

Tête-à-tête #12



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1. What does a typical day in office look like for you?

Answer: My 'typical day' at work depends on the time of the year.

You would mostly find me answering emails and attending phone calls from agents, students, and counsellors; and co-ordinating the India-based recruitment activities for the University.

Planning ahead is always on my agenda. Be it for future intakes, events, travel arrangements, or making budgets. Maintaining stringent timelines is at the core of my day to day activities.

2. Your job entails a lot of travel and juggling different goals. What do you do to cope with all the challenges?

Answer: I face my challenges head-on as it is integral to my role.

I try to pace myself and avoid getting stressed (easier said than done). I also try my best to plan efficiently to avoid unnecessary situations. For example, I always reach ahead of time for my flights and events and spare myself the hassle of getting stressed. This allows me some time to relax and acclimatize to the task at hand.

3. What is your biggest challenge while dealing with the Indian student?

Answer: There are many challenges but if I were to name one, it would be managing the expectations and providing realistic information to the Indian applicants and their parents.

The Indian students and parents seek detailed information about every aspect of their time at the University. The queries may range from the activities at university and city, to sports facilities, lectures, coursework, exams and so on. I try and advise them based on my personal experiences, feedback from other students, colleagues and also the training provided to me. But perceptions always vary and this often worries me. For

Tête-à-tête #12

instance, I recently received a query on the comfort of mattresses in the halls of residences at the University. I am not sure how I should address that.

4. What is the best part about your job?

Answer: The opportunity to meet so many people who come from such varied walks of life, is the best part about my job. Every conversation is unique and interesting in its own distinct way. And they make for good anecdotes later.

To share one such event in 2014, when a PGT entrant called me frantically to seek advice about her accommodation in London. I was not sure how to answer her as the University of Exeter is not in London but in Exeter. To make matters worse, the course for which she had paid the deposit for, is taught in our Penryn campus near Falmouth in Cornwall. I explained the details of the location, the campus, sent her blogs, articles and weblinks about Falmouth; and finally convinced her parents and her to stick to the decision of studying at the University of Exeter.

The key takeaway from this story is that she has graduated with a distinction from our University and today supports us with recruitment activities in India and answers queries about the location to prospective students.

5. What are the aspects of your job that you like less?

Answer: Though I enjoy traveling, it is the erratic time schedule that bothers me the most. When the days are very long, and my sleep pattern and food timings change, they make me a bit cranky and irritable.

6. What do you consider your greatest achievement? You can quote from outside your work too.

Answer: I haven't disappointed any student so far, at least as far I know. It feels amazing when students thank you for the effort you put in for them and send notes of appreciation from the University acknowledging your effort.

7. Highlight one thing about your university that you cherish the most.

Answer: The gorgeous campus. It is beyond beautiful, picturesque and full of life.

8. What is/are the skills absolutely necessary for your job?

Answer: Empathy is the most essential quality that every university representative must have. Being empathetic helps in understanding the deeper concerns raised by parents and students. More so for parents, who send their child to a different part of the world and have never known what it feels like to be parted from their children for such long durations.

Tête-à-tête #12

9. What is the one skill you would most want to acquire?

Answer: I have a tendency to summarise everything in a few words, unless there are statistics involved. I would certainly want to learn to write my reports more eloquently.

10. What are your hobbies?

Answer: As a foodie, I love travelling and visiting new restaurants. I make sure I try the Biryani at every restaurant and when I travel I live on Thai food. Apart from food, I also love watching sitcoms. Currently, I am following 'The Gifted', 'This Is Us', 'The Good Doctor', 'The Crown', 'Victoria', 'War and Peace', 'The Borgias' and 'The Medici'. However, 'Game of Thrones' always tops my list of favorites.

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