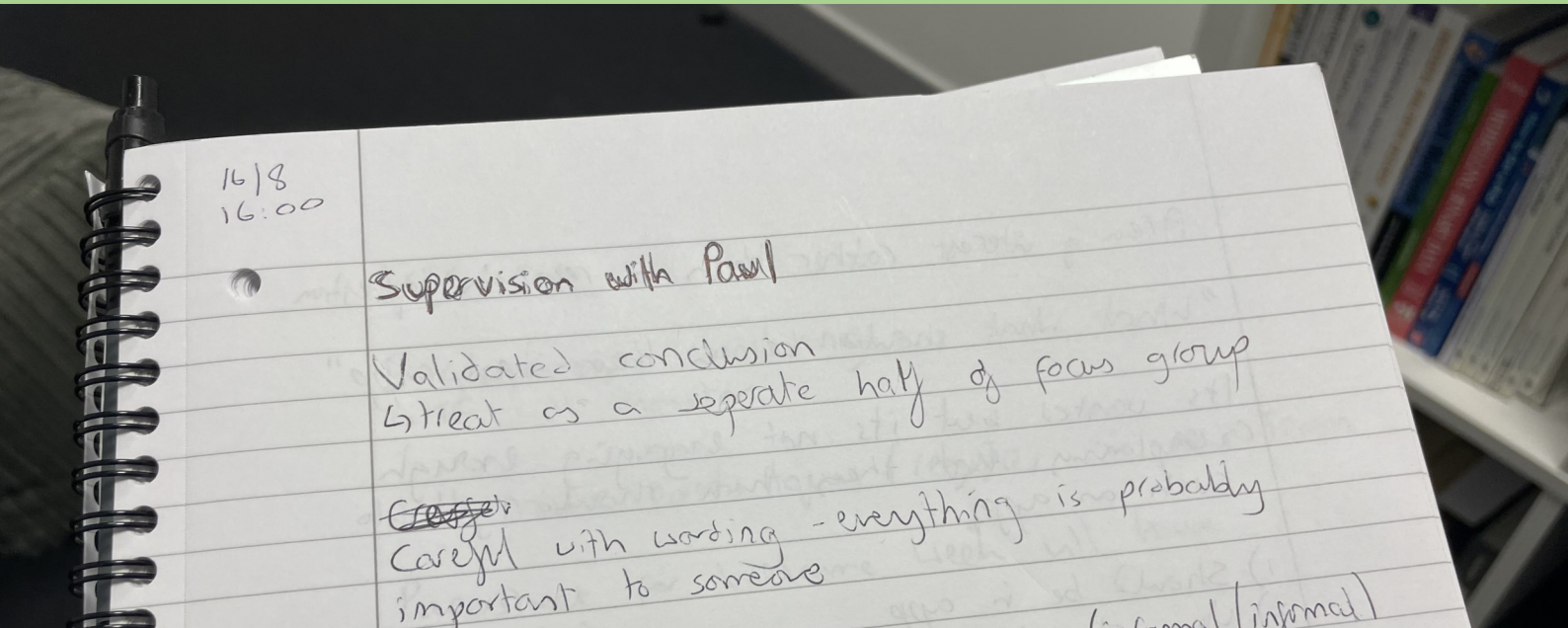




THE TAP

Technology, Anxiety, Pain

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Issue 24



SUPERVISION

It can be a isolating experience being a PhD student. My research is on such a specific area which most other people only have general knowledge about. I am continually buried deep in my data and analysis, becoming consumed by the details. Although this can be extremely rewarding when you are making progress, it can be very lonely when things become tough.

During August I found myself so deep into my data that I had lost sight of the bigger picture. I was looking at mountains of information and struggling to hone in on what I was trying to say. After spending many days trying to find my way out myself I reached out to my supervisor for their advice.

I had such a productive meeting with them, discussing the areas where I was feeling lost and finding a way forward. My supervisor and I have a fairly unstructured approach to supervision meetings - we do not have a set schedule of when we meet, it is more that I organise a meeting when I need their support. This has worked really well for me as I find the idea of weekly meetings to discuss minute progress overwhelming; I work best when given time to work on my research and then discuss with my supervisor when I feel ready to.

Every PhD student's relationship with their supervisor is different but I am so happy to work with someone who understands and supports my way of working.

WRITING, WRITING, AND MORE WRITING

August has been filled with writing, writing and more writing!

I have been focused on writing up my focus group study. The first few parts of the chapter are always the easiest as this is where I write about what I've done and justify why I have done it that way. I always enjoy writing this part as I feel confident explaining what I've done.

The results and discussion sections are always harder. For this study I had two separate research questions so I focused on one at a time. For the first question, I spent a lot of time reading and re-reading my transcripts, making notes, and highlighting quotes that I wanted to use. This really helped me to establish a structure for these sections. The process of selecting the quotes for the results was relatively easy, and to my surprise the discussion section came together really nicely.

I actually found writing the discussion section really enjoyable - this is the most happy and comfortable I have felt in any of my writing so far. This has made me really excited to now move on to answering my second research question, repeating the same process but with a different focus.

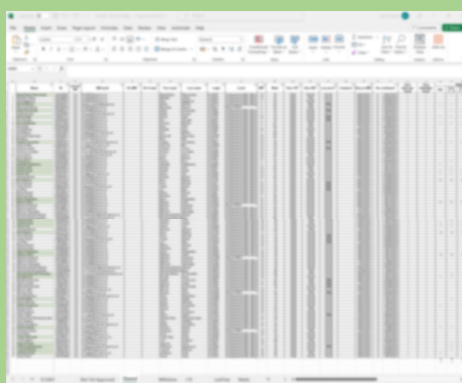
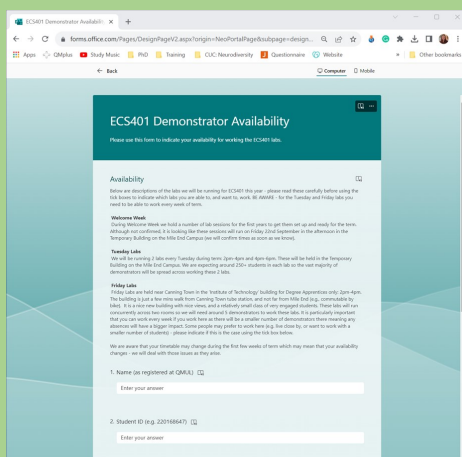


ECS401 PREPERATION

Throughout August preparation has begun for ECS401, the huge first year programming module that I work on.

Like last year, I am responsible for the recruitment and management of demonstrators - these are 2nd and 3rd year students who are employed by the university to work during lab session to support the students taking the module. As there will be 650+ students we will need 65+ demonstrators. The recruitment process is a massive task but I am enjoying getting stuck into it.

There are also a number of new members of staff who will be working on this module so I have spent some time getting to know them and telling them about how the module is organised.



DOUBLE CODING

As part of my thematic analysis from the interviews I conducted with people who tested my app, 'Here', I have to do some double coding. This is where another researcher reviews a section of the transcripts and applies a selection of defined codes from the coding framework to the text. This will then be compared to my own application of the codes to give a numerical measure of how similar our coding has been.

This was done to assess the rigor and transparency of the coding framework and its application to the data, helping to ensure a consistency in coding decisions throughout the qualitative analysis phase.

A recent QMUL graduate, Jane, has kindly offered to be my second coder. We have started the process of doing this and will meet in mid-September to discuss the results of our double coding.

POMODORO TECHNIQUE

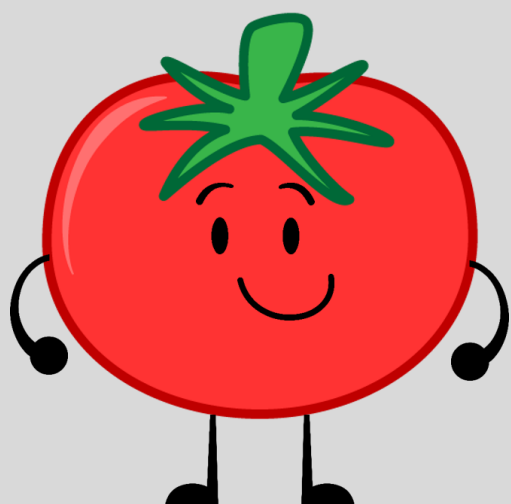
This month I have discovered my love for 'The Pomodoro Technique'. This is a time management method based on 25 minute stretches of focused work broken by five-minute breaks. Longer breaks, of 15 minutes, are taken after four consecutive work intervals. Each work interval is called a pomodoro, the Italian word for tomato.

I have heard a lot of about this technique in the past when I have attended various training courses but have never got on with it - I've never found it helpful.

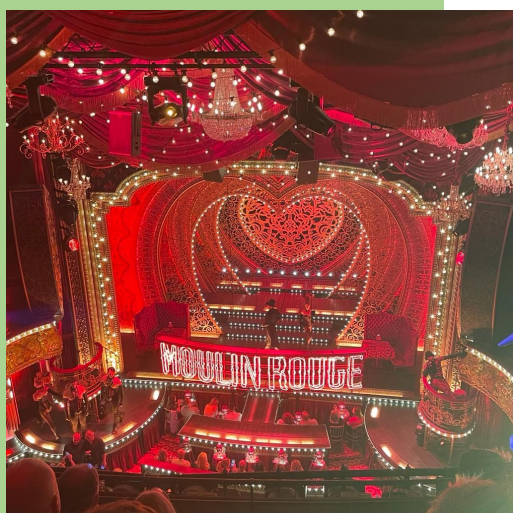
However, when it came time for me to go through 3 hours of focus group transcripts and edit them for consistency, I felt overwhelmed by the size of the task and decided to give it another go.

It has been a **game changer!**

I have been so productive since I started using the technique, getting through really big chunks of work without really realising. It has also helped me to get going with tasks because I know that in 25 minutes I will get a quick break which doesn't feel like long at all. I am absolutely loving using The Pomodoro Technique and would recommend to anyone to go back and try things that maybe didn't work or feel right the first time - sometimes it is all about timing!



DOING WHAT I LOVE



We had a very busy weekend in the middle of August, having trips on the Saturday and Sunday. The Saturday involved going to see 'La Bamba' at a local theatre, a new musical inspired by the life and songs of Ritchie Valens. Among the amazing cast were Siva from The Wanted and Pasha Kovalev from Strictly Come Dancing. It was a really great show filled with some really catchy music.

The Sunday involved going to The Silverstone Interactive Museum. We originally had a gift voucher to visit the museum in 2019, but the museum's building delays and Covid meant it got pushed back. I think this is the longest I've ever had to wait to use a voucher! It was an interesting museum documenting Silverstone's history, from an airfield to a world famous race track. We even got to see some F1 cars!

At the end of the month we took a trip to see Moulin Rouge again in London. We first saw this back in January and I absolutely feel in love with it. The current actor playing the male lead role is Jamie Muscato, a musical theatre star who I have followed for a number of years and seen in various shows. When we went in January he wasn't there, but the understudy was amazing. However, I really wanted to see Jamie play the role so we decided to go again. My Mum, sister and I went for a girls trip and I was over the moon when we walked in and his name was on the cast board. He was worth the wait! His voice is perfect for this role - he can go from soft and soothing to powerful and epic with no effort. The whole show was just as phenomenal as the first time but was made even better by seeing Jamie perform as well as knowing the songs so I could sing along in my head.