

Name	Mark
Age	21-30
Degree	Archaeology
Year	3
Full-Time/Part-Time	Full-Time
Disability	Dyslexia, Asthma, Irea's Syndrome, Back Injury

I have dyslexia, problems with spellings; I get words the wrong way round. Also my memory retention is poor and I am really bad with numbers, I cannot add up in my head at all. My asthma is not a great problem, but I do have some back problems and Irea's Syndrome. When I see white paper with black writing they are so different to each other that the contrast makes me ill and dizzy. I sometimes need to wear special glasses.

I went to a normal State primary school for a while. I was taken out of that and put in a boarding school for two years which had a large amount of Special Needs teaching. At 11 years old, I went to an Alternative Education school for eight years. I had to re-do my GCSEs about three times, I could not handle too many at once. Then I went to my first University to study Earth Sciences. I did pass the first year with some problems. I got into the second year and basically completely broke down, I just could not cope. My average grades were very low, which was not very encouraging. I decided that what I was doing was not for me. I did not have any confidence in myself or the teaching; they were not really helping me. I was once told by a lecturer that he had been really generous with me and not taken into account my spelling and given me a mark of 40%. Think that I had worked for a month straight on that piece. That disheartened me totally.

I started looking for a new course. I have always had an interest in archaeology and was visiting the Butser Ancient Farm where I met a student who was on a placement there. I overheard him saying how good his University was. So, I went to have a look and was blown away by how open they were about things. My mum said, 'You don't want to do archaeology, there's no money in that'. Unfortunately, she is probably right. But I applied and was accepted.

I have been on two digs and six or seven field trips. On one of the digs there were so many people there that I did not really learn anything, very little. On the other one, I was with a group of about 20 people and I learnt more in one week than in five weeks on the main training

excavation. I did not even have a note-taker there. The best thing about fieldwork is with a small group, especially the social aspect, you learn from other people. If I see someone doing things well, I will copy that. In a small group there are usually more jobs to go round as well. If I am doing the same thing over and over, I am not very happy. You find out more, the more you are involved in different things. You learn more in small groups, there is a lot more fun and enjoyment.

The difficulties I have had are misunderstandings of why I am doing something in a particular way. Because of my back injury I cannot kneel for too long. I got shouted at a lot because I was not kneeling properly. I find it less painful lying on my side. It is just a lack of understanding of why I do things in a certain way; they just assume that I am doing it wrong. Sometimes not having enough to do is a bad point. Mainly, having too many people you get stuck in the same job all the time and you are not learning things.

It has helped that I have had a mentor. In the last few months at my previous University I was getting badly depressed. The lectures were not going well and the staff kept saying they were just being generous to me. My LEA provided me with a mentor to keep me on track. When I moved to my current University, I kept that on. She basically kicked my backside from year one to year three. Without her help, I doubt I could have kept on track or got the good grades that I am getting now. They cannot really get her to help me on fieldwork, as she is usually looking after other people as well. But I do have a note-taker who also acts as a kind of mentor. There is usually some supervisor shouting at me on field trips anyway, acts like a bit of an incentive.

I am thinking about doing an MA, but at the moment I am getting so stressed about my Dissertation that I might take some time out. Put it on the back burner for a while and get some experience of proper archaeological work before doing academia again. I have no regrets about doing archaeology. At times it has been a headache and caused me a fair amount of stress, but I have enjoyed what I have done to a point; there have been some bad bits. It is better than my previous University; they used to drag us out into the field even when it was raining.