

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome to the Student Hub Live. OK, in this event, we are going to be focusing on childhood and youth, some really, really topical, fantastic content here that pretty much anyone can engage with. But this session is specifically designed for students who are beginning their studies with childhood and youth.

So let me explain how it all works. If you haven't come to one of these events before, welcome. They're live, interactive. And really, whilst we've planned some of the discussion here, this is a space for you, as OU students, to talk about things that really, really matter to you.

Now a lot of that might be related to content. But you might have some questions. You might have just been allocated your tutor. You might be looking for your tutor group forum. So there are all sorts of things that we will cover in these sessions. But broadly, this afternoon, we're going to give you a flavour of what it's like to study childhood and youth.

So we've got Steve Harrison, who's going to give us an outline of the qualification, a very important thing to be mindful of. We're then going to take a look at gender with Naomi Holford, look at children's digital lives with Mimi Tatlow-Golden. And then John Oates is going to talk about how creative media can help us to understand children's lives and child development. And then we're going to take a look at language with Paul Ibbotson later in the programme. So I hope that there's a lot to get your teeth into.

Now you should see some widgets, interactive tools, on the bottom left hand side of your screen. I would like to know where you are and what you're studying, what level, how you're feeling right now. So please fill those in.

All you do is select the one you want to vote on and then click the item that applies most to you. Then you need to submit the results to Send. And when you've done that, you'll be able to see what everyone else says as well. So there is an advantage to giving us your information about how you are this afternoon.

You can also write in the chat. And that's very, very easy. You just type whatever you want in there. You might want to say where you are, you might want to say what you're studying. So do introduce yourselves to other students in the chat. Just type something and press Enter, and then your results will send.

Now feeding a lot of this in from the chats and from the widgets and also from our social media because we're using Twitter, and we've got our email as well, is [INAUDIBLE] and Claudia. So good afternoon. Welcome to the Student Hub Live. How are you both?

MALE STUDENT: I think I'm doing really well. I'm really pleased to be on the chat again. And everyone's happy in the chat. And we've got Claudia helping us today and helping answer questions as well. So yes, I think we're excited.

CLAUDIA: Yeah. Hi, everyone. Nice to be here. Hope I can help you.

KAREN FOLEY: It's Claudia's first time on the Hot Desk. And part of the Student Hub is all about bringing you face to face with members of the Open University community. And Claudia works in our marketing department. So she's here to answer questions.

But really, this is a chance to engage with anything that's on your mind. So please do make her welcome. And welcome each other, also.

OK. As I mentioned before, we've got the Twitter hashtag that we will be also paying attention to this afternoon. And that is #studenthublive17. And our handle is @studenthublive.

Other things I should just tell you about very briefly are that the chat can move quite quickly. So there's a little pen button on the top hand of the chat. You can press that and then you can pause the chat and then you can scroll through it if there's something particular you wanted to pick up on. We often put links and things in the chat as well. So it can be really, really useful for that.

And there's also a way to change the layout of the interface. So on the bottom right hand side of the screen, you'll see a button that sort of looks like a little screen. And there's three different interface options that you can go for. So choose the one that suits you best.

OK. I'm going to welcome our first guest today, which is Steve Harrison. Welcome, Steve.

STEVE Thank you, Karen.

HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: You've done sessions before about being a reflective learner and about critical thinking, which we've really enjoyed. But today, you're here to tell us about the qualification, which is the BA and Honours in Childhood and Youth Studies, because you're the programme leader.

So there's lots of modules here on the table. Students will be getting their boxes of stuff. Tell us broadly, then, what is the overall qualification all about?

STEVE

HARRISON:

OK. So basically, the BA Honours in Children and Youth Studies is an opportunity for people to think about children's lives and experiences of children from a number of different perspectives. So I guess what's interesting about it for me is we've all got the experience of being young. We've all got the experience of childhood.

But the opportunity to take a look at children's lives and childhood more generally as a kind of social phenomena is to kind of get inside the experience of others. So when we start to think about childhood in different contexts, different cultural contexts, different social contexts, our understanding of childhood is extended or broadened from our own subjective experience.

So it's really got real relevance for people who want to work with children and young people in a variety of fields. But also, I think it's got relevance for policymakers. And also maybe you're a parent or you're thinking about adoption or fostering. So I think it's got wide relevance. And it takes quite a broad view of children's lives and their experiences.

KAREN FOLEY:

And that's why we've selected such an interesting range of topics to discuss this afternoon, which I've really enjoy preparing with the contributors, because there are so many things that pretty much anyone could take a view on. But also, how we think about the nature of childhood and how it's viewed has also got implications for childhood studies.

STEVE

HARRISON:

Absolutely. So for example, in our level one module, E102, Childhood Studies and Child Psychology, we introduce students to thinking about particular issues that children and young people face in their lives and how contexts impact on that-- but how you look at ways through different lenses and how, for example, you consider something almost as every day as gender and something that's given or seemingly given and unproblematic, when we start to look at that more closely, with a kind of nuanced eye, if you like-- through the lens of psychology or through the lens of sociology or anthropology, we can start asking questions about identity and how gender interacts with how we see ourselves and how we see others and how we see our place in society as children.

KAREN FOLEY:

And I'm really looking for something to Naomi about that in a little while. Can you tell us, then-- whilst we don't want to generalise, you've mentioned some of the things that students might be doing with their qualifications. But broadly speaking, who are the students who might be doing

this qualification pathway, Q23?

**STEVE
HARRISON:**

OK. So the majority of our students are female, as it happens. And many are working either part time or full time, so they're fitting their studies with other things. A considerable number of our students will already be working in the field of- working with children and young people in some context.

So we've got folk who may be teaching assistants in schools or they're working in health and social care settings. Maybe they're youth workers who are looking to deepen our understanding of child psychology or some particular aspects of childhood- so a wide range of setting, really.

Lots of people working in the charity sector- so for example, maybe work the National Children's Homes or Save the Children, or may be even working in care settings such as Camphill Trust, so on and so forth. We've got a very, very wide array of students who have different experiences, different motivations for study.

Also, there's people who are using the qualifications as an in, as a way of getting into working with children and young people, who are trying to build up their knowledge base prior to it and before they actually make up their minds which field to work in. A lot of our students use BA Honours as the basis for making their decisions about what careers they want to pursue down the line, because many careers now in working with children and people, you can qualify at postgraduate level-- so for example, social work, youth work, and others.

KAREN FOLEY:

Brilliant. Now, this is brilliant because with students who've got experience working in these settings comes a range of diversity, and also knowledge about things. And yet they're going to be studying the content. So there's this whole sort of way of being where you need to say, I've got experience of this, this, and this. I might be learning about this, this, and this.

But then, how do students start taking what they're learning with enhancing their experience, but maybe not relying on it exclusively? Because they're going to need to be focusing on a lot of the module material. I mean, right now, you know, a lot of our students here are at level one. So they're just starting their studies.

So they'll be at that stage where they're very, very excited and also have a lot of very relevant experience. What advice can you give students about mixing the two, their experience and the module content?

STEVE

HARRISON:

That's a really good question, actually. One of the things we focus on, particularly in level one- but that progresses as you go through- is reflecting on how these new perspectives interact with your own and what challenges they put to you. So for example, within 102, we encourage students to keep a reflective diary, which is not just about noting what you've read, but noting how you respond to what you've read.

And some of the material is really, really challenging. If our own experience has informed how we see the world, to engage with somebody else's perspective, and if that perspective is radically different or challenging, or maybe it touches a nerve, maybe it touches a part of your experience that you had not tended to for some time- maybe it can generate an intellectual response. So you go and write an essay about it. But it also can promote an emotional response.

You may strongly disagree with something that you encounter within your studies. Or you may find that something that you read challenges you quite deeply. And you might find it at odds with your own values. So what we encourage students to do is keep a note of their responses and use that as material for learning.

I think one of the things that I find most exciting about our programme is that it does prompt learning. It invites students to learn. It invites students to develop and grow. And that's often indicated by some form of emotional response.

KAREN FOLEY:

No, absolutely. One of the things I love about the programme is this inter-disciplinary nature of things. So while students might have experience, they might say, actually, I don't really look at it from that angle. So they're starting to get new perspectives as they're also looking at new forms of content as well, which can be absolutely amazing.

Also, it has applications in terms of policies and practises, as you've mentioned before. So while somebody might have a very applied perspective on something, they perhaps hadn't considered something from a policy perspective.

STEVE

HARRISON:

Absolutely. And what's interesting about the team that's created this course and the team who run it, alongside our associate lecturers who tutor it, is that we all come from different disciplinary backgrounds ourselves. So as you'll see with my colleagues who are presenting later on, each comes to the question of childhood from their own particular disciplinary background, be that sociology or be that psychology or, in my case, coming from professional

practise.

And somehow, we find the opportunity for dialogue can be challenging, because we use different language. And we're sometimes looking at different aspects of childhood. And that'll be the same for our students. Our students will come with different study motivations. And our material tries to mediate that discussion and debate.

Sometimes, I think our students find it surprising that maybe within the materials the two perspectives talk to each other quite strongly, because maybe one perspective challenges another perspective. This has been the case to some extent with Childhood Studies and Child Psychology, where the two are- maybe it's a bit overstating it to say that they're in conflict. But they challenge each other.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, everyone I've spoken to, I said, so what is childhood? And what is youth? And we've got this sort of idea that- I'm not even going to get started on this, Steve, because it is incredibly contested in terms of what we mean by this.

But the one thing that, I guess, we can agree on is that there is a sort of vague age range at which this is specifically looking at. I just want to take a quick trip to the Hot Desk to see what people are talking about at home.

MALE STUDENT: I think what I'm really amazed by is how many new people are joining us today. So we've got lots of people on E102 and E109 starting off their first year, ready to go. Some people are doing them both at the same time, full time. [INAUDIBLE] doing E102 and E102. And Samantha, in the room, is an experienced student. She's starting her second year. So that's good to know that someone made it through. That's really motivating. And perhaps lots of tips to get us off to a good start as well. And Claudia's been finding out what people are looking forward to as well.

CLAUDIA: Yes And we've have some great comments there as well. [INAUDIBLE] Laura's looking forward to looking at childhood youth from a different perspective, because currently, she's got more of a psychology perspective. And Rosana is looking forward to get some qualifications, because she's already working with children, but she wants to get more skilled up so she can do that better.

And Summer is actually looking to foster, which I find is quite inspiring. And she's hoping to get more skills to help her do that as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Thank you. I wanted to pick up on this idea of time, because whilst people are often studying one module-- I mean, Daniella and Tatia are studying E103 as well. So how long does the qualification take? And any advice for students who may be doing two 60 credit modules at once?

STEVE HARRISON: OK. So the BA Honours takes- if you're really, really on it, you could do it within three years, I guess, by having a study intensity level of 120 credits per academic year. But it can take up to much longer, in excess of 10 years. And if any students are thinking about the longer period, just check with the course details as to what the time limits are of that.

For those students who are studying 120 credits, it's really interesting, actually. This is something that, for the Open University, was becoming more and more popular, or more common, at least.

KAREN FOLEY: It is indeed, isn't it?

STEVE HARRISON: And with it comes challenges. But our colleagues from sport were on earlier on. And I'm sure that they'd say that you get out what you put in. So if you're training for a marathon, as you get closer to the marathon, you've got to train more intensely. And I guess for a lot of our students who are studying 120 credits, they've got a particular objective in mind in terms of getting qualified within a particular time frame so that they can take their next step in their career.

My advice there is to be as conscious as possible of the non-negotiable deadlines within your two modules and how they interact.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEVE HARRISON: Our modules are designed within a particular qualification pathway. And they do assume that you're studying 60 credits a year. That's not to say they can't be studied at the intensity of 120. And last year, a significant number of 102 and 103 students did exactly that, and did so successfully.

The non-negotiable deadlines are really, really important. So think about when your TMA dates are. Think about when they interact.

A lot of our students got children. Think about when the peak demand times are from your children. But make sure that you make some space, regular space, and fix space for yourself so that you can have that time free of interruptions where you can concentrate on your work

and accept that you're going to have to be selective.

There are certain things you're going to have to study in both module-- key concepts, if you like, key parts of the module materials. You're going to have to engage with the assessment if you're going to be successful.

But there may be some parts of the module material you'll come back to at a later point which is less pressured and so on. So it is very much about getting your time management sorted, but getting a real sense of the lie of the land and, as I said, how those non-negotiables interact with each other.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. And we're not going to cover things like time management in this programme, because we've been doing an awful lot of that in our Boot Camps, which incidentally, if you missed, we had this morning. Libby actually had this brilliant idea. She's been getting the kids to do the house work for her, which we were all very impressed with. So it shows how ingenious OU students can be at creating some of this time.

So do check out those sessions on the Boot Camp about all of those study intensity, study skills, time management, et cetera aspects that we are covering separately, because we're really going to focus on the content today- which leads me to ask about the structure of the programme, because there is a little bit of optionality in here.

We've got a lot of level one students here who I'm sure are familiar with the qualification pathway. But broadly, could you just tell us what is in store for them?

STEVE HARRISON: OK. So if you're a student studying Q23, your key level one module, if you like, is E102, Childhood Studies and Child Psychology. Alongside that, you can study a number of optional modules, including E103, which is Education Studies Primary; E109, Early Years; and also- I'm testing my knowledge of codes here- DE100 with Psychology. So there's a number of optional modules there.

What you'll find if you're studying E102 is you're also studying alongside students who are in other qualification pathways.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEVE HARRISON: So that makes it really, really interesting. And my advice would be don't stick to your own little group.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEVE Get in there, find out about each other, and find out the different perspectives you could bring.
HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: Because often, the psychology students will be coming at something from a very different perspective than maybe students who are approaching this from childhood and youth perspectives.

STEVE Absolutely. So Childhood and Youth Studies students- this may seem obvious-- but their
HARRISON: primary interest is going to be in childhood and youth, whereas psychology students, the discipline of psychology may be at the forefront of mind. And there is a lot to be learned between the two.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEVE For Childhood and Youth Studies, E102 is quite possibly their first module in their study
HARRISON: pathway.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEVE Maybe for psychology students, it might be their second.
HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEVE So you're going to have a mix of experiences. You can tap into that as well.
HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: And the psychologists will be focusing on child development- so again, different sort of questions and different ideas coming from the same content.

STEVE Absolutely.
HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: What happens at level two then?

STEVE OK so at level two, our core compulsory module- whereas E212, Childhood, which is the
HARRISON: longest standing of our modules within Q23- and Childhood is a really rich, exciting module

which takes students much more deeply into Childhood Studies itself. So it looks at childhood across a range of different contexts.

And alongside that, again, there's a high level of optionality. For people who want to stick with the kind of development or psychology perspective, there's E219, which has been produced by our team, which looks at developmental psychology first and foremost.

But there's also choices that involve modules such as KE206, which is coming online now, which we've developed with Health and Social Care. So students who want to look at childhood and youth within particular practise context have got options there, as have those who are primarily concerned with children and childhood, but want to have dabbled in psychology, if you like, in Developmental Psychology at E102, can take a little bit further in terms of E219.

KAREN FOLEY: It's really interesting how variant a disciplinary this is in terms of how you're producing the content, as well as what the student cohort is like, in terms of the aspects that they're studying. So there's a lot of connections going on here and a lot of optionality. And so people might be focusing on, for example, psychological development. Or they might look at the practical complexities of working with children.

But at level three, they choose one option module, don't they?

STEVE Absolutely. And that's the case at each level, actually.

HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEVE You choose one--

HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: One core option. So you can start specialising.

STEVE You've got one core you have to take and then one option to complement that. At level three, **HARRISON:** our current core module is Issues and Research with Children and Young People, which really tidies up, if you like, and refines the academic aspect of your study. So you get to look at research methodologies. You start to consider the design of research, and also in particular, the ethical issues of research with children and young people, because we have to think about their legal status and the issue of potential exploitation when using the information that we get

from research with children and young people-- so really helpful in that regard.

Alongside that, there's, again, a number of optional modules, including children's literature, which is really interesting and another way of thinking about children's worlds. Yeah, because think about the Harry Potter phenomenon going back a while ago. how children's engagement with literature affords them an opportunity to build different worlds and different senses of themselves through their engagement with literature. So again, there's that kind of opportunity just to diversify your study and have fun.

KAREN FOLEY: And do students get to look at designing their own research project?

STEVE HARRISON: They do within EK313. So that's the kind of primary focus within that module. So that's sort of a preparatory module for that. So for students who are in practise settings, it may well be that they want to engage in consultation with children and young people.

In recent years, a lot of work has been done around children's rights and emphasising the importance of children's voice. Involving children themselves in the design of research has become an issue of particular import, and something we've specialised in within the Open University itself. So we've been at the cutting edge of that.

But also, for example, Mimi's research is focused on children and the internet and advertising and food. And these areas are really, really critical, as the influences on children become greater and greater and greater and more direct communication is established between, for example, advertisers and children. The opportunity for parents to mediate what children are exposed to seems to diminish the greater access children have to technology and media-enabled things like mobile phones [INAUDIBLE].

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, no, I know. And I'm going to be talking to Mimi about that a lot later. But Steve, that's been a really, really wonderful flavour of some of the issues here, and also an outline of the qualifications to look at the core and optional modules. But I guess the take home point is just to appreciate the diversity that the student population are going to bring in terms of the practise that they're perhaps involved with, and the different theoretical perspectives as well that they may be interested in.

And it's great to be able to learn from other students. So I guess going and get on those tutor group forums and really start to make the most of those contacts in your studies.

STEVE Absolutely.

HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Steve Harrison, thank you very, very much.

STEVE Thank you.

HARRISON:

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So we're going to have a short break. We're going to show you a quick video which is about the tree sculpture. So this is one of the areas on the campus that we'd like to introduce you to, because we're not just about content. It's also about the space. And our space right now is at the Open University at Milton Keynes. Your space is at home. Tell us what you're thinking on the chat. I'll be back in a couple of minutes with Naomi Holford, where we take a look at the very interesting issue of gender. See you in a minute.

[MUSIC PLAYING]