

# Theo Papadopoulos

Performing & Production Arts Level 3 Extended Diploma



Theo first visited SRC during an open day at Armagh campus, where he viewed the campus facilities and spoke to staff about the various courses on offer. During a tour of the campus, Theo was shown the performing arts studio and was intrigued to find out more about the performing arts course. As Theo has additional learning needs, he, alongside his mum, also spoke to the Learning Support team who were on hand to offer advice and guidance. Learning Support Coordinator Lorraine Abbott, invited Theo to visit the College on a few additional occasions before he officially started his course. This allowed Theo to get to know the campus, speak to lecturers and discuss the support plan the Learning Support staff were putting in place to allow Theo to undertake his programme.

Theo says: *“Lorraine took me round each room and the other places on campus I could go if I began to feel stressed. I was shown what resources were available to me, how to use them and where I could find them. Lorraine also told me that I could come to the Learning Support office at any time if I needed to get advice or needed any additional equipment. I was provided with information on how to access the free, anonymous*

*counselling service offered to all SRC students should I need it. Seeing all the resources available and having a plan of the significant support I would be getting made my decision; I choose to apply to SRC instead of returning to secondary school. What is offered at College to those with additional learning needs is really significant and was a deciding factor for me for my future studies”.*

Theo avails of a range of services to support his learning. He is provided mentoring support, which assists him with planning and organising his workload and breaking projects into smaller more manageable tasks to ensure that deadlines are met. Theo also has access to a SmartPen, which allows him to record lessons and listen back at a time that suits him best.

Theo says: *“The SmartPen really is amazing. At school I would be reliant on asking other pupils for their notes to be able to keep up in class. Everyone else was able to listen and take notes much faster than me because I need more time to listen, process the information and take notes. Using*

*the SmartPen means I have a tool that allows me to have access to theory classes in a way that suits me and means I am not falling behind or having to rely on anyone else”.*

Theo had never been assigned a Mentor before and he admits he was unsure about how this would work in practice.

Theo says: *“Mentoring has been really beneficial and allows me to take a step back and prepare myself instead of rushing into things. It has really helped my planning and organising skills and has also improved my productivity by giving me strategies to help remain calm and not get as overwhelmed as I previously have done. This has had an overall positive effect on my experience at the College and my overall health.”*

When Theo heard about The Sensory Hub on campus, he admits he was surprised that the College had such an amazing resource for students with additional needs. The Sensory Hub located on the Armagh campus is an easy to use, immersive space for students who may be suffering from sensory overload or anxiety. It is a personal space of sound and vision, which in a few short minutes can help a student self-regulate and return to the classroom. Theo admits he was very impressed by the level of personalisation in the Sensory Hub and while he has not had to use it, knowing that he has access to it if he needs it, is reassuring and really helps calm his nerves.

Speaking about his overall experience to date at the College, Theo says:

*“I love my course and my mentor helps me work through assignments to ensure I am making progress. It’s been a blast”!*