feel like in that in that time I like a little bit afraid but when it I give it the presentation it was fine and everyone like especially my supervisor but for myself [click] like all the time even now when I'm taking the [course] if there is presentation no I'm not taking I'm not keen to give the presentation so @ can other one take it so I don't know maybe maybe I'm because I'm not English speaker or I don't know @ or it’s from a part of my personality so @
R: and what do you think you're good at in English
Nono: listening I would be like perfect in the listening and I'm [pause] ehhh maybe the
next one would be speaking but not in the public and reading but the worst one that I think
so over the time I fled from the writing if like I am forced to write I write but like ohhh I feel like I'm not really really good at writing maybe because I don't have and just you know like now in the PhD so in the first year you co- you concern about just lab work and maybe literature review but because I'm not writing daily like a paragraph or something I feel like it's ooof all the time I I feel in the end but when when I reach that point I were really concerned and I did it in the end but like I don't know I like all the time I plan my like I should uhhh read and summarize because now science so I read articles and summarize but because I'm busy with family and PhD so the end of the day I didn't do it like but I'm trying to watching movies or listening to the radio or the TV so just improve and to get more vocabulary but the writing [clap] no way @
R: yeah so what what do you find difficult about the writing
Nono: the starting [pause] so I plan all the time like what should I plan I do planning but when I start the introduction I feel ooo like the topic how I will introduce the topic once I started I can go and fill in but the starting is the bit uh the difficult one
R: yeah so just first getting a word on the paper
Nono: yes maybe@ one@ line@ paragraph and then I can proceed yeah the the first
R: okay and you said that reading is also a bit difficult for you so what's difficult about reading
Nono: at first when I came here like if you like when you I took a class as general and then I took Eng- IELTS classes the reading like if you have like passage like three or four pages then like they said just three or five minutes skim and scan and like just the topic or like I know like most of the words I didn't when I try to improve my reading not concentrating every word in the sentence so maybe I got the meaning of the ideas from the paragraph or but but I'm still still like now I feel like improve it too much four years ago but I'm still like not like that perfect and I'm trying even I'm trying to daily reading but it's it's better than the writing so I can read now so quick scan the topic the keywords in that but but the writing is maybe @just @because @like @panic from the writing I don't know yeah
R: great okay and so can you just tell me what kind of work is required for your PhD so every day what is your daily schedule
Nono: uh like actually we don't have in my in my PhD I don't have daily scheduled but I can like I come every day to the my office because my my samples my patient it doesn't like come daily no when they are [patients] have like [illness] so maybe week there's no
there's no samples but I come to the office like okay I have scheduled maybe reading two paper summarize two paper for analysis the results depends it's not like a plan you have to do it this one this one this one because if some some days I have six samples in a day so I can work because and the lab it's like the first they need my experiment need maybe three to four days to finish but I don't have fixed it like really planned do this one this one this one and reading or planning but but when I have like because we have this journal club and research meeting if I have like no one she will present so I have to concentrate on that talk to summarize to finish the result so it depend it's not fixed so

Yeah it varies a lot

Yeah varies a lot I love to be planning and I love like this is this is the aim this is go go go but it doesn't it's not working with my PhD @ @ @

so don't feel like there's a clear aim or

yeah no it's there's a clear aim from my projects but because there's I even I concern there's no too much sample from the patient I have like basic lab work but from from that really the main idea for my project like I feel I am go away from I go away from the the main idea but I love if there's aim in this two weeks or three weeks you have to finish this one and then go to the next step but just not it's not the case with with this project so you need just we need and in the I like it's so sad we I love to have samples but for this the [patients] and when you feel like that so sad to concentrate this [patients] because they will they have developmental and intellectual developmental delay in their life I wish I have like a samples but in that meant I know that will be scary for for the [family] and for the [patients] in the meantime but I if I have like plan I love to go with the plan like daily doing this one monthly or or weekly or daily I love to do finish like or just for my when I was like when I'm from undergrad I feel like you have to concentrate do this one this one timetable it will be perfect but it doesn't work I really all the time I want to drop to my supervisor I'm worried about my project I didn't do just one I he said stop worrying now you will be finishing that we will get degree and but I don't know maybe maybe my @personality or this is the project difficulty or I don't know really @

right um can you tell me about the skills that are required in as a PhD student

okay first I think should be ummm enthusiastic and team worker so you have to work with the other because I'm in two labs so [topic] and [topic] so we have to be good communication and good uhh speaking because you have to present weekly and I think even in the scientific ways so we have to read articles updated update articles journals about our projects so maybe reading and the writing but I'm se- I feel now like I have like result I have to write a paper but but you know I feel ok I will postpone it I will postpone it
because I’m afraid for that for the writing but my co supervisor she assisted me all the time
no one you you are or you already read the article why you are not summarized this one in
paragraph and keep it and doing the other one and then you will feel you are really like less
stressed and you improve your writing at the same time but I okay I will read and then
summarize a little bit and then go to the other one and then go to the other one so @ yeah
[sharp inhale] but but I think the main one should be [pause] umm I think writing reading
all this stuff but writing it's really for I don't know maybe the other the other what they
think but I believe the writing for me is most important skills I need it in my in my project
time now
R: okay and um let's see how do you feel that your supervisors assess academic success so
what do they look for in your work
[sniff] they say even if I have meeting they all the time they are kind first of all the
kind they are not strict so if I if I ask them to have have a rest or have a holiday they don't
mind you can do this one they are really like they are not strict to have finish this one and
give me review or literature review but or systemic review there they are not but but in the
me- but when I am I'm I stay with myself and like sometimes you have like minutes to
speak with you would you mind just if I have strict supervisor it would be perfect for me so
@ may be I improve and get more more academic performance so maybe @
work at present analysis that result and but but if I I wish I have strict supervisor so he
@ may be I improve and get more more academic performance so maybe @
R: okay so so you wish that you had someone telling you okay I need this by this date
by this yes and by this time yeah but @@ my supervisor @ they are open mind
okay if you if you can't do this one it would be good if you can and even because maybe I
have just a new baby so they will let okay don't r- don’t stress yourself you have family in
this but but because maybe I came here just to finish my postgrad I'm worried about the
time is I am finished in the time is I am with the aim is I am with the plan if I am in the
scope of the project they said yes yes you know all right and you don't worry don't worry
stop worried sometimes okay I feel but it comes the idea if I go back to do have a think
have like to go to see my plan I I really I really worry you know but they said okay you did
do great in the first year and then you can keep going I don't know @@ maybe if they're
strict supervisor they're not say that @
R: so when you've given them a piece of your work so say you you've given them your
literature review or
Nono: sometimes uhhh yes some of the literature review and but the main one because I'm just doing the first aim just analysis of the results we can maybe talk presentation like in a PowerPoint and they give me feedback so yeah

R: what kind of feedback have they give

Nono: uhhhh sometimes it's not scientific but just with the writing so my my main supervisor like written mista- like in the writing the comma the punctuation but in the it's not ehh mistakes in the analysis or just he and sometimes in the slide of the presentation just he give it to me every the first I haven't do like uh you it must easily slide have a title and conclusion but I just give him bullet point and then he said no maybe maybe maybe give a title try to plan every idea maybe in more two or three slide but uhh I'm trying I'm I learned I learned in the PhD and the masters sooo I haven't finished but I learned too much since I started the work in the PhD @ I’m still learning until now @

R: okay yeah okay so how do your professors communicate their expectations so do they tell you exactly what they want from you or

Nono: hmm yes because we have me I think weekly meeting so I tell them uh what I did this one and this one and this one and they said most of the time they said okay great yes you did good and maybe if you had they have extra extra advice so you can correct this one and maybe if you read more in this area concentrate doing because ci- them I think the main supervisor he needs some time as he asked it to do posters and abstract for the conference so we we they insisted me to all the time they insisted me to write because I'm not English so th- they wrote like um um six months the report they give me most of the mark four from five four out of five I'm good but but in that literature review I'm not finishing it I start I'm still reading and writing they said maybe three four so so they never finishing it I start I'm still reading and writing they said maybe three four so so they never give me five out of five and sometimes if I ask did me did I am did badly or good or he said yeah yeah yeah but if you give you five so there's no need@ to@ be@ here like doing finished so this is just maybe official way to assess but I don't know@@

R: okay alright um so how much of a factor does language play in academic success so how important is it
Nono: ah I would I think I say ninety percent eighty from nineteen because if you like

because now we are [nationality] so [language] is completely different from English

everything the grammar the writing write way so translate even the meaning sometime is

the in English like the word sometimes it depends on the sentence and in the topic but in

[language] not it’s like so if you study in language other from your uh tongue mother

language I think a little bit difficult but if you see yourself you can do it I think you will

you can but but the language is really really important it's so for listen you have to have to

understand and you have to speak and I'm still until now afraid to give a presentation in the

front of my colleague if like we have a three three labs if my just my own lab I'm I'm

comfortable I can like but if like more people I'm a little bit afraid you know like but I

think 90% is the language play a really important role

R: and what other factors are are important so besides language things like content or a

family life or housing or social life

Nono: oh okay I think even the family because now I see the difference now between my

undergrad and postgrad my undergrad was a a single just with my mom and my parents

just going to the college studying with my friends studying and when I come back at home

I'd just cuz concentrated on my study I can help with my mom but now as I'm mom for

three kids I think it’s as a wife I think it’s really really difficult you know your your

husband needs time your kids your even your uh your house needs me so I would be

recommend if anyone I even I was saying now to my colleague while they are doing

Master with me last year if you are applying to do your PhD try to do it when you're single

but not when mother with children it would be really really difficult they had really

impact so trying to and even in the evening or try to read a few planning to read or write

but you are still busy so maybe getting tired from that from the kids at the same time the

kids they need extra care and they are still young homework mind the baby baking making

the food so yeah it's an even the social life so if you are going abroad apart from your

family you're missing your country your family it will impact your studying but if you

have plan you can you can do this one and and even now with the social media so you

can speak to them I haven't seen my my mum for three years now but I I phone her every

day so I feel she is close to me and this is not really really impact to me but but in the

family if you busy this is impact you really in different ways but if you have I think I you

will stress to yourself because you have you have family and you have PhD work you have

to done we have declined it's a little bit difficult but with with the help from your husband

if your husband helping you I think you can do it and you can reach your objective in the
R: so you have a lot of help and support from your husband
Nono: yes yeah yeah yeah yeah if I if I'm not like if I got husband but like he doesn't care
about me I'm not in the place now doing PhD with the kids you know it's like difficult they are still below ten so they need @ @yeah maybe time you know yeah but because he is support and yeah I can do what I'm n- I'm looking for yeah @
R: good that's so important
Nono: yeah @ it's really important yeah
R: um so did you have any linguistic so language or academic preparation before coming [institution 1]
Nono: uh yes because when you are as international student so you have to get IELTS or TOEFL but I choose IELTS because it I feel it's academically preparation so you can when you go to master or PhD you can get importance of the IELTS because concentrate and academic writing academic speaking reading yeah I took IELTS before but it's not for a long time maybe just four and a half months but the general maybe six six months yeah so it's really important that language yeah for
R: yeah so so you took alt classes for about four and a half months and how did you feel about that preparation
Nono: aahh I I I before I came here like I didn't have a preparation in my country I just try to read to get for grammar but when I came here I just took the general classes but it was it wasn't like academically really academic like in the university it’s in the school so they teach uh teach the maybe for it’s general language like playing or grammar listening but doesn't they didn't concentrate on the speaking and I like I left I just I was in the school in the in the city center and it's not like they didn't plan like for for example today we have present simple and next day they are not go by page and by planning from the grammar to step by step they randomly I and then I decided no no no it's not academically I don't know I just I waste my time I will prepare to go to the university I studied in [institution 12] in English and I took just uhh uh Eng- IELTS classes but it was a little bit short because they didn't have full year IELTS and then I took IELTS classes in [private language school] in [street name] for maybe four months yeah at first I feel it's so difficult because they need it's not like IELTS they need to reteach you that skills once you learn the skills you can practice whatever you want like three four or five exams in a day but the really important is keep exam practice especially for the reading and the writing you can read and then I took priv- uh private classes because I was looking for seven at first in every task I tried two or three times and then I didn't get that score so I was give up to register I cancel and I then I took private teacher to get just go to the University got 6.5 doing master doing
PhD and then you can register otherwise I don't want to waste my time and to ask my scholarship at the same time so I took a private teacher maybe five hours but she is really good it was like the struggle it was just the writing but I'm really good at the listening and sometimes the reading very got depend on the exam if it's difficult or not but the writing and the speaking okay sometimes I feel like comfortable with the topic but if I got difficult topic oh my god I do not know what I will talk @ but the writing the writing yeah but I feel in the classes because the teacher comes and just uhm speak and doing give you and give you they didn't give too much just speaking for the student if they speak just maybe one to three minutes and that's it for the day but because I feel the English language it's the communication while you are speaking while you are speaking you can improve your your language it didn't happen in the I never tried English classes in [institution 1] but in the in the schools that is just listening and even some school they didn’t practice listening or reading just like the teacher okay give the photocopy and practice this one and that's I don’t this is the way of this they should concentrate on the speaking interacting.

R: okay and so how do you feel that IELTS and all of these classes prepared you for [institution 1]

Nono: yes I when I got that score six point five I applied for the master in the [institution 1] and when uhhh because we have exams and we have assignment written essays so it's like this the main structure parag- introduction paragraph body paragraph conclusion is the same I really got good benefit from IELTS classes uhh I in my I believe if I studied maybe more than four months in IELTS maybe my academic performance was uhhh better than better than better than now so I can I feel like my writing improving my reading but if I had like a really good IELTS classes really good time even if the m- are like too much time I can like but it definitely helped me so much written the essays and yeah just maybe I need push up in the how to write the introduction and then I can go @ @ @ yeah

R: okay alright and what type of preparation should international students take before studying at [institution 1] so what should they learn

Nono: uhh as I said before they should the skills like of the IELTS I think the IELTS it in my opinion at its model really perfect model for for the academic people with eh who are seeing from doing master or PhD in their postgrad they concen- but but in my opinion they should concentrate on this speaking so if you find someone just conversation maybe two to four hours a day or watching more more movies every day writing up every day so definitely you will improve your skills or watching videos uh or teach and even now the you tubes like they have and even I enjoyed watching YouTube's IELTS feature in YouTube I really they helped me the it will be perfect so they really improve their skills
but I recommend if someone looking for postgrad and his international and his language is not like should be take IELTS classes or general but in academic in academic way is not like the the schools like they just business in my opinion they are just business should be in university like academic for purpose like what are you teach now @ R: so it should be focused on academics not going to the store and buying groceries but how to write a paper how to read journal articles

Nono: yes yes yes yes

R: alright so um if you could give advice to professors and faculty about how to deal with international students how to help international students what would it be

Nono: I think I commented to ask them if it's difficult to write daily maybe weekly may be monthly or if it just even just at the first maybe just summarize read and summarize what you read and the article just make just a little bit paragraph and maybe if once they were familiar with with the methods so maybe they can ask them weekly or monthly but this is I think this is this is the main important if you ask your your student to write weekly or monthly just in my opinion daily is so so difficult maybe busy busy but weekly month it would be perfect yeah

R: okay so asking your students to write on a regular basis

Nono: yeah yeah yeah

R: is there anything else that you would tell professors to do to help students

Nono: maybe also encourage speaking so ask them to give a talk or maybe some people afraid like what has happened to it me now I'm afraid if someone asked me to give a presentation but if they practice and uh they regular basis like monthly you have to present monthly has to present even like for a short time five to ten minutes it will they will get benefit from that in my opinion speaking write write speak speak

R: okay um if you could give advice to organizations so schools so like our center or the IELTS schools or the English schools in Dublin if you could give advice to them about preparing international students what would that be

Nono: [sharp inhale] hmm I think they should encourage uh them to read daily write up daily uh speak because I did I'm in my experience I have like three or four schools and one university and even in my master so I took my master like it's not research but it's modules taught module there's not that much speaking so just the lecturer came and gave lecture but in the some of the modules we have in the end of day we have project presentation but if they change the way just doing daily speaking or maybe just have five minutes every student have to present maybe uhm story or whatever it is but just to encourage them to speak and write they will get the benefit so they will not struggle when once they started
their postgraduate or undergrad uhm especially if you are not a your language is not close to the English uh as what happened in the [language] so it's a completely different language in everything so must be practice speaking and writing listening I don't know because my I feel myself like my listening from the start it is good I can I can understand the movies the news if someone speaks to me in a little bit slow but it's not that fast I can understand and my like a good get word but but the writing but they should be like this is not even now with the technology I think the way they teach previous generation it must be changed so just no just just the teacher came and give it must encourage the student to participate to give talk to to build the confidence and and in the same time improve the reading and the writing and their skills so they will and I think now most of the schools they do because now we have kids so I see my kids daily do writing reading and even and just the are in first and second class so I but I don't know about the speaking maybe they but they are my my kids they are English speaking so sometimes they correct it for me mommy say in that way it's not that way pronounce in that way so I feel okay@ my@ kids they are really learn@ from @school you know@ and even they try to speak in English watch in English try to afraid they say oh [language] is difficult and ahh we don't want to speak but because we it's our our language we we need them to speak at least but now they are starting in [country] school once a week a little bit few hours on Saturday so they start they now start to speak and but they prefer English so @@ I think yeah speaking the speaking very very good and even from the from the from the beginner at school and the writing @@ sorry maybe I feel I go on@@ R: noo no it's fine alright are you aware of any support that international students receive from the school from [institution 1] Nono: I didn't exp- in my experience uhh I don't know I never try any support of for the English you mean for the English no no I never tried because I just got that score for the IELTS I saw like there is a #unt courses so you can even but because I'm busy I wish I would go to these classes but and even there's like CV preparation like career service here so but I never try it is when I'm busy I wish if I have time to to write up even if someone like even apart it's not from my project I can like write up and give it to someone correct for me so my improve my improve my writing but I never tried so if you have someone maybe ask me to @@ R: @ okay so those are all of the questions that I have for you but is there any question that you wish that I had asked that I didn't ask Nono: uhm [click] uhhh [long pause] I think I did say I think okay anything else you'd like to add or anything else that you'd like to express
Nono: just maybe because you are now you are expert in academic teaching so if you have you see like someone have like classes for postgrad to go to improve their writing just let me know because I'm really you know I want to improve my writing I wish if I can write like English speaker without any mistakes like okay can I can start because I'm really struggled to the in the writing you know and the especially that introduction you know and even if my supervisor correct for me sometimes the grammar he said but the punctuation but if you if you have any of these like support for just let me know [click] that and it's a great experience and thank you for this
R: thank you thank you so much

Patricia

R: all right so um first I'd like for you to say how would you evaluate your current academic success at [institution 1]
Patricia: @@ well uhm I have taken only one module well I took two one was about um general skills for PhDs we didn't actually have any formal assignments for that one it was most um about you know small talks about how to deal with stress or how to uhh you know work with certain like the endnote and those kinds of things um the only thing with it was a [pause] a how do you call that a resume and we were offered feedback and it was actually very helpful because uh especially for me coming from a different country um we did it differently so I got to see how they will be expectations and and the things that you want and look for in a resume here so it was actually very helpful and then I used that resume the corrected version and sent it to an actual um website where they were hiring people for um some kind of linguistic uh uh work and I got the job they didn't get back to me in the second stage but they said it was nice and they liked my resume bla bla bla they didn't pick me because I didn't have a device that I needed to use for recording so [pause] but the resume was successful which means it it was well done @ so in a way I could say that it was successful and then the assignment that I wrote for the module um I was very happy with it I got a high [pause] grade I think it was a 70 you one or 74 I don't remember so I think overall it has been okay for modules however for the dissertation I found a little bit more uh challenges uh I've had some uh sessions for feedback with my supervisor and she's just mentioned a couple of things for example about my writing style or certain uh issues I need to work on it so I wouldn't necessarily say it is successful because I haven't had and you know clean no corrections kind of thing but I think it's been helpful and it's progressing positively @ yeah
R: um and what would you say your strengths are

Patricía: in terms of uhh writing? or

R: well first we can do academically and then I'll ask something else after

Patricía: well I would say [pause] my previous experience as a lecturer and a [discipline] teacher gives me some kind of [pause] hm guidance or foundation to kind of understand

the world academically eh or at least what @I @think it is like umm obviously the expect-

ations here and in [country] are different the way we treat students is differently so

[pause] it gives me some kind of idea but [pause] I feel very confused sometimes when I'm

here yeah

R: um can you expand on the differences so you were saying these expectations and also

how you treat students is different between the two countries

Patricía: so well um first of all in [country] we don't have a lot of programs that uh

evaluate students’ academic English so when they have to produce texts that are written in

English or when they have to work with English [pause] we don't really expect high grades

or um we don't expect them to be really proficient so as long as they [pause] can handle the

task and they follow certain rules that we give them [pause] it's acceptable but [pause] and

also because I think being in an EFL environment [pause] makes it different [pause] like

click] [long pause] for example the the experiences I've had writing in English in

[country] have been very successful I have a few publications and one of them actually

international although it was in [continent] and it feels like there what I write is good it's

like I've had two papers accepted with no corrections by journals [pause] and then here it

feels like [pause] I can't [pause] I can’t get them right so I don't know if the the fact that we

are not native speakers makes it a little bit like [pause] like they're a little bit more tolerant

with our mistakes there or if it's actually good and I just don't understand what is

happening here so could be yeah

R: okay and what would you say your strengths are in terms of English so linguistically

Patricía: umm [sigh] [pause] well I would say [pause] writing is one of my strengths or at

least I thought @it was um [pause] reading I can read I can understand in fact I I I don't

only read academic texts I read novels and all kinds of things um I struggle for example

with colloquial language? because I've never been well until now I've never been living in

a native country or environment so a lot of the cultural references for I don't know even

music or you know things like that slang and informal language is not my strength um the

the English has learned it has always been in the school context so I feel that I can I I’m

comfortable in that environment uh-hu

R: okay and what would you say that your weaknesses would be academically
Patricía: hmm [long pause] even though I consider myself a good writer I would also say I still have weaknesses in that area uh particularly now that I'm writing the dissertation I think um [pause] dealing with the style? [pause] of a dissertation is becoming challenging now mm-

R: and do you know what about it makes it challenging or is it just kind of feeling

Patricía: well from the feedback I've had from my supervisor um she mentioned that it's very narrative that I have a very nar- narrative style [pause] I kind of know what she means but uhh after she mentioned that I started looking at some uh dissertations that I could access and I started to see like the difference between my paragraphs and their paragraphs and I see things for example I use a lot of quotes and then I when looking at the other ones I so there's no quotes it's just you know parentheses and who said or just like signaling where you found or where you would find a quote so I I after I got the feedback started looking at things a little bit differently but it's only after I got the feedback

R: okay um alright what about the feedback do you feel that the feedback is um so you're saying that's now you're seeing things from a different way but it was only until you got the feedback do you feel that the feedback is coming at the right time that is timely or is it were you kind of left on your own for too long

Patricía: no I think it's been very um constant very [pause] helpful and and appropriate? we meet very often and whenever I ask for a meeting or help or you know something [pause] help is always provided by my supervisor so I think I'm I’m lucky and I don't think it happens for everyone but at least in my case it's been fine

R: okay perfect um so thinking about the modules that you've had to take can you tell me about the work required in your modules

Patricía: okay so for the first one as I said there was no formal assignment it was just like a an activity or exercise which was the resume writing and then for the other one the module it was a four thousand word essay um we were given [pause] I think two topics or I don’t even remember no maybe she had us look at the whole um all the topics for the module and then we picked one that we wanted and and she told us to write an essay on it she told us to be um to consider certain features that were discussed in in the module and I sent her an email before writing being the assignment and I told her about my idea I wanted to contrast two um studies that I found and and then analyze it using the things we saw in the module so I sent her an outline and she agreed with it and she provided a little bit of feedback and then then I wrote it and it was successful I guess @
Patricía: I think for the [module] it was mostly using the computer when you was very challenging because we were working with um programs that are only used in [topic] so things like transcribing or programs to to upload text and come up with you know the frequency of words and stuff like that it was very challenging um we only have two hours and only one hour was dedicated to the computer um skills and we were all lost like we had a Chinese classmate who was very good with computers and we were all copying whatever he was doing like he was so fast and he was natural at working with the computer and we were just like okay what are you doing how do you click on it and you know can you come back and he would be helping us like the teacher would go around and he became his basically his assistant @ because we were like ah help us@ so I think um you this the use of endnote I think those are at the moment some of my biggest challenges um what else obviously academic writing and being able to use certain phrases connectors um using the vocabulary that is appropriate for the writing that we're doing a lot in short time and I think those would be the main skills.

R: okay and can you tell me about the skills required as a research student

Patricía: hmmm independent work being very analytical and critical reading a lot @ um and I would say figuring out things because they don't tell you what to do they don't tell you what to look for they just kind of say something and you have to go jump in the sea and you know swim @ and that's it I think that's something very important to be able to look for things and know or try to figure out what they want you to find if that makes sense

R: yeah so going with that how do your professors assess academic success like what are they actually looking for

Patricía: I don't know @@ I feel like there's something um general? but at the same time they don't tell you so of course they say okay you have to write this dissertation and you have to use academic language and that's it so how do you do it and then they say things like okay look at other dissertations go find examples of other people in the department who have written something and you go and look for it and they're all so different even though they are about the same topic or similar topics they look very different they do have certain things in common for example references um in terms of format the length of the paragraphs like very obvious um characteristics in the text but at the same time it's like yeah but how how do I do it how do I get here and and you have to be very critical with yourself because
sometimes you would write something or I would write something and I look at another
example I say well it sounds similar I I think this could be you know similar and then
when I go for feedback [pause] it's not [pause] so I don't know there's something there that
it's not getting through but I don’t know what it is

R: alright so in general what do you think that students need in order to succeed at
institution 1]

Patricía: hmmm [long pause] well first of all I think the university lacks a lot of resources
as a student coming from [country] I know [nationality] universities have a lot of umm
issues with providing students with services and and resources and when I came here I
thought it would be different for example um the library doesn't have a lot of books that I
need or that I would like to find uh some of them are lost like even though the system says
they are there when you go and look for them they’re not even if you ask for help no one
can find them um [pause] so that's one thing um [pause] and also like there is help like if
you go and and or or if if you contact people they always tell you okay we have this
services we have mentoring we have the student services or this department that is
supposed to be helping students with academic issues but at the same time it's not clear
what they offer and [pause] and I feel like everything is so [pause] directed to master’s
students or undergrad students and PhDs PhDs is like okay you guys know what to do you
you're old you're you know you're supposed to be doing things fine so [sigh] I don't know
R: so you feel like PhD students kind of just get brushed brushed under like covered up
Patricía: yeah yeah like they assume that you already know things [pause] and they just
don't care like they expect it to know what to do

R: okay and how much of a factor would you say language plays and academic success at
institution 1]

Patricía: hmmm [long pause] language [pause] I think it's more about finding this style
[pause] that they want [pause] also I don't know if it's because my experience has been
mostly with American English and a little bit of British English in the masters [pause] and
maybe there's something particular in Ireland [pause] about Irish English that I've never
heard before well I didn't know anything about Irish English before coming here it has
been a challenge I think it's very very different from the other um varieties of English that I
have used and maybe [pause] that's part of the problem maybe there's some kind of style in
Irish English that I'm not familiar with? and maybe that's the problem because I mean
how< how is it possible that I am successful when I use American English or British
English like and and then here is like no no no I maybe it's something there about Irish
English or Irish um style in academic English I don’t know
R: um and what other factors so if identified this the Irish English or the style but what
other factors have an influence on academic success

Patricía: hmmmm

R: and it doesn't necessarily have to be academic it could be anything

Patricía: mmhm I think I also get the feeling that you have to be involved and you have to
be very active and it's a little bit like social media like how much can you [pause] say or
how many things have you done it's like showing off [pause] and sometimes also as a PhD
student it's difficult to be everywhere and to do everything because you are so @busy with
your own research so uh I find it a little bit tiring? that they also expect you to to do many
things on the side [pause] of the of the PhD

R: and give you can you give examples of those

Patricía: eh attending conferences lectures uh even social events I feel like if you're not
really involved in social life here is like you don't exist and uh also well personally I don't
like a lot of socializing? because that's my personality and and I don't think it's fair because
also uh if you're here to do academic stuff why are you required to engage in so many
social stuff or like even turning things that are academic into social like that thing about uh
tell your PhD in the pub or something like that or events were drinking and academic stuff
get mixed like to me that's kind of weird? And I don't necessarily want to take part of those
things so yeah I don't know @@@ it’s confusing @

R: okay so um did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before attending

Patricía: yes and no I I have never had any formal EAP [pause] uh preparation everything I
know about academic English I've learned [pause] by doing so hmm in in [country] the
English classes that we have our general English so you know the basic working with a
textbook listening to dialogues and preparing for a TOEFL exam or in IELTS exam um
when I started the BA I started to write in English because all the courses were delivered in
English and our teachers were native speakers of English or had been trained in European
universities so they kind of taught us um how to do it and [pause] I would say it was easy
for me and and I was the one helping my classmates uh at some point and that's how I
learned by helping other people and by hmm having our teachers [pause] explain to us how
to do things but I've never had any formal training

R: okay and you've touched on this a bit but um how do you feel that that training even
though it's informal how do you feel that it prepared you for [institution 1]

Patricía: [long pause] well I think the fact that I got accepted @@ with the proposal that I
wrote using those skills that I learned could be considered as being successful or as having
had something that set me apart from other people and and come here so I would say it was helpful yeah

R: okay and did you take an entry assessment before being accepted to [institution 1]

Patricía: like a test a language test?

R: yeah

Patricía: yeah in [country] for my job we're required to take an IELTS exam I took the academic IELTS exam I don't remember when I think it might have been a year before coming here [pause] and it was fine I think I got a band seven which is you know enough @ to get in

R: yes //and

Patricía: sorry| I I don't think it necessarily shows or [pause] means what hmm like [pause] a number means what you actually know? but [pause] what can you do @ @ @ yeah

R: can you expand on that because that was going to be my very next question @

Patricía: @ yeah so for example um [long pause] I don't think when you read the description that comes with the number that you've got [pause] like you kind of see okay I know this or or they say this about me but I don't necessarily think it reflects [pause] hmm my reality as as an English speaker or for example um in the writing I felt very confident and I think it showed but [pause] maybe because of the format of the exam also the fact that you're not given enough time or or well not enough time like you have to be efficient when taking those exams so you cannot really show what you can do or it's different writing those little essays that come with the exam than writing you know one assignment for a module or something like that so if if I get high grades in an assignment like the [module] and then I get a number that [pause] it's low or consider low and when you talk to teachers hmm it's it's not it doesn't correspond

R: okay all right um and so what type of preparation do you feel that international students should take before studying at [institution 1] if any

Patricía: I think definitely you would have to take um some kind of content classes in English it could be very overwhelming to come here and suddenly have everything [pause] being explained in English having to read that much in English and basically well doing everything in English so you I think having some kind of content [pause] classes [pause] I don't know if hmm an EAP class because obviously in every country [pause] I don't know what happens and it it would be very different but at least being able to know what it's like to be in a classroom where everything is done in English would be enough at least
R: so if you could give advice to you faculty and professors at [institution 1] about interacting and supporting international students what would that advice be
Patricía: [long pause] hm [long pause] probably um like I know for assignments for example they do have [pause] a rubric or some kind of chart that helps them great but for example is showing us that beforehand um would be helpful to know what it is expected for what you're being graded on when you turn in an assignment because um [pause] sometimes you think that you're writing what you're supposed to write and then when you check that table you see what they marked hmm maybe you didn't understand correctly or maybe there's eh some kind of mismatch between what you think they want and what they actually grade so being aware of those grading charts would be helpful and maybe even though professors don't have the time to work with you in class you know in your assignments at least providing examples or [pause] some kind of guidance so that you know what they want @ yeah because as I said at the beginning everything is so different even if you look at assignments of other students who got good grades and you look at yours it's like okay we all got 70 or whatever but why is it so different it was we took the same module we we you know wrote about the well similar topics and yet everything looks so different and you don't know what it means when professors grade it [pause] so
R: so like what actually makes it a 70
Patricía: exactly
R: like what are they looking at
Patricía: uh-uh yeah yeah
R: okay so if you could give advice to organizations who are preparing international students before their university studies what would that be
Patricía: [sigh] organizations [long pause] well I have an issue with organizations@@@ because um for example all those courses that are supposed to prepare you for standardized tests or working with standardized tests well this is supposed to [pause] to make everything homogeneous and kind of tell you okay generally this is what you're expected to do in this context but then in reality it doesn't happen like it helps but it's not enough so I think or-organizations work a lot on coming up with standard [pause] versions of things but it doesn't necessarily match reality [pause] and like the the IELTS exam it's a nice effort that they include different kinds of accents or different kinds of tasks in the exam but it doesn't reflect what you do when you come to school so maybe I don't know pairing up with universities asking professors and people inside the university and see if they could come up with some kind of tasks that are better suited for the actual life inside the university
okay so having more of like an in-house program and an in-house assessment rather than relying on external standardized exams
Patricía: yeah yeah I think so [pause] yeah because they they would be testing exactly what they want or at least I @think @they @should @do @that @@ yeah @
R: okay and then if you could give advice to prospective students what would that be
Patricía: hmm [pause] about academic English? Or anything
Patricía: anybody coming into //institution 1
R: [institution 1]
Patricía: uhh [long pause] I would say first familiarize with Irish English hmm [long pause]
I think that's one of the biggest ones [pause] umm [long pause] I don’t know [long pause]
maybe not [pause] expecting to be [pause] guided @ so be ready to do a lot of independent work to be ready to do a lot of things on your own to be isolated I mean if it's not necessarily a bad thing like working independently and being isolated could be good sometimes it could be positive because also when you go into [pause] uhh a career in academia you're left alone so it's okay but sometimes when especially from countries in [continent] we're used to our teachers or lec- lecturers or professors holding our hand and guiding guiding us through the whole process like working in class in your assignment like you would be given an assignment and they would actually work with you you know we're going to write the introduction we're going to write this and that or like they give feedback or they provide some kind of step to step thing to help you through the process and here's like okay you know what to do go do it [pause] and it’s it’s [pause] could be difficult
R: okay so you've touched on resources here at [institution 1] but um are you aware of any support that international students receive from your professors from your department from the wider University
Patricía: well I know there is the global the department of global relations um at the beginning I thought they would be more involved and they would be checking up on me at least @ and they haven't like they welcomed me they the first day that I got here they acknowledged my presence but I haven't had any contact with them at all since then so it was only one day half an hour coffee welcome to [institution 1] pff that's it. Nothing about housing nothing about your progress in the school nothing um I know there's also the EAP program uh from [center] um [pause] maybe because I'm part of the department and [center] I know about it and I know what they do and I know the effort they make but I don't think other people know so maybe trying to to get schools and and
people inside the university to first learn about it and then recommend it to students

the program is not perfect it needs changes and no program is ever going to be perfect

like it could be it would be very difficult um to have the perfect program but there are little

things that could be done like I was thinking for example about I saw this in on Facebook

the other day about Irish schools implementing a program where they have where where

kids have little buddies to help them with language problems and stuff so I was thinking

like the EAP program has for example levels or it's divided by discipline >which is very

but having for example other [language] speakers who are successful in writing or

in reading or in whatever academic skill it is [pause] that understand your mistakes and

your problems with language maybe they could hmm help you with some [pause] tasks and

also I know it's very time-consuming but having some kind of um support in terms of

[pause] okay I wrote this or I wrote this draft I need someone to check it and tell me if it

makes sense if it's okay so I don't know working in smaller groups or some kind of focus

group where people could share and and you could get feedback from [pause] more

experienced um [pause] students who could share their hmm first language and I know uh

it's not difficult because here Dublin you know you could find people who speak any

language so if you find those people you you could build something that could be helpful

>even if it's not< you know Spanish Italian French uh Russian you could even have

Romance language languages so all those people speaking French Spanish Italian they are

going to share some problems and as a teacher you know where they

struggle so so giving some kind of [pause] yeah like peer support or something like that

R: okay um that's it from me but um are there any questions that you wish I had asked that

didn't ask

Patricía: [long pause] hmm no I think I think it was fine yeah yeah I can’t think of anything

okay and do you have anything else that you want to add

no I think that's all

Seven

Seven: actually I didn't do a lot of academic uhh in [institution 1] but from my IELTS

scores I think maybe I will be good at uh writing? because I got 6.5 in writing and uh also

uhhhhh speaking because I really enjoying the group discussion during module
R: okay right and what do you have difficulties with

Seven: oh [pause] writing as well because I don't know the structure of the essays so uh maybe it will be very difficult for me to uh when I need to write and also critically thinking yeah because when I reading papers and articles that professors give me I I can only uh read it and uh have recorded but I can't it's very difficult for me to uh think to think by myself about some new new opinions

R: okay yes and can you tell me about the modules you are taking like what kind of work do you have to do for the modules

Seven: uhh you mean the name of the modules

R: well the name of the modules and then also like do you do outside reading do you do assessments what does the module contain

Seven: uh I have three modules this this term and the first one is [module] and the second one is [module] and the third one is [module] and all these as for the assessment I need to finish this essay

R: okay and can you tell me more about the essay like how long it is are you given the question

Seven: yeah for the [module] I need to write a essay about [topic] for the [module] and it's about like 3,000 to 4,000 letters yeah and for the [module] I have three options the first one is the essay that the letters is from [pause] from 3,500 to 4,000 and the second one is a journal but actually I don't know what the journal is and I think it's very difficult for me to record all my daily conversation it should be included in the journal and the third one is the meaning essay and the essay yeah I think I I won't choose this one maybe in the first one suitable for me and as [module] I need to finish two parts the first one is I need to analyze the [topic] like the tree diagram

R: yeah the tree diagram

Seven: @ and the second part is the essay and the lecturer gave me some give us some some topics uhhh I only remember two of them the first one is [topic] and the second one is a contrast between [topic] yeah I think maybe I will choose the second one the compare between the [topic] because my first language is [language] and I have learned some grammar of [language] when I was in university so maybe I will choose this one

R: so you'll compare [topic]

Seven: yes

R: brilliant and so your since you're doing the master’s you also have to do a dissertation can you tell me what's required of you in the dissertation
Seven: oh @ I don't know too much about it I just know uh maybe it should be related to my major and about the research methodology I learned the quantitative and qualitative and that's all @ and now I'm learning statistics.

R: okay so can you describe the general structure of your lectures so when you walk into the classroom what happens is it the professor just speaking with PowerPoint is their class discussion etcetera.

Seven: uhh it depends on the different modules for the [module] the first the first hour the lecturer will uhhh speak about the content and the second hour we were handed a group discussion and the lecturer divided us into several different groups like according to the age of the students and uh I’m on to the child children because I'm interested in them and as for the other two modules just the uhh lecturers will speak.

R: all right perfect um and so you've talked about the form of assessment um but how would you currently say that you are doing academically like do you feel that you are academically successful right now.

Seven: no@ @ because I always have difficulty in reading yeah and uh um every week we have a lot of extra readings but sometimes I uhh I have problems to read them all I can just read maybe like one or two articles for for foreach module yes and I during reading I can just read but without thinking and summarize their opinion.

R: okay alright and what do you think your professors look for when they are grading so how do they assess academic success.

Seven: ah [pause] well in my opinion I think maybe they look they are looking for our creative opinions and also a good structure of the essay and that what I think.

R: okay alright and do your professors communicate their expectations to you.

Seven: uhhhh only one module the [module] uh the lecturer told us something about our essay like the topic and the presentation and and the we- the assessment the essay yeah.

R: okay and the rest have not.

Seven: mm-hmm [pause] maybe after reading week they will.

R: okay all right yeah true we are only in week 6 so@ okay um so how helpful so the one professor that has talked about the essay how helpful was that how helpful where the guidelines.

Seven: uhh it's very helpful because they give us the topics uh so I have some idea about what I need to uhh what kind of reference I need to read and uhh I think maybe I can think about my essay from now.

R: yeah okay right and it's so in general what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]
Seven: uhmm academic writing a I think it's the most important because uhh [pause] I think for us it's very [pause] difficult to write a dissertation in English yeah we have no idea about the structure and the academic vocabulary and how it can link like uh between each paragraph yeah like this

R: okay all right and so how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success

Seven: oh sorry I didn’t

R: so how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success so how important is language for getting good marks

Seven: yeah it's of course very important cuz without such language we can't write it mm like before when we are trying to write some essays we just use our mother language not English so umm actually I had an EAP class now and the teacher taught us a lot like how to write introduction and how to use linking words I think it's very useful

R: okay and what other factors play a part in academic success so what else impacts your academic success

Seven: uhhh I think like the knowledge of the major content is very important because now my major is related to [discipline] but uhh [pause] when I had undergraduate study my major is business English so it's totally different and now when I have the modules I especially for [module] I feel very difficult about it because I know nothing about [discipline] and but for [module] I found it's easier for me because in [country] my teachers always pay more attention to the grammar and vocabulary especially in high school to pass the exam so when the uh uhh when we when I I ha- having class here I found it's very easy for me to understand grammar yeah

R: okay and is there anything else that impacts so this could be inside or outside of [institution 1] that would impact your academic success

Seven: yeah I think maybe for my major is also very important to have some teaching experience because I [pause] didn't have too much experience so when I had the class like [module] I found sometimes I need to imagine what the students will like in my class but for some other classmates maybe they have some experience before it will be easier for them to understand what's the lecturers talking about

R: okay yeah alright so now I'm going to move towards your experiences with entry and preparation tools so before coming to [institution 1] did you take any linguistic or academic preparation so that could be like EAP courses IELTS preparation courses pre-sessional summer courses anything like that
Seven: uhh I have done IELTS classes before and I also had uhhh [pause] it's like a class that taught me how to write dissertation yeah but uh [pause] because my major it was business English so I need to finish my dissertation in English but in [country] uhh the teacher they don't pay much attention to the content they only focus on the structure [pause] yes so maybe it will be a little di- uh helpful yeah for my structure but as for the content I don’t have many @confidence

R: okay yeah and so you just talked about the dissertation and how it may or may not help you here what about the IELTS classes how well do you think those classes prepared you for [institution 1]

Seven: uhh for IELTS classes I just had the speaking and uhh reading and writing classes for the speaking it's like just uh talking with the foreigners to practice more and it is very helpful because before when I was in university which I just uh study writing and reading but not too much about speaking so practice means perfect right @so I think it is very helpful for me

R: and so you took IELTS before being accepted to [institution 1] how do you feel about IELTS

Seven: [big sigh] @@ it was really sad for me@ because I took a lot of time to preparing for IELTS like almost two months yeah I actually I firstly had IELTS exam in February 2017 and without any uh preparation and I got to 6.5 but and I I and actually it uh achieved the requirements to enter here but I thought ah I can I can do it without any preparation maybe if I prepare more I can get a higher score and then I prepared it for two month and then the score is still @6.5

R: so it just stayed the same

Seven: yeah so I feel a little disappointed about me

R: okay and um do you feel that that exam did a good job predicting how well you would do in [institution 1]

Seven: hmmm hmmm [pause] I don't think so because from the IELTS exam especially for the writing we had two parts and I think it's not very related to what I need to write now yeah [pause] maybe for speaking is helpful and for listening I think it's more about the daily life yeah

R: okay right and so what type of preparation should students take before coming to [institution 1]

Seven: mmm well I think maybe they need to read more articles in English and uhhh try to write some essays in advance yeah uhh to get familiar with the structure and vocabulary
like this and then maybe they should find some prof-prof- professors to help them look
onto their essays and give them more advice yeah
R: okay perfect um so if you could give advice to professors about dealing with
international students what would that advice be
Seven: mm-hmm [pause] I have to say that could you please @slow @down because they
are all- maybe they want to talk more about in the content so their uh uh speed I really fast
sometimes when I I found very difficult to uh [pause] how to say it to grasp them yeah and
mmm I hope the the the keywords can be clear because sometimes there are too many
informations in one class so uh and after class I feel uhh hard to to summarize it yeah I'm
always spend a lot of time to uhh like sum up the whole module
R: okay and if you could give advice to future students the students who are looking to
come to [institution 1] what would that advice be
Seven: I think maybe in the lang- uh the language courses during the summer vacation is
very helpful if I had the time to uhh uh if I had time I will [pause] participate uh in it yeah
and also uhh maybe they can find the the reading list the reference and reading list in
advance and read them more so because I I feel like it's difficult for me to read all
reference in the reading list I need more time
R: okay that's a good idea actually and so if you could give advice to organizations who
run summer programs like the language summer programs what would that advice be
Seven: hmmm [long pause] maybe they y- you mean like the institution should have the
/language
R: mm-hmm yeah
Seven: during| summer vacation //before they entering
R: yeah yep before they enter yeah]
Seven: yeah uhh I think maybe it will it should be related to [pause] the [pause] what
they are going to learn in [institution 1] like some skills [pause] like writing skills and also
the yeah I've also the presentation is very important part right yeah because I feel like I'm
nervous when I need to speak English in public and every time when the lecturers say do
you have any questions about our class I don't have to I am not very confident to product
myself yeah
R: okay um okay and are you aware of any support that international students receive from
your professors from your department from the University
Seven: uh yeah I know there is a postgraduate spot in [institution 1] that I didn't uh @go
@there and uh seek help
R: okay um so you haven't done that but you have mentioned the language classes that you're taking um so do you think that the support like the language classes and what you know of the postgraduates support do you think that they're doing a good job or is there anything that they could do to improve

Seven: yeah I think the language class is very helpful yeah I took I had I had this class every Friday and the teacher in this class they I think he’s the best teacher I ever met in institution 1 because he can speak very clearly and uh every time I have some problems in my modules I can ask him and he can always give some good advice

R: mm-hmm brilliant good um let's see yeah so that's all the questions that I have for you are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Seven: uhmm [pause] I remembered in the questionnaire I had wrote uh written down my experience in studying English and I want to talk more about it this part yeah because actually I started to learn English from kindergarten and I think most [nationality] student they also have learned English from like maybe primary school or in uh secondary school and but when I was in [country] the teacher always pay more attention to the writing and reading so uh it's very difficult for me to practice more in listening and uh speaking and I have I have paid a lot of time in when practicing this two part when I need to have IELTS exam yeah and uh when I was in university because my major is related to uh English actually I had I think most [pause] classes I had is related to English English reading and speaking and writing but I feel like after graduation I know I still know nothing about my major yeah so when I come to [institution 1] I [pause] it's like a totally new field to me yeah

R: yeah so it's just it feels like it's completely new

Seven: yeah yeah so if I still have a lot of problems and the same situation also appears to my roommate because we are in the same major yeah

R: okay so if you would say it's kind of a common problem to have

Seven: yes

R: okay um and is there anything else that you would like to express anything that you want to say

Seven: uhh nope @no

R: so first if you could tell me what you think your strengths are academically Shelly: in general?
R: yeah like what are you good at
Shelly OB: um [ pause] I think I am a pretty decent writer [pause] um [pause] I think that I have a [pause] thorough enough drafts by the end usually have a pretty dec- decent way of explaining my ideas in an accessible way? ehm I hate these types of questions @ um I'm not a detail oriented person but I think I'm much better at kind of a broad view like I'm a big-picture when it comes to kind of conceptualizing the issues or drawing conclusions between different ideas um that's my strong suit not delivering nuance
R: okay and what would then be your weaknesses or your challenges academically
Shelly OB: so that might be one um my memory is not great input so like presenting um and whatnot but remembering dates or even sometimes specific names I'm not great at so in terms of um the presentation side of academia that's a drawback um [click] I tend to overthink things which results in anxiety and self-doubt a lot of time which can hinder my productivity um I'm often easily distracted I have the thoughts that play in it of my head I'm a terrible speller if you want to come to the great details um [long pause] yeah I suppose those would be the main things kind of
R: okay um and what do you have any strengths or weaknesses in terms of like academic language so you've mentioned spelling and you've //mentioned yeah
Shelly OB: like I have a pretty well sized vocabulary but I'm a terrible speller and that has tripped me up my whole academic life so it's handier now because we get to type things up but like when I was in undergrad and you hand wrote in your blue b
Shelly OB: I also did my| undergrad in a different country in case that is at all applicable
R: hmmm we're gonna focus on Ireland only because I'm creating the course for Ireland so can you tell me about your module you had to take here so what was the work required in your modules
Shelly OB: um so in my masters we had one essay due at the end of each module [pause] and then that was pretty much it so there was like your research methods we may have had two because we had one kind of you know small piece demonstrating we can condense material or whatever and then our um proposal but basically it was one I think was it 20 thousand words no that can’t be right that's a thesis [pause] how long were they 10 thou- I don't remember how long the essays were

R: mine were four

Shelly OB: that sounds right @@

R: I was like 10 thousand oh God @

Shelly OB: @@ no that’s not right yeah four thousand it’s been a couple of years yeah they were four thousand so I think we have like to take uhh six modules and then research methods maybe? And then each one had an essay at the end that was 4,000

R: and were you given like that's a title or

Shelly OB: so we were given um options we were given essay title options but then we could choose anything else you wanted and I never chose an essay topic that they provided for us because I never really liked those and I always wanted to use something I was interested in so you had the flexibility of being able to do that >with I think was a very good idea< but they gave you some structure in terms of like your options if you want to go down that route

R: okay and um was there a lot of reading associated with the classes um like what outside work did you need to do to prepare for the lecture

Shelly OB: um [pause] [sigh] there was external reading that often articles we didn't really get saddled with full books they were like chapters or articles ehm or jour- like [pause] and it's our so our department was not structured I think as well or as strictly as a lot of others so ours would have been different I think than probably than a lot of other ones but you didn't say have to do all the reading like often times it was supplementary or say one of our classes he would come in and he would do I guess kind of rambling lecture about the material and then we can discuss it so you didn't have to it wasn't like strict reading guidelines um I also worked two jobs at same time so I'll be honest >I didn’t do all the reading if I didn’t have to< but um and [pause] I don't remember like I don’t think it was crazy amounts of reading but I actually wouldn't be able to remember how many hours a week say you were supposed to be reading

R: yeah yeah all right and um so inside of the the modules was it mainly so you said that one of your lecturers would give like a presentation and then you would have a discussion was that fairly standard
Shelly OB: no well uh kind of so there were they did presentations in different ways and I can tell you that ones that worked for me and ones that don't if that's helpful.

R: yes please.

Shelly OB: yeah so coming from [country] ehm our understanding of the system is much more regulated and much more kind of systemic so we had one professor who he like used PowerPoint presentation you know led you through his lecture with that uhm allowed for questions and whatnot so he wasn’t just speaking at you but he gave you a very clear format to follow the other thhh- I only ever had [pause] three four professors I only remember three of them uhm anyway but the other ones didn't um [click] one would give you say like sheet that kind of had an outline [pause] they may both have actually um but one followed that relatively well and he would kind of talk you through and your supplementary material would allow you kind of like foundational understanding he would one of ours should have been home sitting in an armchair with a pipe and he just rambled about stuff tangentially kind of un-systematically and I'm sure it was very brilliant but my grounding or foundation was not in [topic] which was kind of what that those classes were uh so I didn't have any reference material to be able to follow him along on his rambley journey and I was not the only one who found this a problematic approach to teaching.

R: mm-hmm all right brilliant and I'm so you said to think if they gave you like a topics but you didn't have to choose them but did they give you guidelines on structure or how they were going to grade.

Shelly OB: kind of um they gave you uhm they gave you structure in terms of like number of words um [long pause] actually they might not have really given much else besides that uhm the topic like I found it really challenging the first couple essays because I didn't know what a master's essay looked like uhm [pause] uh some of them were there to help you through it but still like I don't I don't have a memory of them handing us a sheet which would have been really helpful of you know these are the expectations this is the format with which we expect you to present this material uhm and talk you through that I don't remember that being there that we've been really helpful um [long pause] [sigh] they even like even with uhm the proposal I remember struggling and and having to ask multiple times to get like an example of somebody's um so that's something I'm not sure if they do as much here what we do in [country] that I find very helpful which is give specific guidelines because if you are starting a master’s odds are you've never done one before and so you may have figured out how to be an undergrad but you haven’t necessarily figured out how to be a master so that would have been really helpful.
R: okay um I'm so what did you think your professors how sorry how do you think that they assessed academic success so they didn't give you many guidelines and some of them didn't give help so what do you think that they were looking for when they were marking your essays

Shelly OB: [exhale] uhhh [sigh] understanding the material so being able to regurgitate it in a clear concise uhm and comprehensive way uhm within our classes a lot of the emphasis was on tying different ideas together because [discipline] is like the bringing together of disparate ideas and trying to find links between that so I think in our classes that was important so understanding and demonstrating that you that you could find and articulate a link between two different say belief systems um [click] [exhale] other than that like they sent us out a form right when you got the score that had you know [pause] five different areas I can’t remember what they all are but you know sp- not really spelling grammar and content and that kind of stuff and [pause] I tended to do quite well on the essays so I didn't get as many criticisms to be able to figure out kind of like you know that kind of way do you know it’d be like this is a um really positive comments um so I didn't get a lot of kind of you should have done this better you should have done that better but I don't remember if they ever sent out that they might have included it in the handbook or something that guideline that they were gonna do a checkbox of but I don't think it was fleshed out very much whereas like when I was teaching you know primary school like you had a major box and then you had kind of supplementary things within it and that probably could have been helpful as well

R: right okay and so going to being a research student so doing your master’s dissertation on your PhD what is the work required of a research student

Shelly OB: what is the work required like writing? what do you mean @

R: um just general like when you if you were to have to explain to someone what it means to be a PhD student what would you say

Shelly OB: okay um well specifically in this country because you guys don't we don't do classes it means basically being on your own uh it means having somehow learned how to access and approach book material journal material navigate online resources uhm [pause] as well as kind of figuring out largely for yourself how the structure of these two things should be presented um and then [pause] depending on your subject matter either just spending your time pulling out ideas from books pulling out um theories then being able to apply those to whatever issue that you are personally dealing with uh or if you're doing this type of research right uh figuring out how to access individuals who have knowledge that you need um in their own heads and figuring out how to approach them how to get
them willing to talk to you and how to be able to um once you get them to the table get the
information that you want from them I think those are the two major parts
R: okay and how would you say that your supervisor assesses your academic success as a
research student
Shelly OB: ooooh I love my supervisor so I should put that out there um I I mean I don't I
don't go to them with a lot of frequency so I would just send them [pause] I have my soul
interaction with them is around my PhD um so not like material I'm submitting say for a
publication or conference or whatnot like um so they would assess me based on the [pause]
documents that I send them and then within that kind of how on point they are or not on
point they are and then helping reorient me to get them on the right path
R: okay and can you identify what on point means to your supervisor
Shelly OB: um clear not um rambling or too verbose um [pause] kind of uh coherently
organized um I'm a very kind of verbose writer and rambling thinker so that like that's a
self-identified but they know this as well about me so um getting me to kind of weed out
all of the extra bits and really clearly and coherent present just the material that I need to
present that's what they're looking for and you know when I've done that they identify it
and when I don't they go okay well this is great you've so much material here but maybe
we need to work on this eh so I think that's that's like the refrain for my relationship with
them is you know clear concise straightforward
R: okay alright and so how do you assess your own academic success right now how do
you feel that you're doing
Shelly OB: oh God that's much murkier one uhmm I think they're two parts of that
academic success in terms of my PhD uhm I feel okay like constantly freaked out and
stressed because it has to be done but kind of on trajectory it with- you know I don't have a
lot of wiggle room in my trajectory but I'm kind of on point in terms of that as far as all the
other stuff I don't I'm not doing anything like I'm not presenting at very many conferences
not spending a lot of materials I'm not doing the kind of robust academic presentation of
my research that I probably should be doing strike that from any official record though um
so academically when it comes to my PhD I feel okay the rest of it if I think about it freaks
me out stresses me out makes me depressed
R: okay alright @ @
Shelly OB: @@ that’s the honest answer
R: but also like your professors are not kind of pushing for that are they or
Shelly OB: no that's what I'm saying that they're not really involved in my academics life
outside of my PhD uhm I'm the [funding body] asks you about that kind of stuff so they
what I've done when that comes in and when I meet them you know I'm going to
present at the conference in Italy in March and they know that because they are both
looking to maybe go to the conference and one of them was the one who told me to submit
something to it um but I wouldn't and it's like a two-part thing it's not that they don't want
to be involved it's also that I just never occurs to me to kind of talk to them about it like
they're busy they've got loads of other shit going on s- it's just not something I think of
involving them in which I don't know if that might not be the right way to do it but yeah
but yeah like they'd be encouraging and supportive even if I said to them I'm doing this
despite the fact they say great job and they might even show up if I invited them it's just not kind of my
relationship with them
R: so how how do you kind of navigate the whole other academic part then so
Shelly OB: I don't uhm so I kin- like I think because I know I don't wanna go into
academia I don't have a lot of drive in that direction I know it could be useful in terms of
goinging other jobs as well but um it's just not really something that I'm particularly
interested in and so I don't have a lot of personal drive the only thing really driving me to
do any of that is the fact the [funding body] asks me to account for what I've produced so
like um conference wise you know this one I applied to because they told me about it the
[institution 1] one was like hmm sure a poster I can do that uhm and I submitted articles for
a publication last year because I on the form there was a space to fill out if you had and I
felt like I should have you know so and that's just I'm personally not driven in that
direction and I'm sure part of that is because I know where I want to end up and that's not
necessarily contingent on that also it's a lot of freaking work and I already work jobs
outside of school and I'm not as driven as other people if that’s just #unt @@ so yeah that's
why I don't really navigate it is my honest answer
R: okay all right yes brilliant um so then in general what do students need in order to
succeed at [institution 1]
Shelly OB: way more support
R: expand please
Shelly OB: yeah um [pause] the same thing I know there are different school systems like
when I studied abroad in [country] there's I mean there's a lot more support here than there
was even there as a student so I understand the scheme like this scale but um there's not
much in the way of kind of guidance or it's a certain degree hand-holding which I get they
always say you shouldn't need this at this stage but for each for us every stage is a new
stage so even if you're in a job you're informed of how to do the job before you know you
get promoted you spend a day with a person who's already done the job or you sit down
with your manager and they say okay these are your new responsibilities this is how you
go about it um and [institution 1] has not been great for that whether it's um you know
helping students who are coming in looking for practical things like housing and visa stuff
or academically ehm [click] giving them like there's the handbook but that's just like
massive voluminous ehm honestly I think it’d be helpful coming in in at the masters or
PhD level to have like a specific minima handbook that shows you like you know here are
the pragmatic ways that these that you can um get access to these different resources or this
is what is expected of you know each school is going to have a different slightly different
one because different school have different expectations but this is what an essay looks like
would have mailed them out to you as prospective student which is a guaranteed way to get
them to every student um there's a lot of kind of well you know you'll figure it out on your
own but the number of people I find walking around on campus without a clue I met a girl
who was studying abroad here in her second year they still haven't figured out like how to
get a computer connected to the Internet here she didn’t even know where to go and I
walked her to the place to go the only reason I knew it was because I asked around a bunch
so there's like the academic side of instruction but you need the pragmatic side to be
able to to investigate the academic side because you need certain like just day-to-day
existence things here out it's not doesn’t very centralized they don’t s- nobody seems to
coordinate with other departments so even with things like funding like I've had my
funding I’ve have had problems with kind of the funding [pause] three years running now
because two different departments don't coordinate so they've got numbers wrong and so
funding has come out of the wrong you know the school’s pocket so the [funding body]
whatever ehm there’s not a lot of coordination ehm so if you go to one area they don't tend
to know the types of information um in relation to another area and so ehm those as a like
as a foreign student dealing with this it'd be the two pieces for me like the practical as well
as the academic but both could use some kind of handbook specifically designed you know
for somebody coming from an outside system
R: right okay and so how much of a factor do you think the language plays an academic
success
Shelly OB: um [pause] are we talking like conversational language or are we talking like
like specified rhetoric for a department
R: uhm probably specified rhetoric yeah
Shelly OB: okay umm it's probably depends um like I had to learn a lot of new language
when I came into my department because I didn't have a grounding in that that was really
APPENDIX E: STUDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

hard um there's a lot of assumption I think in masters and PhDs that you come from a background that is has led you to this place and partially that's may because in Ireland you do tend to have that more as trajectory like in [country] we have a much more broad ranging set of um academic requirements to graduate so I struggled with the assumptions within my department that everybody had a foundation in this arena and I didn't and it took me six months to catch up and I like thought I wasn't going to be able to and totally had a meltdown halfway through um so I think that can be problematic I imagine coming in as a foreign language student that triple fold is challenging but like subject-specific um I definitely found assumptions there that I did not have and I found that challenging R: okay um and so you also mentioned kind of conversational language so what do you Shelly OB: I have so much appreciation for people doing your post-grad work like I did part of my undergrad in a foreign language and that was challenging as hell so I don't know what access to like linguistic services are here um I'm thinking just like observing in a classroom with people with who had a different language there wasn't a lot of checking in with them now you can only do that so much we were in small classes though so they could of um Irish people tend to speak quickly so I'd often that can be challenging as second language learners when you're in that or they have strong accents and a lot of foreign language students say to me over the years your accent is so easy to understand thank you for speaking so clearly ehm so I think just like Irish context usually their patterns of speech are probably more challenging and because they're very verbal and not the professor was Italian the one who had a PowerPoint um because the others didn’t uh it was all auditory and so it's all listening which once you get lost I mean I was lost and it was in English sometime because I didn't have the the- like this the subject specific language so ehm but if you have like a visual map especially as a foreign language learner it's much easier to follow along and you can figure out where you're lost and put yourself back in place um which is much better if it's on PowerPoint that on a sheet of paper or where like you don't know when you slip into the next subject uhm so that is something that I would say it would be very helpful if was a bit more awareness because the [institution 1] is a very diverse school with a lot of people who are of foreign language origins uhm that kind of visual guide along with the auditory guide it would probably be very helpful R: okay and so what other factors play a part in academic success and that can be things inside and outside of [institution 1]
Shelly OB: uhm having a really good support system whether that's family or friends having uhm a safe and [long pause] contented place to live so not l- not be forced to live in really dodgy areas or in really disruptive homes um having space on campus where you can go and work like [research institute] has been life changing for my PhD this year um I was felt very isolated before because I basically worked from home which is safe and has plenty of space and is warm so that wasn't a problem but um it was very isolating and I think my masters felt isolated as well and because I work outside of [institution 1] and I have worlds outside of it that was okay because I had balancing measures but um especially if you're you know a foreign student you often don't have those um I think it can be very lonely and isolating and because of the nature of say a PhD but also there wasn't a lot of kind of community spirit in my school or maybe I was just out of it but it didn't seem like there was a lot of kind of social cohesion as a group if I hadn't had those other things I imagine it would have been really lonely and that shows in your work as well you know if you're not happy your work suffers so

R: okay um so I'm going to skip the things about like language standardized exams and stuff because

Shelly OB: I didn’t take that

R: yeah exactly um so you've kind of touched on this but if you could give advice to faculty to better support international students what would that advice be

Shelly OB: hm [long pause] I hesitate to say this as faculty have a lot on their plate already um but knowing knowing where to point your students to get the help they need um like our even our not just professors but like our head of school is so overworked you always felt bad going to her asking for things ehm and your professors you tend to have any more of a relationship with so you may be a little bit more open with them but [pause] I’m trying to think like [pause] like I don't know if they had a better familiarity with the workings of college outside of their teaching but I think you can't really expect them to do that which is the hard part um [pause] things like sending out maybe before a class the the structure of the class so students could familiarize themselves with it ehm I some teachers do this put their PowerPoints up on line but if you do that prior to class so that you know say if you are a student say an [nationality] student who comes from that system you can create the system for yourself because it's provided for you you know if you do a little extra work because you're doing it for yourself but at least you have access to that or as a foreign language student you can familiarize yourself with what's going to be happening in the class and that might help and hopefully you shouldn't take too much work on their part it's
already created um [pause] even checking in with their students which I know they’re
professor they don't need to be doing like the mentality is y
ou don't need to be doing with
that they're independent but as a foreign student you're not a you're not an adult in your
own world you're an adult in a different world and so there's a certain amount um of that
could be even just you know a couple of times a semester you know I don't know or or if
they had a sheet of of details about where to find you know that they didn't have to do it
themselves it was there they could give to students who are struggling to find the places
they needed to go to access certain things um that might be helpful if that makes sense
R: yep yeah definitely um and so if you give advice to organizations who are say creating a
preparatory summer course for students um what would that advice be and what would you
like to see being taught on that course
Shelly OB: a preparatory summer course before they started in on the year
R: yeah
Shelly OB: oh my God so many things @ @ I mean like this would basically be kind of a
welcome to Ireland and whatever and here let me teach you all the things you need to
know
R: yes
Shelly OB: okay [sigh] well where to begin I mean on the broader scale of yes it's not
specific to the in- to the institution but you're caring for your students and they need the
other pieces so to help them understand like things having to do with housing and having
to do with visas um understanding where major things are what kinds of shops you can go
to get certain types of things because like the shops are not the same you don't get the
same things here say like medicine you know you can't get certain medicine you have to go
to a pharmacy well I'd figured that out but you know you could spend ages looking around
trying to figure out how to get those types of things uh what it means to go to a doctor what
types of things you need to present or doc- or just like basic things of living in a foreign
country would have been super helpful um familiarizing with the campus knowing where
actually things are what the different um like where the different places you need to go to
do for finances and those types of things [long pause] I guess the academic things you
know ex- explaining kind of how classes work in this country for what expectations are the
way they're structured um what expectations are for the material you produce from them
[pause] um like all those things which is be super helpful so even you know you can get a
leap card this leap card does to like the expectations for an essay or that you’ll produce this
type of material and you know here are the guidelines and like it's rudimentary but it's
actually really helpful
R: mm-hmm okay and then if you could give advice to prospective or future students of [institution 1] what would that advice be

Shelly OB: don’t rely on [institution 1] um kind of that that you need to take initiative much more than you may expect to need to nothing's gonna be handed to you so make friends in you know important places early on because they'll be willing to go out of their way to help you um ask lots of questions keep asking questions so you get the answer you need a lot of places aren't going to have the right answers you may not have to ans- ask different questions or go to different places to get that answer [long pause] don't expect to have your handheld that you're gonna have to figure a lot of this stuff out yourself uhm and don't wait around like proactively seek out the answers yourself those yeah but I don't mean that to sound bleak

R: yeah no it's fine honestly that's probably always the most bleak question that everyone answers really bleakly so yeah so then you've talked about a lot about supports um in [institution 1] so are you aware of the types of supports that are offered

Shelly OB: no I haven't thought any of them out I mean yes and that I know there's tutoring services you can go to um I know there's counseling services you can go to I've never gone out and saw any of them myself so I have no reflections on the quality of them I'm aware of them um but they wouldn't be made like repeatedly noticeable um and I not sure how much professors are aware of their existence or kind of encourage them you know that that's the kind of resource that say if you see a student of yours is struggling it's very simple to put that material in their hands cause odds are they may be overwhelmed with everything else and not be able to even see that far

R: okay um so does actually all the questions I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Shelly OB: ummm [long pause] not really like your aim is to try and create something into better the experience of our students right

R: yeah yeah my aim is to create that preparatory summer program

Shelly OB: yeah yeah I think that's it I mean I think the fact is as assuming it's beyond academics like it's your whole life especially as a foreign student if you're plopping in here first like this is your port of entry and there's nowhere else out there that's gonna help you um and as a school the school should care that their students are taken care of I really just don't think they do um generally speaking they want your money they want you to be here but there's very little um you know there's what one day of fresh- or like when we get freshers where loads of different societies are trying to get you to join them like there's not welcoming that acknowledges the fact that you do not understand how this country works
and maybe we could do something to help that if we report to care so much about our
foreign students so everything from like you know understanding how the library works
and stuff in campus to understanding how you function outside of campus I think is
equally as valuable to the- their experience as students yeah but I don't think yeah I mean
you hit all those and your questions so I don't think
R: okay brilliant thank you
Shree
R: okay so first could you tell me what your strengths are academically like what are you
good at academically
Shree: um I'd say that I have a fairly good ability to articulate speech [pause] sooo [pause]
even if sometimes I don't usually but if sometimes I lack in a little bit knowledge I can
make up for it in the way I present it which makes it look a little better so that helps me
score sometimes and overall yeah I'd say that's a strength yeah I might have a few more I'm
not sure @ as such yeah
R: and what would you say that your difficulties are in terms of academics
Shree: my difficulties so my difficulties time I mean for exams or academics in general
R: both
Shree: anything for academics it's always been time management for me always like if I
have lost grades it's it’s because of I couldn't finish exams so I'm really slow that that's a
very major weakness of mine something that I haven't been able to overcome I've been
writing exams for like 16 17 years now but I haven't gotten over that yeah
R: okay I mean what would your strengths be in terms of English and academic language
Shree: um the same thing again I have a fairly decent ability to articulate speech so I
believe I can write well and so that that helps me yeah [pause] and I can learn new words I
can pick up the jargon a little quick so if it's something related to my subjects like um I can
give an example so like maybe like um after a year of studying so I've obviously picked up
a few words and I've studied [discipline] so I've picked up words relating to [discipline]
like for example there's a word called [technical vocabulary] it's actually a technical word
but I learned to use it everywhere even outside my academics so that kind of benefits
overall
R: okay and what would your difficulties be in terms of English and academic language
Shree: umm English and academic language [long pause] comprehension can be one um
sometimes if there is sometimes if I'm reading a research paper um sometimes highly
technical papers or just any research paper as such like Nobel prize-winning articles they
tend to have be like they have a lot of um complicated words in there so that makes it
difficult
R: okay and can I ask have you done most of your schooling in English
Shree: all my school was in English
R: okay perfect that's what I thought just wanted to confirm um so can you tell me about
the work that you have to do for your modules so like what do you do outside of class and
inside a class etc.
Shree: okay so [pause] inside class it's pretty much just listening nothing much I am not the
kind of person it takes too much notes in class either um so in class it’s just pretty much is
attending lectures to know what the module is about it to me classes they just give an
outline of what’s needed to study so that is the benefit of classes for me um but most of the
work I think I have to go home and do it obviously I think for most of us um so I'm sorry
what was the question I'm a little
R: so what what work do you have to do for your modules
Shree: work so what do I go back and do so it's obviously reading so I I take down notes
after I go back home so after I go back home and if I'm reading I take down notes so
remembering things and then taking down notes and then especially if they're important
words key words I write them down I make sure that I find a good definition for those
words and um I have to understand things conceptually so a lot of the times it's not
sufficient for me to just rely on classroom knowledge or just my notes or something I have
to actually go up on and look up online so I have to go the extra mile to actually learn a
little more about the concept so I read related articles related topics and overall I have to
understand the subject overall in order to know the subject pretty well right yeah
R: and so you were seeing inside at the classroom it's mainly just lecturing so they go do
they have a PowerPoint is it mainly just the professor talking is there any group work
Shree: mmmm there is some group work depends on the lecture depends on the module
there are PowerPoints always and yes uh the professors would be talking as well so it's
mainly the talking and the PowerPoint um in some modules there's group work some
models there isn't
R: okay and is the group work inside of class are outside of class
Shree: well outside class I think most of the lecturers uh provided there is group work
outside class we have group assignments outside class um but within class most of the
professor's don't some of them do but even outside the class um I don't know if it's up to
the professor to decide but it's mostly about the um the module the cour- the module
structure how it was structured so how much percentage of the marks are being given for

group assignments so it's like that but most of the modules that I picked they have group
assignments

R: okay um so can you tell me more about the assignments that you have to take

Shree: okay so I think um generally anything or just

R: yeah anything that you have to do for your modules so you've mentioned that you've got
a group assignment so what does that mean like what do you actually have to do for it

Shree: okay so I think a lot of the um positives that I had from [institution 1] were through
the group assignments and [pause] basically in most cases about maybe seven out of ten
cases we are put into groups so we're put into groups and I come from a class where there
are about 90 so we don't know each other @@ and we’re just put into groups so which is a
good thing so I get to meet new people and I'm from [discipline] so we have about I think
something around 38 nationalities in class or so so the reasons why we're putting groups is
because it benefits manage learning [discipline] in general because you're working in an
environment where you don't know a person and the person's from some other country um
sometimes you have communication gaps mostly you have cultural differences um for
better or worse it doesn't have to be for worse it's usually for the better so for the example
for example like if I'm working with Germans they they tend to be um it's just my
observation they're very systematic and they're very organized and they need to make a
plan so on day zero they're gonna arrange a meeting and I think the first few weeks I was
really mind blown because I'm not used to doing assignments this way but I learned
something good from that and they would [pause] arrange a meeting on day zero and they
would just make everybody say and when it comes to work it's it's work so th- you're
exposed to all kinds of cultures so sometimes it makes it difficult sometimes it makes it
easy um sometimes you many times you differ it's never a cakewalk but if you're able to
leverage each person's strengths it time and again it has proven that we can actually uh
produce good results

R: okay and do you also have written assignments and like timed exams

Shree: yes we do

R: okay can you tell me more about that like are you given the topic for their written
assignments do you have to come up with it on your own how long they are

Shree: okay yeah so the written assignments sometimes we’re I assigned a question
sometimes we’re not given question but most of the cases even if we're given a question
we're given choice so we could choose between whichever question we want to > this is in
specific to the group assignments< so they're very open-ended that's the good thing so I
think that's more if a in my opinion is you see the for and I mean it is a good in a good way it seems to be more of a European thing wherever things are more open-ended here and they ask a question there isn't a specific answer to that so it's up to you how you want to frame the answer what angle you want to take what you want to say do you want to agree with something do you want to disagree with something do you have a different point of view these sorts of things so written assignments are usually very very open-ended um that's something I noticed and with assignments they are timed and with the other thing with written assignments is that um sometimes we're not assigned questions at all sometimes in some modules I remember the lecturer actually said you could literally write anything and he literally said that so like what is anything I mean like anything related to module like I don't know I haven't read that module before so he said anything so it was actually a good thing so we could pick up literally anything related to that particular topic anything that comes from the mind and um if it's a group assignment then we discuss and we just write on it maybe a three thousand word essay it's not too much three thousand so if we're given some amount of time you can actually research and you could present a good piece of work so and for the exams it's a little more close ended but that's I guess most exams are so you have to actually study what's being taught and you have to remember that and more or less produce whatever you’ve learned in class

R: right okay I'm so for the group assignments I'm are you actually writing essays together or like what is the finished deliverable for the group assignments

Shree: the end result so um [pause] are we writing it together well it's it's totally up to us so it depends on how we do it but in the group assignments that I was there we it depended on who I was working with so in some cases we don't always literally write together um uh you know different people come from different countries some people are very good analytical some people are very good at research and they may not necessarily be very good at writing so some people may be very good at writing but they're not necessarily that good at researching so because we've all come from different education systems so I've noticed that like um again like you know I come from a class where there’s so many nationalities so in my experience um I mean in particularly my class I've noticed that some of the Asian people they're very good with numbers so anything that they write it's empirically grounded so they come up with numbers and they're really good at that sort of stuff so we try to leverage each other's strengths so though we don't necessarily have to write together we can it depends on how we decide to do it so if they want to help in
writing sure if they want to help more in the research sure so it's different for every
assignment yeah
R: yeah give and take
Shree: yeah give and take yeah it's more or less like that
R: alright um so how do you think you're doing academically so how would you evaluate
your academic success right now
Shree: um overall
R: yeah
Shree: yeah I think it's been pretty good umm so [pause] it's it's been fairly good [clears
throat] it could have been better it definitely could have even been better but it's still good
so ummmm and this is actually my third master's sort of like I've completed my masters in
discipline] and before this I did two postgraduate diplomas in a year so I've already been
through this process before so I've studied two diplomas in a year so like I've literally had
to work really hard the previous year [pause] so this year it's been a little bit easier because
I've studied some of the stuff and then what I I've learned there I could utilize over here so
it's the academic part it's been decent so I it it put less pressure on me and I was able to
score a little more without putting in as much of effort
R: right and where the diplomas were they here in Ireland or
Shree: no well there were British courses so it was a post graduate diploma in [discipline]
Um it was designed by [British university] so that it was their course that I did so yeah the
other course the other diploma was not a it was not from the [British university] one but it
was a an [nationality] postgraduate diplomat so I was told that the [British university] one
would be pretty challenging and not everyone passes that so it's always better to keep some
sort of backup option so I decided I don't want my year to be wasted so I want to do two at
a time so I did two at a time and there was some overlap so that made it a little easier than
maybe what it sounds um but I did end up passing both with two point one so it was okay
R: yeah that's very good well done
Shree: @ thanks
R: so what do you think your professors expect so how do they assess academic success
Shree: [long pause] it's very hard to be honest um every professor seems to have their own
style um [pause] if I can be honest like you said I think that's one of the things that can be
improved in our education system maybe in [institution 1] in specific because I feel that at
least in my department I cannot speak with all departments for all departments the- there
could be more structure so the issue is each module it lasts hardly maybe a week or two
weeks we don't know the professors we don't know how they're gonna assess we don't have a problem putting in the effort and maybe going back and studying but what do they expect it's hard to know a professor in a week or two weeks and you don't have direct interaction with them you're sitting in a class with maybe 20 30 40 the other people so these are all optional modules so we don't know them very well and everybody has a different style of correcting mm some people expect certain things some people I still don't know what they expect like I I felt that I put in a lot of effort for some of the subjects and I scored much less than what I deserved it's not because I put in less effort but it's because I genuinely didn't know what they are expecting so and there are some professors where and I didn't think I put in as much effort but I ended up scoring far more than what I expected so how do they assess I really don't know it's @ everybody has their own style over here it's like that

R: yeah okay and so do they give you anything like rubrics or guidelines or you know how they're going to grade it before you complete the assignment

Shree: to a larger extent no um sometimes they give a vague outline but in most cases no if you specifically ask them then sometimes they will but um to a larger extent no

R: okay it's not really communicated

Shree: no not to a larger extent yeah

R: okay alright so in general what do students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]

Shree: um a general ability to research and I think a lot of it is I I can talk about people who scored more than me and I can look in retrospect what did they do to have gotten those extra grades um what I think they might have done was uh they had a good ability to read the teacher and they knew what the teacher expected and they gave exactly what the teacher expected and that was smart in my opinion so I think knowing what the teacher expects solves half our problems because everybody's got knowledge because everybody has fought to come to get that seat in [institution 1] in that particular course everybody is capable so but it's like if you don't know what you're expected to do then it's harder to do it so the people who tend to succeed more are people who understand a little more what the teacher expects maybe that's just my interpretation I could be wrong I don't know but another thing in general I think which applies everywhere is just the ability to really go back and read so it's just plain hard work um listen attend your classes go back home research do the extra work uh do the essential readings and do the additional readings and put in as much knowledge into that paper within those 60 minutes or whatever eh as you can and that will definitely pay off as such
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R: okay and so how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success
Shree: um a decent extent um you would need to have if you're studying in in an English
system an English-speaking system I think that it's important to be good at language so if I
wasn't very good at writing then I definitely most likely would have scored a little less I
would have scored a little less in my opinion um and like I said if I've articulated the
speech very well then it makes it look a little more professional than it probably is even
though if it's got a little less facts but it seems very structured very organized and language
is on point and if I'm using the jargon uh right amount of jargon it definitely pushes the
marks by an extra maybe seven percent or so
R: okay and so what other factors impact academic success and this could be things inside
or outside of [institution 1]
Shree: [pause] other factors? Uhm personal factors for people or relating to the course or
both
R: both yeah
Shree: well general ability to comprehend can be one sometimes our subjects can be a little
technical and um some people are maybe a little better at comprehending than others so
maybe they just read it once and they understand [pause] but sometimes for some people
maybe they have to read it a few more times and really understand it and maybe break it
down to bits and do extra readings to understand this better so comprehension can be a
factor overall
R: okay all right any other factors or
Shree: mmm well that's one that I can think of
R: okay
Shree: yeah that's all
R: alright okay cool so now I'm going to kind of switch to the entry tools so things like the
standardized exams so did you have to take an entry assessment before being accepted to
[institution 1] so did you take like IELTS or TOEFL
Shree: yeah I've given my IELTS yes so any questions regarding that or
R: yeah so how do you feel about the IELTS exam in general
Shree: well personally for me um [pause] maybe the overall it works maybe it's a good
indicator I don't know maybe it is maybe it's not but that's something that I trust that you’ll
find out through this research but um [pause] one of the things that I had difficulty with
was that they're given in assessment centers and in my assessment center during one of
the tests uh I think it was the yeah it was during the listening test so >I assume you are
aware of the structure< anyway so yeah during the listening test there was actually a
technical difficulty where in the um I think the thing stopped and the listening whatever it stopped and they started it again like a few seconds later but what happened was that you that broke my flow and that affected my exams and I lost a few answers because of that so it's just a few seconds maybe but it still made a difference to me like I could have gotten those extra grades so it's not because I didn't know it's it's a pretty easy for me to be hon- it's just it's just listen and you write so yeah I could have gotten those grades but it's due to a technical difficulty so that's I think in a way that's been a negative for me personally

R: okay and did you take any courses in preparation for IELTS or preparation for [institution 1] like did you take exam classes to help you prepare

Shree: no no no I was going to take classes but then I found out that they send in a preparation book anyway so I thought that I looked at what the structure is it seem pretty straightforward so I thought that my entire education systems’ been English in in English anyway why do I have to take an extra 14 days to learn that language English is like my first language like I know it better than my mother tongue so I don't really I didn't really find the need to take the extra 14 days and I was told that IELTS is more or less just like a qualification exam I don't need to eh get very high grades I just need to get the passing mark of about 6.5 and so I was pretty sure that I could get more than 6.5 I didn't need a 9 or an 8.5 I just needed more than 6.5 so I didn't s- I just like you know I studied you pretty much on my own at home

R: okay perfect and do you think that the IELTS um has adequately prepared you for the demands of [institution 1] do you think it's done a good job kind of predicting how you'll do or preparing you for what you encountered in [institution 1]

Shree: no not really to be honest ummm the questions are a little are very much different than my course in general [pause] so like um I don't really feel that taking the IELTS was in any way similar to my classes in [institution 1]

R: okay alright um and so what type of preparation should international students take before coming to [institution 1]

Shree: well one of the things that was a preparation for me was the course that I did before this the post graduate diploma if I didn't do that course I would have struggled here because the education system in Europe see is very different from the education system in [country] so it's kind of an ironical because I thought the [nationality] always think that we follow the British education system but we don't because like I think through over the years the Europeans have adapted their system but in [nationality] it's the same old ancient system and the way that it was different so I can give you an example so the
scoring is way different so I think scoring here is way harder so getting is 60 or 70 is considered fairly difficult getting over 70 was considered to be fairly difficult here getting over 70 was considered to be pretty much average in [country] you could score above 90 if you were really good there were people who go closer to a hundred as well who are really good but it was definitely possible if a person was actually pretty good and they put in a lot of effort you could score far higher um that's something I didn't know so I might have had unrealistic expectations of my grades if I directly came here and that would have affected my motivation levels and overall that would have played a factor in my success and another thing was that referencing in it's one of the good things that I picked up referencing is very important so when I did in my post graduate diploma course it's a hardcore British course they take it very seriously so even within the exam that's one thing we don't necessarily have to do as much in [institution 1] I guess but in the exam like we had to ref-reference everything like with the year so at least my lecturers here in the [school] they said that if you can't do it if you can't do it in an exam in an assignment it's very important but in the course that I was taking it was very important so learning the topics was hard enough but learning the names was even harder @ and sometimes there are names that I can't even pronounce because they're maybe from Netherlands maybe from somewhere else and like long names I can't even pronounce them so I have to learn the spellings and I have to learn the years and I had to really put in the effort it's very structured and formal but it's a good thing um so it's very difficult and I I felt the that was a good preparation for me so uh learning how the British system is how they work how the mark system function and how the course is going to be like how to write your exams the referencing the and in the exams here the questions here are also very open-ended like I mentioned [country] they're very closed ended there is one specific answer to one ans-question so if you if you deviate from that if you write from your own knowledge you're not credited your mark you're not marked as much for it you're losing marks so that's that's very different um both of them have their ups and downs I mean their advantages and disadvantages but um I think that if I wouldn't have done that post graduate diploma I would have struggled here so if maybe there was some sort of system that would train us for that um maybe a brief about it could even be a brief maybe it doesn't take it it sounds complicated but maybe if like if you spend maybe just ten days explaining or maybe five days in class explaining this is how it works it would have been a better preparation and I know a few who my [nationality] friends who haven't done those sort of courses and they directly came from the [country] education over here and did this they
struggled a lot the first semester the second semester said they picked up but the first

R: um and so if you could give advice to faculty in the dealing with international students
what would that advice what would you tell them
Shree: um [long pause] I think overall I think one of the things I don't know if it's within
their control um it probably isn't but I'll tell you ideally what should happen perhaps um a
lot of the teachers not everybody's been to obviously everybody's from a different
background everybody's studied in different education systems I don't know how people
study in China and I did- and before I came here I didn't know how people studied here but
if I were a teacher then if somebody you know who's not used to this education system is
struggling I would need to address the specific points that he's struggling on or help him
leverage his strengths so if you're good at numbers then try to you know incorporate
numbers into your answers that would push your marks a little bit more and but if you're
trying to I think there are two ways of doing this one is you could help them adapt to the
current education system the other thing could be you don't have to entirely adapt um but
just leverage your own strengths to some extent you have to adapt to some extent you
might be able to just leverage your strengths so I think if the the lecturer or the professor
knew um where a person is lacking and since these were all one or two week modules so
and there n- if there’s like 30 people in class or 40 people the teachers try their best to
remember their names and they actually remember everybody's names by the end of the
week or even the first day actually it's kind of surprising if they're 30 40 people they end
up remembering everyone's name like on the first day that was kind of shocking to me but
if they couldn't so it's a little hard within that time frame to know a person and know where
they're lacking and what they’re good at but um maybe it's a skill that they could pick up
over the years if they were able to better be a better judge of what what a person would
struggle with coming from maybe that sort of background and what they're good at and
addressing those issues and asking them to improve in so and so manner that would
improve the result overall
R: and if you could give advice to future students of [institution 1] or students who are
looking to come to [institution 1] what would that advice be
Shree: [pause] um in specific to academics or anything
anything
Shree: oh I don't know if this would directly address the research but I think one of the
things that I found difficult umm was the career option seemed a little difficult for my
course um it takes a while to actually get a job um I am working now but I'm not in the job
that I want to be in and I'm trying to change so I think that I think you would I would ask them to um be little careful you know what you want and how you want to achieve that so if you want a job in maybe consulting what do you have to do at the beginning of the year to make that happen by the end of the year because the way it works in my country we don't worry about jobs until the last semester the last maybe two months or so and you have a bunch of companies coming into class they have numbers in mind we're going to take ten people twenty people and they screen to 200-300 people and they hire them on the spot and print them off the letter that's how it works that's not how it works here I didn't know that so that's something that if I would have known in the beginning maybe I would have done it a little differently um so that's an advice that I would give in another advice I would give for people coming to [institution 1] it's one of the better things [long pause] I think that it's such a large college and you know there's so much going on and that's the great part I mean there's always something going on so you know there's so many departments everybody's passionate about what they do here because everybody's worked fairly hard to come here maybe so [pause] and you know everybody's passionate and good so learn from everyone take the most of it like one of the things is like I regret which I should have done was maybe um there were a few of these groups and stuff that were set up so there are groups related to the I'm forgetting the exact name but yeah it's the student managed fun so there were positions available in the student managed fun so people who took part in the student managed fun I saw that these are people who were really able to learn their subjects well because they were actually while I was sitting in a classroom just reading books I scored well but like you know what what has that gotten me you got me a little extra grades and maybe a little knowledge extra but that knowledge chances are I won't end up using anywhere but if I would have maybe spent a little more time outside the classroom within [institution 1] and took part in these sort of activities maybe took up a position in the student managed fun and most of these things are just voluntary so if you if you really want to be a part of it nobody's gonna say no so you could just join one of those groups or there are other groups as well within [institution 1] uh so if you could join one of them and if you could gain some in it get some insights from them that would help you learn your subjects better and it would prepare you better for your career and people who were actually to pardon these active I don't know how much they scored but they actually took part maybe they scored a little less maybe they scored the same I don't know maybe they scored more I don't know but those are the people who actually went on to get uh really good jobs later because they've already had some amount of practical experience before
they left college so I would advise newer students to actually spend less time in classroom more time outside

R: okay and one of the last questions is are you aware of any supports the international students receive from your department or from the wider college

Shree: I am aware yes um I think I've heard that there are some student health help groups um I don't know what they do in specific but I think it's self-explanatory by the name I think I don't really know what they do in specific I never really went to any of those meetings so I think they generally happen during the lunch time somewhere but I don't know exactly what happens and I think every now and then once in a while they have um maybe classes happening regarding to help with the thesis or something like that and these are just general outlines to teach um how a thesis is written how the research needs to be done um maybe things like that so there are some help groups outside class but I don't know too much about them they happen once in a while maybe but I don't know there could be more but I'm not aware of all of them and there's some online support as well I think so some resources to be used but these are things that I found out in the end um so there there are some we have access to certain libraries and stuff so I'm not sure if that's an answer that you're looking for but yeah so these are things that I found out in the very end that we and these are actually free for if you're a student and nobody told us that in the beginning of the year we found out writing the end when we are halfway through our thesis so if we would have known that before maybe we would have things would have been a little more easier

R: okay so that's the last question that I have for you but is there anything else that you'd like to say or express

Shree: no I think I've covered it to a larger extent yeah

R: yeah okay alright

Superwoman

R: so um can you tell me what you would consider your strengths to be academically not necessarily in English but just in general academically

Superwoman: I learn quick so the problem is with memorizing but I do understand what the professor is talking about or the lecturers

R: okay um what would be your weaknesses academically

Superwoman: yeah memorizing that's my weakness so if there are tough words or complicated sentences or like somebody has quoted something in the past and we have to
remember that quotation and who actually quoted so that is something I need to work on
I'm poor at it @
R: right okay and in terms of English what would you say your strengths are
Superwoman: maybe speaking and listening
R: mm-hmm and difficulties with English
Superwoman: writing
R: writing
Superwoman: yeah
R: how so
Superwoman: I take more time and like um once I am written about once I have drafted everything once I have written so I check the time so usually the task of the essay is for 30 minutes but I take more time I take like one hour to like write the entire piece after one once I'm written I read it and I feel that it is okay yeah not that good but it is ok but yeah I take more time in writing
R: okay and do you think that taking more time would be something to do with language or would it be content
Superwoman: it would be construction of the words so where I like if a question is given in the exam or there is a topic so I am aware about the content so content is not a problem but how to draft that content or the piece of paper is a problem@
R: okay alright and can you tell me about the work that is required in your modules right now so any modules that you're taking here what do you have to do for them
Superwoman: we have one research skills and methodology module and that we have a project and at the end of the group project we have to submit our individual analysis of the experiment that we have done and there is one tutorial skills group in that group we are we would be um taught how to write like in the exam like what is the format and how we should be laying it out so in that we have to do a presentation and we also have to submit one essay
R: and are you at a master’s level or a PhD level
Superwoman: I am doing a higher diploma that’s a postgraduate program it’s a [discipline]
course conversion
R: right okay alright perfect um and so are you doing any research on top of your modules
Superwoman: no no
R: so it's just modules
Superwoman: it’s just modules
R: alright so can you tell me about the skills that are required in your modules so you mentioned things like you'll have to give a presentation you'll have to do an essay and is there a lot of outside reading a lot of group work

Superwoman: right currently it is more towards group work but in the tutorial skills we have to submit the essay individually and we have to do the presentation individually but in the research skills and methodology we are doing this as a group project wherein we are replicating an existing experiment so just to see if the results are as what they have concluded in the past so yeah

R: okay perfect and so can you describe the general structure of your lectures so like what happens inside of the class does yeah like does the professor's down there with a PowerPoint are you working in small groups how does the actual class take place

Superwoman: um because we like this is a course conversion program so some of the lectures are with undergrads and some of the lectures are with master like the degree program uh students so we have like most of our lectures are with the PowerPoint presentation but there is one of the lecture in which there is PowerPoint presentation and they keep on showing us YouTube videos so in that particular lecture I'll fall back a bit because I feel that if you have to show me everything on the YouTube then I can go home and you know Google Google myself and see the YouTube videos myself I'm coming here because I want to know something from you not from the YouTube videos so if it is more like video learning or you know a media learning that I can do myself so that is that is one of the modules I feel that of way @@@

R: and so everything else is pretty much the standard PowerPoint professor speaking

Superwoman: yeah

R: okay alright and I'm so the form of assessment again you've mentioned essays and presentations but you were also talking about exams um do you know what the format of the exams

Superwoman: are so far I know that we are going to have a research lab exam in which we have SPSS tool in that tool we have to do some exercises so that would be the one and the others are mostly we would be given six questions and out of that we have to answer two so right now I don't know what will be the length of the exam I think it is would be three hour exam three hours so I like I was struggling with it because if I have to answer only two questions in three hours which means one point five to each of the question that means I have to invest good amount of time in the content and in the writing so by looking at 1.5 hours it feels like it okay like it is sufficient time to do so but I am worried about the number of words that they are expecting so I think it would be around 1,500 words yeah
which I feel is like two pages it is bit more for me because I would like to answer a
question in one paragraph or few lines but if we have to write the entire story about it then
this I mean sometimes it happens that there is a lot of content and limited pages and
sometimes it happens that you little content but you have to fill in pages that way @
right right okay the the presentation and I say that you do have to turn in do you know
how long they have to be what kind of format they are do they give you the topic that kind
of stuff
Superwoman: um so for the tutorial skill we have to pick the topic ourselves [pause] but
for the group project they divided us into smaller groups then we came up with our own
ideas and one of the idea was picked and on based on that we are doing the entire group
project and but I don't know the format of the essay yet so I don't know like is it starts
with because usually I know it starts with paraphrasing then you give your introduction
subparagraphs and then conclusion but I don't know if that's the way they are going to
accept the essay or not
do you know how long the essay needs to be like is it 3,000 words
Superwoman: it's 2,000 words
two thousand
Superwoman: two two thousand words
alright cool and you have to pick your own topic
yeah we have to pick your own topic
okay all right and so how would you think that you're currently doing academically
how I'm doing academically
yeah so how do you feel right now we're what five weeks into the term so how do you
feel academically at the moment
okay so um because I have a [discipline] background so I find research lab
easier because it's more computer related tasks and stats I’m good with stats and computers
um there's one subject which is [topic] I’m not good at that because when I open the book
there are so there's this thing in the lecture they give an overview of what this chapter is
about [pause] and then you have to do a follow-up reading right and then when I start
reading I feel that oh there is so much to read I mean this was not covered in the lecture
this was something which was just you know there was just one slide? that how [topic] or
[topic] but when I see the chapter there are like five or six pages on that particular topic so
I get confused that is the topic really important in respect to the exam or it's just for the
reading so I am not clear on this point that whatever the lectures I am attending so far are
that is that important or the reading which I have to do myself is that important in order to crack the exams yeah that@ is @something

R: @ right so okay which leads me to my next question and what do you think your professors look for when they're grading so how would they assess academic success

Superwoman: yeah so that's a question for me@ to figure@ it out yet but I had like I had I got a chance to talk to our program coordinator so I checked with her like how like we are going to be g- marked on [discipline] because [discipline] is a subject in which there's nothing really wrong or nothing really right so it's your own perspective that you are writing on that paper so it how will it be taken so she told me that in [institution 1] people and unless the word is literally not making any sense then it is something problematic but if you did a little bit spelling mistakes it would be okay [pause] but I'm really not sure about the marking and I this is something which I would want to know in the first place like how would you be marking us in the exams because if I write two pages and there are some people who like pointers you know in the essay some people like diagrams to be shown some people are looking for particular keywords if you don't put those keywords then they find that essay is not up to the mark so I'm not really sure about the expectations from the professor ex- like from their point of view

R: okay yeah alright and so this might be a redundant question but I do you have access to the rubrics or guidelines or expectations before you complete assignments

Superwoman: [long pause] hmm [pause] before we complete assignment yes so in we have one research skills and methodology seminar so in that seminar they talked about the uh ethics that we have to follow while doing the experiments or end-to-end about the group projects and then we are going to write something individually and if we are quoting something then uh we have to follow all those rules of ethics and uh but uh there's no clear idea about how the write-up should be right so how much stats they want to see in our writings it's more like okay I've given this topic you figure it out you explore you see how you're going to come up with and that is bit scary because you don't know how much to put what and how much you will be graded on then because a person like me will try to put everything as much as possible and I'm not sure if they are looking for that much of detail or how much stats they are expecting because this is a course conversion program which means that we all are coming from different backgrounds I I have that privilege to you@ to be more comfortable with computers but there are people who are coming from very different type of backgrounds like educational and something like linguistics and they are
not exposed to stats that much so I don't know if they have set a standard expectation from
everybody or they have an individual expectations that I'm not sure of yeah
R: okay alright um so in general what do you think students need to succeed at [institution
]?
Superwoman: [long pause] @@ a lot of reading @@@@ uhh and [pause] making contacts
with professors um because they I mean you need to book appointments with them you
need to if you want to get your answers then you need to take the initiative go to them and
talk to them and though there are like orientation presentations like PPT's that they make
they and also make one for like for each course and each program there is one
handout in which the information is given about which courses of which credit how many
credits of this year and everything but there is no um information about the layout of the
exam or what is actually going to happen on that day so in that way they look for an
initiative from your side it's more like you think about it you come up with questions and
we will answer it so it's not that they are rude they are very like approachable very friendly
all the professors but you need to approach them like you need to make the first move and
go to them and talk to them and if you're not that kind of person who makes the first move
then it could be a problem for you that way yeah
R: okay alright and how much of a factor do you think language plays in academic success
Superwoman: oh it plays a lot and also depends what type of course you are doing because
my undergrad was in [discipline] in which language was not a big problem it was most of
the questions were multi choice questions or something like right or wrong or computer-
stuff but when you're doing a program when I'm doing this program of [discipline] and
when there's so much of research and everything now I feel the need to write more now
this is the phase where you are doing an experiment and then you are expected to write an
outcome from it but sometimes I feel that there is one simple sentence written in
different ways many times in the whole article and um I feel that this is a redundant like
once you say something in the article it is understandable why do you have to write the
same thing twisting the words and tweaking it here and there and place it all over the place
so that is something I feel is overdone while writing yeah but I like to write precise
because this was the expectation in undergrad and then after that I did I worked in
[profession] for six years so I never I we were writing emails with one or two sentences
because we mostly were sharing the results of what we have done and analysis but and
most of the thing were automation related but now everything is like writing and that's how you are going to be judged so it's very tricky

R: right and um this is just kind of a random question did you do all of your schooling in English or only undergrad

Superwoman: oh no my entire schooling was in English yes

R: okay um yeah cuz I just know there's [language] medium and English medium

Superwoman: yes yes yes yeah

R: alright so yours was English medium

Superwoman: yeah

R: um but you're still finding quite a contrast between what you were expected in undergrad versus here

Superwoman: yes yeah yes

R: okay alright and um so what other factors do you think plays in academic success and this could be anything from things inside of [institution 1] things outside of [institution 1] um so I can give examples if you want if you know just

Superwoman: hmmm like from my point of view as an international student this is my first like exposure as being an international student I had been working in different countries Singapore US and Germany but at the time I was working so now I'm a student so personally to me it's a huge difference because for the six years you were getting a good amount of income as your salary every month but now when you're a student you are just giving away and nothing is coming in so when I was preparing to come to [institution 1] we had this um conference or maybe a session with embassy of Ireland that was in [country] in [city] and the over there they said that it is easy to find a part-time job and it is like 10 euro per hour so I made all that calculation in my mind because I till that point I was not very sure whether I'm going to make this move or not but then when they said this thing I was like bit comfortable okay now I think I can survive with this okay but when I'm here and I'm applying you know various places so it's hard to get a part-time job it's not easy no it's just said that it is easy but to all other my friends who think that they would want to come here I would like advise them that this is a very expensive city and the part-time job is not easy to find because I am having a trouble because if I applied as a receptionist and I what I get back a feedback is that I'm overqualified for the position so I'm like I am ready to work so I don't see any problem for you rejecting me on the grounds that I'm overqualified maybe they are going to find a person who does it for a cheap you know a less amount but I don't know so that is something which is bothering me and that is affecting my studies because when I go home and I start reading or you know I
start looking at the lecture slides which are going to be taught tomorrow there would be a pop-up in my inbox saying that okay Dublin 30 new jobs are available okay and then I'll click on that and I'll just see and most of the time goes in there most of the application it takes about half an hour to complete the entire process and after that in two days you get an email that oh no we cannot take you in so yeah it bothers a lot no I'm like if I get a kind of part-time job then I would be at my mental peace and I would be able to focus more on my studies right now it's just that ok deadline is approaching so you keep working fast and a deadline that's not there then you keep on posting for the part-time jobs until you find that so that is very personal to me in general I find that there are because [pause]

though I have done my schooling entirely in English but the sentence formation and sentence construction was very simple I've never used very complicated sentences or a complex word right in order to do the writing or speaking but when I come here there are like words coherent right so I do know the meaning of that but when they place it in the sentence then it takes me a while to understand okay okay this is like this okay this sentence means this so there are fellow students in the class who are international and they are also facing the same thing because there are some words which are very common in English in here but as but we know those words because we read the newspapers and magazines so we know that these words means but I cannot use those words in my writing because I'm not habitual to it because those words I'm not like I I won't think of those words in my writing until and unless I select them and or I do a right click in a computer otherwise when I do writing by myself then it would be I wouldn't think about those words so I'm not sure if you know using those words are going to impact the level or the quality of my essay when I sum it so that is one thing yeah okay yeah so it's still again back to the differences in countries and language even though it's the same language yeah same language but it's different yeah yeah yeah alright um so now I'm gonna kind of switch towards that's more general about [institution 1] and Dublin so now I'm going to kind of go to your experiences with the entry tools and preparation tools so these are like the standardized tests and whatnot um so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before attending [institution 1] so like short courses to prepare you for coming to [institution 1] or for standardized tests
Superwoman: um so for IELTS exam I did join one super-fast track something like 14367program it was there so they were preparing students for IELTS so I joined that um I think 14368most of the things I knew already it was just that when you start working there there's 14369something you don't really follow the structure so it was more like how you should be 14370laying out the structure of their essay when you go for the IELTS exam and you write or all 14371that so that was helpful I did that and my score in IELTS was 7.5 wherein I lacked in 14372writing my writing was six that was again with the problem there were two questions and I 14373had spent most of my time in the answering the first question which was really well it 14374written like this is how I feel about it but the other part I did not find enough time so it I 14375just went like whatever is time left I was just writing it down so that it is it is not like blank 14376so yeah that was one thing I am still working on it I don’t know how to cope with it@ 14377yet@ and yeah that's it I mean um other thing was with the accent so here the accent is bit 14378thick I think this is my opinion this is what I've understood because when I go in stores too 14379make for a job or interview or something and I give my resume they ask me something and 14380I don't know what they're asking sometimes so it's just something is there they are saying 14381but the words are not clear to me so that isn't >but the professor's in [institution 1]< I don't 14382find any problem with them they are very clear on what they say so we have one professor 14383from Denmark and one is Irish and when we have it's [country] so I understand what they 14384say perfectly there is no issue but in general in local when you go around and you talk you 14385know you make a small conversation at that point I feel that the accent is bit thick and 14386which makes I am not able to focus on the words I'm more I'm focusing on the expressions 14387just to guess that what you are trying to say @@@@ 14388R: @@@ right so would you say that the preparation that you took for the exam do you 14389think that it adequately prepared you for [institution 1] 14390Superwoman: no it adequately prepared me for IELTS and not for [institution 1] so for 14391[institution 1] I like I did a short-term course in introduction to [discipline] because I just 14392wanted to see whether I will be able to understand this program before I apply for it so that 14393was something I did but it was not specially for [institution 1] it was like just to get into 14394[discipline] I wanted to see myself how good I am whether it's just the passion which is 14395here for a while or it's really something I can do in it but for [institution 1] there was no as 14396in preparation to come and apart from shopping and packing your bag @@ yeah @@ @ 14397there was nothing but it would have been good if they would have been a pre prep 14398something you know for a week or like a day program or something where we see that 14400okay this is how the campus will look like >although you can find it on YouTube< as well 14401how the campus looks like there are a lot of many videos but from your own like if I'm
going into the [school] I would like somebody from that department to prepare something for international students so that when they come here some of them they feel that oh we did a mistake [long pause] okay so it's not about the college college is great it's like really great but it's about the environment yeah so I would be like people to be more honest about it right so if I would have known that there it is really difficult to get a part-time job here it's not that easy I would have had a second thought in my mind but because somebody is putting you in confidence that yeah it's easy you'll easily find it so you kind of make your plans that way because everybody is not rich so we all make plans according to what finances we have and so and I also got to know that uh that five students from our seniors they dropped out so they did the year one but they did not return back for year two so we have been told that they had like some personal things to take care of but I just like kind of don't believe it because we are a very small group so right now currently we are eighteen and our seniors were fifteen and now there are only ten so [pause] not quite sure what was the reason of somebody to back out because for one girl we know she wanted to become a singer so she went back others they never came like I don't know really what happened but uhh in terms of somewhat I had the privilege to have the education entirely in English and the privilege to go around other countries to work so I had the opportunity to work with people coming from different backgrounds with different accents with different people you know but not everybody has that chance so a prep before coming here an honest one would really help in making a strong decision because it's a big decision leaving your country coming here risking something yeah for two years and then you feel that oh shit I did a blunder so yeah that way right yeah and so so you're saying like the prep would be good on and you keep saying this word honest like an //honest one

so if you| could kind of suggest say you're talking to the people who are designing this prep what would they need to say what would they need to teach in this prep to make it honest

Superwoman: okay so they should be talking about uh first of all they should like like speak about the criteria how they are going to mark us it is very important because um I don't know how it goes in Dublin or in Ireland but from country where I come from having a first division is is that's it if you have a second division if you have third division people don't look at you in the same way they feel that you are a failure though you have passed the exams but you're not a first division holder so that kind of thing so but I'm not sure how it goes in Ireland or Europe how you're seeing how your judged or whether it is based on
particular courses because you cannot excel everything right so if I because I want to do
[profession] so my focus is more on [topics] and [topics] so [topic] is something which I
don't want to pursue so I'm not much interested into that subject but I still have to crack it
so I don't know if I get you know just a passing marks in [module] going to affect the
entire overall grading that is going to be done so if they would give us some kind of this
background and also because not everyone has done research before right so this is
something new so if they give a kind of background towards it that this will be a research
>though they have written everything on the website< it's not that they have not told this so
people know that this is research-based or research oriented program but I don't think they
really understand like this is a research oriented program they're like okay we have to do a
research we'll do that because they feel that we have done the projects in the past so we can
do this here as well but [pause] they I mean so there are certain things which [institution 1]
is really excellent about it's about research orientation it's about self-learning so in that
prep slide if they can more focus towards these aspects that with research orientation we
mean that you have to be or you should have these skill sets before you come in or this is
something which we would be looking forward that you already understand that that would
be helpful yeah
R: yeah and so going back to the IELTS exam do you think that the IELTS exam prepared
you for academic work here in [institution 1]
Superwoman: it was more like a revision to me so because I was a [profession] so I had to
then start writing longer emails and do more analysis more do write up work but yeah it
kind of gave me a revision to what I already did my in my undergrad and what I was doing
so it was more for towards the structure like how you should be putting in your essay to
make it look better that way yeah
R: okay and do you think it um it accurately predicts I guess how you're going to do in
[institution 1] or accurately predicts academic success
Superwoman: no @ no no
R: can you expand on that
Superwoman: um so IELTS exam it's more like like it is academic writing uh so it is the
structure structured format [pause] and I believe that here also in [institution 1] when we
are going to write the exam I'm going to follow the same structure which I am uh you
know I'm aware of so um but some professors [pause] they are not they don't care much
about the structure they care about the content what you have written so they won't mind if
you have if you have not mentioned any quotes right or if you are not um emphasizing on a
particular like names of the [theorists] or names of the [theorists] who have done certain
amount of work they would be more into what you think this is about so it's more like yeah
you know towards inside you like self or or you're centered like what what's your point of
view in that then you can like we obviously like to correlate to others yeah the other
achievers who are there this area but some of the professors they are more towards you
know no your essay should be structured it should start with like this because in research
when you write a paper I think there is a format APA format that you need to follow so it's
more towards structure so it's both the things both things are there if in the research and
skills methodology we have to write down the whole structure structured writing is there
but this is my feeling that some of the professor's they have said that what you are that
what you have learned or what you have experienced what you understand out of the
course is important and that has to be written so yeah it's mix of that
R: okay alright um so if you could give advice to professors and faculty in [institution 1] in
dealing with international students what would that be
Superwoman: hmmm [long pause] that would be like I think so far I have not found a huge
issue with how we are being taught apart from the YouTube video thing but that's only for
one module so it's fine I'll just let it go yeah @@ uhm for intern- it would be like if you
can dilute your accent a bit yeah because we have one professor and when he starts
speaking fast so he eats up some words and it's hard to understand what is the entire
sentence was so if they can be little slow and the way they speak that would be yeah if the
focus if they stress on words more rather than the accent it would be beneficial in the initial
days to understand so that way yeah
R: okay um if you could give advice to future students or students who are looking to come
to [institution 1] what would that advice be
Superwoman: that you have to be very self-motivated you cannot just rely on what has
been taught you have to do yourself learning which means that you really have to be
passionate about what you're trying to pursue so if you think that only the lectures are
going to help you crack the exam I don't think so you need to go around see look at the like
if they have to talk about particular experiment because I understand that they don't like the
lecture is of one hour they also have a limited time they cannot cover everything so if they
just say that okay this part is important or this experiment is important then you can go
back re-revise it because as a student for me it is difficult to make everything important
right so there would be some things which I can skip there would be some things which I
cannot skip I have to know that so if if professors they stress about that then just go back
and do the learning and for the ones who want to come to [institution 1] the way they teach
is really different and it's unique I never I have never been exposed to such type of learning
which is so self-oriented so research oriented so like you go find things come back and talk to us it's like that so you really need to be self-motivated that way yeah

R: yeah and can you expand more on how I mean you've mentioned it a bit but can you expand more on how the environment is different and unique

Superwoman: okay so um when I was doing my undergrad I did it from [city] yeah over there and most of my friends who were doing their studies in different institutes it was more like how to crack exam okay so when professor they we would go chapter by chapter so today we know that there would be chapter number one that we would be studying so it would it was more like open your books okay so we are going to study chapter number one and in that chapter you they also they will talk about that this is really important this division but in here it's not like that if you go into lecture it's more like it's like everything is important so you pick your topics which you feel that will help you build your career which you feel will help you build you know your own path so you pick your own modules you pick your own topics you study about it and you come up with something so that way it is different yeah

R: okay alright perfect um so are you aware of any support that international students receive from your professors your department the wider college

Superwoman: uh in terms of finances I know there is something like graduate program but I really don't know how to apply in it or what are the criteria is that they you know account take into account and do the selections uhm yeah [institution 1] in terms of fees expenses yeah the education is expensive here that way yep

R: are you aware of any other kind of support like

Superwoman: yeah there are a lot of student support so because they understand we are coming you know we are leaving our families and friends behind and we are literally all alone here so there are uh certain facilities where you can make a call if you are in distress or you want emotional support you want a mental peace you want to talk about something which you might not be comfortable in talking to any of the person then you can yeah make a call or you can write and they are really fast they will respond you like really quickly so that sense of you know having that you know if you are in trouble you can reach out to somebody and they are going to help you so we have global Student Union in [institution 1] and I think they are really helpful so I like I don't think twice if I have to ask something to them because they because I know it can be stupid for them that why she is asking this but that is important for me yeah so they help with everything then they will let you know what are what are the like cheap and best places where you can go and shop you
know buy groceries to what is near what is not near where to go where not to go and they keep on organizing uh these a little bit of what do you call like celebrations like here and there so you go you participate so that way so it tells you with your own network like meet new your friends and all

R: okay and do you think that the support that the college provides international students is adequate

Superwoman: yeah I think that is adequate yeah

R: okay um is there anything that you would suggest to the college that they could do to improve that support

Superwoman: I think in su- in support wise they are really good yeah I don't think there's anything about that

R: yeah okay um let's see alright those are the questions that I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Superwoman: [long pause] no I think we had a good conversation @@

R: is there anything else that you would like to express

Superwoman: yeah there's one difference I mean when I did my undergrad in and back in my home country over there once you graduate so it is the responsibility of the college to bring in the good employers to the campus and it give the students a privilege to you know they conduct the interviews in the campus and so they have that kind of facility so yeah so it mostly happens in the final year when you reach the final year so they would be requesting big like companies like [companies] all these companies they will come into the campus and they will recruit out of the final your students but here it is more challenging here is like you need to go into the world and find a job for yourself so yes we do have career services and that's a portal where they keep on you know updating information about where opportunities are available but there is nothing like something coming up in the campus and recruiting and having a talk to students one-to-one though there was one graduate Ireland um I think career fair that happened yeah recently so it's more like that if you want to find a job you go get a job like that

R: right yeah so it's more on the student rather than the University

Superwoman: yeah on the student rather than the university yeah they would let you know that these opportunities are available but then you need to go and you know crack that yeah

R: okay alright thank you

Tina
R: okay so um first I'd like to know how do you think you are doing academically at [institution 1] do you think you're doing well //not doing

Tina: no I’m not doing very well| yeah

R: you're not okay um is this just from your feeling is it from grades it from both

Tina: um I think it’s from both um my module my scores like about 50 um sometimes I get 60 @really @hard like that

R: okay all right so like thirds two twos

Tina: yeah

R: yeah okay um so what would you say your strengths are academically

Tina: umm my strengths well@@ um I think because because in my course there are people who like didn't don't have a background in this field so because I am in in un-
college ge- uh studied the same field so I have a comparative advantage of that but if I compare that to other people who also studied um my field then I’m @@ not good I’m not really strength uhm I think my greatest strength is I think my own point of view because

them yeah I think most of o- people's department professors and other students they are from America or Germany and they're only like two people from Asia and so when we discuss problems I often have different perspectives yeah

R: so you bring a different perspective to the conversation and along with

Tina: um yes other people have told me that like they can learn this perspective

R: good um and what would you say that you struggle with

Tina: only academics or everything

R: everything

Tina: well because uh even if the master’s is in [discipline] I have to learn about quantitative research and you know a lot of math eh logic I think so basically I have a problem with critical thinking and also creativity@ this like uhm I think in I I I’ve regret that I didn't study like hasn't study about critical thinking or philosophy logics I mean I did the in college but @ this is not I didn't study in somethings so I really struggle with evaluating written materials and when I design research it's very hard for me to like visualize or see the hmm se like all of the factors that can play a part in the results of the research so I think it's requires both like to thinking about creativity and like critical thinking logical thinking so I struggle with it yeah

R: okay and what are your strengths in terms of language of English

Tina: um language is um I think like so much about the language because the readings it's very technical so sometimes I even I'm not really sure that I understand what they mean I think understand but then I still have to like search look look up the words in dictionary
because in social science there some words I think I understand what it means but in the field it sometime it means something different or sometimes the author has theories they don't explain the concepts so I don't know if it's like a concept everybody know or there some omission from the article or something so I feel like I spent a lot of time laboring through like the first steps of read of engaging with articles that’s to understand on a surface level what is this means and then as the uh only then that I could really see the logic of the art- of the article and then like evaluate if it good or bad I I don't have enough I feel I don't have enough time I just reading one time and then understand of what it mean so yeah I feel like I slows me down a lot

R: okay and can you tell me about the work that is required in your modules
Tina: um I think it's a quite similar um we have to do a lot of reading each week and write a response paper and then you have some make assignments like um a big essay to write it’s actually not an essay but like research proposals and um also to presentation individual or group presentation yeah

R: alright and so as a research student so you're doing a master's right
Tina: yeah

R: so as a research student what is the work that is required
Tina: I think mostly is the required finding the gap in the literature and design research that improves on the previous ones or maybe that explore some new topic I think mostly the professor that requires the we do some research to improve on #discipline yeah

R: and what skills are required in your modules so you've said there's a lot of reading what else is required
Tina: @@ I think it's mostly reading and critical thinking in like I don’t know research design also like a lot of skill related to it like how how to study like method methodology and yeah um I think

R: okay so in can you describe the general structure of your lectures so when you're in the classroom what do you do are you just listening to the professor are you working in groups
Tina: it's mostly listening to the lecturer in some it’s more listening to lecturers in other is more like discussion yeah

R: okay and in the discussion what are you expected to do
Tina: um well also depends on different class but I think in general that some people who raise some points maybe sometimes is the lecturer and sometime question then people that give their opinion and we are required to listen to other people and um give our own opinion but like kind of in response to other people opinion instead of just sticking our own

yeah
R: okay and so how do your professors assess academic success so what are they looking for when they're grading

Tina: uhm I think um my um first I think most important thing is like the logic and coherent @cohesion @coherence of the the writing so that it can be short exercise but it must be really kind of make sense to them and so logic is more important in a second second most important requirement is really like we have to make it I don’t know like have to kind of complete like introduction bib- bibliography @ and yes and format @ the right way@ that’s something we that we need we need properly cite though yeah

R: okay and how do they communicate these expectations so do they tell you verbally do they give you a piece of paper or posted online

Tina: uh yeah they write about it in the syllabus and in the comments and they can show like what they're looking for but I think they really express em verbally yeah

R: okay okay and do you feel that the the guidelines that they provide do you feel that they are helpful and clear

Tina: well they are quite clear but then I guess I feel like um sometimes I should be more like international feedback from students and professor be good at first I like the requirements are very high for example in my first module the requirement is like read articles and then propose a research design to improve on articles but I have no background in anything related to research I just that's my first semester but I really struggled with it that but uh and so it’s also due to I don't know I guess it’s also because I didn't I wasn't very confident in approaching the professor so uhm yeah I uh yeah but I guess that if I want to happen more like maybe some adjustment or like the most important requirement because if they just list all the requirement I think that’s too high I don't know what's a priority only after I get the feedback on my individual assignment I guess okay this is what he or she looking for

R: okay yeah alright perfect um so in general what do you feel students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]

Tina: well [pause] I feel like communications is a very very important skill because uh uh I feel like the professor's here they the lecturers they I don’t know they kind of like they don't explain everything if you have a question you have ask really and I think the ability to frame the question to find the right question is very important yeah because sometime I feel lost but I also don't know how what kind of questions should I ask how to frame it yeah so the kind of I think studying [institution 1] is very difficult that it it's important to conceptualize your study what you want to do what and then answer the question @

R: yeah okay and how much of a factor does language play in academic success
Tina: I think it’s like besides the you know obvious like intelligence and everything like it’s the most important because of I feel in [institution 1] there is a lot of support for students but if you don't know how to communicate what your problems you don't get help and uh secondly that for me um there's a lot of writing in the course so if you have a problem with the language yeah it does so very difficult because for example it take a lot of time to read so sometime I couldn’t do all the reading and I go to class and so it would occur something that I haven't read about so I couldn't participate in I don't I feel like because I haven't read some sometimes with teacher lecturer say somethings I didn't feel like I entitled to ask them because maybe if I have read it I would have understood so I just basically it's a little um I don’t know it s- it make my study very um my study very ineffectual.

R: right okay so because you couldn't read then you couldn't participate which means you couldn't gain as much from the class or learn as much

Tina: yeah that’s right

R: okay alright and so you are also saying that there's a lot of support and [institution 1] for students but if you can't communicate then you won't get help

Tina: yeah

R: um so can you describe what other factors you're referring to or what other factors affect academic success

Tina: hmm I guess it’s um it’s a confidence and and I think I guess it's a willingness to get out there and just I don't know what to describe but it is a little bit sometimes I feel very embarrassed and because when other people ask questions they are like some questions that show that they could understand it and just want to have more understanding but if I ask questions it like very simple question like so I mean I understand that yeah you're here to learn so you can ask questions the professors uh lecturers they are very helpful but yeah sometimes@ not confident in asking questions but when I do approach the lecturers some are very enthusiastic but some others are like for example I asked my lecturer because I can’t read all of the readings say could you tell me which reading which article is the most important that I should focus on then he’s like oh you have to read everything @@@ and I feel there's a lot of support like student learning and they also say you can approach the [service] they give out the crisis student I haven’t gone there but like oh there's others but I don't know where to start I have very sometimes I have problems that are so basic who I don't know like you know I don't know where to start yeah

R: right so like you're aware of the support but you don't know how to approach them or what to ask
Tina: yeah I guess it’s also because in the in the orientation I was I didn't understand because my listening wasn't very good back then so I just really know yeah you should sign up here yeah but I don't know exactly what they do

R: okay so it's not clear what services they offer

Tina: yeah

R: okay alright I'm I'm so did you have any linguistic or academic preparation before coming to [institution 1]

Tina: well I think practically nothing@ this I I worked for few years and I mean I study English a lot when I was in school and was college but then when I go then I have n- well partly because I had a little time and partly because I didn't really think that I would go to [institution 1] yeah yeah I didn’t really plan@ so um yeah so basically I have@ a little preparation because in my job it kind of related to the field but I think the focus of the course here is more kind of Eurocentric I feel is sometime only in some class that I can feel that my experience and insight is my useful to people but some other class for example like research or [modules] yes mostly just I don’t know know I feel like I start from the beginning

R: ok so you feel is it the content of the class that's very Eurocentric or is it the experiences or the expectation of what you should know about already

Tina: hmm yeah I think that's certainly there is um I thought is my perception then there’s expectation that you know about the thing but I've talked with a a student this some other person I know she said that like you Canada for example if you want to study a field that you don't have a ground knowledge of then you have to take some kind of subjects before that to compliment but in Ireland then if you qualify you go in the you can qualify but still there a lot of things you don't know compared for people who are like familiar yeah that's right and then secondly I think ah Eurocentric I think it’s the content >is I guess it's um< it's kind of expected because quantif- quantitative research so mostly works in democratic countries with everything very uh transparent accountable but I come from um non-democratic country so yeah and so basically also is because I’m #unt I know about institutions both electoral system etcetera so I'm very I'm unfamiliar with that and we were really touch like what inside about you know how the system to work in an authoritarian system so yeah like @ I feel bad because I already have a degree in [discipline] in the country so I thought I should know but really I don't know @ @ so yeah so um and also I think mostly of the culture because most of the students in the course they're from North America or Europe so the the discussion often like kind of centered around people experience and of course I can talk about my but sometime because I had to listen to them
because I need to understand to follow the discussion in that form ideas in my head and I was often not quick enough to say my idea

R: okay yeah so you felt like you have things to say but you had to think about it first and then the conversation had moved on so much

Tina: yeah yeah yeah that's right because yeah yeah something that I couldn't even listen to all that if I when I think that I miss it then I get worried that way um I'm not sure if I don't know what the question is anymore like yeah

R: right and when you did express your ideas and our insight how do people respond to it like your peers and your professors

Tina: well people are supportive and they listening uh at first it um in first semester I often struggle to to express myself so the lecturer he kind of like supported he explain again or like say thing what I said again in a clearer way which it doesn't do to other he doesn’t do to other students so I can see that yeah yeah he like encouraged me and and in in second term then I could some maybe some subjects as a are more relevant to my country then I speak up more and yeah people they most people they are very supportive and like respectful it’s like I had some time I've kind of uh got it because I never see I rarely see them like um you know have some counter-arguments with me so I don't know if I make a good argument or because they like I don’t know like maybe that let her talk don’t make her feel discouraged from expressing her opinions but sometime I have thought that but I think mostly I have more positive experience experience in expressing myself yeah

R: okay good and so did you have to take an entry assessment before being accepted to [institution 1] so something like IELTS or TOEFL

Tina: yes yes I um done IELTS and I got quite high score but the score in speaking and writing is lower than for listening and reading but I feel like because of my high score I could quite un unprepared for how difficult listening and understanding people here @and not only not only because of Irish accent but sometime I struggle to listen to the Americans British people I don't know why I think for a few months I really don't understand what people said and even right now I don’t know I can't understand 100% but it's I know but in academic environments it get easier than in informal setting but I guess when sometimes the subjects get very technical like when we study about recent method or statistic like if I have to follow because both have to understand English and concepts numbers and you have to @write and look and @listen so difficult@}

R: so when you're having to understand the concepts and the language and take notes you're like ahhh
Tina: yeah@@ yeah@@ that’s right@
R: okay@ so do you feel that the entry assessment he said that you still feel unprepared but um do you feel that the entry assessment kind of accurately predicted how you would do or that it prepared you for the studies
Tina: I think it doesn't accurately predict how well I do because I got 8 you know is quite high score so I think that I could success very quickly but in reality I and um also my speaking even though not 8 it also six point five or 7 I think it’s like I can manage with that thought but um when I study here then uhm I don’t know like my pronunciation some time is people couldn’t understand me my pronunciation is so bad@ and the listening is so difficult I guess it's because um uh I think the first semester I didn't have we didn't have any lectures it’s mostly seminars discussion and then it’s very confuse people talk very fast and sometimes over each other and the topic moves so quickly sometime unrelated to each other@ and so this too makes things difficult as well uhm and also some I guess I know some time I feel like people speak and then a lot of factors come in and then make it very difficult for me
R: mm- hmm okay so despite having and eight point zero it just it didn't reflect what you had to do here
Tina: yeahh uhm [long pause] well I um I must say that the second semester I would say is more lecture than it kind of look like the test yes but the first semester it doesn't look at anything@ like@ the@ test@
R: okay so it depends on what kind of class you're doing
Tina: yes yeah
R: okay alright um so what kind of preparation should international students take before coming to [institution 1]
Tina: well I feel like pronunciation is very important this I guess because when I in with my country listen even like because people from same country like second speak English in second language say we speak English wrong in the same way so we kinda understand each other easily as people understand me but here then for example if I meet an Asian student who she speak English very badly I still understand her she understands me but if I meet a very good native English speaker but says in the quite of an accent or phrasing I understand and some time I try bit hard to speak but people still wouldn't understand me what I mean is that like I think they should student should find as many opportunities they possible to speak with native speaker and in academic environment if possible or maybe just lots of conversational English but really discuss some topics academic topics and if will be easier:
R: it will help them

Tina: yeah I guess it's not @really @realistic @though

R: ok um is there any other type of preparation that you would suggest

Tina: okay I said about pronunciation already in question um yes I don't know why I think

R: yeah listening I don’t know what to suggest my like for example when I listen to the BBC

or CNN I can understand very easily perfectly and I feel really confident but maybe

watching TV shows where people kind of fake the accent like Irish TV show or British TV

show where people speak in accent that are similar to in the place then this will@ help@

Tina: @yeah listening I don’t know what to suggest my like for example when I listen to the BBC

or CNN I can understand very easily perfectly and I feel really confident but maybe

watching TV shows where people kind of fake the accent like Irish TV show or British TV

show where people speak in accent that are similar to in the place then this will@ help@

R: @yeah okay alright so if you could give advice too and faculty at [institution 1] in how

they interact and how they support international students what would it be

Tina: @yeah that’s a good question yeah well yes that's really different between how the

international students perceive a lesson and from native English speakers hmmm so

sometime it's not about the content or the ways as a professor explained concepts but

sometimes it’s a low concentration or sometimes it’s a part like oh they didn't we didn't

catch what they say and for a newcomer sometimes it’s like I understand like half the

modules lessons uhm I think that some professors kind of after class they often put their

lectures on blackboard or some notes at least I think it help like even if I miss some part

during a lesson then I could look it up then uh [long pause] yes and I can my second advice

some time I don't know if yeah I think they could have had that expectation some professor

have some expectation that this knowledge is like uh everyone knows it but yeah

sometimes they could stop and say oh does everybody understand it I guess yeah it also

helps when the explain and I don't know I guess that’s all@ yeah@

R: yeah yeah I think those are two good points yeah you know providing the notes

afterwards to make sure that everyone understands and then also not assuming that

everyone knows what they consider as basic concepts

Tina: yeah yeah

R: okay so if you could give advice to organizations or schools that are preparing

international students for [institution 1] what would that advice be

Tina: prepare for [institution 1] in general I feel like informal um conversational English

like a commanding of conversational English could affect your study because I said I

sometimes it's easier for me to talk about my problem with other students or sometimes

reach information like when you sit in a group and people discuss the study and sometimes

I can get understand more about something or get some information that their missing uh

but my conversational English little bit like speaking and listening is like even @worse
that my academic English I don’t know why maybe it’s nerves or something mmm
maybe just learn. I don’t know references uh kind of like when I got in my country I
look talk with foreigners and like I talk with them so it wasn't a big problem but here like
very difficult me to understand that's maybe because most of them are drunker than me I
don't know and I like I don’t know what to talk about then humor all of humor
references so sometimes I feel a bit isolated because I couldn't talk much with them and I
don’t know som- I feels sometimes I feel a little bit like [long pause] I because I I want to
like mingle with people to know yeah to make new friends but because if you just go to
school and study and then go home it’s so boring yeah so I feel like it also could
affect my confidence in like talk in sticking up during class yeah
R: yeah and and so if you could give advice to future students like so students who want to
come to [institution 1] what would that advice be
Tina: yeah I think it’s the same generally um try to um practice listening and speaking as
much as possible but I guess um but because a lot of people uh especially people who
study out of like overseas student from some people they they don’t have a lot of time or
opportunities they have to like prioritize then I think that listening to the news doesn't help
that much@ because they speak perfect English yeah and like formal @the kind of
language that people use in real life like it's very different so just try to seek out native
speakers and yeah practice with them@@
R: and so um are you aware of any support that international students receive either from
your professors your department the wider university
Tina: well I'm aware of support for students in general but I’m not aware of any support for
only oh I know that's kind of like teaching in this course academic English because for
international students that’s it@
R: okay um do you think that this support is adequate
Tina: I didn't take the academic course the academic English course so I don’t know
um there's other support um [long pause] well it's very hard to say@ because I I have no
reference to say it was good or not in general I think I'm quite impressed by how much
support is like is available [institution 1] is very diverse like not only academic student life
or health yeah um but uh sometime I feel like just like make some appointment it took a
long time for me to get someone eh then because I don’t know I spent one year here
sometime I feel like it take so long for me to get support and secondly I feel like uh people
often like only get some a little bit information and they they get the counselling help and
that sometimes is not what I need it's very different I don’t know maybe com- a matter of
communication because if I never find kind of this kind of support before so sometime I
don't know again if it’s a matter of commutation I don't know how to describe my
experience you know just type a few lines on computers and that people go oh meet this
person and then I feel like he he or she doesn’t understand my question you know but at
the time I was I feel like I don't want to be rude like no you don’t understand me
like
R: okay so when you went for help you felt like they didn't understand you but you weren’t
you didn't want to be rude so you just okay thank you
Tina: yeah because this like um [pause] I guess I don’t know like go straight into the
problem they think it is @ I was a little bit overwhelmed and I feel there should be more
talking in person back and forth to because I feel like yeah sometime have a specific
question but sometime I just feel like lost and yeah and I feel like this would be more
helpful if they yeah if there’s more uh feedback yeah
R: right yeah so it may not always be a specific question but more just a feeling and you
need someone to help you explore that with you to figure out what actually is going on
Tina: yeah yeah@ yeah that’s right
R: okay um okay so for me that's all the questions I have but are there any questions that
you wish I had asked that I didn't ask
Tina: uhm any question um I don’t [click] uhm well I know this is about academic English
but sometimes I feel there should be some assistance with the academic and conversational
English because the study experience is not only the classroom but also when you you
some time to meet the lecturer at lunch and the you discuss sometimes for example my
classmates and I go to hang out at the bar but the topic it also about this study yeah and I
feel it really invaluable I don’t know some some people feel like and people express their
political opinions @@but it very interesting I mean yeah I feel I if I have better
pronunciation and conversational English then I could like make friends easier and then
you know discuss topics like not related to the academic subjects and also our lives as
people in around the world for example
R: right yeah yeah okay and is there anything else that you would like to add
Tina: no I think @ no I think that’s all@
R: okay thank you so much [turns off device]
R: [Tina wanted to add information so device turned on again] yeah go for it
Tina: uh okay yeah I think um my lone um I have some problems with my lone but
sometimes yeah it could have a long-term problems if I come here but I feel like because I
had so much difficulty talking and forming in a relationship with people that I feel um
sometimes depressed or unmotivated um bored kind of is um and I think also academic

like problem that affect my academic performance yeah

R: yeah so it's not just language or content it's emotional and what's going on in life

Tina: yes so because the language barriers that make that creates some kind of difficulty in

social life and then yeah it affect my study yeah

R: yeah alright is there anything else you’d like to say

Tina: @no

Vick

R: great um so my first question would be can you tell me about your strengths

academically

Vick: my strength academically my strength is in understanding the content and uh

speaking and critically analyzing so these are the two strengths which are always fine

because I read more and I analyze and with my experience with the traveling of the people

that gives things of speaking that's my core of my strength in academics

R: okay what would you say that your strengths in terms of English are

Vick: English uh in speaking conversation

R: uhm just in general so speaking reading writing listening all of the above

Vick: okay basically uh yeah of course I start for my school I was from a English you

know like my father is English teacher okay so upper form so English is my second

language and we used to like from my place the English is the second language uh to the

mother [language] and my all my graduation studies everything been in English but the

difficulty at the time and from seeing the different places we learn English through

we don't speak or pronounce English in terms of English so we use the local

mother tongue to pronounce English words like a will be promises to ah so ah is the first

sound in [language] we reference a so that's where every dialectic or every word

everything we speak in our own dialectic but we write in English but at same time always

it depends from my country where um my familiarity goes with the [language] and we

have the agitation always the other religion so cultural so we gave up English in the middle

so then everything is in [language] understanding the conversations usually in college will

be in [language] but not in English but the writing will be in English these other two

directly opposite so it's like a mixed bag unless until ah I wanted to came to [city] for my

studies then only I started learning or writing in English academic English well when I

moved to northern [country] for my work I started learning my English first of all because
I need to take a trade-off between learning [language 2] or English so I stood with English because where I need to work so that's where I learned formally then I joined courses at the British Council no not before IELTS just while I'm working so I'm going to have a some good conversation and after my stud- working I went to prepare for my diplomatic service and there I really grown up with some English the basic foundations again I've restarted my grammar everything and that's time I entered the British Council in [city] so join some course to learn to prepare for myself for any interview and everything and that's how I start with English and then I academically in writing when I came I faced difficulties in writing where sometimes with the academic writings in a two-way like when you read an [country] author where I'm from it's very easy for me to read but when I read an American author or European author it's always a bit difficult I need a dictionary because the words they use or the new terms which they resemble we don't understand so either we have to give up on the reading the tough text or we have to go deeply slowly there to construct ourselves but eventually I constructed in a way but until when I faced with the exam like IELTS and the preparation where I made it on my own but still I try to clear but still after coming here I still find a difficulty where even the conversation between the students are very vocabulary the words they use or something different where we don't use those words in our daily usage in [country] the country so that's a familiarity in reading I don't have any problem but in conversation of course still here I have in [country] I don't have a problem in conversation in writing so there are differences right okay alright it's very interesting um so your your school like primary school and secondary school was that um in [language] or was it in English Vick: uh it's in English it's through [language]

R: okay but it was through [language]

Vick: through [language]

R: okay so it wasn't English medium

Vick: English medium

R: okay but still through [language]

Vick: [language] except in English class we read or write in English but when the- when we ask some doubt even teachers used to explain in [language] rather than in English so rest of the subjects are like in books we will read in English when the teacher and student conversation will happen in [language] to explain everything so it's like a in familiarity will come but but this is during my time not the present time right like the present generation after millennium we can say it's like for them they are much fluent and the same thing since I am coming from a village background so other say two types it is not the
metros metropolitan like people from [cities] they are very fluent there where the teacher
students speak in English they write they dialect they interact but for us in a village it's like
a medium is English but the [language] is the common thing so even that's a different state
the difference where I come from that also is a part of life

R: exactly yeah that's very interesting actually so um so what I how would you evaluate
your current academic success here at [institution 1] so what do you say you're doing well
you're not sure you are you aren't etc.

Vick: well um my academic success maybe I'm doing well in a way with my content and
the focus on the work but still writing yeah I have some difficulties still uhm it's like the
way they organize the writing and the way I came from writing it’s for me it's a learned
writing it's not a built in writing so I need to check my own
paper two three times I put it to my friends either so that in a writing of course I lack but
rather than that of course I'm coping with the conversation or reading I can read for a long
time so I don’t any problem with that

R: okay so it's mainly writing and mainly organization just from your background with

English or is it um like what about writing do you find difficult

Vick: uh writing I can say that academically the choice of words so it's like the way I write
if I give it to my professor in [country] it will be evaluated for almost full more marks the
same writing if I produce here it will be evaluated for less mark is because the vocabulary
we use the academic vocabulary and the organization of sentence so these are the thing
content is always fine for me< because I know which content to be top down right and I
have that experience so content wise I don't differ but in my vocabulary and sentence
phrasing I differ of course so there I get the feedback so even my for example I even when
for my essay I just gave an outline and a much of my professor here she d- here is she
didn't give me a feedback on my content she gave a feedback on my writing so the
grammar and the vocabulary so those things differ

R: okay alright and and can you tell me about the work that's required in your modules so
are you taking formal modules

Vick: yes

R: okay so what do you have to do for your modules in terms of like reading or
assignments etc.

Vick: ah for modules of course we have to write an essay end of the term which should be
long around 4 thousand words three thousand to four thousand words and then reading of
the core of articles or books because end of assessment is a presentation so it's like the
three things comes involved in everything so the weighted goes to writing so then the
presentation then the conversation but you're marked for your participation your speech but the participation does not include whether you speak wrongly or correctly in the interaction there it content ehm in your presentation again it's your knowledge and the expression and then the writing of course it's a judgment of a combination of all so that’s the three things R: okay and then as a research student since you're doing the master’s um what kind of work is required of you as a research student Vick: for uh

R: so you're doing a master's a dissertation right so what do you have to do for your dissertation

Vick: mm-hmm maybe I'm like we have to prepare a literature review so there it's are two kind of things to analyze from academic articles journal articles and the books so from I have to differentiate from uhm uhm the person who were writing from the media there any difference the are academic writers the media writers the persons how they see the issue how they address again I have to when I'm narrowed down with this I have to write only in academic terms of academic words which precise way to my [discipline] they're academic terms but when I research from uhm say for example from a journalist who written a book on topic so their journal articles and the vocabulary is something different there's a one difficulty I have again but I can differentiate the terms since I used to it for a long time I can differentiate academic words in the general world so that's a one thing in literature review numbered from the then writing content and researching their data so I think that's a two thing R: okay and so can you describe the general structure of your lectures so when you're in the classroom what happens is it mainly like the professor speaking with the PowerPoint or is it a class group discussion group Vick: well it's a two-way process the first part will be for an hour will be a PowerPoint presentation from a professor uh after there's a interaction in the way and the second part will be a group discussion we in groups and then you have to present in group or either one person so it's always different difference with that lecture but those are both the things R: okay alright um and so when professors go to grade your presentations and your assessment so you said that mostly it's about content but can you tell me what you think they look for when grading so how did they assess academic success

Vick: uhhh I've yet to get any paper assessed paper so in a way with the way I understood from the handbook and the people when I had the feedback and I had an informal talking well they asses on your critical thinking and how you represent your critical thinking in a balanced way so that's a one point they mentioned all the time even when you are in
interaction or in a presentation you should have a clear balanced view of presentation how you present both your the known basic content the contradictions and you are trying to bridge that gap so we have to address in a holistic way that's on expectation or if you are trying to if I try to address some subjects in a very critical way when I where I don’t need to take a balanced view then I have to put myself and framed that I'm going to take this view and why I have to explain it even I did some presentation on that way so I think that is acceptable until you have to be on non-academic terms so if you are addressing you have to be on what methodology you're addressing and why then you can be a critical you don't need a balanced view or if you are generally speaking it shouldn’t be too gentle but be in academic terms that's the thing I found

R: okay perfect and so how do your professors communicate those expectations is it just in the handbook do they verbally say that do they give you assessment guidelines
Vick: oh yeah of course assessment guidelines are there but not a very nuanced guidelines it's like uhh grading for how many persons we are doing for a presentation speaking 10 percent 20 percent of mark and then the handbook will carry the same thing but not a very nuanced one how they are going to check and that thing there’s no clear specification or demarcation not specification so the clear demarcation of the outline is not there
R: okay so it's not super clear it's not super detailed
Vick: mm-hmm um it's not super detailed I can say that

R: alright um so in general what do you think students need to succeed at [institution 1]
Vick: well from my if you ask from my department uh first I can say from [discipline] it's mostly studying [topic] so it's said to oppose opposite so we can’t no one can stand on a single pole without knowing the other pole so obviously you have to come narrow down to the center so how you come down is a different thing uhm well that should be structured within our academic lines the thinkers what we think I think that's a one point we have to narrow down to be an academic success so like if you are working on a thinker and uh what are his person his or her perspective or approach and how you contradict by knowing that and you have given a good example and why what you're doing and why you are doing you have to be very clear for an academic success in [institution 1] from my department that's on line the second when I was being with my friends from my engineering department like when I have some friends it's like for them it's more like a presentation and writing on the end of the work it's not assessed in-between so it's the end of their work so it's more like grading for their projects how they present and how they work so that include some mathematics more than conversation or more than presentation more than a critical thinking they have to be very objective with the result plus one plus
one is equal to two they have to be very clear engineering students like some of my friends from [institute] like for them they have the term exams they are graded by writing not in an essay for like us so they have to sit in the exam hall how they reproduce everything the medical system and everything the questions so it depends from center to center only I have friends from this 3 departments @

R: @ alright and how much of a factor does language play in academic success
Vick: factors?

R: so how important is language to academic success
Vick: oh language is much more important I mean English like a country like Ireland of course it plays part in English is bigger you have to be without that it can survive because a professors are either from British or from Irish which they have look like English and they know how to write and how to produce but when people like from me from a developing country or from my friends from Africa where we have not used too much of English we have to improve writings are one difficult task the factor comes to play there the factor of play for example my friends from say from States or other countries in my class where they are in uh putting in a very organized to be in writing because they don't find difficulty in writing in organization you know one more difference oh I found the factor is the thinking and writing pattern like for example when I had an interaction of my friends from States or other countries they have writing skills right from the school but and people from developing countries we don't have writing skills from school we only go to school and write the formal exam not any creative writing are not there so we don't think critically basically we don't think critically except the special science students the demarcation is always there so here those who practice add to it add value so I think that's a one main factor but I don't know how people from like one of my friend our she's from [city] as she is working in nursing she finds much difficult in conversation and everything even though she had a good uh IELTS score because IELTS the mostly we train in a closed room when we write the exam we reproduce everything in [country] it's like a reproduction so everybody was into the three months preparation they reproduce but when you're into the open environment we don't find that match so then the sense of fear so the factor is external now so how you cope up with your fear and external factors then how you once you manage there then even the internal fear of academic writing thinking and learning so it's a two way for some people so it's also again differ like she's from a village background and people from [cities] they are okay with everything so it's like a metropolitan cities where the people come from that defines them ultimately the base
R: so can you expand more on external factors like so what other factors are going to affect academic success so this could be like things like fear or living situations social life etc.

Vick: well to answer that of course external factors are multiple ways like depends people were first of all where they are coming from like me even though I have a multiple experience in metro cities even though I'm not grown up I have for 22 years I've been from village and then immediately I've been into a metro city when I was working in Metro Cities I don't have any difficulties but when I came to a metro cosmopolitan city like [city] for my graduation I had a different experience altogether even in [country] my place maybe that could give us some space to understand like first time in a closed enrollment I'm having a different diverse core people from different places of my country different culture different sects behavior pattern everything even though there's a common language of English but it's always are difficult to communicate because people first assimilate themselves in a group it's a group dynamics always there so you know always #unt or whatever you know since you are from [country] the people from North [country] will be in northern [country] South will be south so there are a lot of differentiation of be there within the North [country] like there's a different regions [region] and the people will assimilate themselves to the scale apart from that there are external factors of the hierarchies different system so within the system when we study and we came we also have the external fear we can't speak uhh somewhere or the other I always try to break this on my own where in any different situation I never assimilate with my [language] people because first thing I can't learn anything so I want to get into step myself into the opposite pole whether I know or not whether I have the scale zero they might be higher level I don't mind whether I know the language or doesn't matter but I step myself into it but that gives it acts in both way so in a way it's okay but in a way how long you will sustain that so that's a different equation so somewhere I sus- I sustain I'll learn the language and I'll learn the food and everything so the external factor now I want to draw is on two things one is the culture language particularly language and the second one is on food because food is always I found in my experience in traveling food is a very demarketing factor for to be in a group where your whom you're assimilating and especially people coming from [country] therefore this is a big factor right yeah in a way so always I have a different taste for food so first people accept me into their culture from food I accept the food whether I like or not I pretend to be liking so people first they break their gates so they break themselves okay [Vick] is like this fine okay then they start speaking first they will speak with me English whatever they know then I learn two three languages words from their own language then I try to communicate them then I find the similarities linguistic bit
similarities so that's from my experience so literally I enter I step into their culture to meet external factors but once I'm comfortable with my friends again with the social sphere of either education or working the both the sphere again we have to demarcate into the label so there it's something I simplify now when I came here in Ireland even though I I see the first some conflicts I had with the people so even coming here it's like people French are French German are German Austrian are Austrian so I was a little shocked here Austrians never like German German never like French French and German never like Belgian and Italian are different oh and what a kind of European we are thinking European are one land and everything they are so differentiated fine the same case I found that the people from States where #unt Dakota north south east west some from Michigan or some from New York there are a lot of differences from which school you're coming from so again the dynamics plays there so how you resemble but the central point for people to the topic this is a broader and these external factors when someone is coming in and when you see in a group dynamics in the class so with whom you will relate yourself the sense for a person from say from [country] for example like me coming from such a 6,000 miles away and where you have a close relation or friendship to talk friends to talk first you have to see who the [nationality] are and for me I’ve been in [institution 1] since September say six months I know only two [nationality] only I met the two [nationality] people last in my Chinese New Year Day with my friends place I never been with [nationality] @ anyways because I know what will happen with them so that's one thing but when I see there they’re a group of [nationality] people who communicate who talk in their own language so that's where the friend who I mentioned from [city] she used to speak and she has a sense of speaking at least freely so she goes with a [language] she never speaks in English but when she came to the morning into the class she needs to speak in English but she is very poor in English so the difference the external factors played here like affiliation or affection their sense of resemblance so these are the factors that play the emotional factors not the intellectual factors they’re not from external so emotional factors are a lot of things to do so I think that's one reason I want see this the vast differences I gave the same experience I feel like even in the class sometime the French people will speak English is something different and the Italian the way they use the English dialectic is different Germans are far better so again the difference of assets to play to understand what they speak so for example it's very difficult for me to understand someone speak English from my friends from States because there are dialectics and the pronounce uh pronouncing the word are different but it is for me very easy to speak English from Central Asian country one of my friend so it's like more of slow pronunciation so like that it's those are the factors so there
people try to assemble other friends to speak fluently that not from the class outside the
class that cut something for them I mean somewhere that engagement everything
happening so that will innovate will enrich in my opinion it will enrich it but the
continuation should be there so how you can assemble the external factors so internal
factors it’s up to you

R: alright um okay so before you came to [institution 1] did you take any linguistic or
academic preparation so did you take like IELTS classes English for academic purposes
anything like that
Vick: no I to ok some classes from British council [country] [city] just for learning I mean
speaking English
R: okay so a more general English
Vick: more general English well for me to cope up with the working environment but then
I learned academic writing when I stepped in myself into a social science field in my
going my master's [discipline] but I learned on my own writing and everything and when
I took IELTS exam I never gone for a coaching I just got the book what they have given
the material and then I prepared on my own so and that's really when my score will reflect
my speaking will be more seven the rest listening reading and writing will be over six six
writing would be five point five so the average comes down to six so that's the one

R: okay ok ay um so now since you've said that you've taken pretty much every test out
there um I want you to tell me how do you feel about the test
Vick: the tests are a very highly differentiated thing the way they test you like IELTS it's
like you have to be in a written exam not a computerized test that's why I prefer first the
IELTS okay so because first time I skip the TOEFL because of I should write on a
computer and not use to the computer typing or writing or speaking nothing so that's why I
gone for IELTS so IELTS basically their test to the speaking will be conversation and the
listening will be #unt and not much of very big statements of continuous-flow the linking
part will not be there it's like a two sentence three sentence and they will have a time of ten
seconds in between the sentence so you can think you can listen slowly the writing the
questions also will be different in IELTS like it will be a very simple question describe
explain some content that's it so reading it's a paragraph mostly doing in the paper we
know the calculate the time we can read a paragraph because the since school we are doing
the comprehension work in the paper comprehension reading and of course q and a
answers so it's very easy for us then this is the part with IELTS my experience so it's
overall good for me but when I want to step into US universities and I got the admission I
need to submit my TOEFL GRE score all the stuff the first time I went in TOEFL even I
prepared on my own after my registration the point is the preparation in itself something
different like it comes with the conversation like it's like a listening for example in IELTS
you will have one listening it will go on you will write it so finish in our TOEFL it's like a
one conversation being in a classroom the teacher will explain a subject or like
anthropology or any social science or a medical whatever it is and the students will ask
question then you will have a q and a what the student asked or the what teacher replied or
how you understand the content or the whole subject is all about what so we have to even
listen in a multiple dimension three four things will happen simultaneously and you don't
know which one you are going to answer first two three four and the video will not be
played second time it's only one time even in IELTS it's one time but you'll have only two
questions and the simple sentences while in the reading like same you have to do in a
computer for TOEFL again the same paragraphs it will be very #unt something raised on
assertion you have to find many things different and then you have to answer the questions
accordingly and the choice will be also something different the there won't be any
straightforward choice you have to be critically something explaining tougher but that
criticality will not be an IELTS IELTS is a much more like a Commonwealth countries so
British is has that mindset I think the colonial thing to have the people from there but US is
something different entirely altogether uh writing also it's very critical in TOEFL um and
not as much as in IELTS when you write that critical level of the the basic what you write
in TOEFL if you write it in IELTS you will get seven or eight but the basic you what you
write in IELTS is if you wrote it into TOEFL you'll get zero you will not be graded at all
so the bench- benchmark is entirely different from TOEFL and IELTS so these are the few
things in speaking again the multiple dimension comes to play in speaking between
TOEFL so it's like an IELTS one-to-one personal will be there and like they will ask you
like a teacher is an opposite side someone person they must you describe your hobby
personal life so it's like a man-to-man interaction and it's more formal and informal facial
expressions are there but in TOEFL it's again like you'll have multiple questionnaires in
conversation you have to answer like a speaking whatever they say you have to speak so
that emotions are not related there these are the two things so this is a basic difference
between TOEFL and IELTS which are the both of #unt and when I want to compare it with
PT Pearson's teaching education it's a grading system in itself altogether different like
ey don't go for a clear speaking category then reading then listening then writing no for
example in speaking itself they will ask question you have to speak you know it's a
computer-based test you have to speak again in speaking itself they will speak you have to
write again in the same thing they will speak you have to listen and you have to tell the
three things happens in speaking the same thing will come to again in a reading part you
won't write anything something how to write after listening after listening you have to
speak after you have to talk so it's a mixer that through all the stages PT and the grading
system also it comes like a communication and grammar communicate speaking and
grammar so it's a different grading skills so the academic part this other way TOEFL
IELTS and the PT differs I hope I have answered your question
R: yep um so how do you feel that those tasks prepared you for [institution 1] or predicted
your academic success in [institution 1]
Vick: oh nothing
R: nothing all of them
Vick: all of them uhm they prepare only for visa especially TOEFL prepared me on the PT
prepared me to get admission in US of course then I can explain in US in US cities but in
[institution 1] that doesn't matter [institution 1] I got my admission without all the stuff
only for a visa I have to submit my score @
R: okay fair enough so do you feel that has any relation or any benefit taking these tests
and these preparation course for the tests for [institution 1]
Vick: oh well not for me as I say that it's not directly but indirectly I know how do the
people think when I come here when I see that demarcation of the conversations but these
are the tests which are seeming okay this is the reality what I have done so it's like I'm not
into that fear or anything okay I learned that and since I prepared something already
I'm not know that everything is new to me but not everything is the same familiar with me
so I mean somewhere percentage-wise 30 40 or 30 70 or 40 60 so just I have to cope up
with the things so I can use my own mechanism to communicate or write the way I used to
do in a way it it clears the air a little bit okay and I know what's happening there it's not
any shock so that's the one thing happen with me
R: okay alright good um and what type of preparation do you feel the international students
should undertake before studying at [institution 1]
Vick: I mean maybe international students or from different things from Europe or from a
developing country or developed
R: from everywhere if it differs for for different countries or different areas expand on that
so what kind of preparation should European students take what kind of preparation should
students from developing countries take etc.
Vick: okay so maybe from uh developing countries are from say third world countries or
from Africa uhm from my experience here I think it should be a multi-dimensional both
speaking uh writing these are the two things and conversation these three elements are much more important because the point is for example here we people speak with the different people from different countries in like Irish British the different accents and everything like we learn English in our own terms on our own language own dialectic and we don't when we speak that also keeps the difference the sense of measurement among the students so why you speak English maybe within when I speak English so people can say I'm from [country] because of my dialectic so that's all one way altogether so in writing yeah keeps the same so the people cutting the conversation they don't go for a long conversation with the students from Europe or other English countries so they go with their own people again and they go with their own people they cut off with the language they speak the common language so they end up nowhere they started somewhere they end up with the again with the same line base line so only there's a again demarcation when they come to the within the campus within the class they are exposed to high English but within the outside the campus and outside the class where they are affiliated and how they are going with the same thing that makes a one difference especially from our people from develop and then same thing applied to the writing skills what we know we apply we write but in academically whether we are growing or not ah it depends on the individual of course how they want to improve but everyone tries to complete end of the day so that's the one thing with the developing country like if I say from people from European countries or from US of course they are already fluent in English but uhm of course they are very good enough with the people from my country like mine and everyone so everyone knows the English so no big comments or anything but always I think it's a it's not a problem with the people from Europe or other countries or the mostly westernized countries from Western country where people have the always we like people from [country] or Asian countries we always have the two side of mentality not a rational individual always you are reduced to something either since you're in [country] you know how people are reduced either by the [social hierarchy] or the hierarchy social things so when they come when the people more to the different space so they can't go with the individuality in their face and they take the image reality they always try to back up themselves with some known people so they reduce themselves I think somewhere that should be expanded that line where people can traverse freely like more conversational class like people used to go hang up in the bar and the pub and how many people can speak for a long time after two rounds of whiskey or beer and they speak only the movies but not about the academic stuff but like some of the class stuffs could be discussed after the class or the peer groups can be created more which I prefer I think when I face that time but I can do it with the masters so it's like a different
thing I think that's all people I mean the people from developing countries should be lifted up to bridge that gap so I think that's a gap I hope I answered your question

R: yeah yeah yeah no no you're answering perfectly uhm so if you could give advice too faculty at [institution 1] in supporting and communicating and helping international students what would that advice be

Vick: [long pause] uh it’s a difficult question for me @ like uh I don’t know you’re recording that @ what if they @

R: no it's fine your name isn’t going to be attached

Vick: no it’s like uhm like it for me it's comparison because I always do comparison and I think like many things in [country] or my institution my institution in [country] will work informally there is no any formal structure like you can knock anytime you can step into a teacher you can meet anyone if they're really busy they will say really busy if they are not doing some work they will ask you what is important you need to really talk yes then you can sit you can talk they will cut off from their work then the engagement will go on then you can go then they also get back to the work this is again the two-way people are in to in a [country] for example they will assimilate they will reorganize and then de-organize depends on the situation but when you come to the west which I felt here it is very formal here because of that individuality whatever the notion we had uh we developed in the West they have set timings for everything they can't spend more time for you or for even for themselves even their family their dimensions is different so here the teacher [institution 1] they have the office hours for one hour until they have an emergency thing to interact with them they will give an extra time to talk but how far it will help you in understanding the English or conversation is a question for me because they assume you know English you can write everything they can give one feedback for example I can say my own I experienced in my class when I was writing an essay I was I'm not aware that only the for essay a discussion outline I can have one appointment with my teacher course coordinator not the second time so I’m not aware of that actually I never went through the handbook completely probably well that's I’m from [country] we trust the words more than the book but here people trust the book then the words so that's the point @ you know I never aware of it and uh I prepared everything I thought of writing a second time maybe I can have a discussion where I want to put my all my thoughts the rough thoughts so then I can edit them but the first feedback I got I asked for a second time in the email but the second time I got only I got the rule only in the handbook so and so column the mentioned it only one time you can meet the professor so they are not supposed to I'm not supposed to give another feedback or a meeting that will be dishonest to the other students so in a way you
can understand of course I understand so then I have to work on my own right I can't ask
so I think then how people engage so there they can create some space maybe it's a new
thing we have to think from the West I mean uh I think some manner I want the Western
people to think in that way it's much more not doing for them like [country] like that's a
lower disorganized but like some professors who are really into it they know when to talk
when to have they don't have any formal office hours or sometimes even though when you
step in immediately if they are really into the work they will say I'm into the work I can
talk to you later so they don't go with the too formal way only on two hours in Tuesdays
the fixed time so that's also an extreme like all the time you're giving all free time is also
extreme but somewhere in the middle so like for example I need at least in my research
discussion at least I needed two three times to meet a professor because the way I think I
go slowly because I'm coping up multiple things like vocabulary I have to think I have to
think the content I have to think the research question I have three dynamics in myself but
when I have a chance to meet a professor once before my presentation not the second time
how many things I'm going to put when one thing when I'm looking at the coursework
daily course work weekly coursework I have to do at the same time I have to work so at
least it should be two three times at least not all the students who are much in need if they
ask and if they can figure out so then that could be a one thing in [institution 1] I mean the
whole not in [institution 1] everything in the West because I understand the people from
different space we have to think like for example I can cope on my own but what about my
my colleague in class from Africa [pause] so actually he got uh what to say sleepless night
and then he go oh he can't sleep somewhere because he is thinking nothing is coming out
of it something needs to pull out of it maybe the counseling helps but it's not counseling
helps with your stress or emotion but not with the writing so when the writing is taken care
of the fluidity of thought happens then the stress automatically comes down there is a
interlocking between the both I saw during my people writing the essay some different
even the people from let's say from my Europe they are stressed of course they don't
have any problem in writing so they enjoy the stress so their difference between the you
stress and the normal stress they came to play of course they study psychology everybody
has the answer for everything here everybody is from the text yeah your stress what kind of
stress stress is the stress right no it's you created your stress or a subjective stress okay
come on stress that's it end of the story sometime I say I'm from [place] soo even though
that's where I try to different some cultures they cultivate some cultures don't in the even
the rationality part you know I see it's a very difficult for first time to cope of it like in
[country] you know when you're with the people it doesn't matter whether you have money
or not you will go on to enjoy everything but here even if you don't have you can't do anything can leave their friends they can value they can't ask you there you need to ask, everything is formal like here in [country] we will pull a hand you come here you don't have don't care you come we pay and everything next time you pay whatever it is we don't mind so those are the nuances comes to play the people from that kind of structure and they see the new kind of structure it's like a totally circling in opposite direction clockwise and anti-clockwise so then the academics how much the focus will happen so many things interlinked I think in a way so the teacher should focus on the culturality also to study or think like four people we are from [country] my class so and then say five are from States two are from France three from Germany if you value the majority will understand everything then somewhere I drop down because out of four from [country] I am from [country] they are from [cities] so they are far better ahead of me so their needs are different but my need is something different so how you but IELTS will give if they judge by the IELTS score even I can get in a constructed in I get six but the ground reality is something different that is produced out of a closed door but not from the external things from open-enrollment I'm not produced out of an open environment so then how the teacher understand the difference so maybe an analysis could be made if 34 students are there they can see different cultural background even some students from Ireland who are from a country side they have face difficult in any way they're fluent much in English writing everything of course but in a content they face a difference then they need something different but again one thing I found us like the these are the factors teachers are caring in more in undergrad students not in the master students because they think the people are matured or they crossed a period of cycle here also again the one difference comes between the Western society of the students here on the East like undergrad students not the majority of them immediately moved to the masters so they go the experience they work they come back at least they have the two three years of mature the level of outside see then #environ but in [country] or in the other countries the people come from we study school immediately we study grab bachelors immediately we go for masters PhD PhD so the ten years is a continuous thing so some people who complete their engineering like my friends over here they complete engineering and the next year for master's they have been here there's no space of seeing the people or language so it's a one in only the the closed space has changed not their mind or anything so again there is a nuance to understand you can’t grade on a single thing that they know everything or uh they know how they know then the epistemology comes to play how they know we have to think from angle so their analyzation or some counseling or maybe from uhm career services or talking to some
group of students from different countries like within [country] or within [area] or the
[nationality] from who are migrated and stayed in London for a second generation those
people are a different thing so again these are all multiple differences exist people from
Africa which part of Africa again so how much access there so we have to analyze
somewhere even in the application I can recommend to have something understanding
thing how much they're testing I think maybe it's open to you know @
R: brilliant yeah um so what advice would you give to future students at [institution 1]
Vick: me?
R: yeah so based on your experience now what would you tell students who are looking to
come to [institution 1]
Vick: oh who want to come to [institution 1] ah I welcome them
R: yep do you have advice for them
Vick: yeah if they ask me why you're welcoming so warm way then I can tell one thing
even you make a mistake you'll get the second chance third chance very easily @@
actually that's a flexibility I found in Irish institutions well not only in some of the other
Irish institutions in Dublin and I heard from people so that flexibility is very good with the
teachers but the point is only you have to correct on your own so that's the way the
difference comes but the flexibility is good only but the more than that well I welcome our
students in a way it’s a sound environment I think the people friendly in a way after that
I'm not used to the word when people ask me about racist or anything I never experienced
anything in a life I have been in a very hard racist country [country] because I'm from
South and I been in eight nine years but on the North [country] mm-hmm I have been a lot
of racist seeing there but uh I don't value those people with one comment so I can't
generalize the thing you know I have a good friends so it's about how you go and see the
people talk to them and moreover that's the one way to put it so friendly environment
which people given me the comment well I'm not sure about it because I never experience
even experience it’s like for me a part of a study like I analyze the person who makes a
racist comment I see from how they develop their way where they come from I have ten
questions before judging them or putting an answer so I neutralized myself but to be honest
maybe I can share my experience I had a good thought on racism when I was in Westport
and here to my friend's place we went to a pub and there came an Irish family with a two-
year-old kid I think yeah two years less than two they're sitting my friends and our family
everyone sitting they started playing with the kid and the kid was so laughing everybody
enjoying the kid that she made sure he was so into the play and they know my friend
introduced this is [Vick] from [country] and then everybody I shake the hands with them
and I was seeing the kid and uh I shown myself the next second the kid went like this no or something I have so on something actually I don't know why then I really thought for two years it's seen the people from the white skinned everything and immediately he saw a black skin it's a color differentiation the race is not in the mind when we grow it’s from the mindset like Freud and the first six months what we see we don't see any multicultural things that's what Freud said so it's a new dimension for me but how people think from this angle is a different question so second thing I can recommend that's because of the education the level of education I think that's performed here I mean because I know universities throughout everything since I have played for 82 universities @ @ I was rejected by US Embassy

R: no really
Vick: yeah I got my admission to [US school] for my PhD
R: and but they wouldn't give you a visa
Vick: they stopped my visa they I’m not allowed to enter well that's a different thing actually [institution 1] is like I got my admission in 2014 after my masters but I be not able to come and away due to some reason then I forget all about the [institution 1] then only I started stepping into US universities so then I started TOEFL GRE everything I prepared I got my admission almost I wrote for nine universities I wrote and three year I got my admission and I rejected all when I went to [US school] finally so all the [discipline] I wrote since I my interest is there yeah I explored almost all here in UK I got my admission in [UK school] for [discipline] and then in Brussels I got my admission in [University] for [discipline] so and finally when my US visa got rejected all this admission is there I said why not [institution 1] again yeah last year and then Ireland rejected my visa last year @ @ and then one year I worked with my professor volunteer I worked with the refugees and everything and this year I applied for [institution 1] and this I got my visa that's what I doing it something I think [institution 1] is a destiny for me no I didn't choose [institution 1] [institution 1] chose me @ he wanted me here I don't know what yeah so that is education yeah to answer the question it's a level of education was good and what other people like from [country] or more engineers so the developing economy in Ireland they're focusing on like engineering subjects for a job also they're coming by studies one year but how much people from the [country] are aware of the social sciences subjects it's a question mark for me because still all the social finds is preferable to UK and US more most of the countries so if you ask me about the the negative side is there is no scholarship from Ireland many universities don't have money and they and really they don’t have money so that's one lack they face people only the people with money can step into Ireland
but if they came at least some 50 50 or 25 75 depends on the class and everything that could be more they can attract more students like the Irish government has said that they want increase 30% of students by 2021 no sorry 22 but what is the target of the students who are the are they engineers or the students from social science field who are they so I think that's sort of one lack we have here.

R: okay um so as my last question and are you aware of any support that international students received from the University so in terms of services offered to them

Vick: services you mean scholarship or not necessarily scholarship but services it could be academic services it could be you've mentioned counseling uhm social stuff like that

Vick: uh I don't know I heard of people went a lot of them took a counseling so only my professor referred me when she asked me to go for a counselor okay so I was something running with my so many issues oh so you should have gone already but I never went so okay some people took it I heard apart from that I don't know whenever I see the services I see the Facebook or the postings of whatever they go to the events and the bar or the food or everything [student council] meeting so that’s a service I think so free food every time I see the everything they have that only there so no any- actually there's nobody else updated or they are keeping to themselves purposefully I don’t have any idea but my professor told yeah few people are going for a counseling it works pretty well for them you should try I said I should try I don't have any time to do it so I think that’s my simple opinion on it

R: okay I'm so that's all that I have to ask you for us is there anything else that you'd like to add to the interview

Vick: no I think honestly I think I answered your question no way contrasting all the time so I think that's a one factor always the culture within the culture where you are and who you are I mean that's the thing need to be answered like in writing and at least a people who are from social science background so how they can think or what they can think even when we are preparing critically here how the you know all the people from Germany or the European Union or us for example I'm telling how they have the perceptions from my class like how they see the America is influencing the w- East in the policies either in a positive or negative then positive is why the critical thinking is very less they are still obliged or tilted towards the West entirely like there are that differences and how we can differentiate the situation even of course everyone knows some are critical some are lenient I mean the cultural aspects can be taken care of even from people like from Central Asia or other people they might be okay but are they really okay yeah of course there's my research
my masters and my future is such as capabilities so they are okay but are they really okay and really means how they are really okay to what level either in English in writing they're coping up whatever they are struggling we need to have something I mean since [instituion 1] has more than 65 percent of international students at least once we can group them into a country wise or at least a region wise to know what they want and we can assess in a multiple of a course a professor can do from a psychological perspective whether they are mumbling or where they're they're bold or elegance or fluent even if they took the IELTS exam or any English proficiency exam we can say we can need to figure out whether they take it in a closed environment or really they came up with an open environment and uh how the service can be or a speaking or a English speaking class and writing skills can be modified a little bit for them so not like only like the essay writing workshops are there it always focuses that everybody knows the basic first they have the baseline the threshold is set but the threshold is measured by when you're entering you know English because of this exam but how we know that exam is the question I need now so so the people who are taking the workshop is their writing or an interview or whatever they have the at least one or two will not match even the threshold itself so for them it's a bleak again it’s not a holistic thing and again the people from like Germany or from a continental Europe who are taking the workshop and how they see how they attach accordingly maybe less variant but still there is a variance I see from my friends when I talk with my friends of course the commonality in understanding they don't have variant but after the workshop and the discussion and after two three days whether they are really converting that workshop into an essay say like productive thing or they are taking the feedback and eventually it fades in a week whatever they learned in the workshop I think my answer could be honestly it fades away they stand on their own line where they have learnt English or whatever the attitude they have the really that workshop never changed the attitude so always the workshop is for an attitude so what they developed what they cultivated it fades so we have to think again from a country perspective and why why should be there if they know how they know and how much they really know that will really enrich [instituion 1] that can get a student in a very enlightened way to cope with the things both in writing and speaking of course good in listening and reading

R: okay alright thank you

Zan
R: okay so first can you tell me what your strengths are academically like what are you good at academically

Zan: @@ uhm I don’t know I’m good like academically in general I’m not really sure so if you give me like some options that I can pick from

R: yeah like umm so would you be really good at say um writing papers or at exams or giving presentations

Zan: okay yeah I’m pretty good at um presentations uhmm [pause] and exams

R: yeah okay and what would you say your strengths are in terms of English like what are you good at in terms of English

Zan: uhm [pause] I pick up you know the new words pretty quickly and um [pause] and I say because um people you know I got a lot of comments that I pick up um the accents and you know the um um I don’t know you know all all the time when you say something that you don’t really mean it? Like you have some sort of question or something like behind it and I can pick it up like kind of naturally ehm [pause] and I’m pretty confident in my speaking and and that helps in you know in my communications every day and yeah that’s it

R: okay and what would you say your weaknesses are in terms of academics

Zan: ehm [pause] um I would say um I don’t I’m not too bad in any academic thing because you know I’m pretty good academically general like um the thing I most struggle with um [pause] would be writing [long pause] but you know I’m not too bad you know I don’t get too bad marks yeah on things but I’m I have to put a lot of effort into writings to you know to get a good score

R: right and what would you say about English so what are your weaknesses in terms of English

Zan: um I would say um listening? I find it hard because um when I come to Ireland the English when I come here is different than the English that I learn at you know at home um so the accents and then you know the local language uhmm it's very hard especially when uh you know the lads they they speak so fast and they use all the slang words and stuff and sometimes they don't want you to understand as well so they try even harder to use more slang words and speak you know faster than usual and I'm living in [city] and the accent makes everything worse so that's very tough for me

R: yeah yeah and so you've already said that you're quite academically strong um but how would you evaluate your current academic success in [city]

Zan: um that’ll be based on you know the the marks that I get but uh but because I think that I'm doing this community work so I kind of make it just one of of you know of a thing
of my study and then the other part is very much practice you know a lot of
communications and face-to-face interactions you know with people so I you know I
would push you know half of my effort on academic you know study and then a lot of you
know face to face work and trying to to learn the language and you know to use and and to
use the language more efficiently yeah you know effectively then as natural as possible and
so because I only put half of my effort into academic work uhm so um I say I base on my
academic you know the the mark that I get and the feedback I’ll I always get feedback
from my lecturers um after you know after essays I don't don’t get feedback from my
exams but the mark but would say a lot about it

R: and is is the feedback that you get on essays is it helpful is it useful is it detailed
Zan: um it depends on individual lecturers I think some would give you know very detailed
feedback you know they have written feedback and then they also you know give feedback
verbally as well but somewhat only you know give us written feedback with very bad
handwriting that I have to ask him no I don't know what what are you saying here so
you know and some and some lecturers that I have have been so good that they well they
you know give me the feedback although written feedback and verbally they also give me
like you know encouragement you know no you're not very strong at this you don't have
you have very good structures um you have very good you know logic in your your essay
but you know there's still a few you know um English you know you know errors in your
writing and like collocation you there will be words that don’t go together like
that and and then the things they will always say like you need to add a little more of this
you need to elaborate a little bit on this because you haven't gone into depth
into this you know into this argument and like that and so it really depends on who I get
feedback from yeah

R: yeah yeah okay and so can you tell me about the work required in your modules like
what do you have to do both inside the classroom and outside of the classroom for your
modules
Zan: uhm in class we have to do a lot of readings and discussions eh um group um
you know between the groups in the groups ehm you know with the lecturers and um we
have readings to do at home and then we come to class the next day and we discuss
about what we what we learned from the readings and then we have to do presentations as
well not many just I think just a few times over the last three years and we had to do also
essay and um um we have um uh speakers come to our class as well and we have two
blocks of placement in third and second year that would be three months full-time yeah
and exams at the end of the year
R: okay and in your placement like what types of things are you doing in your placement
Zan: um as I say that I'm doing is community work so basically the most you know the main thing that that I did in placement is you know face to face work with the the community members with the young people with the groups so firstly teaching and you know giving some sort of advice uh encouragement and um um support in you know and working with the volunteers and then um we also did um like I helped my supervisors with report and you know other duties you know and like getting stuff for the parade or you know preparing um some sort of documents or or you know data data entry you know a little bit of everything
R: right okay and do you are you required to do any sort of research project like a dissertation
Zan: yes
R: okay
Zan: uh I did my dissertation this year it’s my final year I did a dissertation as I did a case study
R: okay and so what kind of work did you have to do for the dissertation was it basically a lot of reading was it interviews etc.
Zan: uh both uh so I did to do I did the readings for a literature review and then I did uhm individual interview with my participants as well
R: okay and can you describe you've touched on this but can you describe the general structure of your lectures so is it mainly like PowerPoints with the lecturer speaking or is it discussion based or a mixture
Zan: uh it’s a mixture and it it also depends on what lecturers that is oh excuse me um so basically we we have you know all lecturers will have PowerPoints but then it's just you know just the guidelines really but we did most of it it's the main we did was discussion yeah and sometimes we have a lot of the activities within the class like you know we will have clipboards and you know to to take notes and and you know it's very um because we're doing youth work so it's kind of we have some creative you know element into it so yeah sometimes we have you know your like in our facilitation skills class we got to do our own first presentation um practice and yeah and the other would be ehm so Powerpoint and and the lecturers speaking
R: and would you have access to the PowerPoints like what they post them online or send them to the class
Zan: ehm we can access it online through blackboard yeah so it's very easy and it's always there it’s the same as Turnitin we submit our assignment through Turnitin
R: would you have liked the rubrics and the expectations for the assignments would that also be on blackboard

Zan: uh yeah yeah

R: all right and then would um so how would the professors communicate their expectations is it only on blackboard or what they also discuss it in class

Zan: yeah yeah the most of them discuss it in class and they also post the the rubric on blackboard or send it to us to our emails to our student emails as well

R: okay and um how do your professors assess academic success so what do they look for when they're grading

Zan: um so they they have the rubric so there’d be um there there’d be the um [click] so the language like you know accuracy so you know punctuation um grammar and and spelling that uh so the structure and then references um and they they see if you have you know references ehm [pause] and then they see it is you know relevant to um the topic you know to the questions uhmm I think that's basically yeah what the requirements are

R: yeah okay and so in general what do students need to succeed at your institution

Zan: I think that first of the induction will be very important and I think is important for the students that they they recognize the importance of it because you know in first year a lot of students didn't you know oh it’s first year and I'll just chill and you know and uhm that's kind of the same thing to international students I saw I think they kind of get into the the mood of Irish students like you know it's just chill ehm but then and then at the end first year everybody was panicked because oh my god we didn't learn anything uhm so then for an international student I think it's really tough because you know it’s another language and we need to learn the language and and then you're not try to fit in the class to make friends and you know to try to socialize to know the town to know the the country and everything it’s really tough and I think I got a very good induction with international office as well as my the lecturers in my course they I think they think they know the students very well that they will be very chill in first year that they give very you know specific uh instructions like you know this is how you do the references they even get me them you know lecture just to do references and they they clarify and they say very clearly what they expect from the students in first year that they don't they don’t expect you know very high performance from the students but they do expect very basic and you know like and the thing that you can do like you know you just need to work a little bit hard like references try to work on your readings and and sort like that so I think that the induction will be very important that we need to just you know to really put an effort in it so that you know and then second year and then third year will be so much easier when so yeah
okay and so you've mentioned that there's a lot of factors um that international students have to deal with so like socializing knowing the town knowing the country um on top of language so would you say that those factors impact your academic success more less the same than language

Zan: uhm [pause] I'll say do you mean the socializing kind of

R: yeah so basically everything kind of outside of academics so things like finding a house having friends knowing the culture

Zan: okay I get it yeah I think it has a huge impact not like you know directly but like like if I don't you know I don't get a good accommodation so that I don't think that I would do

R: you know do very academically and I have friends who live who lives in [city] and she lives in very very bad accommodation and even I think that's even very bad for her health

Zan: you know her well-being even um you know mental health as well so I don’t know if I lived in such accommodation oh no no that would be disaster and I would yeah I cannot focus on my study and everything else and also you know I got so much confidence because now I know the people um do you know like I feel like I fit in like I feel like a part of the community I have friends who are Irish you know like it makes me feel very confident and so when I go to class you know I feel very confident to talk with my classmates you know because we do a lot of group works so do you know that would you know what be a big thing yeah um and you know like um yeah I’d say so and you know doing all the other speaking you know all the presentation you know it gives me a huge confidence in my academic work yeah

R: yeah good okay so kind of going to the entry and preparation tools so things that you had to do before coming to [city] um did you have any linguistic or academic preparation

Zan: yes I so I took a IELTS test and so that I could get the visa to you know to to come to Ireland and I think that was it that was and I did I did English in schools as well yeah so um English in schools will be very much ehm you know a lot of grammar and um you know vocabulary and then I I took a course for my IELTS preparations and so where I did a lot of you know how to structure your essay and you know to [pause] and yeah like structures um [pause] yeah I think that's a lot about structures and a lot a a bit of speaking yeah

R: and do you think that the IELTS course I prepared you for studying in [city]

Zan: yes like in terms of language definitely because as I say that it's it prepared me you know how you need to structure your essay you know you know everything from the very little things like how you write your introduction how you write your
conclusion and I was kind of surprised in like in first year that was one of the thing that the
lecturers give feedback to the students you know like you need to to rewrite your
introductions even to Irish students as well um uh like that and um yeah I the course that I
took it was very short it was something for one and a half months and so it was yeah it was
basically they they went through you know all the other speaking and writing and reading
and listening four skills yes I think it's pretty much practicing yeah more than anything
yeah

R: and how do you feel about the IELTS test do you have any feelings on it
Zan: um
R: it's probably a while ago now
Zan: yeah it it's three years ago so it's kind of a while ago I think it's good that it really you
know it really gave me a pretty good idea about you know you know writing an essay and
stuff and really gave me of the um the vocabulary to you know in in writing the essay and
exams [pause] um but I didn't do very well on the exam in speaking test I'd say because I
didn't really know what they expected um so I was kind of I just say what I I thought in
my head but I didn't really show what I can I could really do but then when I finished the
test you know a few months later I found out that you know there are certain tips that you
can get high score in IELTS test so they'll be certain you know certain words that they they
want you to include in your in your speaking that you know they would give you higher
marks for it that there would be certain grammars that they that would give you higher
marks and stuff but I didn't know so I got very bad on the speaking test so I was a bit upset
about it um but
that was okay I mean I still got like you know enough overall score to to
apply for the visa and to apply to the course in a [institution 8] so yeah
R: yeah okay um and let's see what type of preparation do you think international students
should do before coming to study in Ireland
Zan: I think I think that they should um I think they should contact with the students who
you know alumni that who you know what who lived in this town before going to studied
in in the college before so that would give you really you know a really good idea of you
know what you should expect and what you should prepare and I didn't get it@ because
there are not many [nationality] student studying in [institution 8] even with me now I'm
still the only one so it's very tough and that because I didn't know anybody before I came
here um but I think that'll be really good and now there are a few [nationality] students
coming um next year so I try to to get in touch with them so I hope that you know I can
help them in you know a little bit of tips and and you know experience and so I think you
know the contact with the people who experience you know my experience will be really
really good and you know doing research and you know ask support from international office you know they very helpful before I came here they gave me a list of you know accommodation you know the tips or and then what you need to know about the town and a few basic you know that I need to know before I came like the transportation and they got me the taxi to get me from the airport from my first arrival so that was very good um and I think so and then that yeah so before I came here they gave me a list of you know the tips or and then what you need to know about the town and a few basic you know that I need to know before I came like the transportation and they got me the taxi to get me from the airport from my first arrival so that was very good um and I think so and then that yeah so

Zan: um they have um English class for the international students who you know who want to improve their English um they also have um they also organize activities that all the international students will get together like you're not going to a short trip to Wicklow or to somewhere else for one for one day um we have International Day in the college in December so that was that's a great day um and also anything else like I just for anything that I need that I think that I can ask help from the international office I just I think I basically just walking through walk into their office and you know ask if anyone can help me you know I don't know where I could know which dentists will be good that I can I can go to or you know with good price or you know I get stuck with getting a lift to my placement you know could you just put a word out so you know I can get somebody to bring me or like you know uh oh looking for a job you know would you recommend to me any a site or you know anything that could help me with us and you know just very small little things and when you know with all the paperworks uh like like the lecturers to like visas the bank you know visitors and everything yeah I just basically they're very good

Zan: um I don't know I don't know um I think um it would be maybe making a some way to make like you know more accessible to international students because one of the thing I see from international off- international students is that they very shy and and if they have a group they would never get help you know if they happen you know if they have a group of [nationality] students you know they were stick together they would never
ask for help they would never go into it especially if their their language isn't good they
find it really hard to just to you know to to walk into the office to ask for help um I think so
yeah and then they'll be you know when for the students who you know are very confident
and stuff yeah they're you just don't they they just kind of you know do what I do like
they're just gonna get help from anyway
R: right yeah yeah okay and if you could give advice to organizations who are
preparing international students for studying in Ireland so these could be like Pre-sessional
English for academic courses or IELTS courses or agents who are sending students to
Ireland what would that advice be
Zan: sorry can you repeat the
R: yeah so um if you could give advice to organizations in preparing international students
to study in Ireland what advice would that be
Zan: um I think it would be good if they if they held um a session or like some sort of a
meeting where you know I applied through an agency so I think it would be good if they
organize you know a morning or a session that all the students who apply through their
agency um you know a day to you know to really talk about the community to talk about it
the questions you know what you you know what the reality is you know what you should
expect um I think it's just a day to to really prepare like you know in our head that what we
need to prepare really because you're really up to the students like individually that they
prepare but you know you it'd be good if they are prepared you know that what they need
to know and what they need to prepare so I think that will be good yeah [pause] oh and in
that day maybe to get one or two you know former students to to come to that day and you
know tell them to tell the new students about their experience I think that would be a good
link and a good preparation
R: yeah and let's see if you could give advice to future students future international
students at [institution 8] what would that be
Zan: [pause] uh I don't know I would say you know it's just you know just you put yourself
out there and you know try to do as much as you want you know I you know like do a
volunteer you know try [city] is a small town and and you know it is safe and friendly and
people are so friendly and helpful and you know you're just so I think it's just yourself that
you know try to to learn the language try to do to you know to access to all the support that
you get you know do do the extra language course you know do not do the English class
with and then try to socialize with other international students you know try to really fit in
the class with other Irish students rather than just stay stick in your own group of you know
students who coming from the same country you know to do you know so get yourself out there and experience and do the new thing and and learn yeah

R: okay that is actually I'm the last question that I have for you so is there any question that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Zan: [long pause] no

R: okay is there anything else that you would like to say

Zan: um I'd say that I am very interested in your research it's very much um [click] it's very much my interest and also I sh- you know I really want to you know to support because um because I I said to you that I am the only ones and the only [nationality] student in [institution 8] for last few years so what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to I wr- I write blogs and blogs for like education in Ireland [country] so they are the agency that they know they work with Irish Embassy in [country] that they to promote Irish education in [country] so I wrote blogs for them you know for them to post in their Facebook on their newsletter you know try to you know just say you know if as most students will go to [city] you know first I would recommend [institution 8] as you know it's still still good college but in a very good town and the price isn’t as high as in [city] and else like accommodation and everything so that's what I'm trying to do yeah so good news is that I there are four students coming next year I don’t know if all of will come but as I say four offer letters have been sent so I hope yeah so I'm very happy with that I think it’s something very good and so I also you know I worked a lot with the international office trying you know because I need a lot of support from them so oh you know for the last three years you know I've been waiting for your research and if you think when you finish your research you know please you sent your report to me it's nice to get it you know and if possible if you know if yeah you allow me that can publish it you know I can post it and share it through Twitter or my Facebook you know saying that you know to get more people to really put you know do you know like I think I know international students are good for Ireland you know it’d be great if Ireland could get more international students so I think that’ll be great you know to to get more attention on this matter

R: yeah all right I'll definitely send you my results and like in the meantime it'll take a couple of years because I'm only in my first year of of my PhD and but in the meantime if you have any international friends anywhere in Ireland if you just pass along the word that's I'm looking for people to take the questionnaire and even more so I'm looking for people to do interviews so even if they don't want to take the questionnaire if they want to do an interview like send them my email address um I would love to speak with anyone and everyone who's an international student here especially from places like you know I've
done a lot of interviews at [institution 8] but I'd love to talk to people in different areas or
different colleges just to get other perspectives
Zan: yeah I’ll pass on the word

R: okay so first I'd like to know what you feel your strengths are academically like what
are you good at
Zico: what am I good at I think I'm really good at engage- because my approach to
research is a qualitative kind of thing I'm a qualitative researcher I think my strength
strength is really to be [click] able to engage with participants and really good people but
my weakness I would say writing skills my writing skills are not there yet I feel you know
because I started learning English at a very late stage in life when I was adult already so I
think that was not good for me when I came to academia you know and but I'm getting
better I mean I get that that's why I take the module English for academic purpose to really
gain those skills you know but I have seen how much have changed when I did I did my
Master's work I was completely lost at the beginning I had no idea how to write an essay
you know so today I have I have those skills but I think still a little bit dry you know I can
write English but it's not like in [language] I can write much better [language] than in
English so I want over time is just really bring that up you know to learn to learn those
writing skills because my profession is going to be writing English you know so yeah
Zico: definitely I can express myself much better [language] uhh it just come nat-naturally
for me because I'm a [language] speaker and you know and I went I was located in in
[country] I went to college in [country] of course I I express much better in [language] you
know uhm [click] but I I'm not that bad in English as well you know but when it come to
the writing skills I feel that I'm not there yet uhhh I I doubt myself a lot on you know I
think there is a space for lots of improvements related to my writing skills you know but I I
really haven't been able to uh uh publish for example I think when it comes to this stage for
me to publish stuff then my writing skills will come you know because the PhD it is very
messy you really don't have time to sit down and publish anything you just have to go
around and doing things at the same time you know but I have the data now and maybe
next year I'm going to be able to start uhm uh uh start start to publish then I think my
writing skill is going to be really tested you know and and also that I wh- when I'm going
to start writing for academic journals I think I'm gonna get more skills you know but until that stage I'm just kind of you know getting by I guess yeah sure R: so can you tell me what like an as a research student so you're doing your PhD what is the work required of you as a research student so basically what is a day to day life PhD student like Zico: hmmhm it has changed uhhm since the beginning was like you know um write the proposed at the beginning write the proposal and submit the propose I did that so when I started doing it PhD the first stage was to refine the PhD the proposal because was just a rough idea then I have the first step was to refine the proposal and also to bring something [from discipline] to [discipline] research because I was I was I based my proposal was from the [discipline] and my sup- my the literature that I used a lot of my proposal was from the [discipline] and my supervisor asked me to bring something from [discipline] so I have to change the the proposal beginning uhm also I spend lots of time at the beginning applied to the IRC the Irish Research Council so I spent about two months doing the proposal as well and that was really nice because it really helped me to redefine the you know the topic the the contacts the aims you know the methodology so that was nice to me so the next phase was it the literature review so I spent loads of time on the literature review because initially I had four aims so each aims of the proposal was a different kind of literature you know so and in my knowledge at that stage was really kind of small we know to the literature so I really to to dive myself in the literature of each aim so I spend lots of time in the first year doing that then the second year I I did the methodology ehm and all the confirmation report so the confirmation was really int- interesting because as I said before I had four aims and was too much and was I was really looking at different literatures and they did not like that they thought it was too much and I was really mixing literatures so they asked me to really scale out the whole thing and cut half half of the proposal then I just left to aims and the literatures are now linked are very close so it was easy for me to you know so after the consummation I I finished the methodology before going to field work so so at the moment just doing a tran- transcribe transcriptions so it's going to take me until December to finish each five interviews then I'm going to translate to English everything you know because I want to have that data in English then after January I'm going to just doing the results and the discussion so that's what I aim at at the moment sure R: yeah and um did you take your masters here at [institution 1] Zico: I did um can you tell me about the modules that you had to take so what kind of work did you have to do for the modules
Zico: mm-hmm so I did the master’s [discipline] is studies here at [institution 1] so the modules I took about six modules and ten credited each one so the mode- one was at this about the [topic] in you know in the [topic] and all that stuff the hit- the history of [organization] and the importance of that institutions you know to peace and so that was nice that’s was was my favorite module because the module entailed us to go to Geneva for one week fieldwork so that was cool we got I got to go to Geneva then we got to spend a few days at the [organization] attend seminars and meeting important people so that was the interesting I did another and in addition to going to Geneva we had also an assignment um 4000 assignment on the about the [organization] any aspect and I remember that I wrote about the reform of the [organization] and I pledged um because [country] is a candidate to get a permanent seat at the [organization] so my essay was about arguing that we need to reform the you know the [organization] and I am argue to open to a nation like [country] you know so that was my um [click] assignment so a second mode was on the other module was on about the [topic] so because of that module we got to go to Belfast for two days as well so that was really nice that was an open eye kind of thing because I I had some knowledge about the [topic] but I had no idea that was walls in Belfast there was a division between the east and them uhm so that was a shock to us and also it entailed a four thousand essay on the [topic] so I did that as well and the modules one was about you know [topic] and I can’t remember the other ones uhm but I remember that I did on essay on gay LGBT and gay rights in Latin America because at that time um um gay marriage was legalized in Argentina so I felt I was doing one more kind of essay so all the modules was you know going to a little a field work and also an assignment of about 4,000 words and I think at that stage I really had the chance and that was my first time of writing an essay but I did lots of mistake because I never asked people to spellcheck for me I never asked people to proofread for me you know so I was doing things by myself first time so the grades wasn't that great it wasn't that great um I never got like first you know because I forgot to to check spelling proofreading and other people with other with more experience than me they were doing this all the time you know so that was a mistake um because I was doing lots of work but I always forget the other side of you know look at grammar and spelled and proofreading you know so that was my big mistake but I managed to pass I'm a bit surprised but in the thesis I got A in the thesis R: perfect and while you're doing a PhD here so of course yeah and so inside of the modules like when you were in the classroom was it mainly the professor lecturing with PowerPoint or was there group discussion group work that kind of stuff
Zico: yeah um um most of the lectures was a professor talking with PowerPoints you know but always students were required to read an article was to that lecture to that lecture and of course there was open discussion as well during the lectures but most was professor talk with PowerPoint and we were required to read the papers before going to the lectures uhmm yeah there was never like group work but there was discussions uh especially there was a week about [topic] where you know we have to bring people to the table and so we the one week we really work we study together to really learn those skills how to you know to bring it to the table about these [topic] something like that so but most of the modules the professor talk with PowerPoint and we read the papers like that you know they allow us to to ask requests of course they did.

R: and so how would you evaluate your current academic success in the PhD do you feel like you're doing well

Zico: mm-hmm I think I am doing well umm uh I feel much stronger now but before I was really doubt myself a lot you know just get to your head at one point you know especially doing the confirmation report because I I was they thought that was too much and I blamed myself why did I got myself to this point of you I passed I understood the whole thing that was good for me you know and when I really scaled down the whole thing was good because I had a really clear vision how to go to the field and collect that specific data would being impossible to go to the field and have four aims to collect data to answer those four aims so yeah now if I feel that I’m half way through yeah I am okay now you know I’m just very happy with the data I collected you know I was afraid of not be able to go to the field and collected the data and I really proved that was able uh to engage with people to build trust to you know to collect data so that was uh important to me too to feel that I can do this you know I can go to the field I can collect data I can you know and I think I can I can I can finish this I can finish this but I feel strong now but before was doubt myself a lot yeah and I also have a really work ethic a good work ethic so I really work hard and Monday to Friday in college and you know so I think that will pay off at some stage uhm and I feel that I’m not behind schedule as well I think I'm okay I'm okay because some people did fall behind schedule yeah but I think I am okay uh you know I'll just start third year you now and I have already the data in my hand I just have to you know transcribe and start the analysis process write the results and discussion so I have already the literature have the methodology I have you know the framework I just have to write now the results and discussion the conclusions so it's not that bad so I feel confident at the moment yeah
R: good and how do you think that your professors assess academic success so what are they looking for

Zico: mm-hmm

R: so like your supervisor yeah he's looking how does he evaluate how you're doing

Zico: mm-hmm academia is like that the the way we me- you are measured today it's by publications how many publications you have I think so far I don't have publications but I have gained all these skills I think is important in academia as well you know uhm but she’s not really happy with my like she really wants me now to start eh present papers she in our last meeting last week she said you are now we are you know you at the moment that you really have to push yourself to start writing papers not just present your proposal anymore now I want to see you move into the stage of writing papers you know because I have the data now so there is no excuse for not write a paper about you know so I think that's the way she wants me to go now you know to start writing papers and maybe publish something in fourth year you know and the way we measure it it's on publications you can be really really good you can have you know you can collect data where you can really engage with people but if you don't really have publications all that hard work is lost you know because when it comes to get in jobs and employment you need publications that’s that's the main job of academics you know to publish and publish and publish and also another skill that I she's not really happy because I failed the IRC twice the Irish research council and I think that's another skill that researchers need today to really write proposal to get money so she's not happy that I failed the IRC twice you know sooo yeah but I think she's okay with my work so far but she wants me to move to write papers she want to see papers you know and I agree with her sure

R: so how does your professor communicate her expectations

Zico: mm-hmm through meetings yeah and she's really keen and um that's the side of her that I don't like and she really thinks through a timetable oh it's all the time she's talk about it’s a timetable it’s a timetable where are you at the moment you know and people doesn't work like that you know people have problems people fall behind schedule and you know some people are slow we slower than other people and she always ask keep asking about the timetable timetable timetable I want dates and you know and I I don't really work like that you know really so the early days it was difficult for me because she was really trying to set up meetings all the time and I had nothing in my hand to show in in the early days’ time you know so yeah so we communicate communicate through timetables we have a one-year twelve-month timetable that I try to follow so every two- every eight
every eight weeks we meet so that's the way we communicate sure.

R: and let's see um during your masters yeah what were your professors looking for academically so when you were handing in those four thousand-word essays how did they assess them what were they looking for

Zico: uhmm yeah I think they were looking for you know good argumentation you know and good writing skills I think that's the way they you know good argumentation the the assignment good writing skills good use of good literature in the assignment variety of literature and I think I failed you of those you know um um um um expectations because I did not check spelling I did not do the proofreading you know I was doing the other things uh [click] also because I was really writing for the first time I was kind of shy of really put forth my my point of view and some of the feedback that I got back was that where’s your opinion here what do you think yourself about is you know so I was good of really bring the lots of literature lots of you know was good at that of bring lit- loads of literature but I was not really good really express myself through that literature you know here's what I think these guys are saying you know so I think that um um giving myself a voice through other people's work you know I was just give- I would just make their voice heard but I was not you know so I think that was um something that they value in in writing I guess yeah I think messed up that answer though.

R: no no you did terrific that was awesome yeah yeah um so in general what do you think students need in order to succeed at [institution 1]

Zico: mm-hmm the problem with the students here I think you know at least my case I just got here like you know no one told me listen here is a master level when I was asked to do the first assignment I had no idea what goes into in an assignment for an assignment at that point you know I had to learn by myself I think if if people that start doing a master’s here if they could have some kind of you know seminars on writing skills or what goes into an assignment before they are asked to do something you know even for the undergraduate students I think that's important as well because they just come from secondary level and they're not really asked to write that much in academic style at that point so they got here if they asked to write write write write without knowing how to do it you know I think uhm yeah I think it will be lovely for either undergraduate student postgraduate students to have a little bit of you know to develop a little bit of writing skills before they are asked to to write something I think that's important I guess.

R: okay yeah and so how much of a factor do you think language plays an academic success
Zico: mm-hmm uhm mm plays a lot it plays a lot because academic is through language you know you just communicate through publishing stuff you know so language language skills are very important you know and some people really good at use academic lang-
academic language in the writing and some others are not you know as I said I have lots of skills I can engage can collect data but I fall behind when it comes to writing skills you know so I have lots of skills one side but I fall fall behind the other guys when it come to write skills but it play a big role academic write- writing skills are very important in academia you know they're important

R: and so what other factors impact academic success and that could be things inside of [institution 1] and also outside of [institution 1] so what else affects academic success
Zico: hmm what more affects academic success so could you repeat that question
R: yeah so what else affects academic success either inside of [institution 1] or outside of a [institution 1] so that could be things uhm well people have brought up things like time management things like personal things like working housing stuff like that
Zico: ah yeah what the helps academic success at [institution]
R: or what could impact it either positively or negatively
Zico: yeah in my case what will affect me was lack of money that affects me a lot you know because I'm tired I have to work three days a week and because the scholarship that I was offered it's not really enough for me to pay the bills so and I have seen that over and over and over at my department uh I have [click] two friends of mine or two or three that are living living with 500 euros for 540 was a month you know so they faced a lot over the years to be able to pay the bills and get by so that really brings so much ehhh stress in students life I think bring support mostly with financial with better scholarships and you know so that's the main problem uhm of lack of of a funds of scholarship for student especially for the grad graduate students because they are at a stage in life that they don't have the parents support anymore you know so the undergrad is fine because they're very young so they they live with their parents I guess but the graduates students are like independent people so and they have to you know to do a PhD at the same time they're worried about rent and you know money so that's my case and that really affect me I have a um happy happy face so I'm tired but I'm all the time putting this happy face you know because I don't really want to be the and be seen uhm you know tired or so always puts for this happy face but I'm tired and you know stressed but um so that's the main problem I guess and that affect the way people gain success because if you they're ehh rested and not worry about financial problems of course they will do better they are gonna write better they're gonna you know have leisure of course they're gonna of
course they’re gonna do better you know at least in my case it has affected me a lot of not being able to be there 100% because in my head I just think okay I have to pay the bills so how to you know so that's the main problem in other college even worse you know the other college cause I was at [institution 2] before it's even worse

R: is it Zico: yeah I have seen many people left there yeah

R: okay and so were you doing a PhD there Zico: yeah yeah I did for one year

R: okay and you left and came back here Zico: yeah I couldn't pay the second year there and then I applied here and I got accepted and I got a scholarship it's not much just little but at least paid for the fees there they were charging me eleven thousand for the fees you know so I really couldn't pay the second year and that was painful because I um I worked really hard and I was accepted and you know I got to know people there but I made friends over suddenly suddenly I have to leave everybody behind and I left yeah that was painful you know so

R: yeah and it was purely just because of finances Zico: finances yeah yeah yeah finances sure

R: okay yeah so I'm going to kind of switch now to looking us your experiences with preparation tools and also things like standardized exams um so before coming to [institution 1] either before the Masters or before the PhD did you take any linguistic or academic preparation to help you prepare Zico: mm-hmm no uh before I did my Master's I was living here before just um attend a language schools uh because I had no idea at that point that I was going to move into a master’s degree I was kind of you know to be honest I was working and just going to this you know very not good not very good English school in Dublin at that time you know at that time but they closed now so I was just going over to use those English schools here just you know to learn but I didn't know I have no idea at that point that I was really going to do a master’s degree it just came you know just came over the years like oh I’m going to do a master’s degree but I have no preparation before that and that was my big mistake I think that was my big mistake because I could have a a first class in the master’s and I did not you know

R: yeah and so what kind of standardized exam or did you have to take a standardized exam like IELTS TOEFL to gain admission Zico: yeah oh yeah had that yeah that's the good point Jess I study for three months to do the IELTS then I got a really high scores I get seven point five
Zico: yeah almost eight yeah I think I did a great job on that and I just wrote one because we have to write two little essays and I just wrote one because I ran out of time yeah so I think if I have write the second one I would have to score eight or eight and a half so I did the IELTS yeah so I did the IELTS yeah I

R: and so how do you feel about the IELTS you have any feelings about it

Zico: I think uhhh it really because it's so fast it's so so so fast I think it really if you really want to see if someone able to speak and to write you don't rush that person and I feel the IELTS just go go go go go you know you have ten minutes you know I think you really don't measure the English skills of someone by pushing that someone to speak quick or to write quick you know the problem with the IELTS is time uhm and I think you know there's a problem with that it's time is too short to really reflect what people have you know the skill that people have I think yeah

R: and so do you feel that the IELTS adequately prepared you for your studies in [institution 1]

Zico: mmhm a private language school yeah

R: and did you take the IELTS course did you take it in a language school in Dublin like a private language school

Zico: mm-hmm I think the first thing is just really uhm have the proficiency in English and you know but mostly but despite that have have academic skills because everybody there is a distinction between how to speak and how to write academically in English you know some young people really good at speaking at at everyday English they're really good on that because the learned through social media but when it comes to academic writing they really don't know what that means you know so I think it's despite be able to speak really have to to be aware that I al- I I need also to have writing academic skills here because I'm going to [institution 1] next year you know they should be aware of okay I can speak but what about my writing skills you know to because this is a very up
level high level so some people they get here without that though that skill writing skills I
think is important but there is some support here like you know they here in your
department I think they aware about that lack of writing skills of most of the international
students have so I think over there they of of got better of of asking people to come before
the term and and and and and and take some of those like because I did I think I did back in the
day before September before the beginning of the the term I took a module with [name]

uhm here

Zico: during the summer I think amazing amazing amazing idea but they should they
should really advertise that it's really important for you international student if you are able
to speak to really gain those academic skills through this summer come to school here you
know

R: during the summer

Zico: it did yeah yeah for the first time I was you know listening to someone uh uh hear to
someone talk about linking words how to build an argument how to what goes into
introduction what goes in you know so for the first time I was like hmm you know there's
this structure here so yeah it helped me uhm a lot what lacked to me that I did not pay
attention to the spelling and proofreading and grammar so yeah probably when I did the
summer camp I was aware about you know linking words how to build an argument how
to use the literature yeah of course I was

R: yeah alright and so if you could give advice to professors and faculty about how to deal
with international students um what would that advice be

Zico: mmm [long pause] I think uhhhh I don't like them to distinguish you know you are at
a stage that everybody’s equal there you know at the master level you know I know that
there is the international student there but I think the professor they [pause] it’s not really
their problem I guess should be at the Department problem or college problem we have a
community of international student here so the college should be aware of that not the
professor you know I think the Department and the college should be aware that we have
international community here who have to create policies that support them you know
support them and I think [institution 1] is doing that through here to the global relations
office as well to support international student but to throw that responsibility in the
professor's shoulders hm [click] I because everybody have the language to understand the
lectures you know nobody have difficulty to understand the professor I never came across
someone in [institution 1] that was not able to understand 100% what the professor was
saying you know um but the problem is when it come to to the assignment you know some
people we really don't have the same skills as a native speakers so that's the problem you
know but to to attend the lectures everybody's at the same level about understand a 100%
what the professor said but when it comes to the writing skill of course some people are
behind but I think that is a more kind of department or college it should then the professor I
cannot grade this this way because it is you know I don't think is the right thing to ask a
professor oh grade this in a slight way because is a international student you know
right I think everybody should be I'm gonna grade these essays in the same level I don't
want to see who is international you know but I think the college should be aware of that I
think
R: yeah so there wouldn't be advised that you a give to a professor but what advice would
you then give to the college so you've said they need to be aware of this but what in your
opinion could they actually do
Zico: mm-hmm really um going back just really really and make sure that before students
international start here they they aware that they're gonna be asked to write in a high level
so if they don't have the skills there that the college it's it's here to help them you know
really it's really important for you to be aware that international student that you have to
have the IELTS that you have to have the writing skills if you don't have if you feel that
you don't those skills yet we are here to support you to this modules over the summer nah-
nah-nah all doing the the thing as well here are the you know and the global relations
like one of the problem that international student that some people feel like >not my case<
lonely and depressed you know like they're young people that come from Asia or come
from Africa find themselves here alone you know I think the college is aware about that as
well of create support the global relations office I guess for umm you know yeah [click] be
more aware of that you know that intern- international students are more vulnerable regard
writing skills more vulnerable to be depressed and lonely than a local person just to be
aware of that but I think they are working towards that I guess
R: and if you could give advice to future students or students who are looking to come to
[institution 1] what would that advice be
Zico: mmhm ummmm ummm you just take me as example just be aware that the highs the
high standards they have standards they have here very high to be read- uh gain those
writing skills those you know writing skills before you come here you know and if you
know 100% sure that you have those writing skills trying to gain those skills ehh before the
the new term and explore the the tools and the you know the the things that we have in
college to to help you to gain those skills that would would be advice and ask someone to
proofread and check spell spell check and that helps a lot I guess okay
R: okay so that's actually all the questions that I have for you but are there any questions that you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Zico: mmm-hmm no just like I said it's really interesting and you know because oh you're here to study the international student I think and now it's gonna open even more so more people will come in future I think this research is interesting in a way that it's going to really allow not a [institution 1] to better receive these students and make them to excel their academic achievements but also to other college to you know create space and policy that welcome better international students and give them the best platform for them to you know try and to do well hopefully sure

R: and is there anything else that you'd like to say or express

Zico: no just thank you for asking me to do this

R: thank you
APPENDIX F: FACULTY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Chris

R: okay um so first can you just tell me about kind of the work required of students in the modules in your department so that could be if you wanted to do like undergrad postgrad Chris: okay well I suppose in in level seven and level eight undergraduate work typically there's an examination which would be 60% of the module typically and then there will be continuous assessment which would be 40% almost all of our modules across the school would have a laboratory element which would be at least 20% so the students would be expected to participate in the laboratory follow the instructions and submit a significant enough report on documenting their methodology the limitations of methodology and commenting on the results they achieved um most of the time now the examinations are two to three hours of examinations there’ll be a significant focus on analysis some descriptive element um and then there'd be a lot of project work where students will be expected to define and specify a particular problem that's relevant to the module or the program um and produce a body of work with a justified methodology and good comment on the success or lack of success on the particular approach in the postgraduate modules so there is only one taught postgraduate program in my school in [discipline] I th- believe mo- I'm involved on the research project module which would be a significant 30 credit research project um where the student would produce a very significant dissertation at the end of that the majority of the modules have I think are 50/50 between examination and CA and again most of the CA would be a project on within the particular um specialization within that module so there would be a significant amount of written in English required on all the submissions um is that R: yeah yeah that's perfect um and then as research students so your your master students and your PhD students what's the work required of them Chris: so all our post graduates are now are re- would be registered on the structured PhD program so ehm one of the modules in particular they have to take is a research methods module which provides guidance on how to carry out research how to structure your research how to you know kind of some guidance on submitting technical papers and eh just general funding availability and how you access it and the particulars of those funding approaches the other modules so there are at they do eh a statistics modules because a lot there’d be a large statistics element to a lot of people's research so they undertake them so there are probably necessary modules that they take um and there may be others then they
can take other modules that would be more particular to their discipline area so I think it's 30 credits in total to take and they're generally expected to work very closely with their supervisor as I'm sure it's the same within the general arrangements for making putting together publications or reports they make a lot of presentations including a significant enough annual evaluation each year where they're expected to submit a report and produce a presentation that follows a format um and then they're given feedback on their progress over the that previous year [pause] I’m trying to think is there anything else [pause] all the students have access both undergraduate and postgrad to an academic writing center which provides them with support and again I suppose possibly international students would avail of this more than the eh our Irish students but again that's not to say [pause] they need it @more @ um and so they just provide guidance on the types of submissions they’d be making and interest generally put together English technical concise eh eh sentences which convey the meaning with clarity and avoid ambiguity I suppose so that's available to all students.

R: and um and so then kind of the structure of your lectures or modules and specifically ones that you might be teaching what happens inside of the classroom is it PowerPoint group work

Chris: okay so speaking for my own module this semester I have a module in [topic] and I take a kind of a flipped classroom approach I give them out a full book of the notes um the notes I will kind of work through they'll be up on a PowerPoint during the the lecture but is more as a support or a reference on what we do during the class so I've three hours of lectures in a week we generally work through applications or we provide context to the contents or so it's a a fairly analytical [topic] module like we spend the majority of our time using the relevant tables and standards and graphs to work through problems with as much real-world significance as possible um then they undertake an examination at the end of the year that's worth 60% if you haven't attended the classes it's quite difficult to pass the exam because the notes alone are not really sufficient because you wouldn't get access to how you actually undertake the solutions um the exam is slightly ha- more difficult on that basis that we’re we're using the notes in a very applied manner so it it can up the level of it there's also a laboratory where it’d be a two-hour session the students come in there's guidance given to them on what's expected of them in within the laboratory and they'll undertake a relatively prescribed exercise within the laboratory environment and they’ll either produce the report their conclusions whilst within that two hours or else they’ll be given a chance to send it submit it within two weeks there's also a project they do for me where they take a problem from that they've identified within their own lives um
and they it has to have a general some adherence to the module content and they will have

to provide a rigorous specification of the problem they're considering and put together a methodology for solving it and sometimes that'll involve you know some software developing an experiment or something just to do >and it's not a 20% project so they're not expected to produce a large body of work the big thing I focus on is the specification I think that's a big thing I get them to work on and it will be relatively similar for all the modules I teach that is kind of the format I take all my modules are 60% exam 40% CA they all have a laboratory and they all have a project and so that’s my approach

R: okay and so then you described a lot about the form of assessment so then how would you assess academic success so what are you looking for when you're marking

Chris: um prin- so within within [pause] first of all we we try to make sure when we're generating our module descriptors that the learning outcomes and the assessment methods are mapped appropriately that the the assessment techniques that we’re employing are actually measuring the learning outcomes for the module so I suppose within the project area what I'm trying to get them to do is in a less the exam questions are very prescriptive they they it's a very closed thing they have a solution generally and there's only one if two ways of solving the questions the proj- the idea the project is to give them a more open-ended type ehm problem which they define themselves so what I'm looking for is their capacity to provide a rigorous specification on a problem which they've principally identified themselves um so again the problem would be very specific to them I try to in order to avoid plagiarism I try to ensure that when I'm giving the the project that they have to put their own stamp on it so um I will ask them specifically how this is something that is particularly relevant to them and try to ensure that it is going to be a custom project or problem for them to solve so I suppose the project area is is about that taking away the prescription and giving them the freedom to put definition on on their approach themselves within the examination essentially um I’m assessing their capacity to justify and apply the correct tools to a particular problem um I generally don't let them away with just providing mathematical answers I would expect some comment or interpretation of the results so for my own modules um they will get very little marks for just regurgitating or remembering things uhm they’re principally getting the marks on their approach their analysis justification and then interpretation of the results um in the laboratory generally what we're looking for is can they work on a team can they follow eh the required safety ehm health and safety directives that are given by the technical staff and then use equipment that would be relevant that their discipline area and
be familiar with the variables and the conditions and so on that would be relevant to that particular sector.

R: okay and um so kind of leading on with that question as well what would really differentiate say a first-class honors versus a second-class honor so how would you look at say a project or even an exam or in the laboratory kind of this is a sign of the first class

Chris: yeah well [pause] I suppose I've had quite a lot of uhm exposure to undergraduate projects what I would be expecting from someone and that would be getting first class honors is they would [long pause] so we meet them on a weekly basis for half an hour and during our conversations a lot of the time you kind of agree a work package for what's going to be completed within the next week um some groups will have logbooks where they specifically write that down I personally don't do that what I expect from someone that's in the first class honors territory is that they're taking a real lead in the work and that they're going beyond beyond even the definition of what my expectations would be for the work in other words they would be taking full direction and responsibility for the work and they would be producing work of I'll not say has to be completely novel or completely unique but they would be putting a clear specification or distinct definition on it themselves quite aside from even to support they would get from the supervisor so in other words we expect the student to ultimately be the specialist in their particular area and the first class honors students will be expected to be doing things that the supervisor wouldn't be necessarily directing on so that part of the work where they're actually just not receiving as much guidance but they're they’re uh they're taking it in their own direction so I I suppose it's the real thing first of all is it at the level and as the person taking ultimate responsibility for the direction in which the work is going and then you k-the provide very clear justification um on the particular direction that they've taken from an examination perspective um most of the examinations would be graded like there would be a kind of a a ABCD type approach and the the part Ds would be for people um you'd be expecting students at 75% plus only to be able to address those particular elements so we try to ensure that there is a grading of requirements across the questions not always the most simplest thing to to achieve but we try to do it that the examination will reflect our line measurement across a full range where you can distinguish between the candidates I suppose

R: and so then how would you assess the academic success of a PhD student that you're working on

Chris: umm principally the same I suppose we’re looking for the same things that the person is really taking over the ownership of the project during the annual evaluations um
they would be given not only to talk about the publications they would have had in the previous year but what their plan is for the subsequent year. I suppose one of the key metrics is the quality of the submissions they’re making for conferences or journal papers the impact factors of where they’re getting published on a daily basis. Again, generally we would meet with our research students at least once per week. Sometimes more often, sometimes less depending on what’s being required. At that particular time again, you’re just looking at the quality of the analytical framework. I suppose from an [discipline] perspective is the analytical quality of what they’re doing. Are they employing the appropriate tools? Are they applied and employed correctly? Have they interpreted the information correctly? And again, the real indicator when it goes for peer review at a conference or a journal, the feedback that they’re getting is a measurement of that. 

R: Right and so with the students, in terms of having say the projects and the examinations, would you communicate expectations and rubrics and guidelines kind of at the beginning of term would they have it in written form or... 

Chris: So students would get a student handbook which would provide the relevant details on the assessments that they’re going to be taking over the course of the year in all the modules. For the program within my own project areas, I provide a relatively detailed breakdown on where they’re getting the mark so I’ve broken it up even though these projects may only be 20% they’re given very clear guidance on where the marks are going for and that is communicated on the first day of the first lecture. I will go through the full details of the module. I also give the students a little booklet specifically for each of my modules to say this is basically the support you need and then they get appendices and so on. But they would be given they would be given very clear instructions on what’s expected from them and in general that means I don’t get people coming in going I thought I was gonna get 80% I only got 60% on the limited few occasions that that has happened I’ve had a few final years I’d just give one particular example might be relevant he was a student who was doing a project with [company] um and he got 63% and he was convinced that he was a first-class hon...
get first class honors in this um and the supervisor should be able to provide some guidance on the expectation in that particular area for the student and then to also say that they’d be expected to be able to reflect on that guidance and also accept that they will take the part of the project in a direction which will be somewhat unique to them so I think it's I think there would be a good that would be good clarity in general it's not always easy in a semesterized environment because when you're only dealing with class or have a class for 12 weeks it's very difficult to always give the extent of feedback that you would like to give because by the time you get to do that the module is finished and and a lot of the times particularly in the early stages of the program will just want to move on to the next semester so they've not as interested in the feedback some of the students mightn’t be in the feedback as you would expect even though it's available @@

so in general what do you think students need to succeed at [institution 10]

because the contact hours for our programs are quite high relative to programs in some of the universities or programs outside of [discipline] um the best thing they could do is be here um if you're attending and you're following um what you're doing the work that you're supposed to do and [pause] and you're investing we define a module as 100 hours of student effort which includes the delivery time and then the independent learning um I think of a student invests 100 hours in any of our modules um and they’re deemed to be qualified to take that module [pause] success will come to them@ I don't think um like stu- some students will say okay I've attended all the classes and I haven't done well but the classes might only account for one third of that hundred hours so they're expected to do significant independent study so I think [pause] all modules have been designed as as packages of learning that require a hundred hours for a student that comes in with the entry requirements um so if they invest the 100 hours they'll have success @@

and so then how much would factor do you think language plays in academic success

Chris: um I’d say it's a big factor we generally our programs require that students would have IELTS 6 or 6.5 coming in um I think if a student has lower than that their ability to pick up information during our classes would be quite difficult um I suppose our classes are not just about lecturing and kind of just throwing the information out a lot of the time we're trying to teach and and and provide tutorial support during the class particularly when the classes are small if your language is not sufficiently strong I think the listening aspect of the class will probably be the biggest difficulty you will have like I think a lot of students that have that will come in with maybe so so non-native English speakers the written aspect [pause] I kinda feel is not is is not as compromised
by that lower ability but the ability to pick up information during lectures is much more
difficult um so I think providing sufficient support with notes available before class and so
we have a repository for notes that that's quite an important thing that the student
needs to do but I think as with my own classes what I do in class is not 100% represented
in the notes so you're expecting them to be able to take up that information um during that
time so I think um it's very important @ and that listening aspect and we do expect
students to be able to produce in [discipline] we expect them to write sentences which are
technically concise and convey the meaning without there being confusion or ambiguity
um and from a research perspective you're expecting them to produce the work in a way
that other people can replicate their work or at least identify with methodology so the
clarity and expression of uh the intent is is very important so yes I think it's critically
important @

R: and what are their factors would you say play into academic success and this could be
inside or outside of the university
Chris: um I think it's the student who realizes that this education is just one small part of
what allows them to forge out a career um like I think what we're sometimes students think
we're training them for a job rather than educating them for a career um and I think the
people that identify and have some purpose or intent of where they want to be in five
years’ time after they graduate or ten years I think it's identifying with the career or the
context for their education I think someone that just sees it as okay I start in first year and I
finish it fourth year I'm gonna get some job and some people do very well you still get
people who get first class honors on that but I think the student that I see doing really really
well is a person that if not on the first day through the progression of the program identifies
the context for it and where it's going to fit in with their ultimate goal of achieving a career
in a particular sector or a particular discipline um I think it's that drive and again it's
responsibility it's about them taking ownership and responsibility for their own direction or
their progression path within their career ultimately if you have that I think
irrespective of how difficult you might find the academic aspect you see it as a stepping
stone to where you want to be so even though you might struggle with some of the parts
that you will ultimately get there so I I think it's that having that goal and identifying
what the education what education is giving you in achieving that goal I think is is
important

R: um so I’m gonna go more towards international students and like IELTS and such um
so what experience would you have with international students in your department
Chris: eh well I suppose specifically I have a lot of experience with the Chinese program and the difficulty students taking our program in China through English would have with successfully completing modules through a second language um so through that I've become very aware of the difference between IELTS 6 IELTS 5 IELTS 4 and so on and I I was also the Erasmus coordinator for the school um for around ten years so uh a lot of times we would have students coming in uh with from Spain France and so on in general I find they've always done remarkably well I think um it's principally b- because not just because the bar is set at IELTS 6 but because these were brilliant students to start with I have never seen English as an issue for them um [pause] maybe during class additional support or they might ask different questions or after the class they might ask you what you did mean by that and that I think all people are able to provide that support um my own experience of it is that they've always been very very successful in their learning um I was involved with the [program] eh a a few years ago also we had students come in in language even though they were all IELTS 6 minimum coming in language seemed to be a bigger issue for some of the students um I'm not sure whether it was related to where they had achieved the scores in Brazil um but some of these students did have real difficulty with project work and so on anywhere where there was less prescription um and they had to think and write their own ehm definitions and so on in English seemed to be quite problematic um so I suppose my experience with Erasmus students is in general they've not never had an issue my experience with some other international students would be that with the [program] it seemed to be an issue because it was a large body of students coming in um in general the international students coming we get uh students coming into our postgraduate program um English would be an issue with some of these students also um and again they seem to do fairly well in examinations but when it comes to project work um there would be a noticeable difference between the their construction of technical English presentations so on would be wouldn't be what we'd expect ehm or hope for at that level l- from level 9 students R: okay and um and so you you've been talking about IELTS and you kind of talked about how you're aware of the differences but would you have any kind of general feelings or thoughts on the exam itself and how well it's doing either preparing or predicting students for higher education Chris: [pause] I think and again because I'm not a I'm not going to pretend to be an expert in the area from what I can gather IELTS seems to be a fairly technically rigorous um approach to trying to measure English ability um and if a student can get through the IELTS system or achieve a six um they're pretty good um the alternative to that would be...
taking approaches which I've heard people talking about just trying to increase their their word count and so on I suppose softer approaches and again [pause] maybe they are maybe that's better but I don't know my my only experience is really with like I if I if I see someone's coming in with an IELTS six I have I generally I expect I have a general expectation this person is going to fit in with relative ease um so [pause] on that front um I would gather it to be an effective method ehm whether there's a more efficient methods of doing that I'm not sure it's again I suppose defining efficiency in that context is difficult um but it seems rigorous so um and I think in general the number reflects [pause] what I would expect don’t know if that’s yeah yeah that makes sense so for your international students would you be aware of the kind of preparation they've had before they come here especially in terms of language wise would you know if they’ve been taking like Eng

Chris: I think eh probably there's combinations of all @ of what you've talked about I think in a lot of the European universities they would probably have the English for academic purposes available because unlike some of the colleges and universities here they they’re measurement of success of a European University is sometimes based on the number of partnerships they have with with other colleges and universities so I think the importance that across Europe in particular that they place on on partnerships and international experience is probably higher than what we put on our own students because we Irish students some students will go away but not a lot so I believe that within those places they would be getting direct exposure to English for academic purposes um some international students that I'm aware of would be independently undertaking the IELTS exam IELTS classes and IELTS exams um preparing them specifically ehm for I think it can be for some of the students coming from some of the some of the countries it can be a bit expensive for them to do that um so possibly in some cases they can come so in [institution 10] for example they can undertake foundation programs that will will provide them with learning in on the IELTS system and get them up to a level they require to get into our programs um but again they need to be of some [inhale] threshold level of English before these programs are useful to them as well right yes would you have experience with students who have come through the foundation program yeah and would you be able to make any comments on how the foundation program has done preparing them
Chris: um I think in the main the foundation program works very well um in some cases eh [long pause] [exhale] [long pause] in some cases I think maybe the level between some of the jump into some of the level 8 programs still appears to be quite difficult for some of the students but I think this is just highly dependent upon trying to to map the ability or the learn- the previous learning of the student and the expectations that we might have for the student coming in um so anytime I've seen issues with a student it has probably been a combination of language and maybe not having the the discipline specific knowledge that they require to to succeed in a program also um so I think that our foundation program does provide the foundation they require for our program

R: and if you could give advice to programs like the foundation program as to what you would like to see in that program what would that be

Chris: [click] I think possibly a source from an [discipline] perspective is a focus on technical more of a focus on technical English um again not being an expert in the area I don't know [pause] is that a step that needs to come after the word count has increased um but what sometimes students get away is is is I think it's not a problem just with international students is thinking about the sentence in advance of writing it so that you can ensure that what you represent on the page is as clear and concise and coherent uh a representation of what you're trying to say as possible so I think maybe a bit more focused on short sentences technically concise sentences and ensuring that meaning is conveyed in a kind of a succinct coherent logical way um and again that's eh something we have to work with our students not just international students just trying to okay [pause] it's not about getting things to sound good is getting things to convey meaning concisely and I think just a technical conciseness is quite important us so

R: and would you work on that in class with your students or would it be something that you would refer them to someone else or

Chris: I would work quite a lot on class and if I I'm work if I’m correcting reports quite often I’ll be writing the sentence is too long the end of the sentence is at the start and the start is at the end um the sentence is confusing there's too many words it’s completely unnecessary so I think particularly in the projects is where I really really focus on trying to get them to structure concise technically kinda ehm ehm literacy kinda just to to make sure that they're kind a- getting some guidance on how to put the sentence together and so yeah I I work quite hard on that with all students so

R: um okay and so then are you aware of any type of supports that international students have within the university so I know you've said that they have academic writing supports

they have
Chris: so they get they will get access to the English for academic purposes modules at at
eh introductory intermediate and advanced level ehm so they have that on a weekly basis
when they're here they the academic writing center is available and I suppose beyond that
it's just what they get from individual lectures or or program leaders or heads of
department [pause] I think that's really about it unless unless there's something in the
International office that I'm not aware of um I I feel that's probably the extent of the
language support they’re getting

R: ehm so the modules that they're taking once a week are they mandatory or is it optional
is it for credit

Chris: they they get credit yeah so they will when they arrive here they will be tested in the
induction week and based on the score they achieve and the testing they will be
assigned to one of the three levels um they get five credits for that so a lot of them are
happy to take that some of the other universities may require them to achieve that five
credits in the English language some completely ignore it um so but it is credit based so
they get to get their five credits the same way as they would for any other module um and
it's [pause] there's a significant enough exam I think a presentation exam and project I
think hm

R: interesting and so you kind of covered that so uh what do you hope that your students
leave feeling after finishing their degree or having achieved after finishing their degree

Chris: in general or internationals students

R: uhm if it’s different both

Chris: um I think it it’s the same for both but I think what I like students to feel [pause]
it's a good question [pause] I'd like them to be enlightened in their discipline area I'd like
them to still believe that that's what they wanted to do um I'd like them to see the
limitations of the knowledge they have within their particular career area um but that they
know how to progress within their career so that they leave here they know that they've got
the piece of paper that and there's a grade on it that in some way reflects the extent to
which they've taken responsibility for that part of their ehh education but to realize that the
education will continue afterwards I think if we have have it that okay you've done your
education bit now it's time to move on to the work I think we've done them a disservice um
I think it's just one small step on their actual education within their career um because if
they do take it as a stop the chances are they're going to be in the same job for the rest of
their lives and that's >I think if that's happening < or that was happening that would be
saying that it's a failing on our part that we haven't we haven’t helped to develop in them
an awareness of what happens or what should happen within development of a career so I
think is to identify with what where they are and where what they need to do and the steps they can take to ensure ehm a career progression and and continual progression or development of their career and education once they leave us

R: and do you think that the majority of students start leaving feeling this

Chris: uhm [click] some students [pause] [exhale] I would say it's almost 50/50 a lot of st- I think what we do in the [institution type] more than [institution type] is eh we provide more access to tools in [discipline] so a tool will get you a job so [tool] you know access to part- particular pieces of equipment will generally get you a job where you're able to contribute very early on so you start a job and immediately you're using a tool that your fairly familiar with um what you don't want to happen is that you essentially become someone who just uses this tool so if you're doing the job the same job five years' time I think we've definitely done um these people a disservice and we haven't educated and we have trained them in a tool um so I think [pause] some people have a greater awareness of that than others um to put percentage-wise I don't know if it's 50/50 and but sometimes I think we don't necessarily talk sufficiently about when we're eh talking about some of the packages we deliver we should be identifying what they are rather than eh okay this is how you do this thing um so I say it's 50/50 I'd like to think that most of our students the majority of our students eh know what they're getting from us and what they need to ensure to prevent them from just looking like they've been trained in it tool

R: okay um so that's actually the last question I have for you um are there any questions you wish I had asked that I didn't ask

Chris: eh no but the question that I thought was the one that caused me to ponder was what would you like to get from the English English educat- the English learning because I think it's something I'll reflect on afterwards to see do I believe that there are uh hmm things missing from people eh not people from the learning the English learning language their learning English language learning that they've been given to date so just to to provide them or make them more able coming into an [pause] program um but I don't think there's anything else I think I think you were fairly comprehensive with your questions

R: okay alright and is there anything else that you'd like to add

Chris: no I'm okay

R: okay brilliant thank you

David
R: brilliant um so first can you tell me a little bit about the modules that you would teach
on so like what work do you require of your students and your modulus
David: um okay so do you want me would you like me to list the modules that I teach first of all
R: um yeah
David: yeah okay so I am coordinator of [general] curriculum that would be an undergraduate module that's widely open to to uh uh to undergraduate students from all over and visiting students eh so one of the [general] curriculum modules is called [module] ehm it's also available as an obligatory core module to [disciplines] students so they have to take it that's in the first term five credits so 12 weeks or 11 and then in the second term there's another [general] curriculum module called [module] eh it's only [general] curriculum so it's only taken on that optional basis and it is sometimes taken by visiting students as well [click] so there's those two undergraduate level do I teach anything else so I I I'm coordinator of those modules I like teach a handful of topics in each of those each of those I teach one topic [topic] in the second term and I teach like two or three topics in the first term ehm so I think that's it for undergrad so what else do I oh no wait I teach a module that is currently called [module] which is an obligatory first-year module for [discipline] student uh studies students and that's a five credit module I teach a lot of that and I'm the coordinator of it but I don't teach it all eh so that's that eh at master's level then I teach two modules uh uh I teach [module] and I teach [module] so [module] is an option that's available to um all four of the MPhils so [disciplines] uh [module] is a core module for uh [discipline] students as you know and um there would be visiting students who take both of those um modules as well so then in terms of what I expect students to do do you mean in terms of coursework or just in general what kind of input they
R: both yeah
David: in the larger modules like the two [general] curriculum ones that I mentioned ehm those are very large groups of it would be in or around 60 or 70 for the for um the [module] and up to 120 in uhm [module] and I don't expect much in the way of classroom contributions there um you know getting interactivity going with large groups is a difficult thing that I haven't resolved I do occasionally so what I will occasionally do is ask students to uhm you know I'll I'll give them some sort of prompt or a stimulus and say can you come up with an example of this or of that or of the other and then hope to get some volunteers which is hard work sometimes so occasional kind of spontaneous oral contributions in class but most students will simply sit those out and will never have to
pipe up in class at all so there would be for the very large groups there’s very little of
interaction and for their for assessment then they have to write at undergraduate level they
have to write depending on whether they're the people taking it as a core module or as an
optional module they’ll have to write an assignment which is more or less an essay essay
form essay form of either two and a half thousand words that wouldn't apply to the visiting
students or four thousand words that would apply to the visiting visiting students and
anyone as a [general] curriculum so it's currently uh 4,000 word assignment is the way the
[general] curriculum version of it is assessed and that's all that they have there's no other
form of assessment they don't have any exam the ones who take it as a core module
disciplines ehm they do two and a half thousand word assignment and an exam we're
changing all of this @@ and uh everybody is going to be assessed the same way a lot of
things are changing in in [institution 1] at the moment and I think everybody is going to be
assessed on the basis of a maximum three thousand word assignment and there’ll be no
exam in future so three thousand words we've generally agreed uh is is much more
appropriate four thousand words for master’s students okay but for undergraduate students
um uh that four thousand word assignment is really daunting a lot of them find the thought
of four thousand words daunting and there's also this kind of anomaly that um so um so it
used to be that the master’s students would be taking a ten credit module so they're
master’s at the postgraduate level ehm they were taking a ten credit module [modules] and
they were writing a four thousand word assignment for ten credits while the
undergraduates were also writing a four thousand word assignment for five credits and that
just doesn't seem right so I think we're going there will be some differences in exactly how
people assess things some people are splitting it into two and so on I think [name] uhm
splits [module] assessment in two parts for example but where there's only one assignment
I think in future at undergraduate is going to be 3,000 words which seems to be more
manageable [click] because one of the questions that students often do come up with is um
you know how far well they they all have a notion that there's a kind of 10% margin I
always #think why it's just it's just a kind of a common sensical thing it's four thousand
words it's if you're a hundred words over who cares you know if you’re wildly over that’s
another matter so I don't I don't legislate for that but they're also often concerned about
what if I don't make it up to the word limit and my uh view of that is always that that isn't
in itself a sin there's nothing wrong with that the problem that arises is if the substance isn't
there so if you turn in a three thousand word assignment you'll get penalized for being
under any word limit but it's likely because if you're a thousand words short of the
maximum then it's likely that there isn't a whole lot of substance in there compared to what
your classmates have t- have turned in ehm but what that does tell me because they they
often ask about that is that there are concerns that they just can't produce enough that they
don't know enough and they don't have that kind of academic chops yet to be able to
produce something of that size and therefore substance so that's at undergrad level and then
at postgrads 4,000 words uhm and it's the one slight inequity there is that our postgraduate
modules are available to visiting students as well in their undergrad our visiting undergrad
students eehm so they're having to produce 4,000 words assignments as well and they have
the additional issue of it not being their first language uhm writing in English but then that
applies to some of um many of the master students as well because many of the master
students aren't native speakers of English either but I guess you know they’re undergrad so
it's that bit more more daun- challenging for them and what I try to do uh is [pause] I
try to distinguish between language problems and conceptual or academic problems in
assignments when I'm marking them uh so you do your best it can be difficult it can be
difficult even with native speakers to say well is this this is garbled but I don't know
whether it’s that the student knows exactly what they mean [pause] but that they they aren't
skillful enough as writers to get it across or that they um that they actually don't know
what they mean and they're so they're not thinking clearly you know you’ve got that clear
thought and clear language thing they often go together but they don't absolutely always
some people who are very good thinkers and very good maybe face-to-face communicators
are not great in writing it's a very different kind of a skill ehm and then that's magnified I
think in the case of um visiting students who don't have English as a first language
right and so in your undergraduate level and the postgraduate do you give the
assignment topic or do they need to develop their essay topic themselves
David: It it's kind of a mix ehm well in the case of the undergrads um there's a range of
different topics so it's taught by different people um and so let's take just as an example
(module) so I teach three different topics in there one about kind of [topic] to to [topic] one
about @let's see oh yeah [topic] and I used to teach something about [topic] but I don't
think I do that anymore ehm so anyway I have two or three topics ehm and they will have a
menu then of topics everybody contributes one topic on each topic that they teach unless
they teach many of them then you might say well pick two out of three so in that case it's
pretty well specified what they what they have to do ehm in the case of the uh my
postgraduate modules um I tried to combine the two things so in [module] for example I
have one that's a kind of a catch-all that just says some find some aspect to this module or
something related to this module it has to be at least t-touched on in in the module and
research that and write an essay about that and that appeals to some people because they
might have uhm they might be very autonomous in in that way that they have ideas that
they’d like to pursue and they're prepared prepared to do deep reading into it and so on
or it might be that there was a particular topic that was touched on in the course but
not developed at length and they'd like to go into that some more others feel a bit at sea
with the with the whole challenge of of academic ehm writing and and and eh this kind of
an assessment exercise and they prefer to have more guidance and so I have two other
options there that are more carefully worked out and one of them is like a critique of [text
] so you know take a [text] and do an analysis and critique of it in terms of the kind of
things that we talked about and some people ehm some people like that just because they
find that an interesting challenge anyway but I guess also it's something a little
bit more structured and then there’s a the third one is also pretty well structured and it
maps on to >oh I forgot to mention that< in [module] they also have to do a presentation
you'd remember that too taking a topic in [module] and discussing first of all the uh the
[topic] itself then what challenges it presents for [clients] and then how would you
deliver it give us a a a imaginary situation [workplace] situation tell us how you’d
deliver this and then they can do the same thing for their assignment so um but I often get
people [click] saying I'd like to do something on say [topic] and I would encourage them if
don't have a very strong idea of what they want to do and that accounts for a lot of
students there's a lot of them who don't know exactly what they how they should approach
this so very often they'll email me with a suggested structure and I’ll give them feedback
mind so ehm so I like to give both of those options and that's partly in response to feedback
from external examiners many years ago not I think for me particularly for just talking in
general about the masters courses they said there is kind of this discrepancy between some
of the assignment prompts that are set are very specific um they're very
prescriptive about what you have to do and though's a very wide open ehm so I try to
give both options as my solution to that

R: and so when you're marking both how do you assess academic success and what are you
looking for when you're grading

David: well we have a set of um rubrics that we've developed we have descriptors for
the different grades so first class honors two one two two third ehm and those have been at
undergrad but we haven't done this for a post-grad at undergrad level we've developed
th- those into a table of rubrics you know you’re familiar with the system of rubrics ehm so
that kind of gives a description of what first looks like under or a 2:1 or whatever under
each of these headings so we have like seven headings is coherence of argument um
presentation uh I can't remember what else content and use of relevant literature and so on
so but at the same time I think the truth is probably that if you have
experience in the system and particularly if that's the system that you did your undergrad in
yourself ehm you kind of have a sense of what first looks like you might be hard-pressed to
really draw it very accurately but you’d know it's kind of I know one when I see one ehm
and likewise for it a two one and two two which is not to say that there aren't cases where
you hover between two grades and then you try you can kind of assess is this somewhere
in the middle of this typically 10-point band or is it higher up or lower down but they do
correspond pretty well to the descriptors but I wouldn't want to say that I’m I'm you know
I’m it's really more an impressionistic indicator both for me and the students of what is
meant it's kind of a sanity check on what is meant by these things but if you never
do< but if you got a student coming in and saying look you gave me a two two but a two
two says this this this and this whereas the two one says this this and this and therefore I
think I should have got a two one because it is it's not as mechanistic and deterministic as
that ehm and we say that about the rubrics as well at the undergraduate level that this is
supposed to give you an indication you know it's not necessarily we're not doing any
applying any mechanical algorithm that says if you have a tick in this box this box and this
box then you get a two one or anything like that it's just one of the things that does is it
simplifies the process of giving feedback ehm what I'm looking for then having said all of
that I guess is [pause] critical engagement I mean the one criterion that probably jumps out
above all others is does this student [pause] have ideas of their own and not just having
ideas of your own because you can have lots of people have ideas of their own and they're
cranky ideas that are @@you know that aren't well-founded or that well thought through
and that haven't really been brought into interaction with opposing views with views that
conflict with this you know and where you get that where you get somebody who has eh
read the literature or some of the literature at least and you can see that that has triggered
ideas and they've made sense of it and they've gone back to interrogate and said well hang
on in that case what about this and they read it more deeply and they say oh yeah I can see
what they mean that kind of critical interaction between you know something that shows
an actual process of intellectual engagement with the material that for me is what uh
represents success in in as an academic enterprise and I always say to students as well it
doesn't necessarily mean that I agree you know I might disagree with you umm but you
know the best conversations you have aren't with people who agree with everything you
say you know there are people who disagree and then you have great fun trying to persuade
them but there has to be something there that you can where they're actually engaging with
it and if you can see that process of engagement on the paper that they're they're grappling with these ideas and they disagree with some of them and they think well this person hasn't taken into account this that or the other [pause] you know that there's some intellectual initiative of their own that there's some spark of an idea whether it's a development to something or applying it to an area that you mightn’t have thought of especially that if you see something in an assignment ehm that gives a perspective or an example or it you know something that you haven't thought of before ehm it mightn’t be earth-shattering but that's fantastic you know then you think that's somebody who's operating on some kind of an intellectual level so I think that's what you hope to see if that's all then presented in a in a well-written style as well with a bit of voice in it then then so much the better [pause] uhh does that answer that question or I can develop it a little bit if you’d like

R: no yeah that's great um so what would you say that um here you'll stick with the kind of assessment side at the moment um how do you communicate your expectations and assessment requirements to the students so would you verbally tell them at the beginning of the term middle of the term would you post it on blackboard would you give them a handout

David: it's in the handout the the handout is the main thing so that's kind of the law that's what we are going to be doing and that's uh what in most cases I think there might be one or two handouts at undergraduate level where it's separate yeah at at the undergraduate level where you have to marshal a team of people who are all teaching this thing then we give ourselves a few weeks and there's a certain point you e-mail everybody and say we need we need uuh assignment topics you can you please send them to me by such and such a deadline and then that will go up separately so it's all actually in the in the module handout ehm but it'll go up on blackboard ehm personally I try to avoid [pause] I do in the yeah I don't I don't have paper handouts for the big ones so for the two [general] curriculum ehm for the smaller ones for [module] which is 36 I'll distribute paper one for them and likewise for the uh post grads I'll give it to them on paper uh it'll also go on blackboard um and in most cases the assignments are actually in the in the module handout so and um we'll discuss them in the introduction but then also when you're getting closer when you're kinda halfway through the module and they need a reminder they're starting to turn their minds to what they're gonna do so then I’ll go through it again start talking about requirements and saying the sorts of things that I've just been saying to you about you know what constitutes a really good assignment and hope it doesn't scare too many people
off because I think you know what I've described that kind of evidence of critical engagement and and thinking ehm that's kind of to me that's sort of first class level but if you give a you've got a very competent uhm uh no I don't not not a regurgitation not something that's too reliant on the sources but something that's a very good uh review of of an area without much in terms of breaking new ground or or new insights or anything that could still be a good two one [pause] especially if it's well presented as well

R: right okay I know so what would you expect your students to do outside of the classroom in terms of week to week day-to-day

David: well [pause] it kind of depends on what you mean by expect there’s what there’s you know what you officially expect and that's what you in real life actually expect having been a student yourself and having seen many generations @ @ of students what I officially expect is that the y would [click] review their notes review the slides and read maybe one thing maybe not in huge depth on each topic that I teach I'm not sure I've ever actually said that to to students there's an interesting interesting thing what I actually expect will happen@ is that they'll keep up as they go along week by week um with their own notes [pause] in many cases do nothing at all in between@ especially at undergraduate level um and then start turning themselves um t-turning their thoughts to um the assignment a few weeks out from the deadline uhm in some cases only um seriously thinking about it when the deadline is really looming and that's what I think actually happens I don't think that's the best way to do things but on the other hand I also personally think [pause] that I didn't do a whole lot in between @ @lectures when I was an undergraduate student anyway um but what I did do was pay attention in lectures [pause] and I think if they even do that and if they engage in lectures and go and come out with a sense of yeah I got that [pause] then I think that's not bad I mean I think if if all of your students did even that much at undergraduate level that wouldn't be bad at all postgraduate level you want them to do some reading as well but in the things that I teach you're not asking them to master everything and you're g- kind of want them to specialize uhm you know that they're gonna pick one topic that they're going to make their own and go into that more deeply ehm so I'm okay with that that's something that one of my lecturers um impressed on us early on when I was literally in first year yeah as an undergrad uh he had come through the German system [pause] [click] he was himself Irish but he had studied done all of his studies in Germany and he had never done an exam in his life uhm and throughout it was all based on seminar papers and so on and every seminar paper was on one topic so you did the research even as an undergraduate you picked a topic you read up about it you wrote an assignment on it and your you got your marks based on that so it