

Q&A panel

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KAREN FOLEY: Hi, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live. Well it's the first of October today. Anyway, I'm Karen Foley, and I'm going to be sitting here going through a fantastic programme that we've lined up for you today. We have a Q&A panel. We have life changing learning. We're going to find out what the online library's about. We're going to be talking about risks, volcanoes, the reading experience database, our favourite philosophy cafe, ethics of political morality, career service, time management skills, up scaling in maths, more philosophy cafes, the apron programme, and concluding with a live science demonstration, which I'm really looking forward to.

So it's jam packed programme. Hope to see some people who come yesterday. And if you are new, welcome. This is the Student Hub Live. So let me explain how it all works. There are two ways that you can engage with this event. You can just watch the screen and you'll see all of this lovely, fabulous studio here, or you can watch and engage. So that's the live and interactive button. You can just pop back to the website if you want to do that. And what's different about that, is you can use our interactive tools, like widgets.

And you can also see the chats and participate in that, and that's the way that we get questions into the studio. As well as our email, which is studenthub@open.ac.uk. And we have a hashtag which is #studenthublive15. So we'd love to hear from you, and we're going to explain how all of that works. So without further ado, I'm going to go to HJ and Helen on a social media desk. Hello.

HJ: Hello.

HELEN: Morning,

HJ: Yeah, morning. It's great to be here again. We had a fantastic day yesterday.

HELEN: We did.

HJ: There's so many good sessions, and I think one of the things that we talk about really that we really love is just how supportive everyone is being, because there's loads of new students as well, isn't there?

HELEN: Yes, that's right. Yeah.

HJ: Yeah, we've definitely enjoyed that. And we've loved seeing all the stuff that you guys have sent in as well.

[BELL DINGING]

HJ: Oop, there you go. Now that tells us that you have sent-- indeed sent something in. Oh, yes, we've got a new gizmo for the--

KAREN FOLEY: What's that, honey? For the mailbox?

HJ: Yeah, for the inbox. Unfortunately we get a bit of spam in our inbox, so we decided to get this new spam filter. I'm extremely pleased actually. We'll see if it's worked. All clear. Lovely, lovely. There we go. So ah, brilliant. We've got some emails that have come in for our Q&A. We've got some lovely questions lined up for you. We've also had selfies come through in our board, and our inbox as well. So you've been sending all those lovely selfies in, and yeah, there's lots of ways that they can send them in as well.

HELEN: Yeah, yeah. Don't forget. You can send to our email address which is studenthub@open.ac.uk , or you can tweet us at [#studenthublive15](https://twitter.com/studenthublive15). So, yeah, send in your selfies. We'd love to see you.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. And I can see a new hashtag that's appeared, which is [#loveparttime](https://twitter.com/loveparttime). So today our new challenge of the day, because we've had lots of selfies, is we're talking about why we love part time education. We had yesterday a lot of love for part time education. Some of the things that it allowed us to do. So I'm going to start by doing a little register and seeing who's here and some of the comments that you've said before hand. We are going to collect all of this. So if you can, every one from the OU is doing this today. we're sending [#loveparttime](https://twitter.com/loveparttime). Tell us why you love studying part time.

So we have Andrea Porter. Is Andrea in the room. I love the OU and have loved studying my last two modules. Georgina always wanting to study computing but lacked confidence in her abilities. 20 years later, after completing a few MOOCS she's ready to study again. Catelyn says, I love studying with the OU. I've had so much support and it's highly appreciated. Georgina Allen, a different one, really impressed with the OU so far. The structure of the materials and the support. And Alise says, the OU has helped me massively. I wouldn't get that anywhere else. Ian says, I've returned after a 35 year break. And Joanna says, the online resources and support material is very impressive.

So we'd love to hear more about your comments about why you love part time. So that's our challenge for today. Right. So we've got the loads and loads of questions to get through. So I have two guests to answer them all for you. Welcome, Linda Robson and Sue from the Student's Association.

BOTH GUESTS: Good morning.

KAREN FOLEY: Hello. Right. Lots to get through. HJ and Helen, what's our first question for our panel?

HELEN: OK, we have a question from Michele. She says, is it compulsory to attend all the day schools because I can only attend some?

SUE GOODYEAR: Shall I lead off from a student point of view? I think we're aware that students have other commitments, which is why they're part time, and so try and attend as many as you can, try and contact your tutor and let them know in advance if you can't attend in case there's notes or something that they've got. There are some compulsory day schools on some of the modules, I'm led to believe, but I'm not familiar, because what I understand the day school to be when I was doing languages, was like a longer tutorial day. So make sure you're in the right area for not attending, I would say. I don't know what you would say.

LINDA ROBSON: I'd agree with Sue's advice, really. I only know one module where they are compulsory. But generally, it's really valuable if you can go. But we do recognise that not all students can make the day schools.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Yeah. Perfect. So the long and short of it is, I guess, find out what specific to your module, and whether you need to go or not. But again, it's a distance provision. We've just had some confusion as well about the word-all. So we're asking everybody how they're feeling right now on the word-all. And we'd like you to fill that in. We've got a few interactive tools, like our maps, so we know where you are.

We like to know what level you're studying. That helps us pitch what we're talking about as well. Because while this is for new starters to the university, we are aware there's a lot of you are already studying, and are coming along as well, which is fantastic. So we're asking how you're feeling right now. And the hashtag-- we have a hashtag for this event, which is [studenthublive15](#), and we also have a hashtag for the love part time, which is [#loveparttime](#). So you can engage with both of those, and we'll be picking up both of those, but any questions or anything you want to get directly into this studio, [studenthublive15](#). Lovely. Next question, please.

HJ: We've got a question on Twitter using our [#studenthublive15](#), and Eleanor asks, what's the best way to get started on level two modules, because they've only done-- they haven't got up to that stage yet, so usually it's a little bit of a step up on that level, what would your advice be? How can she prepare?

KAREN FOLEY: Would you like to take that one?

LINDA ROBSON: Yeah. Well the expectation is, that students would complete their level one study first, and part of the purpose of that is to prepare you for level two. So you will find that there is a transition, but you're supported through that transition. And tutors are aware of which modules you've studied before, so they're able to look at your profile, and give you the support that you need.

KAREN FOLEY: Can you say something, Sue, about that jump, from your experience as a student, from level one to two. Was it as big as you thought it would be?

SUE GOODYEAR: At times it was. I have to say, I thought I'd sort of timed in my study times at the best times that suited me. Some days it was in the morning. Some days I did better in the afternoon. But I did have to factor in the longer times, but then I also factored in, sometimes more breaks, because of then absorbing what it was I was sort of interacting with. Yes, it is quite a step, but I would also say, read all the information that they send you, so that you're familiar with what it is they're asking, because sometimes students are posting on forums, and the responses, read the assignment and assessments and guidebooks and everything else that gets sent to you. Read those because it does help.

KAREN FOLEY: You know, I think, a lot of people have that anxiety. We've had that a lot from people, that excited and nervous, irrespective of whether it's just starting with OU or jumping a level. Everything is different, isn't it? Even if you're studying psychology, level one psychology to level two, there's different tasks, different activities, and they're all structured, as you say, in a very considered way for people. But I think sometimes those nerves are quite helpful, because it, I guess, it makes you alert to what's going on, and

mindful, as you say, Sue, about reading what the material is and being clear about what you're doing for that specific part of your study journey.

SUE GOODYEAR: I think some students worry that they are worried and nervous, and that's quite a normal reaction and response to be at this time, but there should also be oodles of excitement.

KAREN FOLEY: Well I'd love to know how your feeling, so do fill in that word-all. And let us know. You can choose three words, and this is if you're on the live and interactive to let us know how you're feeling. As you say, nervous and excited are two words that have come up a lot. And also, it's nice to see that we're not alone with some of those feelings as well. HJ and Helen, have we got more questions?

HJ: Yeah. We've got loads coming in the chats. I think--

HELEN: Yeah. Rebecca was asking, what if she can't get to day schools? What are her options then, if she's not available?

LINDA ROBSON: OK, well first of all, there might be an option on attending a different day school. Students are free to attend any day school, for that module. So, if it's the date that's the problem, you might be able to attend another one fairly locally to you. The other option is to ask your tutor for notes about what the day school is going to cover, so that you can catch up. Talk to other students about what they found useful at the day school. And some modules, there's also online versions available. So they're well worth attending. If there is online, then they'll also usually be recorded, so you can watch them later.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. Would you like to say, Sue, what happens at an online tutorial, or a face to face tutorial, because I think sometimes it seems like an idea, and we don't really know what happens. What's your experience?

SUE GOODYEAR: For me personally, I attended face to face tutorials. I got an awful lot out of it personally. The fact I met other students, and the fact I could sort of chat with them, and they understood sort of that terminology, tma, ema, sort of all those things that come with the learning. From talking to other students, sometimes they haven't been at an establishment since their school days, and they may have been bullied in the corridors, and stuff like that, so it opened an awful lot of memories, and sort of negativity. But with chatting to the other students, they soon overcame that, and they started to thoroughly enjoy that face to face interaction, and often it saved lots of emails to your tutor if there was something you didn't understand, because you get that feedback there and then. Yes, I would have advocated going to them. There are also students who I've come across, who thoroughly enjoy the online elements of the tutorials. And that's the only way sometimes they can access them. So I think, it's whatever suits you. But I've also travelled, I lived in Newport, South Wales. The furthest distance I went to a tutorial was Manchester. I had friends up there, I factored it into a visit.

KAREN FOLEY: And Linda, you're a staff tutor, so you'd be aware of all the levels, I guess, of tutorial attendance and the associate lecturers, and how that's all going. Could you say something about students attending all or some of the tutorials? Do you find it common that they sort of maybe can't go to one, and then they'll go to another one? That's not, you know, if you missed the first one, that's the end of the world.

LINDA ROBSON: Yeah. There's a lot of variation. If you missed the first one, that doesn't matter. Do still go along. You'll find there's other students in that place. I'd also say, if you're nervous about your tutorials, then do talk to your tutor about it. And when I was working as an associate lecturer, and working directly with students, I had one particular student who springs to mind, who was very nervous about attending tutorials, and so I met him in the car park and walked in with her, and something simple like that can really make the difference to you being able to attend a tutorial. So if you do have concerns, do speak up and your tutor will help you overcome them.

KAREN FOLEY: You've mentioned different options, and how you may be able to go through a different tutorial, that maybe isn't in your area. Rebecca says that she can't go on Saturday, so she'd like to know what her options are. How could she find out what else is in her area that she might be able to go to?

LINDA ROBSON: If you look on your student homepage, you'll find that there's a tutorial finder, and that will list the local tutorials, so you can have a look through those various parameters, you can compare to, how far you're willing to travel. So have a look there, and also, talk to your tutor. Again, there are things that can be done to make sure you get the support that you need.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, I had a little email come through actually this morning, from somebody saying, can I come to your tutorial? It was a student. So they'd obviously been on that, and then they email the tutor. That's helpful for me because I then I can print enough handouts and take enough biscuits. HJ and Helen.

HJ: Yeah. We've had questions come from all over, emails, Twitter, which is absolutely fantastic. Good one for OUSA rep here. There was a big campaign about this, and this is something that I believe OUSA help bring about, and Laura's asking about what the print on demand service entails on how much it will be.

SUE GOODYEAR: Wow. Right. Yes, the elected officers and student association reps were aware that students were saying about print on demand, because obviously some study material was going completely online. And what happened as a result of that, was I don't know where exactly it is on your module pages, but there was an opportunity for print on demand, which from what I understand, is it comes in cheaper than if you were to print it at home. Not to be confused, because we've had students with disabilities who've been printing their own stuff off, whereas if the OU's aware that they've got disabilities, and they've asked for their module material in a set way, they should be receiving in that way. They shouldn't be printing it off. So do check if you have got a disability, that you're not printing off unnecessarily. And do look at the print on demand, if, like me, you prefer hard copy to scribble and write over, and wade through at the end.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Well we set them on fire in the chats. Everyone's demanding biscuits at their tutorials. And I've been told by the producers, that every tutorial is different, and not all tutors will provide a selection of sweet or savoury snacks. I'd also like to prompt you to fill in our wordall as well, which is looking great. But if you haven't already filled in how you're feeling right now, do do that. Just the top three words that come to mind. We're not going psychoanalyse those. I promise. But it would be great to know. It gives us a good steer about how you're feeling at home. Right. I'm very conscious, we've got seven minutes left, and a lot of questions I'd promised we'd get through.

HELEN: Yeah. There's been a lot of chats about Facebook groups. And generally, about how you support each other as students. And so, how you build communities in an online environment? so maybe not just Facebook groups, but tutor forums as well. So maybe your panel could talk a bit about that.

LINDA ROBSON: Shall I take that one? I think all modules now provide forums so that you have a space, which is private to your particular module, where you can talk to other students, and your tutor will also be in there moderating that. Or it might be a different tutor if it's a national forum on your module. So that they'll be able to make sure you're keeping in the right lines, and will intervene if there's anything incorrect that's put in there. There's also lots of Facebook groups, that people are running, and they can be really useful to support each other in a less formal way. You do need to be slightly careful there though, because they're not moderated. So if you're talking about the content of the module, maybe asking someone to explain the theory, you need to be a little bit careful, because if mistakes are made there, you might go away with something that's not quite right. So I would recommend those kind of questions you put into your module forum so the tutor is aware of them, and keeping an eye on it.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. OK. Next question, HJ.

HJ: Yeah. We're all very intrigued about this biscuit that you're doing, and few people think it should be a human right, which I think we can agree on, but others prefer jelly beans, so a hot debate here on the chat. But one question is, a lot were talking about this yesterday, is the rise in tuition fees, because some people have studied casually with the OU out of interest, and it makes it harder to do that, so perhaps that from a student perspective, what the impact is there, and from the University perspective, what the reasons behind this has prompted these changes?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, it's a topical issue, isn't it? Would you like to start?

LINDA ROBSON: It is a big issue. The rise in fees occurred at the same time as the Brick Universities introduced their rise in fees. So most of the Brick Universities went for a fee of around 9,000 pounds, and the OU reluctantly rose the fees to what they are today, and this is because the government policy changed. And so we're no longer getting direct funding per student from the government. We recognise that it is a real difficulty for students to raise that money. On the plus side, you are now entitled to student loans to help you with funding that, so you don't have to pay until you are in work after you have graduated. But we were sad to put the fees up that much, but we're not actually getting more money, because we no longer subsidise by the government.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's almost a proportion-- so it's not that the fees have risen, it's the proportion that's being funded that has changed, and that has impacted then on the students?

LINDA ROBSON: Yeah, it's a shift from the government paying that money to the university per student to the student themselves who's paying.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Excellent. somebody's cat has brought in a live mouse. OK. Mine do that too. We've actually had a lot of cats on the chat. And I'm a lot of cats are very good study bodies, at times like this though, it's not really necessary, so get rid of the mouse. I hope it's not alive. We only need computer mice here. So that's very handy. Do you want to feed in on

the fees, because I know we do have a lot of questions we promised to get through, but is there something you would like to say too?

SUE GOODYEAR: Just to sort of reiterate on what you've said, is that it's sort of come out of one pot, and gone into another pot effectively. And I think if students have issues, then contact their student support teams, and find out if they've got a specific question that needs an answer. And I'm also aware that from an OU Student Association, we have our charity, OUSET, and if there's any students who, sort of, fall between any funding gaps, there is a process by which they can apply online, and see if they're able to qualify for any further assistance with any of their study things. It is not a big pot, but if it is the difference between you succeeding or continuing with your studies, it's worth looking up.

KAREN FOLEY: If you give us then, we'll put that on the website so people can chase that up if they want to. Right. More questions, please.

HELEN: So Sean is asking, do we get an academic email address at any point since the Facebook page is asking for one?

KAREN FOLEY: Oh that's a good question, because you can get a lot of things with an academic email address, like cheaper versions of Microsoft Office, which is a really good thing.

SUE GOODYEAR: I know when I started on my student homepage on the left hand side, there was a Google email thing, which I clicked on, and it gave me an email with open.ou.ac.uk at the end of it. And I've used that. And I just go into my student homepage, because I don't have all my emails bouncing off into one phone or whatever, I like to log in, and keep my student life separate.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, yeah. That's a different part of your identity. Excellent. More questions, about two minutes left.

HJ: OK. We must be quick. One thing that I have talked about is, what if we miss tutorials, but a lot of people want to know what tutorials are actually like, because they are a bit nervous, we've got new starters here.

SUE GOODYEAR: They're a chance to obviously learn a bit more about your module, to meet your tutor face to face, and to meet with other students. Really sort of drill down into what it is that you're learning on your module. I believe it's from sort of that time up until the next assignment that you're learning from, so you can be aware of how up to date you are, or how behind you are as well. For me, it was a good indicator of where I was on my learning journey.

LINDA ROBSON: It's also a useful place to consolidate what you've learned, or to catch up, if you're a little bit behind as well. So it's quite a useful little block of time.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Let's take one final question.

HJ: Well let's just choose one. I don't know. No. One good question that comes up, because it all happens to us, is that if we fall behind, what's your top tips? Who should we contact? And how do we get back up to where we should be?

SUE GOODYEAR: My initial one is, don't panic. Don't panic. You've got your study calendar. Email your tutor, because they may be able to help you. Talk to the other students on your module, because they may have ideas that they've come across in their study to, sort of, help them catch up. But keep going. It is a bit of a roller coaster learning journey. Yeah, there is help out there.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. Would you like to say anything to end?

LINDA ROBSON: I would agree with that, and say most people do get behind at some point, and it is a roller coaster so do keep talking to people about where you are, how you're doing. But also. If you have actually had a proper crisis, and you feel that you can't complete the module this year, we do have facilities to be able to defer to the following presentation. Talk to your tutor, and if they think that that's appropriate, you can start talking about deferring to the following year.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Well Sue and Linda, thank you very much. Devin says, yeah, my Easter goodies have arrived, so that'll keep you busy, Devin. I hope that mouse is out the house. And so we have our word-all. And I'm aware that some people have had technical problems. It's probably to do HJ's new spam filter in my opinion, but we are sorry about that. The thing with technology is it doesn't always work all the time. There is catchup available. And I have a team backstage, Elliott and Adrienne who do an amazing job on the email. So if you're having any difficulties, you can email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk. We know that you're annoyed, because you want to come here, so we will do our utmost to try and help, if there is anything that we can do about that. So do email them, and they will do their best to try and help you out. But I'd like to show that word-all now so that we can see how everyone's feeling. Excited. Happy. Nervous. Awake. Curious. Engaged. Intrigued. Ready to go. Well so are we.

So we've got a full jam packed programme. We hope everything is sorted out now, but do email us if not. Don't forget to send us your selfies, so we'd like to know how you are enjoying this event, picture of you, picture of your cat, no dead mice, please. And also, why you love part time. We're going to try and get a collage of all of that together to put up on the Facebook page later today, so please do participate in that. We're now going to have short video break, for those of you who are new, these are just our intermissions. We'll show you a couple of videos. You can chat away in the chat box. And I'm going to come back for a life changing learning session. So on that note, we'll be looking at how the OU can change your life, and about the open degree. We'll see you back in about five minutes.

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