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KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back. In this section, we're going to take a look at the law and how it is studied. And there's a widget, an interactive tool, that's appearing on your screen now. So we would like to know-- this is a bit of a funny question, actually-- because we'd like to know three things, because these will just only work if you put three things in them. But if there's only one or two, or even-- well, if there's three, it won't apply. But if there's one or two things, just put an x in the other spaces, and then you can submit it to send. We'd like to know what the most rewarding things are about studying law.

And joining me in the studio to tell us the answer to that is Neil Graffin. Neil, welcome. Now, you're a lecturer in law, where you have been for the last few years. And you're Module Chair of W102, which is Law Concepts and Perspectives.

DR. NEIL Yeah.

GRAFFIN:

KAREN FOLEY: And you also are a tutor, associate lecturer, so you're teaching on that, as well. Now, what are some of the routes, then, for students who are studying law with the Open University.

DR. NEIL Well, the main route, really, is the LLB. We do offer an LLM, as well, for postgraduate
GRAFFIN: students. But with the LLB students, we generally study 60 credits for the first couple of stages, and then we do offer 30 credit modules in the latter stages, really. So it's quite a rigid format, maybe. The reason for that is because we are accredited, and it's a qualifying law degree, really. So when students study with us, they will have the option of becoming barristers and solicitors after their subsequent training after doing their degree.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, this is accredited, which is very important, if you want a proper solicitor or a barrister. So it's recognised by the Solicitors Recognition Authority and the Bar Standards Board. So those aspects are important, so basically anyone can say, I want to be a solicitor or a barrister, or have a career in law, study with the Open University, and actually get that law degree.

DR. NEIL Yeah. Effectively, they would need to study within six years to be able to do that. Now, that's
GRAFFIN: what we offer. But at the end of the process, and normally what happens-- well, there's a variety of routes, but they would normally need to do a training course after that. And if they

wanted to be a solicitor, for example, they would have a training contract. But we offer the kind of first stage in that, which is the proper law degree.

KAREN FOLEY: So in six years, then, how does that work? You mentioned it was fairly rigidly structured. What does it look like?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: Well, for the first couple of years, students would study W101, An Introduction to Law, and W102, which is the module I'm Chair of. They would then study a mixture of different modules. So they'll look at contract law, for example. They'll look at constitutional law. They'll look at criminal law. They'll do a myriad of subjects, which really make up what is the qualifying law degree. So really, effectively, that's it.

We are offering, now-- it's going to be new, and so it will come into place for some of our students later on. We're adding a module to our qualification, and that is a 30-credit module. But it's designed so that students can do pro bono work. So they'll be able to do some work within the community. As part of that, we'll be opening an online advice clinic. And in addition, we'll be doing sort of public legal education events, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Wow. So there are real opportunities that people can get to have a go practicing law within the pro bono law clinic. And I guess that's really important, because doing a law degree is something that you need to get work experience as part of, obviously, after you've graduated. But how great is it that you've got these initiatives going alongside supporting what students are currently doing?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: Yeah, it would be really good for employers, as well, to see that you've got practical experience, maybe, looking at various aspects of being a lawyer, really. So yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So you've mentioned the 6-year thing-- the maximum-- do students then take concurrent modules, because what I've heard about law is that some students can take two together. So maybe, they are studying full-time equivalents, and that can feel quite heavy, and I guess, there's a lot of reading, and a lot going on, a lot of skill developments, et cetera.

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: What does the typical-- I know we can't do too much of a typical law student-- but how does it typically work?

DR. NEIL Well, typically it would work over the six years, but we do have students, for example, who
GRAFFIN: might study W101 and W102, together. We have a large amount of students that do that. It just means that they're effectively studying full time, so they would need to be prepared for that.

They would need to think about, you know, what their commitments are outside of study. They might need to speak to an advisor within the SST, for example, just to go over the details of what's actually involved. But that would allow people to study the law degree in a shorter space of time, and we do have students who successfully, each year, studied the likes of W101 and W102, together, and do very well.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Great. So you've mentioned, then, that time management might be an issue. And if you do want a whole session from our boot camp on time management, you can check that out on the Catch Up, also. But I guess, what's the workload like, in terms of doing things? I mean, people read this, and they go, yeah, 30 hours, 60 hours. It's very difficult to conceptualise how that might look in a study week. What's it like when you're studying law?

DR. NEIL There's a lot of reading. I mean, everybody will tell you that about law. But we do offer quite
GRAFFIN: different formats to look at as well. So we do have videos. We've got animations. We deliver our materials online, so that gives us flexibility. For example, last year, I developed animations of cases, so we do use that flexibility really, and have been able to present our materials differently, and hopefully in a more interesting way for our students.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Great. I'd like to talk about some of the topical issues in law and how we teach them. I mean, yesterday, we heard all about how-- we were talking to languages-- and we heard all about how singing can help languages. I don't suppose there are any law songs around that you can think of that might help students with this heavy work load?

DR. NEIL I Fought the Law?

GRAFFIN:

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, dear. Yes, sure. All right, well.

DR. NEIL As a point, I have heard recently, the Bar Standards Board do actually say that if you do try
GRAFFIN: singing, that that can help improve your voice. So if you're in a courtroom, for example, you'll

be able to vocalise things much better. So actually, that's quite interesting you should bring that up.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah, actually, I'm going to practise that, because tonight we've got a moot on with the students from the Open University Law Society. So I might have a go at that in our break this afternoon. OK. The thing about the law, though, is that it changes dramatically. It's a very, very fluid landscape.

A lot's happening. I mean, Brexit springs to mind. So there are a lot of implications, and so how does that work, then, for students studying various aspects, maybe when they've graduated or they're going through with so many changes happening, right now? How does impact on curriculum?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: I mean, Brexit is a huge thing, really. I mean, our lives-- my life, anyway-- has been dominated by Brexit and the referendum this summer. I think I was dreaming about the EU. But there are a lot of changes, but we have made changes to the module materials this year to reflect the fact that we have been through the referendum. The thing about Brexit is it's such a fluid thing at the moment. Nobody really knows how it's going to pan out, whether we'll be invoking Article 50 soon, or anything along those lines.

But it goes to show, in a way, that actually the law does dominate our lives. I mean, EU law is something which came very much to the forefront of everybody's consciousness, really, during the referendum. And it does really show how much law impacts on our day to day existence, really.

KAREN FOLEY: It is so interesting, and as you say, very, very dynamic. I mean, the Bill of Rights, again-- whether we should have one in Britain, is another key issue. And in fact, you came along a few months ago, and we had a really interesting discussion about that side of things. So law is constantly changing and evolving. But I want to focus on what some of the more rewarding aspects are. And we asked our audience, you know, what they thought was so rewarding about studying law. Should we see what they said?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: Yeah

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Let's have a look. So we've got lots and lots of different words coming up-- social responsibility, challenge, students, variety, jargon, education, better judge, helping people,

fascinating, knowing. Obviously, a lot of law students out there changing lives, careers, analytical reasoning. So there are a lot of both skills, and I guess, motivations for studying law.

DR. NEIL Yeah.

GRAFFIN:

KAREN FOLEY: And law can be a very useful degree, irrespective of whether you want to practise or not. What are some of the skills, then, that people might learn when they're studying law?

DR. NEIL OK. Well, that's quite interesting that you say that, actually, you might not just become a solicitor or a barrister. I mean, a lot of our students don't end up becoming solicitors or barristers, so-- but employers do look for law degrees for a variety of reasons. So being able to think analytically, being able to read large pieces of text and summarise those, being able to absorb lots of information, being able to interpret things in a different way-- I mean, these are really strong skills for any sort of environment, really, not just a legal background.

KAREN FOLEY: So how many students, then, do go on to practise? Do you have any sense of how that actually works? Do people get sidetracked, like Elsa did, and think, actually, I'm ending up in a completely different space?

DR. NEIL Yeah.

GRAFFIN:

KAREN FOLEY: How often is the idea about what people want to achieve related to the reality of what they, then, go on to do?

DR. NEIL I mean, it does happen often. I mean, my own personal story-- although I work in law, I think I probably dreamt of being a solicitor at the beginning. I was always interested in human rights, for example. I was always interested in social justice, social responsibility, and I'm quite glad that that came up as a keyword.

GRAFFIN:

But I did my law degree, and I decided to do a Master's in Human Rights, afterwards. And I really enjoyed the research element. And I really enjoyed, you know, sitting down and reading journal articles, and finding information, and thinking, yes, that's exactly what I was thinking. And I just really enjoyed that.

And I decided afterwards, that actually, I didn't want to become a solicitor. I thought I would go into academia. And that's maybe why I'm sat here today. I never thought I would go into law

and be sitting in a studio in Milton Keynes, you know. But I know a lot of people, a lot of my peers, have went on and worked for the Civil Service in big jobs and have done a variety of things with their law degrees. There are lots of routes you can go afterwards.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Now, that's really inspiring, I think, and especially with people who, maybe, have those ideas. It's nice to know there is that fluidity and change, despite the quite rigid structure, I guess, of the curriculum. Now, you mentioned that there were a lot of various interactive aspects to W102, in particular. And I wanted to pick up back on this idea around current issues and how those are, then, fed into curriculum, and what students might expect, as they're studying.

So I know that there's a lot of interactive content and a lot of online resources, but case studies are a really important way, I guess, of demonstrating some of the issues and skills in law. Can you tell us a little bit about those and how they work in 102?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: Yeah. I mean, students will study a variety of cases, really. They will look at cases and statutes. They might look at case studies, themselves. They'll look at problem questions and scenarios. I mean, but there are a variety of ways that we try to engage students. We try to get them to think about how they can use the law.

So we'll present them, maybe, with a story of a very unfortunate person who has got themselves into a tangle with the law in a variety of ways. And we'll get students to think around the subjects and how they might apply the law to these particular scenarios. I mean, that's what we would call a problem question, that students will do those in the likes of W102 and the other modules that they'll study across the LLB.

KAREN FOLEY: Right. Now, they're all talking about Brexit in the chat and what sort of impact that might have, and trying to sound out areas. But I wanted to pick up on something else that's going on in the chat, which relates this issue of jargon, which, I guess, is very important in law, but also something that's very common throughout any subject area, especially when you're starting.

Students will often notice these glossary definitions and start noticing that things can be applied, in maybe not the context that they used to referring to. How does that work for law, and what advice would you give to students in terms of getting to grips with some of that terminology?

DR. NEIL Jargon-- I think this is one of the things I probably struggled with when I was studying my law

GRAFFIN:

degree for the first time. You're coming across legal jargon that you're very unfamiliar with. It's not something-- a lot of legal jargon-- you wouldn't maybe come across in everyday life.

You might need to read a statute for the first time. The content is alien to you. It's written, maybe, in quite archaic language. You're having to read cases. You're thinking to yourself, you know, what does that mean, what does that mean-- I'm going to have to consult a dictionary on this, or whatever it might be.

But you will get used to it. I mean, it can be a sharp learning curve at the start, but you will get used to it, and you'll get used to maybe some of the Latin terms, like *actus reus* or *mens rea*, or those types of terms that you, maybe, wouldn't come across in everyday life, but are prevalent through your degree. I would just say that it will seem quite alien at the start, and sometimes students, they have an idea of law. They, maybe, watched, *Making a Murderer*, which was very popular last year.

And then when they sit down, you realise, actually, there's lots of different terms and terminology and concepts that I'm really unfamiliar with. And it can seem quite daunting initially. But to get to the point where you're as strong an advocate as those defence lawyers in *Making a Murderer*, you really need to kind of get that basic groundwork, and you need to sort of sit down and learn all that sort of stuff that you are unfamiliar with. But I would just say, students will get there.

KAREN FOLEY:

Well, that's pressure, Neil. Gosh, so you didn't manage it so well. Now, with hindsight, what would you recommend students do in terms of actually battling down something that's going to be so important?

DR. NEIL

It's really just getting the grips of things. But they have plenty of support with the Open

GRAFFIN:

University. You have got your tutor. You've got communities of students, as well. I mean, we have the forums, for example. Students do meet up on social media, as well, and I know students, informally, meet on Facebook in different groups. So really, you will have plenty of support, and I would just stress, do listen to your tutor, do you listen to their feedback. If you can attend tutorials, attend tutorials. And enjoy it. I mean, law's a fascinating subject, and I'm sure you will enjoy it.

KAREN FOLEY:

It's interesting, actually. Because we were talking in one of the boot camps the other day about how you can use different types of module material and that there were PDFs available. And one brilliant tip that someone had was that they search, using a PDF for terminology, to sort of

get to grips with how it's being used colloquially within the module material, as well as, Davon, had a great idea, actually. It was with making some little index cards with terms, so that you can look through them and get to grips with all of those, and then you can keep them throughout your career.

So those were absolutely brilliant ones. Penelope's also wondering whether some of the fluid landscape and changes will have an impact on the types of law? What do you think about that? Will things like Brexit and the EU have an impact in terms of how we're actually teaching and doing more?

DR. NEIL

GRAFFIN:

We will still continue to teach EU law, regardless of Brexit. I mean, that's something which has been stressed by the bodies that regulate university. So EU law will still remain important, because EU law is obviously very important across Europe, so we will continue to teach it as it is. We don't really know about Brexit. We don't really know what's going to happen. We don't know what's-- I mean, it's a huge body of law.

I've recently been at a number of conferences, where we've talked about the process of extrapolating ourselves from the EU, and it's going to be very complicated, because the EU does touch upon many aspects of our lives in terms of sheer volume of law that has actually been created by the EU. So it's going to keep lawyers in work for quite a number of years, really.

KAREN FOLEY:

Yeah. I mean, because whilst the EU is a massive buzz thing, and very, very prominent at the time, there are other impacts in law. I mean, you know, Penelope is talking about Sharia law and Sheik law, and how that's being recognised in some courts. So there's a whole range of perspectives and aspects that are impacting what's happening right now.

DR. NEIL

GRAFFIN:

Yeah, certainly. And you touched upon the Bill of Rights discussion that we had a number of months ago. I mean, there's talk again of getting rid of the Human Rights Act. It kind of got pushed to the side over the summer because of the EU referendum, but it's now come back up again. But the Human Rights Act has been a massive piece of legislation in terms of its influence on the law in the UK and possibly beyond.

So if we are to get rid of that, as well, that's going to be a huge impact on the law. But I mean, the law faculty will keep students updated. We will be making amendments to the module materials. We will certainly not leave students in the dark with regards to stuff. We will be continually developing what we do, really in order to meet the demands of all these changes.

KAREN FOLEY: Gosh, so lots and lots going on. Lots to be excited about. I wonder if we can return back to just the basics of the module, W102, because students are getting allocated their tutors, and I want to talk a little bit about what to get in terms of how to get the most out of your tutor relationship. But can you give us a little bit of an idea about the structure of that module, what students can look for in terms of the blocks, the assessments? How does W102 actually work?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: Yeah. Well, there's six blocks, and it's structured over a number of weeks, and each week students will consult their study planner, and they'll find out what exactly they're studying for that particular week. They will have a number of tutor-marked assignments to do over the year.

Those tutor-marked assignments will touch upon various aspects, and they're there to help students develop their knowledge of law, but also to develop their skills, as well, whether that comes down to their writing skills, their ability to evaluate, and things like that. And then at the end, there will be an exam as well, which some of our students may not have studied or may not have taken an exam for quite a while, but we do have a high pass rate on it, actually. Students actually feel it's beneficial.

KAREN FOLEY: I've heard about your completion rates with your law students. They do very, very well, don't they? Why is that?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: I think it's a well-structured module. I think students find W102 engaging. They relate to the subjects in it. There are very many interesting subjects in it. So they do well, and we're glad to see that, really.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, great. So you talked about the study planner and students getting their work. And we've also touched on that students may be doing concurrent modules, so they're going to need to manage their time quite effectively. As a tutor, how important is that study planner, and what would you expect your students to be doing right now, who are enrolled in the October-start presentation.

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: My advice would be to try and familiarise yourself as much as possible with the module guide, find out how things work. You might want to submit a dummy TMA assignment, just so you know how to do it, really, when the time comes. Get in touch with your tutor. You may have received a welcome email from them, so send them an email back. Get on your tutor group forum that's due to open soon. You might want to post a message in there.

Maybe, you might want to look your first assignment, get an idea of what it's about and start to think, really, about how you're going to plan the year, how you're going to plan your time, which I think is very important, and just get to grips with things, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. I'd just like to go over to Sophie and Kristen, because there's a lot of chat going on. And I appreciate there were a lot of different conversations, which is exactly what we want to be happening in the chat. So please do keep having those. But we also like to feed questions, and so if you've got any questions to ask Neil, do let us know. Sophie and Kristen, what's going on?

SOPHIE: Lots. It's very busy.

KRISTEN: Very busy.

SOPHIE: Please do bear with us. We are trying to keep up with everything. And do remember that little pin button in the top right hand corner, because that's really helpful. But I know you've had a lot of questions in, so--

KRISTEN: A whole range of questions. I mean, people are talking about different types of law, different things that they want to study, and then also how they study. So one person had asked about whether you have to actually do speaking in front of a court as part of your studies, so we wanted to know about that, and then also how they can prepare for using case studies. That was another thing that they were wondering about.

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: Speaking in front of a court, you don't actually have to do, although Open University Law Society, I believe, are doing a session today.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. I'm excited about it. Sophie is organising some singing practise, now, for me for later.

[LAUGHTER]

--so I can get to grips with my courtroom gravitas.

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: So they do have a Mooting Society, so that might be something you want to get involved in, if you are interested in that sort of thing, really.

KAREN FOLEY: But they also go paint-balling. Mooting and paint-balling are their two primary activities of the Open University Law Society. Did you know that?

DR. NEIL No.

GRAFFIN:

KAREN FOLEY: That's quite interesting, isn't it?

[LAUGHTER]

DR. NEIL I've never received an invite, but--

GRAFFIN:

KAREN FOLEY: No, neither.

[LAUGHTER]

DR. NEIL Maybe I'm glad, but-- Yeah, and we organise the essay competition each year with the Open
GRAFFIN: University Law Society. That might be something that students want to look at. We organise that. It's the Tom Bingham Memorial Prize Meet, organised every year after the esteemed judge, Lord Bingham.

But in terms of case studies, maybe we can talk about problem questions and getting prepared for those. We do have lots of materials that we've got-- basically a guide which looks at how to answer essay questions, how to answer short answer questions, how to answer problem questions. You might want to familiarise yourself-- well, you will want to familiarise yourself with that particular guide. Just go through it, and you'll get lots of advice on how to answer various types of questions, really.

It also gives you information on how to reference, which becomes very important in law, how to reference a case, how to reference a journal, how to reference a book, a website, whatever it might be.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. No, that's absolutely fantastic. So some really good advice, there, in terms of getting organised and getting set up. What is the thing that you think that students doing W102 are going to enjoy most this year?

DR. NEIL I think they'll just find law very exciting. It's very dynamic. It constantly changes. There's always
GRAFFIN: something in the news. I mean, we will use the OU Twitter feed to publish some news stories and various things. And we can fill that up constantly throughout the year with different stories.

It's just a really interesting-- law touches upon all aspects of life. I got up this morning. I bought the train ticket. There's a contract which regulated that. I got to work. I am employed by the Open University. That falls under employment law. I mean, law touches every aspect of your life.

You know, it regulates human behaviour. If you commit a crime you will be punished in accordance with the law-- hopefully not, of course. And it protects your fundamental rights, for example. It protects your right to a fair trial. It protects your right not to be ill treated. It protects your rights in work. You know, so--

KAREN FOLEY: So whilst you can do W102, people are saying that everyone's mum used to watch *Rumpole of the Bailey*. And what we were wondering is how much can you learn about law from this old TV programme?

[LAUGHTER]

As a curve ball. How like the TV? You know, this is something you mentioned earlier. People see these programmes. They think it's a very, very glamorous and end up, then, doing, you know, tax returns and all sorts of other more menial sort of tasks when they're practicing law, perhaps. So how like the real thing on TV, or how like TV, is the real thing?

DR. NEIL GRAFFIN: It can be quite similar. I mean, if you watched *Making a Murderer*, last year, fictionalised TV-- I love that it was set in the United States. I mean, that almost represented-- it was almost like what you would see in a film, for example. So it can be like that. But I mean, there's a variety of things you can do with law. I mean, you might finish your law degree and write wills, for example.

You might go into conveyancing. You might do human rights cases. You might do criminal law. I mean, there's a variety of different things that you can go into. And you will find something that may surprise you. I didn't think, for example, that I would be interested in contract law. But actually, that was one of my favourite subjects when I was studying my law degree, so yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Lots of scope out there. Well, Neil Graffin, thank you so much for coming on. That's been a really interesting insight into studying law and W102. And I just want to finally add, by saying, that I know a lot of students may have credit transfers and come into law at different levels, and maybe, at level 2. And this is quite common. What advice would you give to those students, who maybe haven't got all their glossary cards and all of their organised things

beforehand from the W102 module?

DR. NEIL

Yes. I mean, the materials at stage 2, they're designed to be studied at graduate level. So

GRAFFIN:

students can look at the guides, as well. They can get clued up on some of the things that they may not have covered at level 1. Just get stuck into it, really. I think that's my best piece of advice.

KAREN FOLEY:

And tutors are never afraid to have you emailing them and asking questions. And it's always good to clarify these things, if you're stuck. Thank you so much. That's been really interesting. Well, I know you guys are talking about a whole range of different issues around law. And also, there are a lot of various interests in careers.

We were asking you what sorts of careers you were interested in, and there were various things, like anything from being an estate agent, setting up your own business, practicing law, solicitors, barristers, et cetera. So there was lots of interesting stuff going on around half an hour ago, when we were asking about that, which is great, because we're going to switch tack entirely after this break, when I'm going to be talking to Danny Quinn, who is an entrepreneur. And I'm going to talk to him about being entrepreneurial.

So have a break. Watch this short video while you grab a cup of tea, and we'll see you back here in about five minutes.

[MUSIC PLAYING]