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**KAREN FOLEY:** Hello, and with me in the studio is Paul Catley, who is the head of the Open University Law School. Now, Paul had studied law at A-Level College, a further education before going on to study law and economics at university. And he then went and worked for a solicitor's firm, and is now very interested in education and is passionate about lifelong learning. Welcome, Paul.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Thank you.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now, tell us about your students that are studying law. How do they do?

**PAUL CATLEY:** They do really well. We were really pleased. We've just been looking at the results from last year. And over 90% of those who completed the courses passed them. And in the first year the Introduction to Law Course, which is what most students do as their first course, the pass rate was 95% of those that completed, which I think is brilliant.

**KAREN FOLEY:** That's excellent. And what about further on in terms of Level Two and Three?

**PAUL CATLEY:** They carry on really performing exceedingly well. And I think the big message is that if people put in the effort, they can get the results.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So those pass rates are quite a lot higher than a lot of the modules. Why do they do so well?

**PAUL CATLEY:** I think it's really down to determination on the parts of the students. It's also really great that we've got some super tutors who really help them. And we've been working very hard at redesigning our modules so that they're really suited to online learning. So there's a mix of written materials but also videos, audio, so quite a range of different things which hopefully will appeal to different learning styles.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now, a lot of your students are studying law with, I guess, the idea of going into that professionally, but not always. So what is the value then of a law degree?

**PAUL CATLEY:** Well, I think increasingly these days, it's important to have a degree. Employers are expecting their employees to have degrees and, therefore, that's really one part of it. But I think what you get with a law degree is something which is going to be useful really whatever you end up doing.

It's very hard to imagine a job where law isn't at all relevant. Whether you're going into business or whether you're going into the public sector a knowledge of the law is going to be useful. But of course, if you want to become a solicitor or a barrister, then getting a law degree is the obvious route. And we do have quite a number of students who do our degrees and then go on and enter into the profession.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now, a lot of your students say that they find doing this degree very satisfying. Why is that?

**PAUL CATLEY:** Well, I think law itself is a really interesting subject. If you just think of criminal law-- and you're watching a detective programme, if you then start thinking, OK, so if this was to go to court, what would need to be proved? Very recently, a lot of people have got very interested in the Archers, the case of Helen, and whether she could run a self-defense-- defence against the charges for grievous bodily harm that she was facing, and attempted murder.

And I think that just sort of illustrates how the law can be fascinating. You've got an event, and then you've got to look at the legal consequences. But it could equally be employment law that's your particular interest, or family law. So law itself covers a whole range of different areas. And I think that is great.

And it also is something that is developing. I've just been writing a unit for one of our modules called "Law Society and Culture." And in that module, we're looking at some of the new areas of law.

And what I've been exploring there are the new questions for the law coming out of robotics and the idea of machines that can learn and can adapt their behaviour as they get more experience. So what happens if something then goes wrong and that machine, that robot, causes an accident, for an example? Who's liable? Is the person who owns the robot? Is the person who did the initial programming when, in fact, the robot has now learned to do new things? So whether that's a driver-less car, or whether it's a robot taking on functions within the house, those sorts of questions are new for the law and fascinating, but we can go back and look at sort of earlier legal principles to see how they might be sorted.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So law is very, very diverse. And also has an impact, I guess, on a lot of aspects of people's lives. Just finally, what advice would you give students about being realistic in terms of their studies and time management?

**PAUL CATLEY:** I think one thing that is really important is to think how much time you can devote to your

studies. For our law 60-credit modules, we sort of assume that a student is going to be able to give about 15 hours a week to their studies. Now, I think what is important is that before you embark on studying a course, really think, OK, is that realistic? Maybe work out timetables and think, OK, so I could do two evenings a week, and I could do a bit of work at the weekend. Is that going to be enough?

Get buy-in from your family. You're going to need them to be supportive of your decision. So I think that would probably be the biggest message that I'd give, particularly for people who are, say, got caring roles or full-time employment or things like that, to think through whether they're really able to devote enough time. And certainly, to think very seriously if they're thinking of studying in theory full time and doing 120 credits a year. That is a lot to ask.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Paul Catley, thank you. That's really good advice, I think, for a lot of students, not only just law ones. And that's been a really useful introduction to law. So thank you for joining me.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Thank you.

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