

# Case Study: Fiona Reid

## Background

Theorise began working with Fiona during their undergraduate degree at Queen Margaret University whereby they established an exceptionally positive working relationship during a tumultuous period during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time the way support was delivered had to be adjusted from in-person to fully online support which brought about many challenges that Fiona like many students took in their stride and dealt with admirably.

Fiona's journey with Theorise started at this point and has only developed since then to being supported by us at post-graduate level as well as joining our support team. This is Fiona's experience in their own words.

## Fiona's story

"When I first became aware of Theorise I started out as a student who was seeking support due to being neurodivergent and struggling with university classes through the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time I was in a difficult period of university work, where I had essays that had been extended twice or three times, and it felt like I would never pass the year as the work kept building on. I was at the point where I was considering leaving university altogether, because I was so overwhelmed with all the work I had to do. Working with my Study Skills Tutor and Mental Health Mentor was a life saver, I was able to work on my time management skills, learned how to proofread my own work and managed to pass the year with much better grades than I anticipated.

As I came into 4<sup>th</sup> year, I wound up working for an initiative called ELTI tutoring high school students throughout East Lothian and Midlothian, which was organised with Queen Margaret University in partnership with Theorise. The program particularly focusses on helping high school pupils who wouldn't be able to access tutoring due to their diverse backgrounds, and for the first time in my life, I felt like I had found my calling in a part-time role!

I had always been passionate about working with students, taking part in voluntary roles such as the PALS (peer assisted learning) program at Queen Margaret University, but working with ELTI really allowed my joy for helping students come to the foreground. It was around this time I started to wonder what kind of career I could see myself in once I graduated. I felt a strong pull to want to help students

like me, who had struggled in Higher or Further Education due to learning difficulties, or struggles with ADHD, autism and more. However, I worried that I would never be able to afford the training needed to get a job in that field, as I was still a young academic. I spoke to my Study Skills Tutor and asked them about their experience taking on the role, and decided to contact Dany, who is the director of [Theorise](#), anyway. I figured there was no harm in asking, but I would never know if I didn't at least enquire!

Dany emailed me back and we scheduled a phone call, in which we discussed my options, and surprisingly (to me) he was incredibly receptive to my goals. I entirely expected to be turned away, or to be told to come back when I had more formal training, but instead Dany listened to me, and offered me a deal. [Theorise](#) offered to cover the training course required for me to become a Study Skills tutor, and in return I could work for [Theorise](#), and slowly pay back the cost of the course in hours worked. I still remember when I got off the phone with him, and I immediately called my parents and my partner to tell them how excited I was!

This was an opportunity I would have never been able to take on without the support of Dany and [Theorise](#). Over the summer I went on to do a Study Skills for Students with Dyslexia Course with Dyslexia Action, and once I passed that, I was officially signed on as a tutor. I started off a year ago with a few students and loved every part of it. It feels incredibly rewarding to help students to achieve their full potential, and to make the most of their college or university experience. I have since gone on to write a Master by Research in Psychology specialising in neurodiversity and queerness and hope to continue to keep my training up to date to be the best tutor I can be.

Throughout my Masters degree I was both working as a Study Skills Tutor, as well as still receiving support from my own Tutor and Mental Health Mentor, and I believe that being on both ends has really given me a unique perspective on the benefits of Study Skills and Mental Health Mentoring. Often students just need a guiding hand to help them through, and I am excited to be able to share my knowledge with them. I have been working hard to maintain a person-centred approach with each of my students, and I believe that working at [Theorise](#) has allowed me to develop that in a whole new way due to the opportunities they have provided me with. I am truly grateful that Dany took a chance on me and provided me with the opportunity to work with all my students. The job has been great for me as it caters well to my neurodivergent brain, and it feels like a role I could see myself in for many years to come. It feels like I am making a real difference, and no two workdays are ever the same, which I love! I

learn something new from each student I work with, and I feel honoured to be even a small part of their college and university experience.”

### Conclusion

The journey of **Theorise** and our collaboration with Fiona, and their own personal and professional growth exemplify a remarkable narrative of determination, adaptability, and the power of student support. The story began during a challenging period marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, as **Theorise** transformed its support delivery to assist students like Fiona in navigating the academic world. Fiona's personal testimony reflects a pivotal transformation, where they went from a student grappling with neurodiversity-related challenges to becoming an integral part of **Theorise** support team.

Fiona's journey is a testament to the positive impact of support systems in higher education. Their determination, nurtured by a Study Skills Tutor and a Mental Health Mentor, enabled them to overcome academic obstacles and achieve success that had once been deemed unattainable. Furthermore, their experience with ELTI, a tutoring initiative, ignited a passion for helping others, ultimately guiding Fiona towards a fulfilling career path. The pivotal moment in Fiona's story was their proactive decision to reach out to Dany, the director of **Theorise**. The offer extended to Fiona by **Theorise** to cover the required training in exchange for a positive contribution to the organisation not only changed the trajectory of their career but also opened doors to Fiona's future aspirations.

This opportunity not only highlights **Theorise** commitment to fostering talent but also Fiona's ambition and the mutual trust that formed the foundation of this collaboration. Fiona's dedication to their role as a Study Skills Tutor while in pursuit of a Master's degree specializing in neurodiversity are testaments to their commitment to helping students unlock their potential. The dual perspective Fiona has had, as both a support provider and a recipient, equips them with unique insights into the significance of Study Skills and Mental Health Mentoring. Fiona's approach, grounded in empathy and a person-centered philosophy, is a reflection of **Theorise** core values.

In conclusion, Fiona's story illustrates the transformative journey from a struggling student to a dedicated member of our support team, made possible by **Theorise** unwavering support and Fiona's unwavering determination. It serves as an inspiring example of how mentorship, adaptability, and a shared commitment to personal growth can lead to fulfilling careers and make a meaningful difference in the lives of students. Fiona's narrative reflects the essence of **Theorise** mission and the positive impact it can have on the educational journey of individuals, regardless of the challenges they face.