

Season Three, Episode One - Clearing and Coming to Warwick

00:08 Tom

Welcome everybody to the first episode of the new look pathways podcast. In this third season, the team will discuss all things, student experience and engagement, starting today with the discussion on our own experiences of going through clearing, as well as some tips for those who are thinking about going through clearing in this coming year, what students coming to Warwick can expect from us during Welcome Week and a bit more about student life in the Chemistry Department throughout the year.

My name is Tom Ritchie. I'm the Director of Student Experience in the department. And with me today are Adam and Emily who I will let introduce themselves.

00:40 Adam

Hi, my name's Adam. I'm the Student Engagement and Experience Coordinator for Chemistry at Warwick.

My role is about all things community and student support, student comms, events and activities, open days, and those kind of things.

00:54 Emily

Hi, I'm Emily Williams and I'm the current ChemSoc President, and I've just graduated from my BSc in Chemistry with medicinal chemistry.

I'm coming back next year to do a postgrad masters in drug discovery.

01:10 Tom

Fantastic. That's great stuff. We also have a fourth member of this team, Jessica Mann. She's a third year undergraduate student, who is also our new Student Comms Intern. However, she can't join us today as she is in the midst of a summer placement, but you will hear more from her in future episodes.

So let's get straight to it.

We are recording this a few days before a level results are released on the 18th of August, and I guess I really wanted to start by just asking you both:

What was your experience when you got your A-Level results?

So Emily, if you want to go first.

01:42 Emily

So I got my A-Level results in 2019.

I looked on UCAS in the car before I went in to collect my results and I saw that I'd got into Warwick, so I was really happy. It didn't really hit me until I walked into school and I saw my teacher who was like, "do you know?"

And I said, "I do." And I just started crying because I didn't think my A-levels went very well. And, and then I looked at my results and I got exactly what I needed to get into Warwick. And, I was really excited to start University, but obviously I was a bit nervous as well, but, yeah, I really enjoyed my time and I'm coming back to do more. So I really enjoy Warwick.

02:21 Tom

That's great. Adam, how about you?

02:23 Adam

So my experiences, were probably opposite to Emily's. So obviously I was very anxious waiting to get my results. I did my degree at a time when UCAS wasn't online, so everything was done kind of at call up, I didn't find out my results until I actually went in and got them at my sixth form.

So I didn't do as well as I thought, I thought my A-Levels were gonna be great and I didn't, do quite as well as I thought. I'd dropped a grade. So I had to then call the University to find out if I had a place, which I did. So I was really fortunate in that respect that they still accepted me, even though I was, I was down a grade.

I think the overarching memory for me is just the anxiety waiting for the results and then finding my results and then having the anxiety of having to speak to the University to find out if I'd still got place. And I think it was just as well, at that time looking forward and having the anxiety of the unknown.

Moving away from moving away from home, moving into hall residents, moving away from friends and family and going to a University where I didn't know anybody.

So it, it was all very positive, but on reflection, I think it was these kind of waves of anxiety that I was feeling around results day, but it all worked out in the, in the end.

So it was, it was a positive thing, and the anxiety was completely normal. I realise now.

03:56 Tom

Yeah. And I think, you know, if I think about my own experience, it was much closer Adam to yours, I think, than Emily's in that. I mean, I was particularly unfortunate in that my A-Levels were released on my 18th birthday, which made that the least enjoyable birthday so far.

And similar to you, I missed a grade, which meant...I missed it by one mark in the end... which meant I couldn't go to the University that I was originally planning to go to. And similar to you, I went through UCAS and, and clearing at a time when it was all paper based, so you had to literally fill in a form and take it to the university that you thought about going to, whereas I imagine it's much easier now that it's online and there's probably much more support.

Yeah. I think, I think, you know, thinking about how it felt, I'm with you on, on that, those feelings of kind of anxiety and that we put so much pressure on our A-Levels that when you don't get quite what you need, it felt for me at least a bit like a pit of despair, you know the ground feels like it falls away from underneath you a little bit.

I think it's really useful to be able to talk about that and to, to let people know that that's actually quite a normal feeling and, and that a lot of people feel that, but, you know, there are ways, the clearing process is such that you can still go and do what you want to do and that there will be options out there for you.

Whether you want to study chemistry or, or whatever, you can still go and do that. So I think it's really useful to kind of acknowledge the feelings that come with the A-Level results, because it can be complete elation as Emily mentioned,

or it could be that kind of anxiety that we've kind of touched on.

I guess it's probably at this point useful to say for, for students who are wanting to come and study Chemistry at Warwick, but maybe miss their grades, Chemistry courses are going to be in the University's clearing process this year.

The University clearing hotline will open on the 18th of August. So yeah, the Thursday that A- Level results released about half eight in the morning.

So you'll be able to call up and have a chat with someone from admissions on what your options are. If you do miss your grades, I would recommend doing that.

So I wanted to talk a bit more about what it's like to come to Warwick and what students can expect in Chemistry in Welcome Week, both from a social side and an academic side.

So Adam, I wonder, you know, Could you talk a bit about what, what we've got planned for students during Welcome Week this year?

06:18 Adam

Yeah, sure. So Welcome Week this year, we've got quite a full week planned within the department.

Within the week we're separated out between academic and optional core sessions.

So there are some, there are some core sessions that we expect everybody to attend.

So we have a welcome talk where you get to meet key members of the department and you get to learn what's expected of you.

That will be on the Tuesday of welcome week and so it really kind of sets out the kind of academic expectations of you. We've got some other core activities, such as the Library Induction, which will cover the resources that are available to you.

We've got a session with ChemSoc mentors where you'll get together in your mentor groups. And it'll be an opportunity to meet your mentor, ask questions, and those kind of things.

And also we're holding a session called the chemistry MolModJam, where you come along and you collect a welcome kit.

And within that kit, you get a molecular kit as well. So you'll have the opportunity to go off into rooms in chemistry and play with your molecular kit. It's the opportunity for you to work out how they, how they work.

You'll be able to build molecules and they're really good for helping visualise what molecules look like. So they're really handy tool for the duration of your studies, really.

So outside of those core activities, which will automatically be populated into your Welcome Week timetable we will have a number of optional sessions as well.

And although you don't have to attend these, we would recommend that you do come along to really get the most out of, out of your induction.

So some of these sessions include walk and talks, drop in sessions, and we have a social planned as well for the Thursday evening.

So lots of opportunities for you to come along and informally meet staff members and meet each other. You can ask questions, if there's anything you're unsure of.

There's lots of opportunities throughout the week for you to come and just clarify and ask those questions. So, if there is something you weren't worried about, just come and find us;

there's gonna be so many opportunities during that, that first week for you to come and have a chat with us.

There's so much going on and that's just within the Chemistry Department. And outside of that, I know Emily will talk about ChemSoc activities, and the University will also be hosting a massive range of sessions as well. So an absolute fun week to look forward to!

09:03 Tom

Emily, yeah. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about, about ChemSoc as well, what you've got planned and also if, if you're happy to kind of reflect a bit on Introductory Labs, because I know that Labs are something that people could be quite nervous of before they start.

09:18 Emily

So when I was a fresher, so in 2019 we had an Introductory Lab session.

What we did in welcome week is we walked around in a group of people and we took pictures of different bits of equipment, just to understand where they all were in the lab and to get to know all the lab demonstrators. And it was a really useful session. So I went to all the optional department sessions in Welcome Week when I started and I thought they were really helpful and it was a really nice way to meet other people and go to other events within the week. ChemSoc has their own calendar for Welcome Week.

So we're having a meet and greet on the Monday lunchtime.

So if you just come along, you can meet the members of the ChemSoc team, and you'll be seeing us quite a lot around campus and in the Chemistry Department. We're also having pizza, so everyone would want to come. The other kind of big event we have is our barbecue, which is on the Wednesday evening, you can just come along, have some food and meet some new people.

It's just a great opportunity to try and meet more people from your course and also come and ask questions to us. Um, ChemSoc have got a member of the Exec - which is our committee - on campus each day.

So if you have any questions, you can just send us an email or Teams us, and you can come and meet us and we'll be around the department or in the Library or something just about if you want to come and ask any questions, if you have any worries and fears and you can also meet your mentors at the meeting group with us.

So ChemSoc have a mentor scheme where all first year students will get a student from a higher year to help them. And if they have any questions, whether they're academic, social or just general queries and worries, you can come and ask us and we'll put you in the right place.

11:07 Tom

That's great. Yeah. And, and I guess the question for me is where could students find out about that? Like, what's your, what's your social media presence? What should they search for?

11:15 Emily

So I think our best place to look is our Instagram. So @WarwickChemSoc, and we're also on Facebook, we are starting to branch out into TikTok, but we're not quite there yet. And we have a website with all the other contact details on if you are looking for us, which is just Warwick ChemSoc.

So, it's really great if you come along and join us and we've got some opportunities to join the committee and have a say in organising events for other chemists.

11:46 Tom

Yeah. That's really great. I think to, to learn about what's what we're doing in Welcome Week I'd love to, I'd love to talk a little bit more about what we're planning for the, for the next year as well. So the, the, the current plan is a 'We are Chemistry' project where we are working with students to try and create as many different types of events as we can, under four different themes to just really get students to feel like they're part of the Chemistry Department and, and that there's something there for them.

So, the four themes that we're planning are:

Get Active,

Learn More, which is going to be kind of thinking about cultural events,

Feel Good, which is going to be around wellbeing and other kind of support events like that and check-ins,

Have Fun, which is a really crucial one that, that focuses on kind of sober socials.

So, you know, we trust that Chem Soc can do the going out stuff in the evenings, but this is for perhaps for people who don't want to do that and want to just come and spend time with people in the department, chatting and doing different things.

We've planned term one, which I think is really exciting, and so far we've got things that range from getting therapy dogs into the department to spend some time with students. I've run some of those before and I don't know if you two have, but they're the most fun events, where you just get to sit and stroke dogs for three or four hours. It's fantastic. And I've never seen a sad person at one of those.

We've got some yoga and mindfulness sessions that we're planning in the department, trips to Birmingham Christmas market, Weekly check-ins with pumpkin carving and crafting and playing sessions in there where you can come and check in with Adam and I and see what we've got planned for that week and come along.

An E-Sports night where we are gonna hire out the E-Sports suite on the campus, so we can host some games and things like that. A Thursday running club for those people that want to, to jog or to run. And Friday football that's just been started in the department as well, where they there's pitches hired out every Friday for people to go and play.

And a cycling charity challenge that Adam and I were talking about this morning, where we are planning to get some Watt bikes outside the department and get some students and staff to ride on them for a lot of hours. I'm not sure I'll be very much a part of it. I'm happy to supervise, but not sure I'll be in the saddle very much.

Yeah, there's, there's lots more to come in term one, alongside the stuff I've mentioned and we've got our Term Two plan as well, that we are really excited to share with you.

But I guess my question is Adam, you know, Of the events that we are planning, which one are you most excited for?

14:23 Adam

So I feel like I should say, the running club or cycling, but I've gotta be honest. I'm looking forward to anything that really involves food and these therapy dogs, because let's face it, who doesn't really want to sit and pet an animal.

I know that dogs are not for everybody, but I think like the reasoning behind it is kind of the amount of positivity that people get from actually having these therapy dogs come in. And I think that, I think even using the word therapy is probably a bit misleading. It's just about feeling good. It's about kind of escaping it's about having that kind of like emotional connection.

So I'm looking forward to that, I think it'd be really great to be able to have that session within the department. And, I know we're holding it or plan to hold it quite near the beginning of term. So it might be a really good time after a couple of weeks on campus to kind of come relax, reflect, and kind of like, just really take stock of kind of how far you've come in the first two or three weeks. So, I'd say that's probably the session I'm most looking forward too.

15:33 Tom

I think for me, you know, for basically the same reason as Adam has mentioned, it's probably gonna be the weekly checkins on a Wednesday that we're planning because there's always gonna be food and I'm never one to turn down some free food at any point.

Yeah I'm most excited to have those weekly check-ins with people to kind of just hear how things are going. We all know that university...it's different, you know, it's challenging. And we all feel that when we start, because it's a new thing and change can be difficult some times.

I think is what it's also worth talking about what ChemSoc have got planned for the year as well Emily.

I know that you've, you've got some really interesting stuff planned. So, do you mind talking about that a little bit?

16:15 Emily

Yeah. So, ChemSoc so have our big annual Chemball, which is where we invite students and academics to come along and have one good night. There's a three course meal. So there's food's there for everyone.

Tom16:28

More food!

16:28 Emily

Lot of food! We also host a weekly event called Chem cafe, which we have some exciting speakers and opportunity to students and to also check in.

So we've got some wellbeing events and some social events planned in, we also have a weekly social.

Some of them are going out. Some of them are quizzes. Some of them are meeting people, have a look on our social media where we share it all.

16:53 Tom

Yeah. I think it's really useful. I know when I started university, you kind of get there, you get through welcome week, You start, you have your first classes and then you go... so what do I do now then?

And I think knowing that there's things on, you know, ChemCafe will be on a Monday night, you know, we are thinking about having these check-in events on Wednesday afternoons, and we are looking at trying to have things planned for different days so there should always be something, if you want to come and talk to someone or even just get free food.

Great. So what event Emily are you most excited for that ChemSoc planning?

17:30 Emily

Probably the ChemBall, just because it's such a special night and it's something completely different to just our average weekly social or ChemCafe.

17:38 Tom

Yeah. Great, great.

So I guess the, one of the last things really for me to talk about is, the department this year are working really hard to increase representation in the department. So STEM and science subjects are particularly underrepresented in terms of BAME students, LGBTQ+ plus students, students with disabilities and women students generally.

So the history of people from those minority characteristics are not particularly present within science subjects and chemistry. So some of the work that, that the EDI committee - the Equality Diversity and Inclusivity department are doing...this coming year is creating four staff and student networks based around BAME students, LGBTQ+, students with disabilities and, and women students to join.

The purpose of these is that there'll be a space where you'll be able to meet with students and staff who share that aspect of your identity. So you will have kind support in the department beyond the traditional personal tutors and things like that. And also space where each of those networks will have some money to plan their own events as well around what they want to see in Chemistry?

How can we, how can we change Chemistry to make it kind of a more equal place for everyone to access? I think is something that we're, we're really excited to see how it works. The last thing I guess from me, we've mentioned a few times about the social media channels that we will have.

So we currently have Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, uh, and TikTok is on the way for the department. If you want to find any of those and search 'Warwick Chemistry' and follow it and you'll start to get more updates on these things. And it is the same with ChemSoc, I believe you go on and search for 'Warwick Chem Soc' on those platforms as well, and it will bring it up so you can join and follow and learn more about what's going on.

So, I wanted to end this first podcast really by asking what one piece of advice do you wish you'd been given when you joined university?

19:54 Adam

Yeah. So I thought long and hard about this, cause I think the best, the best advice comes from reflecting back on my experience and what I would say is seize the opportunity and immerse yourself in every opportunity that's given to you.

So when you arrive here, just go along to the societies. You might not realize you have a passion for something. You don't know who you're going to meet, so go along to all these taster sessions. They're probably not gonna cost you anything or very little, so try as many things as you can. Some of it'll stick. And some of it you'll think, oh, I wish I hadn't have bothered, but you never know what you're going to like, you never know who you're going to meet.

So really I'd just say seize every opportunity that's given to you, because, nothing ventured, nothing gained and you never know who you might meet along the way.

20:45 Tom

Absolutely. Yeah. Emily, how about you?

20:48 Emily

Well, Adam's just stolen my piece to advice, so my piece of advice is just put yourself out there. Try and meet as many people as you can get involved with all the societies. Warwick has the most societies as of any university.

21:01 Tom

Wow.

21:01 Emily

So there's loads of things. So anything you want, basically go and have a look on the SU website and get some information on all the societies, and just come along and meet people and put yourself out there and don't worry about it, even though it can be really quite scary to move to university.

21:21 Tom

Yeah. I think that's a really good, a really good way of acknowledging that it is difficult. And I think from the piece of advice that I would wish I had been given is, you know, we talk a lot at universities about something called Imposter Syndrome. So you may not have heard about this much before, but it's this idea that you go, "I shouldn't really be here", like "I'm not good enough to be here" or "I'm not intelligent enough" or whatever it is we, we tell ourselves.

And I think for me, my advice would be to know that everyone feels lost to start with. Everyone feels like an imposter because of course you do. You're new, everyone struggles, whether it's with coursework or maybe meeting people.

Everyone has an element or a struggle that comes with that.

But as Adam and Emily have said, like, if you get involved, you generally find your group, and usually in the most unusual places as well.

I think what I wish I'd known is that universities and in particular now Chemistry have

so many opportunities where you can come and talk to us, whether it's with your personal tutors or your mentors, or even just, if you see Adam, Emily, Jess, or myself, just walking around, just ask us, just say, can I have two minutes for a cup of tea or a cup of coffee or whatever, and just share your worries, you know, share what you're worried about and share what you're thinking, because you're not alone.

There's always people that have, have been through it and, and want to help you settle in, and our inboxes are always open. You know, if you don't see us, just send us an email and we'll always come back to you within a day or two and usually quicker.

Great. So thank you so much, Adam and Emily. Um, I realise this is the first time that we've done this and yeah, it's gone okay, I think it's gone, okay.
So hopefully we'll, you know, we'll get some feedback from people.

I also want to thank you too for listening to this first podcast of the new season.

We hope that you'll join us for the next podcast and we'll post that a month today on September the 15th. So please follow us on social media and do look out for the next one.

Thanks so much.

23:23 Emily

Bye!

23:24 Adam

Good luck!

Social Media

Chemistry Department:

[Warwick Chemistry \(@warwickchem\) / Twitter](#)

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<http://www.warwickchemsoc.co.uk/>

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