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Ref: Phillip Morris - Email Reply

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Hi Dawn,

I am writing to you today to ask for assistance or advice on how best to succeed in placement following the feedback email sent to us last night from my mentor Phillip Morris. I have concerns about the perception portrayed within the email as I believe it to be an inaccurate representation of my performance, effort and does not take into consideration advice given to me by other team members or my personal circumstances, status as a disabled student or the recent family emergency that I had to attend to.

There were a lot of negative points made in the email and I would like to take this opportunity to address them and perhaps offer an alternative experience of events to offer a balanced account of this first week back.

I returned to work on Monday and all the lessons that I was to take had been prepared by the other tutors for that day. The people in the department are Phillip Morris, Rob Hegarty, Lucy Greenwood and Chris Short has just joined us. I went into work on Tuesday and all the lesson plans for the lessons I was to take that day were provided the day before as requested, and printed and placed on the tutor’s desk (I have an email from Rob stating that he still had feedback for me for the portion of the lesson that he observed and that he did not see the lesson plan on his desk until Thursday. I did email it to him.

As you and your colleague Paula Beer, Phillip and Lucy are aware, on Tuesday evening I had to give you all notice of my inability to attend school on the Wednesday due to being called away to a family emergency. My sister and her housemate were both in a bad mental state and were threatening to kill themselves due to their challenging personal circumstances. I had to call the police to attend to them before I could make the 40-minute drive to be with them. I looked after them until 3:30am at which point my brother arrived from Burnley and we brought my sister to my house to be watched until we could take her for treatment by the medical services. I left her housemate with her family. When she was settled I then continued to work until 6am when I was exhausted. I completed an evaluation that Phillip asked me for, marked the assessment for class 8A5 and sent notification by email to Philip.

This was entirely disregarded in Phil's email, and he did not ask me how I was yesterday.

I gathered resources regarding algorithms for Lucy for the lesson that she would have to cover and sent them to her. I took the next day off and when not dealing with my family I completed a 217 page for scratch that I had been working on over the Christmas period. I stayed up until 1:30am to complete 6 weeks’ worth of work including, scheme of work, starters, lesson plans, presentations, tasks and assessments. I had help with this from 4 other colleagues from Edge Hill who are all teaching the same stuff. Phillip informed us that the stuff is out of date. I prepared separate differentiated task work for my weaker class 8A5. I was told that we were doing scratch with the whole of year 8 up until 3:30pm yesterday when Lucy informed me that Phillip had requested that Scratch only be taught to 8A5 and that the other year 8 class would be taught Python. I didn’t complain about this and was making plans at home to create the resources needed for Python. I would like to point out that I have only started programming in September 2017 and since that time I have been working hard during the SKE course and in my own time, and in school to work on my Python skills. I am not avoiding this due to it being an area of weakness. I help the students in year 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 Python classes and they thankfully due to my excellent rapport with the students, also help me when I they have knowledge that I don’t yet possess. This promotes a good working relationship and sense of achievement within the students.

I went to school determined to make up for the lost time and to not make a fuss despite the enormous amount of distraction and stress that such an incident can inevitably cause.

During the day yesterday, I covered in the morning for Lucy with her registration class and when she arrived we discussed P5. I told her that I had completed the Scratch pack and she was pleased with it. I printed out a copy of the document for the department to share and as evidence of my planning. Lucy asked me about the marking for the year 8’s and I told her that despite the family emergency that I had managed to mark 8A5’s assessments and that I was working through her year 8 class. I told her that I would work on it through my free period that day. Lucy told me that if I got it done I could add comments to each of the students’ assessments telling them areas to improve upon. I worked through as much as I could in the hour that I had (I am a documented slow reader/writer due to dyspraxia, Phillip is aware of this). I knew that I could not finish the marking and told Lucy that I could not finish it before the lesson and that I would complete another starter instead of presenting the marks. Lucy said that this was fine, and we agreed that I would present the students feedback as a starter task for the students next Thursday. So, in that case I am confused as to why Phillip wrote in the email that I have caused a massive delay?

In the P5 lesson yesterday I had prepared work on OneNote that needed to be shared with the class. The workbook that I had prepared had become corrupted and would not sync therefore I was unable to distribute the work. There was also an issue with the monitoring and display software. This was first noted on Tuesday and reported to Phillip, it was not rectified in the time I was off. This did not matter as I was able to get the whole class onto the scratch website, create an account, identify sprites, the staging area, the controls and every student managed to create a unique scene and animate their sprites. Therefore, despite the technical difficulties the targets for the class were achieved. This was entirely disregarded in Phil's email.

I do everything asked of me and met every target handed to me. I take the register, I monitor time, I use the consequence system, I monitor students work and use the software for this, when it is operational. I plan for assessment and have great relationships with all students and staff that I interact with. I am trying my best to balance disability, personal circumstances, family emergency, university workload and school workload. I am managing everything because I have good support from university colleagues and friends and family, but I am at a loss as to how I can up my game in the face of such a skewed perspective of my efforts and performance. I have also finished my MSc Computing dissertation over the Christmas period and I have one assignment left to do before the 19th January.

Lessons are prepared for and planned for and over the past few months I have had documented positive feedback based on the level of planning and preparation I have completed.

Assessments were completed on time, marking for one class has been delayed with permission from Lucy. The deadline for this would have been met I not had the family emergency.

The scratch project I created was made in conjunction with Rosie, Nikki, Anand, and Alvi - They are all teaching the same thing - so how can it be so bad/outdated? I am happy to consider this; however, I think I will make new resources for Python now. I am happy to use resources provided by the team and I am always happy to receive guidance on how to improve as a teacher. The team has given me tips on more pieces of software to use such as Triptico, Kahoot, and other such programs. I have incorporated everything they ask into my lessons.

Regarding the weekly meeting, we have not had one over the past few weeks in the run up to Christmas in a regular timeslot or on a regular day due to the busy nature of the period.

There was no set time or date for the meetings yesterday otherwise I would have been there. Phillip was busy at the end of the day yesterday and I saw him multiple times throughout the day, on lunch, to borrow equipment etc. and there was never any request made for a meeting.

I appreciate that I am on placement, but I am also a student, and as taught in today’s lecture regarding good feedback; I would like to ask why positive aspects of my practice have not been highlighted and recommendations for improvement are not presented in the feedback about me in the email. I had an official observation on Tuesday and was told that I was about to be awarded a grade 2 for the lesson, planning, timing, presentation, challenge and room control/behaviour management. If there was no evidence of planning as stated in the email surely this would not be the case.

There is no mention of the incident that I had to deal with this week. I do not believe the content in the email to be a true reflection of my performance overall. However, I am keen to improve my skills and practice as I want to do as well as possible. I am keen to work with the team at Montgomery to help me become a great practitioner. I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding this opportunity for learning.

Kind regards,

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