So tell me a little bit about yourself.
Like, where did you grow up and how did you end up at X?

I'm from Z.
When I was in sixth form year 12, we got emails sent to us about X scholars.
So I did that in year 12.
And then I will also probably apply to X.
I probably would have heard of it if it wasn't for that, but then it was my first choice of, you know, and now I'm a second year student doing English literature and creative writing.

Cool.
OK, nice.
It's nice to hear that it impacted you in that way.
Obviously we’ll touch a bit more on that later.
What are your plans for after you know if you started thinking about that?

So at first I was so sure I was going to go into journalism.
But I'm not sure anymore.
OK, maybe teaching.
OK, but that's quite cliche the English, but yeah

We have a really good like teaching program here as well and like it's quite well respected.
So that would be nice.
Yeah, like that happened to me as well. I was so sure of what I wanted to do when I started Uni and then by the end of it, it was.
Yeah, absolutely different.
That's cool though.
So first of all, we're gonna look at like when you're preparing for UNI and when you're at school or college.
So did your parents or carers go to university at all?

My mum went to UNI.
Yeah.
I think she went to UNI of Q.

OK. Nice.
Nice.
And how about do you have siblings who'd also applied to UNI?

Or I have a younger sister.

OK, so you that you were the first.
How did you experience support from your family and friends when you were thinking about and applying to higher education?

Because my mom had gone, she was quite keen for me to go.
And so it's not even just about the course about like being independent and everything, but it was totally new for my dad, obviously, you know.
And we came to like, open day here and it's just will come out.
Like he couldn't believe the size of the lecture theatre and things like that.
So it's pretty cool, but I think he was happy for me to go to UNI.

And was your mom able to support you with kind of, you know, things like the application and understanding student finance or is it or it was very complicated.

I remember it was doing that application shipments like it was very complicated and I think she took.
I don't even remember now, but like she had to like phone up student finance because they needed details.
But they helped me.

Yeah, yeah. Good.
OK.
And how about at school or college?
Like what kind of support was available?

Umm so.
In P why can't it was called out but the like pHSCE.
Ohh, it was always some variation that we had some lessons where like a former student from asset from he'd gone to Uni came and spoke to us.
But except from that, it was so doing your own research.

OK.

And I think X scholars did help in that way.
Things like like accommodation.
I had no idea about.
It was more.
I think school helps you prepare for the academic side of it.
Like just getting the grades to go to UNI and then they build up as in like you need to scrape thing that you should go to, but things like halls and how to actually live by yourself at uni, umm, things like that.
I don't think school really prepares you for.

Yeah.
OK.
And so you mentioned it pays for the academically obviously like to get grades.
Well, that goes along with it.
So it's kind of like support for personal statements or advice on the UCAS process.
Did you feel that your school provided that?

I feel like they did.
Yeah.
Umm, our form tutor had to go through our personal statements.
OK.
But it's, it's still obviously really difficult as much help as you can get is obviously, yeah.
So I think in X Scholars, writing the personal statement, things like that pretty out.
But that that's all that extra bit of support.
Yeah, yeah, he's obviously you're getting help from the teachers, which is really good, but from their perspective, that's like only the teacher.
So it was nice seeing students how they wrote it.
And yes, like that.

Yeah, absolutely.
OK.
So would you say that you you feel kind of, it sounds like you feel quite happy with the level of academic support that your school gave you, but perhaps less so on the pastoral, you know, life skills for uni.
Is that fair to say.

Yeah.

OK, OK.
Did any university come into your sixth form to give talks or do workshops or anything?

I don’t think so, no.

And what about like other people at your school?
So did most people apply for university or they doing different sorts of things?

Uh, I think majority probably did go to uni.
But again, most people stayed in Z, like most people from most went to the University of Z.
OK.
And still living at home, right.
So I think I again, I wouldn't have even considered applying to X and having to move to X umm, if it wasn't X scholars.

OK.
And how about your immediate peer group that your friends from sixth form, where they also sort of staying close to home?

Yeah, they all stayed at home.

OK. Interesting.
Interesting.
Did it feel challenging to do something different to your friends when you decided that you wanted to go to X?

It was quite scary.
Yeah, cause it's if you stay at home and obviously you've got your friendship group already and you don't have to so cook for yourself.
Do your own laundry and stuff.
So coming to UNI was really daunting.
Yeah, but yeah, no, I didn't.
Again, like doing X scholars sounds stupid, but that's what made me want to go away because it just made it sound like more exciting and scary.

Yeah.
Yes, it doesn’t sound stupid at all.
I think that's, yeah, that makes a lot of sense.
And like you say, that's part.
That's one of the reasons why going to Uni's so good.
Because you learn all of those Life skills, even though it feels terrifying at the time.
And you do it, and then you know you've done it once.
So OK.
And how about extracurricular activities whilst you're at school? Did you do many of them, whether they were opportunities too?

I I sort of did all the nerdy clubs I did like debates society.
And things like that at school.

And was that relevant to your university application at all sort of like, did you reference that in your personal statement.
Yeah

it sounds like if you're gonna do an extra curricular, that's quite a useful one for you need to be fair. OK?
Did you have any financial concerns when you were considering going to UNI?

Yes, I did OK.
My mom is disabled, so she's on.
She gets like, benefits because of being disabled.
That was why, like I remember why student finance found it so difficult.
Because it was like trying to work out and stuff, right?
So I was that's another factor, of course, of staying home is that you don't have to pay so much, yeah.
I'm glad that I did.
Now looking back, you just don't know how.
Student finance works.
Yeah.
Once you work at how it works and then how much you have to pay back if you make a certain amount of money like it makes total sense.
But at the start you have no idea?

Yeah.
And was there anywhere that you were able to get support for that in terms of finding out that information?
You know, did your school help?

This is random, but I think I I was like just Googled it online and like those and Martin Lewis clip.
Yeah, but he spoke about how student finance actually works.
So that was quite helpful.

Nice.
OK.
So you kind of just did your own research.

Yeah.
And that actually there was a thing in X scholars when they talked about how student finance actually works.

Yeah.
And so, yeah, is it fair to say that getting more information sort of helped to alleviate some of your concerns because you realize that it isn't, you know that you gotta find thousands of pounds up front kind of thing.

Yeah.

And so moving on to X scholars, you mentioned obviously that you did you say somebody came in to talk about X scholars or you got an email from school, and in terms of sort of how the school marketed X scholars like, were they encouraging you to take part for certain different reasons or was it just kind of like here’s something go have a look.

Just sort of sent us an email being like if you wanna do this do this, OK, they were they were pretty good at giving those those sort of opportunities I think but it was kind of just you just get emails about things and then it's like you have to sort of take the initiative if you want to do.

Yeah.
And what made you sort of want to do that 'cause you said until that point you've been, considering staying around Z.

Well, I just thought it would be interesting and I haven't heard of it.
Was the only like scheme like sort of heard of where you like find out more about UNI and you actually get to do so.
There's an academic element that you actually get to have lessons and also just a taste of what universities like.
So I thought it would just be interesting to try it.
And then yeah, I hadn't.
I had never even really heard of X like X Festival, but accept that I hadn't really considered it.
I just thought it would be interesting to try it.

OK, interesting.
And obviously you touched on this a little bit already, but how like how would you describe your experience of X scholars?

It was really good.
Really, really positive.
I'm so happy I did it cause otherwise again I don't think I would have ended up here.
So I'm really happy that I did it.
I am and I made friends from X school.
That something didn't even compared.
But we still have a group chat.

Ohh that's really nice.

Yeah, and it was all virtual, but I think we were meant to have a like we were meant to come here at the end, but because of COVID yeah, yeah, online.
So we ended up actually not coming to the uni at all like at all.
I was very disappointed at the time because I was so excited for that.
And then I when it got cancelled, I was like, well, I obviously do wanna go to X cause I was X forward to that.

Yeah.
So OK, so it was disappointing, but in a way, it made you realize, yeah, you know that you would like it as a place because did you say at that point you'd already been to an open day here?

Yes

So you've been to campus once. OK. Got it.
OK, so I don't know if you can remember this far back, but which parts of X scholars did you enjoy?

I think they're all interesting like it was all valuable, but I think the they did socials where it was like students who are already here talking to sixth form students.
And obviously it was all still online, so it was all over zoom, but they were really fun and just got to meet new people and ask questions about UNI in a very chill way.
Like it wasn't too formal.
And everyone was really nice.
He did it and you just got to ask sort of the stupid.
Quite not stupid questions, but like the silly questions that you can't ask your teacher, that's like what is living in halls really like?
And yeah, making friends in freshers week and that sort of thing.
Yeah.

OK, so the current student element of it was really valuable OK.
That makes a lot of sense because yeah for your teachers, it's gonna be a long time since they went to university.
So it's totally different as that and they might not have gone to that specific uni as well.
So OK, and are there any parts of X scholars that you didn't enjoy anything?

I think like it was all pretty good.
Umm yeah.

OK, so nothing you would change other than obviously you mentioned ideally that you would get to come to campus.

Yeah.

OK.
And you mentioned that it was obviously doing X scholars was had a massive impact on where you decided to apply and therefore come to UNI.
How about your decision to go to UNI in general that had had you already settled on the fact that you would go to UNI and it was just a case of where?

I was pretty sure I wanted to go to UNI, but again I was thinking of just staying at home.
OK, I'm going to uni in Z.
Umm, it's just yeah, because most of my friends are doing that.
And also because my mom had gone even though my dad hadn’t.

Yeah, OK.
Ah, and so thinking like a a little bit more broadly, is there anything that you think universities can do to support students whilst they're still in secondary school?
So imagine yourself back when you were doing X scholars to support them.
You know, if they're not like thinking about university or anywhere that basically universities can provide that extra bit of support at that stage.

I think schemes like X scholars in general, it's really good, that sort of thing.
Maybe going into schools and just talking to students and.
Not being too formal, I think because I think that can still be quite daunting.

So they're just sort of more, is that so when you say like going into schools, that sort of giving information but so sort of in like a bit more of a casual way?

Yeah. That was my favourite part from scholars being able to talk to current students at the uni, umm, it felt less pressure than a teacher like talking at you.
Yeah, and it felt more inclined to sort of ask questions, I think, yeah.

OK, that's good to know.
Thank you.
So now moving on to your experience of UNI so far, how are you finding it?

Yeah, yeah, really good.

And did you feel when you came to uni that you were ready?
So when you first started, you feel that you were ready, you know?

Yeah, I mean, obviously it's really scary. Umm, no matter how prepared you are. Yes, still a big thing, but it was good.

Yeah.
Great.

That's not very profound, but

No, this doesn't have to be.
It's just your experience.

I think things like just advice that the students who already you said like keep your door open during freshers week.
Just try and talk to people because I think the biggest thing is home sickness.
As you make friends like, since you have a group of people, home sickness sort of like goes away a little bit because you know it's established a group.

OK, that's pretty nice.
So obviously you have mentioned there that X scholars in a way helped you be more prepared because you got advice from current students that you then sort of implemented.
Are there any other ways that X scholars made you feel more prepared, more ready?
You got a bursary through X scholars.
That was really helpful.
And again, you know you said earlier like were you worried about financial things and see that helped definitely.

OK.

But also yeah, it was just the trying to talk to people like, get yourself out there, go to things umm, and even like the academic side of it again, because it is different from sixth form. It is a change, so I think that helped us well and just yeah.

So it helped in that you've had even like a small taster of the academic style of uni, is that right?
So you kind of knew what to expect, even though, as you mentioned, it's still quite a jump, but you felt kind of, you know, what was coming?

Yeah, exactly.
OK.
So about your current university experience as a student.
Are there any challenges or barriers that you face now?

I feel like every student has this, but again, like money, but we obviously second year, so trying to find a House for next year and like random things like that to the financial side of it.
And then also again this is an open, this isn’t at anything in particular, this just general student things like balancing deadlines and stuff.
Umm, but because I I've been working a lot more, so I work in the student union, but I've taken a lot more shifts so then trying to balance out with like still doing uni work and getting everything done on time, that sort of thing.
But that's all very like general there's nothing particularly that's like a massive barrier.

OK, that's good to hear.
That's good to hear.
Is there anything that you think universities in general, but also X specifically could be doing to support students more?

Yeah, I think the only thing is that it's up to like I think the help is there.
But I think for a lot of things it’s going and getting the help you need it.
Umm, because I think people just like get on with things rather than actually ask for help, but I don't think the uni can do much about that as long as it has the systems in place.

Umm, so you don't think there's anything that would encourage students more to use the services any you know, almost like invisible barriers that are making students reluctant to go and get help?

I mean, not particularly, I suppose maybe people to feel embarrassment going and asking questions.
And also it's just easier to get on with things sometimes, but again, I don't think that's the uni’s fault.

Yeah.
OK, cool.
Umm, thank you.
So from school through to now, what do you think were the most important or influential things that helped you to be at university now?

Umm, I would say X scholars was part of it because again, like I don't know then I applied to X and then it was my first choice of UNI and I'm here.
So, umm, X scholars and then definitely my mom.
Support to me, my whole family, but definitely my mum particular.

OK, excellent.
And just just to make sure we're there any other barriers to coming to uni that we haven't mentioned that?

Mainly just the financial stuff, but that was pretty much it.

Yeah.
OK.
Do you have any advice for programs such as X scholars or other activities that universities could be doing to support.
So if you were to give one piece of advice?

This isn't really advice. Also like it couldn't be helped, but again like it would be nice if it was face to face not virtual, but again like that couldn’t be helped.

Yeah, not during COVID, but yeah.

Yeah.

So you mean I guess the thinking about the context now you're saying that in person face to face contact is really, really nice.

Yeah.

OK.
Fantastic.
Anything else that you would like to tell us?

No.

Fantastic.
OK.
Thank you very much for your time.