

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**KAREN FOLEY:** Hello, and welcome to the *Student Hub Live*. My name's Karen Foley, and this is the second of our Open Justice events for the law school at the Open University. Now, this evening, on the 3rd of May in real time, we're going to have a live and interactive discussion. And I hope you can take part in it, too.

Now, there are several ways to get involved. There's the Watch and Engage option. And, to do that, you log in with your student or staff details, and you can then access the chat and also the interactive widgets that you will see appearing on your screen.

Now, there are lots of things we'd like to know. And if you were here this morning, some of these might be familiar to you. We'd like to know how you're feeling, which level you're studying, what you're planning to do with your law degree-- and even if you are studying law-- where you're based, and whether you've been to any of these events before. Also, what does "pro bono" mean to you? And should law students be involved in pro bono activities?

So there's lots to get involved with, there. All you do is select the widget that you would like to engage with, and then press the button that applies to you most. With the wordles, you need to put three things in, to submit the answer. So, if you can only think of one or two, just put a full stop or a cross in. And then you should be able to submit your answers and send those.

You can also engage with the chat. And Sophie and HJ will be feeding that into our discussion in the studio, from the hot desk. And I'll introduce them in a moment. But anything goes in that chat. You might want to talk about, well, not your end-of-module assessment, but doing your end-of-module assessment. You might want to talk about some concerns you've got. You might want to ask people's advice about other courses that they may be doing.

Or you might want to talk about what you've had for dinner, and how you're finding your OU study, more generally. So anything goes in that chat box. But also, you might have a question that you'd like to ask our panel. So, if you would like to ask that, please do pop that in the chat, and we will make sure we cover it.

Now, if you aren't in the chat, you can email us, or probably better is to put something on Twitter. And our hashtag is #studenthublive17, and our handle is @studenthub. So we will

make sure we include all of your comments, then.

But I know a lot of you will be watching this on Catch Up, as well. So do take a look out for future events that are coming up that you might like to get involved with also.

Now we've got a really interesting programme, this evening. Firstly, I'm going to talk to Paul Catley, who is the head of the law school. And we're going to do a bit of a general introduction about what's happening. And he's going to fill us in on some of the things that the OU law school are most proud of and also some of the challenges that they're being faced with at the moment.

We are then going to talk to some students about their experiences taking part in Open Justice activities. And they're going to tell us about a project that they've done. We're then going to tackle the whole issue of public legal education, and we're firstly going to look at social justice and legal education. And then we're going to look at public legal education in prisons and to prisoners.

So, some very interesting conversations. And whether or not you're a law student, there should be hopefully something that you can contribute to the chat in there. So, Sophie and HJ, could you say hello to us, and let students know what you're hoping for this evening and how you're going to be feeding their conversations into the studio.

**SOPHIE:**

Hi! Yes, again. So, we're back, for a couple of hours, with the law lot. I'm hoping we'll get some more of the chat that we had earlier, which was really good. There's quite a few people on, already. I hope everyone's had a nice dinner. I'm sure we'll be talking about food again very soon. [LAUGH]

**HJ:**

We've also got Kate joining us, in the chat. So she's able to answer any more specific questions about studying law or the Open Justice project. And she was very helpful in the last session, and we had lots of good questions about the Open Justice project. And I also say it's worth looking in our website, on the Resources section, as well, for all the stuff that we discuss. It will be up there and, yes, lots of helpful things.

But, yeah, just say what you think. We're open to talking about anything. And I'm sure we'll have a good discussion today.

**KAREN FOLEY:**

Excellent. And this morning's sessions are available on the Catch Up, too, if you would like to watch those. We had a really good webtour, an introduction to the Open Justice project. And

we heard about things to do with employability and, of course, some key legal skills, there, as well. So do make sure you check those out.

But let me introduce you to Paul Catley, who's the head of the law school. Paul, thank you for coming along tonight.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Thank you for inviting me.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now, the OU is approaching its 50-year anniversary. But the law school is a fairly recent addition to the university. So I wanted to know how the law school contributes, then, to the OU's mission, generally.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Right. You're right. The OU law school's only been around now for 20 years. So this is our anniversary, this year. And I think one of the things that we've found is how hugely popular studying law is. We're now the fourth-biggest course within the Open University, which I think is brilliant, given that we're still a relative newcomer.

Now, one of the core elements of the Open University is the idea of social justice. And that is really something which is central to the law school and to the study of law. Because, I think, an awful lot of people who study law are doing it because they are interested in ideas of justice and remedying perceived injustices.

So, I think that's really crucial. But also, we've, over the years, really sort of developed as a law school. When we first started, we were working with the college of law. And this was partly because the legal profession is quite conservative. And I think they felt, well, can you do law by distance learning? And, despite the great history of the Open University, they wanted us to start in partnership with an organisation that they knew well and trusted.

But, over the years, we've sort of developed our own confidence, but also we've developed the confidence of the legal professionals. So, what we've now been doing is developing our own law degree. And this year will be the first year when law graduates of the, if you like, pure Open University, rather than Open University in partnership, degree will graduate. And that's really exciting, that that first cohort who've gone through the entire course, full time, will be graduating this summer.

So, there's lots of things that are happening. There's this Open Justice, project, which is a very exciting initiative. We're also going into the world of MOOCs, the idea of Massive, Open,

Online Courses, that are free. And we're going to have badged Open courses. So you can get a certificate for having studied it.

And what we're starting off with is looking at the law in Scotland. And this is going to really give an opportunity for people who want to know a bit about Scottish law, which is different to the law of England and Wales, to do some studying for free but get some certification for that, through the badge courses. But also, if they want academic credit, we've got an assessment module which is linked to it. And that, we're hoping, is going to prove really popular, not just in Scotland but across the world.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now, we've got a lot of students out there, 57%, who are not studying law but would like to.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Right.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And I also wanted to ask you a little bit about some of the other projects. We talked about the Open Justice project this morning, and so people can watch that on Catch Up. But you said there was a lot of innovative stuff going on. And there is. I mean, virtual reality, the Open Justice project. The detectives and work that the Open University do with the BBC, as well.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Yeah.

**KAREN FOLEY:** It's all very, very innovative, very exciting, and a great way for students to test whether they might like to study law with the Open University and to find out more. But what are you proudest of, in terms of all of this innovation and growth?

**PAUL CATLEY:** I think the thing that I always remain most proud of is just the determination of our students. You know, I think being an Open University student is really something which does involve a lot of self-discipline, a lot of determination to succeed. But what I hope we are creating are some really exciting courses.

So, this year, I've been involved in a module on law society and culture, which has been looking at a lot of cutting-edge areas of law. So we've been looking at law and robotics in that, which isn't something which is normally in an academic law course. But what it sort of looks at is the fact that, increasingly, robots are taking a greater role in our lives.

And, what's the legal implications of that? You know, we've got driverless cars being trialled. Well, what happens if one of those cars is involved in an accident?

We've got lots of questions about, will jobs be replaced by automation? You know, we've already seen that in manufacturing, but a whole host of other kinds of jobs are now being sort of looked at, as well. Could they be done better by machine or cheaper by a machine? And so it's really raising social questions of how ought the law to respond to this, how ought politicians to respond to it, and does the existing legal system work.

So what we're hoping is that, if you come and study law with us, you'll get an insight into issues which are going to be really big issues in the coming years, as well as having the opportunity to cover a lot of the courses which would be in just about any law course, like understanding about the law of contract or understanding about criminal law.

**KAREN FOLEY:** It's lovely to see the OU being so high-tech. Hugh was telling us, this morning, about some of the virtual reality, as well, that gives students an opportunity to test things in a safe environment, which is wonderful experience. But, turning to this Open Justice project-- which, again, is another innovative [INAUDIBLE] and it's the central focus of what we're talking about, now-- it supports the mission of the OU in so many ways. But could you just fill us in, in terms of some of the key things that we're trying to do, here, in terms of the public legal education and legal advice?

**PAUL CATLEY:** Right. I think one of the missions of the university is about social justice, and it's about education. And I think the Open Justice project is just a superb example of where you can combine those two things. An awful lot of people don't really know what their legal rights are. And, through public legal education, which we're looking to do partly by going out into the community and getting students to talk to people about law that is relevant to them, but also what we're hoping to do is to create a lot of web resources so that people will be able to refer to them and to get a better idea of what their legal rights are.

So that's one aspect of it. But another really exciting aspect of the Open Justice project is that what we're hoping to do is to basically have online legal advice. Quite a lot of law schools have got into the idea of their students giving some legal advice to the public. But that's tended to mean that the public have to go to the university to get the advice, or students might go to one local Citizens Advice Bureau and help with advice there.

What we're aiming to do, as essentially an online university, is to really make use of that and to provide a platform where people can email us with their questions. We can then either get students to respond to those questions, and the students will be assisted by our AL

community, which includes many solicitors and barristers, in making sure that that advice is right, but the student will be then thinking about actually giving real advice to a real problem and how to set that out for an individual, rather than it being just an academic issue.

But also, I think, a really important element of this is that, if this isn't something which we can give the legal advice on, we will then put the person in contact with another organisation which can provide that information. So, it'll both be an advice system and a referral system. Which hopefully will be hugely valuable to the public but also will be great for students.

Because I think, increasingly, you know, if you're going into the legal profession, then it's a huge bonus to be able to say you've got experience of giving actual legal advice. But also, for a huge number of other jobs, the sort of skills that you will develop in thinking through a problem, thinking about how that is best tackled, thinking about how to then pass on that information to the recipient, are really important skills, beyond the legal profession. Just as, the sort of public-legal-education side, the idea of planning a presentation, going out and delivering that presentation, reflecting on it, thinking about how you're going to relate to your audience, what is going to be relevant to that audience? Those are great skills for a lawyer, but they're great skills for anyone going out into the workplace.

**KAREN FOLEY:** We had Marie Da Silva on, this morning, talking about some of the employability aspects. And we looked at some mock advice, as well. And we had a tutor on, and a student, and they were talking about how it can be right to know things but also it's important in terms of how one delivers things to the public. And so, this aspect gave people real employability skills, to actually use things, to be able to go out into the workplace, and also to test areas that they may or may not want to develop in future.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Absolutely! You know, I think it's a great chance to really think, is this what I want to do? Is this the area that I want to be involved in? Because I think, when you're studying a course, there's a tendency to just think about this module and then the next module and to, at times, stop thinking about, why am I doing this degree, and what do I want to get out of it?

And I think what is really important, if you are studying for a degree, is to keep at the front of your mind the sort of idea of, what am I doing this for, and what do I want to do, and to take advantage of opportunities like getting involved in the Open Justice project, getting involved-- you know, if you're thinking about-- certainly if you're thinking about becoming a barrister or a solicitor advocate, but equally if you're thinking about being in any kind of role where you're

going to be getting up and standing on your feet and expressing your views, the student law society, which is fantastic, has a really thriving moot group. And they've been tremendously successful, you know, beating universities like Oxford in competition, and things like that, and winning national competitions.

But I think that sort of opportunity, not just for those people who want to go into the legal profession, but for anyone who's thinking of any kind of public speaking, it's a fantastic way of developing those skills.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now, because we've got a lot of students out there who are thinking about studying law, I wonder if you could just give us a brief snapshot. Because, at the Open University, of course, it is distance education. And one of the things that I know the law school are very good at is making things current, making things topical, integrating real-life issues and examples within the module content, so that it's not just a lot of reading and a lot of theoretically isolated instances. So, why is studying law with the OU so exciting, in your opinion?

**PAUL CATLEY:** I think one of the things that's been really exciting in developing our new courses is that, when we were in partnership with the college of law, essentially what we were producing were written materials-- really high-quality written materials. But what we have been able to do by moving more towards online delivery is to get a real mix. So that, yes, there will be some material to read, but there'll also be videos to watch. There'll also be audios to listen to, so that there's a real mix, there, in terms of the sort of learning experience.

And also, there's the flexibility to be able to study when you want. You know, I came to the Open University just over three years ago. And, before that, I'd been working for a traditional university. And, increasingly, a lot of our students there were combining studies with work. But for them, that was a real challenge, because the classes were at a specific time. And so, if their work commitments meant that they couldn't be there at that time, they missed out.

Whereas with the Open University, and with the law courses, you can study when it's convenient for you, so that if you find that actually you've got time in the evenings or you've got time at weekends, because you're combining it with full-time employment, well, that's fine. You're not going to miss out on anything, because all the material is there, when you want it.

**KAREN FOLEY:** No, it is excellent. I know that students studying law tend to be very happy, whether they're doing it to practise or to enhance their careers. But law is very dynamic, as well, as we've seen with a lot of these initiatives. Just briefly tell us about the future, in terms of some of the

challenges and issues ahead, and some of the things that might be on the horizon for people interested in studying law.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Right. I think one of the things is-- you know, it's obvious, really, but the law changes. And therefore, what is really important, as a student of the law, is not so much learning what the law is at a particular point in time, but learning how to find the law, learning how, when you've then found it, to be able to apply that law and work out how the courts would apply that.

So those sort of skills elements are really crucial. I think, also, one aspect is to be alert to changes. You know, at the moment, we've got a whole host of changes. You know, there's--

**KAREN FOLEY:** Brexit, I mean-- [LAUGH]

**PAUL CATLEY:** Brexit is a big issue for big, commercial law firms, because, you know, just as we've had a lot of focus on banks and whether they'll stay within the UK or move outside, a lot of big-city commercial firms are not just operating in the UK. And therefore, in a sense, there's that need to sort of think about the future. Now, one thing that is brilliant, as an English lawyer, is the fact that most international trade takes place under English law.

So, you know, if you've got a French company trading with a German company, there's a fair chance that they will do that under English law. Certainly, if you're looking at developing countries and things like that, for them, most of their trade takes place under English law. So it's a fantastic qualification, really, wherever you study.

But I think another aspect is that we're in the process of change within the legal professions. So, one of the things, and it was just announced a couple of weeks ago, is, we've been having a review going on about the future of legal education and the routes into the legal profession. And the Bar Standards Board, who sort of govern things for would-be barristers, and the Solicitors Regulation Authority, who govern things for people who want to become solicitors, have, in the last month, both announced what their future route to qualification is going to be.

And this won't affect existing students. They're still going to be able to carry on under the current rules. But it will, in time, start to affect those who are coming in.

Now, for the bar, if you want to become a barrister, it's not much of a change. Effectively, the stage of the academic stage, the university stage, is going to stay the same. It's going to be, then, there will be more options when you then go on to the professional stage of training. And



it may well be that the costs of becoming a barrister come down.

For the solicitors, it's been a bit more radical. They're still sort of taking the view that it's an advantage to have a law degree. But what they are saying is that they're going to set up an exam, the Solicitors Qualifying Exam, which is to go into the acronym of SQE. And this will be in two parts.

The first part will be a knowledge test. And the second part will be a skills test. Now this is going to mean that there's going to be a sort of national test, rather than a whole series of different organisations setting up their own separate tests and those being sort of approved by the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

So I think what it's going to mean for us as a law school is, we're going to change some of our teaching to give another route through the degree. So that, if you want a general law degree, that will still be available. If you want to qualify for the bar and become a barrister, that will still be available. But if you want to become a solicitor, then what we are looking at is that, in your final year, or in your final two years if you're part-time, you will be able to do courses which will help prepare you for that part one of the exam.

And one hope of this new exam is that, in a sense, it's going to level the playing field, that it won't really matter so much what university you were at. It's going to be, can you pass this exam, in order to qualify to be a solicitor? The second part of it will be about skills and practise, at working in a sort of legal setting-- which won't certainly just mean a solicitor's office. And, for that, there'll then be some skills tests where you will effectively be interacting with an actor playing the part of a client or playing the part of another solicitor. And you will be showing the skills that you have developed.

So, very much things like the Open Justice project could be a brilliant foundation for preparing for that. But also, what it will hopefully mean is that there's going to be a range of new routes into the profession-- for instance, working at Citizens Advice Bureaus, which, up till now, haven't really been the way into the profession.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Hmm. So experience is really going to be a key factor, in terms of success. And this Open Justice project is one way of doing this. Paul Catley, thank you so much for coming on tonight. And you're going to join us again to talk about public legal education and social justice--

**PAUL CATLEY:** That's right.

**KAREN FOLEY:** --in about half an hour. But first we're going to talk to some students who've been out performing some public legal education in schools. So we're going to find out about them.

But thank you very much for filling us in on all that. It sounds very exciting and dynamic.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Right.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Thank you, Paul.

**PAUL CATLEY:** Thank you for inviting me.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Right. We're going to have a quick video, now, where we're going to look at how to use work experience. And then we'll be back to talk to Eva and Owen about their experiences taking part in Open Justice activities. See you very soon.