

Case study - interview with Ayotunde

Student Happiness Index 2025-2026

HOWDEN



Interview with Ayotunde



Background

Ayotunde is a Nigerian postgraduate student studying Mental Health Nursing (M.Sc.) at Oxford Brookes University. He’s been living in the UK for about three years, having previously gained a PhD and worked in Nigeria, and hopes to contribute in a meaningful way to mental health services in the UK once he graduates.

Mental health and support services

Unsurprisingly given his degree, Ayo is passionate about supporting mental health. While he describes his course as challenging and at times intense, he is proactive in looking after his own mental health and prioritising happiness – believing that you create your own joy. As a result, he views the demanding sides of his degree as a natural and important part of the learning process, contributing to both his personal and professional growth.

In Ayo’s experience, academic pressure doesn’t necessarily erode student wellbeing when it’s balanced with the right kind of support. He points to the university’s approach to student support as an example – highlighting that support systems at Oxford Brookes are proactive, with staff making

efforts to check in on students and arrange meetings where necessary, particularly if there has been limited recent face-to-face time.

He also works as a student representative, and has seen first-hand how these systems work. He notes that the university support services make frequent referrals to both internal and external services when needed, and that they take student issues very seriously – in fact he believes the university is willing to go to significant lengths to support students. That said, he also says that, despite these efforts, it’s not always possible to fully understand what his peers may be experiencing beneath the surface, and that many feel under a lot of pressure.

The importance of financial discipline

Ayo is self-funding his masters, and he also works part-time. He acknowledges that costs are very high, whether it’s rent, food, transport, energy bills or anything else, but says he takes a highly disciplined approach to his financial management to make sure he can live within his means. He budgets carefully and is careful not to overspend. He’s also reluctant to get into any kind of debt, and only recently started using a credit card.

An important part of his financial wellbeing is his mindset. Ayo stresses the need to avoid comparing himself to others, particularly through social media, as he believes this can lead to dissatisfaction with what you’ve got and always wanting more, which he says can have a negative on mental health as well as leading to you putting yourself under unnecessary financial strain.

Discussions around finances

On the subject of social media, Ayo agrees that digital habits can be an important factor that influence student wellbeing. He believes that social media in particular drives loneliness among students and is essentially a waste of time – saying it “keeps you busy doing nothing”. He feels strongly that people should be careful with their use of social media if they want to prioritise their wellbeing.

However, he views AI as a useful tool within postgraduate study. He uses it to support a range of tasks such as brainstorming and organising his ideas, which help improve both his efficiency and productivity. However, he stresses the importance of maintaining a balance – saying that overdependence on AI has a negative impact on both critical thinking and creativity skills.

Case Study



Future plans

Looking ahead, Ayo’s immediate priority is to successfully complete his M.Sc. programme. After that, he hopes to find employment where he can contribute to mental health services in the UK, while also exploring opportunities in leadership, innovation, and international development.

Overall, he’s found his experience as an international student to be richer than he expected. It has been both demanding and transformative, and above all, worthwhile – despite challenges along the way. He’s optimistic about the future – demonstrating that, for him at least, student happiness and wellbeing is flourishing.



Get in touch

T: +44 (0)333 234 1198

E: studentwellbeing@howdeninsurance.co.uk

howdenbroking.com/studentwellbeing

Howden UK Brokers Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority No. 307663. Registered in England and Wales under company registration number 02831010. Registered Office: One Creechurch Place, London, EC3A 5AF. Calls may be monitored and recorded for quality assurance purposes.

HUBL-CC-EDU-269-0626-CS1