Interviewer
Perfect. OK.

Interviewer
Cool. So tell me a little bit about yourself, L. So, like, where did you grow up? And and yeah. Tell me just a little bit about you.

Student6
OK, so I am 21 years old and I grew up in Z. So like in Q area, but before coming to Uni I moved to more like an area so I grew up in Z and then what made me I guess choose X was the Joint Honours course. So I'm studying joint course and most other other universities don't have that sort of course on top of it it was an accredited which was useful for course.

And then I also got to still pursue my passion for art as well. So yeah, like that's that's me. When I grew up in Z and I chose X.

Interviewer
OK, so did you have any other plans other than going to university or were you sort of always looking at that because obviously the joint on it is quite a specific. So it sounds like maybe you had a specific goal.

Student6
Yeah. So I was always looking into go to university initially. I really wanted to go to just to find art school 'cause that was most of my choices. But then after consulting with my parents, they were like, you need to do something a little bit, you know, a bit more of a mix. And I was like, OK, what else am I good at as well? You know, I really enjoy and all then X was like a perfect mix of both. That'll make me. And then also my parents act as well. I was like, you know what this this is Nice. I like it so.

Yeah.

Interviewer
Yeah, sounds like almost ended up being the obvious choice kind of thing.

Student6
Yeah, more or less.

Interviewer
Yeah. Excellent. And and what about your aspirations for the future? So when you graduate, have you thought about what you what you want to do?

Student6
I feel like I'm in two minds so.

At the moment I'm planning to graduate scheme, so looking into HR and consulting, but then also partly wants to continue my studies so strengthening the degree, getting the masters and then then giving you access to more like therapeutic roles. So being in the NHS and doing that then still alongside both of those avenues, I still want to keep pursuing my art career. So keep on painting and getting them in exhibitions and galleries and stuff.

So still doing a bit of both.
Yeah, that's my current kind of bike vision for the future at the moment, yeah.

Yeah.

Mm hmm.

Interviewer
Nice. That sounds really exciting. All of those options, whichever one you end up choosing. Nice. So you mentioned a little bit about your your parents already. So did they go to university?

Student6
No, they did not go to university. They I'm a first generation immigrant, so my parents came from T to the UK and I was born here. They emigrated so they didn't go to any sort of high education. So I'm one of the first in my family to do it.

Interviewer
OK. Yeah. So did you have siblings that have had been by the time you applied or?

Student6
Yeah. So.

By the time I applied my older sister and my older brother were in university, so my sister graduated about time and I went into my first year. So I I had some like scope of university being accessible. I guess in my family.

Interviewer
Yeah. So how did you generally sort of experience support from your family when you were applying to higher education?

Student6
Oh, so I relied on my sister because she did a similar sort of social, scientific sort of humanities degree as well. So speaking to her about advice and like, what kind of courses would be beneficial. So speaking with my older sister who just graduated and I was like my main support and then also my six form at the time as well. So going through different options with them and then took it to my tutors, seeing if I'm doing well enough to get into a particular uni and stuff. So yeah.
A mixture of relying on my older sister and then the.

Services available in my sixth form as well.

Interviewer
Yeah. OK. That makes sense. So just to talk a little bit more about the services available in your sixth form, what kind of specific support did they offer you? Was it things like personal statement support or taking you to open days? What kind of support did they provide?

Student6
I believe some personal statement support.

We used this website called unifrog as well to like rank different universities and water down which one we're doing well in which one will suit us the most. Also they gave us different resources and websites to look at our prospects as well was one that we used.

And I guess another one was just them making free time to book in with the teachers to just speak to them about future options. So that was how, like some of the options they gave to us.

Interviewer
Great. Yeah. And do you feel how do you feel about the level of support that was offered? So those things you've listed, do you feel like that was, like, sort of everything you needed, or were there things that could have been sort of slightly more supported?

Student6
I think I think the support they gave was enough for what they can really like do. So I think other support that would have been intrigued by was more like say financial specific or bursary specific. But that's we don't think it's it won't be able to encompass that for every university. So I think what they're offered was enough for me to be like satisfied as well with the main things that went university specific.

Yeah.

Interviewer
Yeah, yeah, I know what you mean. It would be hard for them to know the ins and outs of every institution. Did you have any universities come to your school or college to chat about things?

Student6
No, we didn't have any university visits actually.

Interviewer
OK, OK.

And in terms of what other students in your school or college were doing, like did, most other students apply to university as well? Was that a common pathway or?

Student6
Yeah, it was quite common. Yeah, most of us at least, like within my friendship group and other people in my year, most of us were applying to university. Yeah, it was quite common.

Interviewer
Yeah. And how did you sort of experience that? Did you find that your friends and peers were kind of knowledgeable and like a good source of support for applying or did that not really factor in?

Student6
No, I didn't really factor in with the friends because I think I think we're all kind of up in the air what we were doing. So most of relying on the teachers then and my family members as well.

Interviewer
Cool. Got it. And just to sort of chat a little bit more about school experience, did you take part in any extracurricular activities whilst you're at school?

Student6
Yeah. So whilst I'm at school, I was.

Part of the netball team, so throughout my time staying there from secondary to sixth form and I was also doing music lessons as well. So like throughout my secondary school time I was playing the flute for about five years and then and I was very sporty so I always took part in the track team. So doing like 100 metre sprints for the school and going to different competitions which was quite fun so.

I was quite involved with the athletic side in my school.

Interviewer
Obviously it's not the only reason that you do extracurricular activities, but did you talk about any of those in sort of personal statements or did you find any other ways that they benefited you in terms of higher education?

Student6
I think I think I did mention my netball like career. What time in my personal statement and I think it definitely helped emphasise more of the soft fields alike communication skills in this personal statement so definitely was perfect as an example for teamwork and then working and then determination as well. So I think having extracurriculars helps enrich your personal statement even if you don't have any work experience because by that point I didn't have any.
Sort of like professional work experience that by interacting in the opportunities in my school.

I was able to show for my skills, so I think it is quite useful.

Interviewer
Yeah, that sounds really good. Yeah, exactly. I mean, it sounds like you're quite busy, but were there any kind of other opportunities for extracurricular things that you would have liked to do that you didn't or?

Student6
Oh, there was like prefects and head girl head boy.

Well, that I felt a bit too much pressure. I was just if for me I did sometimes it was an art ambassador. So like going into year eight classes and helping them with their artwork and stuff. So that was more relaxed, but it would have been cool to be a head girl, but it just felt a bit nerve wracking.
A bit intense.

Interviewer
I get that for sure. Yeah. OK. Thanks. And then you mentioned sort of you would have liked a bit more specific guidance about bursaries at specific institutions. Did you have any sort of financial concerns when you're considering higher education?

Student6
Yes, I definitely had more financial concerns because sometimes universities feels like it's very expensive, especially when I think about like accommodation and then cost of living being away from home and then having to like, provide for yourself entirely. I was a bit.

I don't know, bit anxious about that whole premise, but I think as time went on and I asked more questions, I learnt more about like my options financially. So that was one thing I was a bit anxiety inducing. Was the money side.

Interviewer
Yeah. And you said that you were able to sort of ask more questions. So is that was that support from your school or where did you find support for those concerns, would you say?

Student6
Yeah, it was with my school, so just asking them about.

That's why I find out more about SFE and stuff. So like that there is that support there to help.
To fund the tuition and then also fund just maintaining your life away from home. So yeah, definitely from the school as well.

Interviewer
That's good. And do you find sort of now that you're obviously sort of like well into university that you feel kind of let, do you feel sort of less anxious about that and more able to manage it?

Student6
Yeah, I definitely feel less anxious to buy a more able to manage now. I've had time to, like, get used to the waves and then pick up part time jobs and you know, figure it out that way. But yeah, now I'm good, but I guess the the initial feeling of the unknown entirely just feels like, oh, there's a lot going on, but yeah.

Interviewer
Yeah, for sure. Sort of. The first time that you have to be kind of financially responsible on your own, right? So it's, yeah, it's a big deal. OK, great. Thank you.
So just to talk about X scholars itself, how did you end up taking part in X scholars?

Student6
So I remember my school, my my 6th form was quite put quite a lot of focus on going to a summer school, so they helped us. They they gave us time during the day to just go summer school hunting and I came across X scholars and I was like, oh, this is quite interesting. And then I also saw that they have they had mentorships with different streams as well. So like for the arts and creative stream. And I was like, I want to see how.

Studying art, studying art would be like there so.

That's how I kind of came across and was interested about it.

Interviewer
OK. And so you said your school was quite sort of you know focused and supportive about you guys finding summer schools.

In what way were they encouraging you? So kind of like, what were they saying would be the benefits of you doing it?

Student6
I think main benefit was for the UCAS application and personal statement to put in there that you've done like further investigation into that. Of course you're interested in and say it's also that is this university and applying for as like as one of the choices being at a summer school at the same institution can boost your likelihood of them like liking your statement as well. So it was definitely for personal statement purposes but then also just having a taste of university life as well.

Will be beneficial for both of those sectors.

Interviewer
Yeah, great. And how would you describe your experience of X scholars, the programme in general?

Student6
I really enjoyed it, like I really, really enjoyed it and I think it gave me a very authentic and rather realistic view of X and just being here. 'cause. I wouldn't say my current experience being in X for the past four years is really any different than my small taster during X scholars.

Yeah, I really enjoyed my time. I really loved the accommodation as well the campus.

And also going to the art department and seeing the facilities there.

Yeah, this is overall very positive experience.

I have no qualms about it.

Interviewer
Yeah, it's good to hear that it is an accurate representation of obviously what you've actually found it to be like whilst you're here, which is great. So obviously, yeah, you seem to have had a positive experience. Were there any aspects of X scholars that you didn't enjoy so much?

Student6
I guess one aspect that I think was a bit, I don't know if I didn't enjoy it, but it was something that I kind of like put as a maintenance of oh, maybe this aspect of the uni, I don't really enjoy as much. It was more so with one of the art studios maybe. So for the first years and every year your studio gets moved around to the department and I saw that the studio spaces were quite small and I was like oh, I don't know if I like how small it is, you know.

That's something that I guess they can't change, but now they've actually changed it 'cause we have a new art department, so it does feel a lot nicer, but that was one thing that I was I took a mental note of.

Interviewer
Yeah.

Student6
And yeah, I think just.

At that time, the department felt a bit like outdated, but again, that's fixed as well because there's a new building.

But but in terms of the programme itself, I don't think there's anything really negative about it or nothing really stuck out to me that I thought was dishonest or not enjoyable. So yeah.

Interviewer
Great. And just to confirm, did you do the like residential, was it pre COVID so you got to do it in person?

Student6
Yeah, I got to stay. Yeah. So it was. I did a residential, and I think I stayed in halls.

 So it was actually very nice halls. I didn't end up staying there first year, but it was. It was very nice.

Interviewer
So just so, yeah, I guess clarify you, you said there wasn't really anything that you didn't enjoy. So is there anything that you would change or add or something anything that you thought like oh actually that wasn't really like didn't really have anything to experience so you could take that away basically anything that you might change?

Student6
Anything that I might change about the programme?

I feel like I kind of wish they had a stream for the joint. Honest courses cause a lot of it was very much single honours or just having maybe.

A student life talk or a taster drop in session where you can speak to students who did a joint honours. Because I didn't get to speak to any joint honours students or get like their authentic view of that and as a person who was interested in in that course, I felt like I missed out on that portion.

So it would, I think that would be something helpful.

Because I think it could, I can imagine it being quite difficult having a stream for every degree, but at least having maybe like a live talk or a drop in that maybe students who are interested in the joint honours lifestyle can go and speak to, yeah.

Interviewer
Yeah, that makes sense. OK, thank you.

And what was the impact of doing the X Scholars programme on your decision to apply to university?

Student6
Yeah, it made a great impact. Actually, I think being on the scholars mentorship more or less influence like solidified my choice to come to wedding because I really got to experience campus life and I just I really liked the crowd or the kind of people that attracted X as well because when I went to different summer schools, I felt like it was a different it was a different kind of energy, something 'cause I went to quite a few of the London ones and it felt almost a bit pretentious and I didn't really enjoy the crowd as much. But in X, I really felt as great sense of belonging.

So that was one thing that really factored into it. And also there's quite a few perks from being a scholar as well. So there were lower grade boundaries and then it also gave a like a scholarship grant as well by entering the university. And I was like that. That's quite nice as well. Like, it really influenced my choice, like being a scholar. And I just really enjoyed my time. So I just felt like it was a university. I should come too.

Interviewer
Great. That's nice to hear. So in terms of support, like when you're thinking about applying to uni, is there anything else in general like that you think that universities could do to support students like yourself who maybe yeah, that your parents haven't gone to uni and just kind of to support those students and make sure that they know that it's a reality for them if they want to do it.

Student6
Yeah.

I think just like really.

Emphasising the benefits of a degree as well, because I think nowadays I hear like a few mixed messages and sometimes people saying oh degrees are useless. You know you can still do perfectly fine with that one. And that's of course is a reality as well. But for those who are interested in university, just like really emphasising how a degree can help you and how can give you access to different markets. So only in the last I think 2 years I found out about graduate schemes and they were all exclusive to individuals who.

Have a degree or just finishing one and I'll and I really love the class of a graduate scheme as well, and that's something that only university students can have access to. So even, you know, showing the job potential in those.

Can increase like the likelihood of somebody wanting to come to university and then showing accessibility and also.

Being quite forefront with the support given as well, so even if it's mental health support or any kind of financial support if you're eligible.

Student6
Making the support systems quite obvious, so even with accommodation I wasn't aware of home at halls before coming, but once I came that was one thing that really helped me feel comfortable at university. So I think that's one thing that perhaps perspective students could be aware of as well, because it's quite it was quite a special system, especially during COVID as well. We felt very isolating, but home at halls and having those events and being able to interact with your flatmates was really helpful in feeling comfortable.

Interviewer
Great. Thank you. That's really useful to to hear from your perspective.

OK, so let's move on to actually at university.

How are you finding uni?

Student6
Oh, I mean, I'm really enjoying it so far. I'm in my final year now, so it's really it's it's becoming crunch time, you know, it's getting a bit tough with the dissertation and stuff, but so far I've really really enjoyed my time at university in my third year, which was last year, I got to do a study abroad in Cyprus and I think that was like one of my highlights of my entire degree. I just know it already. I'm going to miss it and it's going to be one thing that I'm going to remember forever and I felt and that was actually one of the things that fed into why I chose X as well was.

The study abroad option.

I always knew that I wanted to go abroad.

And just experience another country. But then also, you know, experience the academic development as well, so.

Yeah. My third year was third year was meant to be like one of the hardest ones. But for me, I just worked hard in autumn term and then I got to go abroad for the spring and summer term. So I just kind of like really enjoyed myself. So it was really great. So, so far, university is going very good. Yeah.

Interviewer
Great. I'm pleased to hear it. How did you find it when you first entered uni? Like, did you feel like you were ready or or not ready or in first year?

Student6
That's it. I felt like I was thrown into the deep end like I was so nervous, and it was also during COVID times, there's a lot of anxiety about. I don't want to get ill. I don't want to catch anything.

And I chose to live in halls because I didn't want to be alone, and I wanted to kind of like still be able to socialise, even if it's just within my halls. But then still, I was very nervous about becoming. I'll I caught it anyway in the next year. But you know, I was very much avoiding it and stuff.

So in the first he was very nerve wracking, but then as I got comfortable kind of like attending my classes online and then seeing the events that happen on home, at halls, that really helped me connect with people, even if it was just people in my flat. So that was one thing that really helped me kind of come out of my shell a bit more and socialise with others because everything was rather isolated in my first year. But yeah.

Interviewer
Yeah. My turn. Yeah. So obviously nothing really could have prepared us for COVID any of us.

But in, was there any way that taking part in X scholars made you feel in any way like more prepared for uni when you when you got here or not?

Student6
I think it prepared me in terms of just knowing kind of what to expect in a way, but it was very it was very much a taster. So it wasn't it couldn't fully encompass how I would feel like here, but I definitely felt more comfortable coming because I was, you know, relatively aware and used to the scenes of the campus. So kind of knowing where I was going, which felt, you know, more homely because it's like a familiar area. So I think wedding scholars helped me get used to just being on campus and seeing the buildings and not feeling like it's a completely novel area.
And and I guess the social life was very different again 'cause it was COVID. But yeah, I think it just helped me feel a bit less scared of being in a new era, completely being a better scholars.

Interviewer
Right. And are there any challenges or barriers that you face at university? So anything to do with, you know, financial concerns or I know that we've discussed that a little bit, but yeah, anything that you've faced in terms of like a lack of knowledge before you got here?

Student6
I think kind of barriers, I mean initially I did have quite a few financial concerns as well, but I remember speaking to my sister and stuff and who she referred to in her university, she's like, oh, go to students union. They can help you if you have any issues. So I use the student union quite a bit for any like non academic queries or more personal questions and any kind of like different sorts of help, so I spoke to them quite a bit for support as well, which was really nice.

But yeah, I think what was the question again?

Interviewer
Just if there are any challenges or barriers that you face?

Student6
I don't, to be honest, I can't. I can't think of any overt challenges. I feel like specifically impacted me in particular.

Interviewer
OK, that's absolutely fine. That's good. That's that's what we want to hear really.

So yeah, I know you've mentioned the students union, is there anything that you particularly value or that you think X could be doing more of in terms of supporting you whilst you're here?

Or if there's anything that you want to mention that, like, X already does, but you find really valuable just in terms of support.

Student6
Yes, the support's really good here, to be honest.

Especially in like via e-mail, I've signed up for quite a few different mailing lists, so especially for careers service, I think it gives a lot of really good support for the future, which I think is very good. I don't think there's really a lack in my opinion, because even they give really good amounts of health support as well. And then there's always the student union available for more like cultural events.

Which I think is really lovely. And then the.

The range of societies as well, so going from like cultural to sports societies. So it's really what I really value is obviously having the ACS, so Afro Caribbean society as well just being able to like find people from a similar background and just being able to connect on that as well, which has been really valuable.

But yeah, I haven't really.

There isn't for my point of view. I don't think there's much of a lack really, maybe just more promotions are making it more aware, making interest more aware of it, but I think they do quite a good job with the mailing lists like I always get notifications of different opportunities available. So yeah.

Interviewer
Great. Is that usually like from the sort of student communications or is that the students union, is it sort of all of them?

Student6
Most of them, like the careers service careers advice, so like notifying up any fairs or if there's any placements as well or internships. So everything to do like campus jobs and my jobs online, they always send opportunities into my inbox and it's really great because then you can just kind of like prepare for your future beyond university, which is very important.

Interviewer
Fantastic. Great. Thank you. So just to kind of like wrap up and reflect overall on on your kind of university experience, So what would you say were the most important or the most influential things that helped you to be at university now?

Student6
I think I think the main influential thing was being on the bedding scholars programme, to be honest, because I also went to another summer school at UCL as well, which felt very different. But just being is going to those summer schools and just having a taste of being at university made it seem more realistic for me. We've been in that space.

And then obviously doing X scholars as well-being in the studio or being in the lecture hall and meeting.

Current students are speaking to them just made it feel all more real.

So just those really fading too, like making university more of a reality.

Interviewer
Yeah. So it sounds like the opportunity to experience sort of that face to face what it would really be like was really valuable is that is that fair to say, yeah.

Student6
Yeah, very same 'cause. I didn't go to an open day because I had, you know, well-rounded experience on X scholars. So I think experiencing a place in person and being able to talk to, like, course representatives or any sort of representative of any community in the university is really beneficial. Just being in the space and experiencing it first hand is very important.

Interviewer
Great. And are there any other sort of barriers to coming to university that you want to raise that I haven't already asked you about?

Student6
I guess another barrier could be getting the grades.

So I think a lot of people might feel like university is not for them because they haven't got like a particular set of grades or if they don't excel or if they're not the best academically or like exam settings. So I don't know how maybe you would address it, but.

I don't maybe like letting them know that there are different ways of going around it or just making them aware of clearing and and those other options that that I think that's probably another major one that could stop people from coming to university.

Interviewer
Absolutely. But for you, just to clarify, was that like a concern or were you sort of reasonably confident that, you know academically you could achieve and get into uni?

Student6
Yeah. For me, I was fine. I was like, yeah, I could. I could do this. Yeah. So, yeah.

Interviewer
And any other sort of final recommendations or suggestions from you know your perspective and as somebody who took part in X scholars, but it doesn't have to be about X scholars just are there any other suggestions that you think universities in general could be doing differently or more of for for access to university?

Student6
It would be quite nice. I'm not sure if X does this, but if they would have.

Sort of events open to the public where? Well, it could be an open day, but something where students can come in and listen to a talk or listen to access like a sort of live talk or like I talk about access to university.
And just informing students of their options. So that will be quite, quite nice. Well, that's something I would have loved to have come across when I was applying.

Interviewer
So you mean sort of like instead of a whole summer school, we do offer like taster days. So for like specific subjects, sometimes it's like you can sign up and then come on to campus for a day. And it usually has, like, a campus tour and stuff. Is that the kind of thing that you mean.

Student6
Yeah. So something like that, I think it would be very helpful.

Interviewer
Great. Yeah, I suppose it's that. Like you were sort of saying earlier, it's that real experience, that is what's what's valuable. OK, fantastic. Thank you so much. L, is there anything else that you particularly wanted to add that we haven't covered?

Student6
Not that it comes to mind. I haven't got much to add. Yeah.