

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**KAREN FOLEY:** So in this next session, we're going to look at DD801, which is Principles of Social and Psychological Inquiry. And I'm joined by Kesi Mahendran. Kesi, thank you for coming along today. This is a really exciting new module. It's the first of the two-year masters programme.

Now for those of you who may have missed this morning's session, we did a session about careers in criminology. So if you're interested, that may be one to watch on the catch up. And you can find that on the website. So Kesi, fill us in on the masters programme, but specifically, we're going to just be talking about DD801 today.

**KESI MAHENDRAN:** OK, so we're launching the masters programme, and what we've got to offer is three new masters. We've got a masters in psychology. Then we've got a masters in forensic psychological science. And then we've got a new masters, which is an MA in crime and justice.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Now this has been quite an exciting process, because you've written the qualifications and now you're writing the modules. So it's been a top-down process in terms of design, which is great, because I guess you're fitting everything in and thinking about where it all goes.

It's a two-year programme as well. And this is the first year for 60 credits of the masters. So who can take them? What's the access requirements?

**KESI MAHENDRAN:** Well. I mean, I think it's going to be very interesting, actually, the masters programme, because anyone can take them, really. All you need is a bachelors degree 2:2.

And if you don't have that, I'm looking at the moment-- actually, I've had a steady flow of cases that are what we call-- excuse me-- nonstandard cases. And if you have a background-- maybe you were doing social work, or you've done an MBA, or you've done something slightly different, I've seen a few of those. Then we're looking at those cases as well.

So I think what we're going to get, Karen, is a really interesting mix of students, because what is usually the case with social science masters degrees is you need to have a first degree in a cognate discipline. But what we've decided to do within the faculty is to keep it open. So we could have people from arts backgrounds, social science backgrounds. I think we will get a lot

of psychologists, naturally, enough who've done their first degree here in psychology.

**KAREN FOLEY:** As you say, what makes it so exciting is you get such a wide range of people and diverse experiences also. Let us know if you're interested in studying for a postgraduate module with the OU. So we've got some widgets on the screen that will have changed now. So we'd like to know which subject you're studying. Are you considering postgraduate study? And which level you're currently studying. So just click on the widget that applies to you most so that we know what you think.

We've also got a slightly more difficult question that Kesi will come back to later. But you might want to have a stab at it, and that's about post-truth. Is it possible for an empirical study to reveal the truth? So take a look at that when you've got a second, and let us know what you think.

OK. So Kesi, we started to briefly look at the structure of the overall masters, which is the two-year process. But let's take a look in more detail at DD801 in terms of the structure. So it's 60 points, and it's starting in October for nine months. Can you tell us about the sort of qualifications that you could get from it?

**KESI**  
**MAHENDRAN:** Yeah, I mean, so anyone who's interested in doing a masters in social science would start on this module. So it's the foundation module for all three of the qualifications that I mentioned. And what it does is it provides a training and an opportunity for you to explore knowledge and the process of inquiry.

And the way that, as you said, when you're setting out-- the programme, the way that we've done it this time is a little bit different, really, because I'm the qualification director of the MSE in psychology, as well as the chair of 801. Alongside the two other qualification directors, Deb Drake and Johanna Motzkau, we designed, as a team, at the beginning. So we designed all the modules together so they fit together. It is quite neat, actually. So even themes that you get in the first module will reappear in the second module.

So that's the idea is that the first module then holds everyone together, all the students together as a community. You'll get to know people, make some new friends, and so on. And you can then collaborate with your new pals, if you like, your postgraduate pals, as you proceed through three blocks.

And to keep going on the idea of inquiry then, so what we're going to do is, first of all, we're

going to talk about how inquiry is conceived. So we have this neat narrative, which is conceived, interrogated, received. It's a little bit cheesy, but it does work.

So it's conceived. How is knowledge conceived? Then you have a second block which is about how knowledge is interrogated. How do you know if it's true or not? Which means you need to understand method. We're not going to train you in method, as such. That's more of a first degree thing. But what we're going to train you in is the critical skills in being able to interrogate method.

I mean, most students see lots of data all around them, don't they? On the news, and so on. And this is an opportunity, which is how we end up with widgets about post-truth, this is an opportunity to look at the truth of information. How was it gathered? What was the sample? What was the method, and so on?

Then in the last block, we look at how knowledge is received. And the processes by which knowledge is received, whether that's by government, public influences, and so on-- it goes around in a circle-- affect how academics and researchers ask the new questions.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now Charlie is on the level 1, and he's hoping to do a postgraduate module, as indeed are a lot of people out there in our audience right now doing level 1. And a lot of them are interested in doing postgraduate. And some of them are not quite sure about it as well.

So that's really interesting. And thanks for filling us in. And let us know if you've got any questions about that, about even, for example, whether or not study at the OU is different to at a brick university at a postgraduate level, because maybe we can tackle some of those questions later.

So these three blocks, Kesi, you mentioned some of these aspects. But I wonder if you could tell us in a bit more detail, because it is an interdisciplinary module. And you have the cognitive, social, and forensic psychology and criminology in counselling, so there's a lot happening that will both entice students and that they can weave into things. How do we treat that interdisciplinarity?

**KESI**  
**MAHENDRAN:** The way that we do it is by topic. So we take key topics, like one of the topics that we're going to introduce in the module is anxiety. So anxiety is something-- I mean, as the students are talking about it, you feel anxiety before an EMA, don't you?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah.

**KESI** And so this anxiety we're going to treat-- it's a concept, first of all. I don't imagine 100 years ago, anyone even used the word. So first of all, it's a modern concept. So we'll talk about how to know whether you're suffering from anxiety, how to treat anxiety.

And then to move into a more sociological level, we'll then look at why is anxiety a "thing" now? Why is it so high now? Is it true that Britain suffers from a high level of anxiety? Are the Danes happier than everybody else? So it starts to-- so if you take a topic, then you can use different disciplines.

Do we pathologise certain people as being anxious, certain groups of people? And then you start to bring in criminology. So you see the psychology, the wider sociological level, the criminological level. And that's how we're approaching each of the topics. We've got some really exciting topics as well.

So we look at how things are categorised, the concept, what research gets funded, what research doesn't get funded, and so on. And I think it gives the students an opportunity. It's a very independent module. I mean, back to your student that you referred to-- is it Charlie, was it?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yes.

**KESI** --that is studying at first year. Well, we did quite a lot of hand-holding at the beginning. I will say that. It's not a leap to postgraduate level. So in the first, probably first two months, it's very taught, actually. Probably 3/4 of it is taught. And then you get progressively more independent as a student. So by the time you get to Block 3, you're very independent, actually. And that's an opportunity.

So one of the topics that comes up in the second module is leadership. So you might think, oh, I'm really interested in leadership. I'm interested in women in leadership. And you might think, well, I'd like to do some work about women in leadership in my workplace, because I think something is going on there. It's quite interesting. There's a lot of female leaders, perhaps. And we give you that opportunity so you can develop a case.

And that's how the assessment is done. It's about taking it into your own environment. And that could be your work environment, your home environment, or just a setting that you're interested in.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And that must be great, because people have a chance to really apply things. And so they're getting to test all of those ideas that have been quite taught at the beginning.

**KESI** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

**MAHENDRAN:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** What's the study intensity like then for students? I mean it's 20 hours a week, you say. And sometimes, I know, it can be difficult to conceptualise those, because you think, I'll do those on a Sunday. And of course, it's not always possible to do 20 hours on a Sunday. How might students split this up? And how intense are those 20 hours, really?

**KESI** I wouldn't underestimate it. I mean, it is a bit like taking on a part-time job. I mean, 20 hours a week is a lot. You're going to need, I would say, three sessions to pull it off.

**MAHENDRAN:**

Well, the way that we've designed it, because it's entirely online, so as long as you stay with your module page every week or get two or three weeks ahead of yourself, every time you get to a new topic week, there'll be planning box at the front. And it will tell you exactly what you need that week, what you need to watch, what you need to download, all the sources, all the materials, and all the activities.

So you can start to plan. If you know you've got a long train journey that week, then you can think ah, OK, it's a three-hour train journey. There you are. I've got three hours straight away. I can do a third of it like that.

So in any one week-- as I say, it's taught at the beginnings, so you're looking at about 15 hours taught work and then 5 hours independent study. By the time you get towards the end of Block 3, it's flipped around. So now it's 15 hours independent, about 5 hours taught.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Right. So you'll need to be very motivated and diligent and organised. That sounds right. But I mean, the beauty of things online is that they're often very transportable. So you can take things on the train. You can plan your studies so that it can fit in with your life, I guess.

We also have tutors, so associate lecturers who are working with students. Now can you tell us a bit about this? Because I guess this is the key way that things might differ from undergraduate research is that the tutor is almost like a coach here.

**KESI** Yeah, yeah, very much so. So this is going to be a new relationship for you. And as part of

**MAHENDRAN:** signing up and registering on a postgraduate programme, you will be allocated to a tutor who

will be your coach. And they will have one-to-one time with you so that we built that into how we've designed the tuition strategy.

And what we'd like the students to do, and we'll do that in the first TMA, TMA 1, is to set objectives, both for the module and for their qualification. So they'll do that-- it's called an objective-setting approach. So you self-manage by setting goals for yourself, basically, which is not an unreasonable way to go about things.

And then what will happen, if your tutor will really get to know you, so that that tutor can say, when you're thinking to yourself, oh, why did I decide to do a postgraduate programme? This is just overambitious of me. Then your tutor can say, well, remember what we said at the beginning. You knew you wanted to do this because you want to get to this place. So halfway through, they'll pick you up on your objectives and maybe revise them, and so on.

So it's a coaching-- we've just recruited. We're in the recruitment process. We had a very good pool of applicants, actually, really a lot of excitement about working on the module. And we recruited the social lecturers who had training and coaching and mentoring. So we're going to get a really good group of people. And as I say, the ratio is quite low, so they will get to know you. And they will be there with you through the process.

**KAREN FOLEY:** You've had to choose a group. And so there are also some conventional tutorials, in a sense, which I think is also really exciting, because whilst the supervisory aspect can be really nourishing, it's also nice to talk to other students.

**KESI**  
**MAHENDRAN:** Yeah, who are on your level, yeah, and who you can be very candid with, and so on. And what we're going to do is have forums. We're going to have live-- use the Open Live facilities, and stuff like that.

And then there's going to be a little bit of collaborative work and also a bit of review work. You won't be scored on reviewing at all. But it's an opportunity to-- one of the last TMAs in 801 is a campaign poster. So you have to create a poster for the public.

And what we're going to do with that one is you review another poster. So somebody reviews yours, and you review another poster. And it's still getting used to feedback and handling feedback and then giving feedback and just getting that process there, so real opportunities to collaborate.

And while I'm on that subject, Karen, we also have the qualification website as well. So that will be where you can build community. That will be a slightly different space where you can hang out with students. And that qualification website will be open and running all the way through, between the two modules, especially in that gap between the two modules.

So that's almost like a chat room arrangement. You can upscale in that space. You can meet other people in that space. And you can also profile yourself and develop a profile, especially if you like social media and profiling yourself.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Well, I'd like to come back and talk a little bit about content and look at the results of the widget, which if you haven't voted on, if you could do so now. So we'll take a look at post-truth. And Kesi, you can tell us why this is a good example of something that students might like to learn in the module.

Sophie and HJ, though, are there any questions from people at home?

**HJ:** I don't think there's any questions, in particular. We're just talking about exams a bit. And there are some postgraduate or people thinking about doing postgraduate in the chat, which is really interesting. So they are paying very close attention to this. And they do say that it sounds quite interesting.

And Janet, I think she might be interested in it. as well. She said about her studying DD210 and said there are so many things she's found out that are constructed in society. And she's finding it really fascinating--

**SOPHIE:** Yeah, she got the idea of anxiety being a social construct, so yeah. And Diana, she's looking to go into a PhD and then do research, and things. So there's people who are really thinking ahead. It's nice to see.

**HJ:** And Ben joined us as well. It seems everyone's in the middle of doing exams and TMAs. So--

**SOPHIE:** Put me to shame. [CHUCKLES]

**HJ:** But they've come here for a break, some people have said. So it'd be nice to look forward at what will happen after their exams. And yeah, so hopefully, lots of interesting modules and perhaps a few new students signing up for this one.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Well, Kesi, could you give us an example? Because I'd asked you, when we were

talking about the session, about some of your advice for students. And one of them, you'd said, was not skipping activities, like the anxiety week.

So tell us about what the anxiety week is in the module and some of the things that-- I mean, this is all about being self-reflective, which we start very early on, from DD102, all the way through our degrees. And we try to be mindful of it. But also, time can get on, and we can sometimes be in the middle of an EMA and forget all about it. So is there anything that you could tell our students who may be feeling anxious about reflecting on things and about how useful sometimes going with those and recognizing those feelings might be for them?

**KESI**  
**MAHENDRAN:** Yeah, I think if you're interested in inquiry, you need to know where you come from, what your standpoint is with inquiry. And this is one of them. We've got quite a pleasant quiz which appears in week 8 which asks the question, why do you do research? Do you do research because you want to discover something new? Or do you do research because you want to change the world or problem solve, and so on?

So we start to get the students to think about the processes of why people are motivated to do research at all. What I think generally my advice with the postgraduate programme is, is because it's online, it becomes very important, I think, to do all the activities. So it's quite often, I think, with OU teaching, we ask students to pause, don't we? Pause and reflect on and then whatever the subject matter is.

But what we're doing in this module, and actually all the way through the programmes, is we are asking students to actively do something. So with the anxiety week, week we have a case. I won't present it now. But we have an individual. We tell you her story and what's going on, why she's come to see a counsellor. And you get then the opportunity to be a counsellor.

So Laura, who wrote that week, Laura McGrath, who's written a really excellent weeks' materials, what she does is she shows you CBT, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. And she shows you the principles of it.

And then the activity, which comes as Activity 4, it says, now use those principles to analyse Mary's case, if you like. And so it becomes very important to actually have a go at that. And then you get a reveal at the end. So the systems can see what you've chosen and then the reveal at the end. It's not like you're going to get a wrong or right answer. But it starts to get you to think about that level of explanation for anxiety.



And then coming back to some of the comments that students have made, later on, you start to go into the social construction of anxiety. And it'll make you go back to how you did in the first activity.

And so it becomes-- that would be my main really key advice to students who are going to undertake the masters programmes, whichever one they decide to choose, is it's online. Do the activities. Get involved. The more you put in, the more you'll get out.

It's not a bookish module. It's very hands-on. There's going to be videos. You're going to be watching videos. You can be listening to sounds. There's a riot, you get to listen to and work out why it happened, and so on. So it's very interactive, and it's very overalls-on, hands-on postgraduate training.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Thank you, Kesi. We're out of time. So I just wanted to end by asking your final thoughts on the widget which was the post-truth question, which you've touched on before, thinking about the extent to which it is possible to know things.

So let's see what people at home said about the question, is it possible for an empirical study to reveal the truth? So we've got 36% saying, yes, it will stand as the truth until it is replaced. Now we had to shorten some of these answers, Kesi, because the widgets were very, very small. [LAUGHS] So what is the correct answer? And what might this indicate in terms of how you're approaching some of these very difficult questions?

**KESI**  
**MAHENDRAN:** Well, thank you for participating in that, because it's a philosophical question, isn't it? It's a philosophy of science question. And of course, there is no correct answer. I mean, there are different models of science. And it's interesting that the students were-- the figures looked like they were kind of spread, 36%, and then it was sort of in the 20s.

And I think that's about right, really. The people who went towards 36% went towards normal science. That is the normal science model is that you get the truth as far as you know it at that point. And then somebody comes along and says, well actually, the world is round. Oh, we didn't realise it before then. So that's the very much, this paradigm shift, normal science model.

And then you have the social constructionist model, which was that different people will have different truths idea, depending on perspectives. What someone with power might say is the truth is different to someone who doesn't have a voice. So that becomes more political,

sociopolitical.

And then you have the problem solvers, the pragmatists, who don't really want things to get too philosophical. They say, well, if it works, if it changed things, if people feel better, let's go with it. And CBT is an example of a really pragmatic solution to anxiety.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Kesi, thank you so much. There are so many more questions I want to ask you, but unfortunately, we're out of time. But you've given us a wonderful overview of DD801, which is a PG Cert in its own right as well and the first year of the three masters programmes. So thank you very much for filling us in on that and showing us some of the issues that students might grapple with if they embark on that module.

**KESI** Thank you.

**MAHENDRAN:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** If you enjoyed that, you might enjoy some of the things we're doing. If you're a psychology student, don't forget to come to our DD310 and DD317 sessions this afternoon. And if you like some of those more philosophical questions, then at the end of the show, we're going to look at the masters in philosophy with Jon Pike.

But you can check out the whole range of activities and events on the programme by looking at the Student Hub Live website, [studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk](http://studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk), to see the times of the sessions that you might want to enjoy. And don't forget, also, there's that criminology session that we did this morning, that relates to what Kesi was saying earlier.

We're going to have a short video before we're back in a couple of minutes to look at A277, which is the Exploring Religion. So we'll see you very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]