

KAREN FOLEY: Well, welcome back to the Student Hub Live. It's afternoon tea time, I think, and we're going to have a nice chat now about what ways you can feedback as a student. I mean, you've heard lots of this sort of stuff. We've had the library encouraging people to write love letters. and we've had all sorts of limericks and haikus in. So we've had lots of different ways of expressing how people feel about the library.

We've just been talking about statistics and surveys, and ways you can feedback. We've been talking about the way that The Open University Students Association enable students to come on various panels and feedback on their experiences, as well as be representatives of students. So there's lots and lots of things that you can do to get involved.

But what if you don't want to do any of those things? We want to open this session up and talk about how you might like to feedback as students. What sort of things you might be encouraged to do, even if it's a line in the chat, or would you like to vote on something? Do you think things should be on social media?

How can we, as an Open University, encourage you guys to feedback on what is and isn't working for you? Now to discuss this very big topic, I'm joined by James Warren and Rachel Garnham. You're both involved with the Student Experience on A Module feedback, which is one of the ways that students feedback. But tell us why you're so interested in opening this up and exploring the ways that students can feedback?

RACHEL GARNHAM: Well, we have quite a lot of different ways already where students can tell us what they think about how they're getting on, how we do things. So the Student Experience on A Module is one of them and I think James can talk more about that. We also have the student consultation process, a series of online forums, and face-to-face meetings where students can tell us more. And it's just really important that we hear what students think about their study experience so that we can make things better for them and for future students.

KAREN FOLEY: What sort of things do you want to know about?

RACHEL GARNHAM: Well, part of the student consultation process is asking students what they want to talk about. So some of the things that have come through that avenue is they've told us they want to talk about the references we provide, or at the moment, we're talking to students on our online forums about the IT systems and their availability. A few weeks ago, we were talking about

how we can better support students, the sort of student support services available-- so everything related to their student experience. So it would be really interesting to hear what students think about, how they want to tell us, and what they want to tell us about.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, we're asking them on the chat right now. I mean, I'm hoping they're not going to continue talking about their hoodies and the bags and the biscuits, the bananas. Lee, you work at the Student Support Team. What sorts of things do students like to feedback on to you when they call you up?

LEE: Oh, wow, we get lots of feedback. It's very varied and it encompasses the whole range of the module. So it might be about the module website. It might be about some of the videos that are used, or some of the podcasts.

We get lots of ideas for improvements, as well, and we feed all those back to our faculty colleagues and the people who actually write the modules, as well. So all the feedback we receive is also very useful to us, but it actually gets to the right people, as well. Because we don't just put the phone down and make a note of it and file it somewhere, we actively do something with that.

So we send it to the people who write the modules and the teams who develop the module material. So it's a really good way of feeding back to us. So if they don't want to use Facebook, or forums, or get involved with the online stuff, then they can always just give us a call and we can do that feedback for them, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant-- HJ, how's everything with you?

HJ: We've just talked about what we've enjoyed about our modules in the past. So I said, I enjoyed that it was a new module and there was a nice mix of audio and video stuff there, as well. Debra learned loads on her level two science module and feels very prepared for level three.

Cassie's dad is starting a new module, A344 this year. And we're just saying we found the tutors very supportive, as well, throughout our modules. So it's very good to hear that feedback.

KAREN FOLEY: So is this a good thing, in terms of just generally positive feedback? Do people feedback, Rachel, about the good things as well as the bad, or do they just tend to say, I was reading this book and I've noticed that diagram 1.4 should actually be labelled 1.3?

RACHEL No, we want to ask students about the big issues. And when we talk to them, we ask them

GARNHAM: what works well, as well as what we should be doing differently. And we get, I mean, particularly about students tutors, people have had really excellent experiences. And they just want to see that sort of consistency applied across the board, that sort of thing.

So they tell us if they've had a good example and ask that we do more of that. So yeah, it's really useful to hear what works well. We can really sort of impact across different policy areas and so on if we know what students are thinking.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, so we've talked about some of the ways students can feedback. And you're talking about ways that you'd like students to engage with you, so giving you ideas about what they could do. What are some of the things you're expecting students to say, in terms of how they might feedback?

Do you think that time is sort of one of these factors that make it more accessible if things are short, or if things are managed? What sorts of things are you expecting students will give you, in terms of how they can engage with giving you feedback that you'd find helpful?

RACHEL I think, students, we know, are very time-poor. And if they have free time, it tends to go on

GARNHAM: their studies. But others have more thyme, so we sort of like to provide, like, a tower of different ways that people can get involved.

You know, if you've got no time at all, we'd like you to just sort take a moment to post something on the forum to say how we can do better. Or please complete your Student Experience on A Module survey, or the National Student Survey-- that's one thing you can do. If you've got a bit more time, get involved in one of our consultation forums.

If you want to come to campus and sit on the committee, there's lots of different opportunities for that. So what we'd like to do is just bring people to the next stage, and also, provide other opportunities. The new module web sites now have feedback buttons so you can feedback directly about your module website.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, so tell me what happens then? Does someone's tutor see what they've done if they feedback on the module, if they don't like something, or they can't work something? Is there some sort of alert that's triggered, or how does that sort of get incorporated?

JAMES WARREN: OK, so the way the feedback works for students within a module is for every module they take,

they get an email link that invites them to fill out the questionnaire. And that's the one that people have been referring to that's called SEAM-- Student Experience on A Module.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, brilliant, excellent.

JAMES WARREN: But if you like, maybe it's just easier to say the student survey--

KAREN FOLEY: But not the National Student Survey.

JAMES WARREN: Not the National Student Survey, which is something different. And so within the module survey, students can comment on a whole range of things. And what we've tried to do with the new survey is make it much shorter.

So the previous one had about, I'd say, 45 questions more or less, maybe 48. I can't quite remember. But it was a real killer, a bit of a slog to get through. And so one of the things that students said again and again is they've got a lot of fatigue from surveys. It's not just the OU, everybody gets surveyed about everything nowadays.

So what we've done with that is try to make it much shorter. and so I think there's about 22 or 23 questions. So we've tried to really reduce it down with the kind of questions that students said, these are the really important things. Like, how does my tutor help me? What's going on inside the module? Are the assignments about right? Is the workload about right-- those kind of things that time-poor students mention. But at the same time, we've tried to keep the open questions.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, 'cause they're the best. I always look at those first.

JAMES WARREN: Yeah, so I think there are still three or four open questions. I should know this because the new questionnaire has just gone out in the last three or four weeks. So if students are on a February starting presentation, they still have about a week left to complete their questionnaire.

And as Lee was saying, with those open comments, they're really, really useful because the module team will go into those every year and look through them very carefully, and try to sift through them and get a better understanding for what's working well. And on the other side of the coin, what's not working well and what needs to be fixed. And that's an area where we're very keen on getting the student voice in and making sure it's representative.

So we're quite good at collecting some of that data. Sometimes we're very good at writing the action plan and then doing some of the things that we said we were going to do. But we're not always good at telling students we've done it, or some of the fixes that we've done.

So part of this whole process around surveying and making things better for students in the module is to play that back to students and say, did we really fix it? Is it better this year? And I think that's something-- I wouldn't say we're at the beginning of it, but it's a continuous process and we have to make it better and better each year.

KAREN FOLEY: So James, is what you're saying then, that these surveys are sort of almost shifting, in terms of the point of them? So the-- well, I always used to think that they were for the tutor because we used to get sent the results from the student feedback. And it was really helpful to know things like what the students thought of the tuition, and how available they felt you were. So all these great questions that I found really useful for engaging my own sort of teaching, and being able to compare my results against the national average, which all statisticians like to do.

But some students were saying things like they don't know, or not applicable. So did you guys do tutorials? They didn't know, it wasn't appropriate and things. So there were some questions that I can see it would be useful to remove. So is what you're saying now that you are sort collating a lot of this data to actually use to make global changes?

JAMES WARREN: I would say-- OK, so let's address the tutor part first, because one of the key areas that students say again and again is how important their tutor is. So questions around the tutor and the tutor being helpful, the tutor being easy to contact, haven't gone away. And they are going to remain a stable part because students have said I want to ask questions about my allocated tutor. So that will be in there. And as a tutor, you should get feedback on the revised questionnaire. It sort of turned off for one go, but now we think it's stable and should work.

And the other area you asked about, is there sort of a global change? I wouldn't say it's a global change. We're still looking to make changes at the module level, but because we've changed the way we're doing things at governance and the way we've done things with committees, what we'd like to do is have a broader picture, over many modules.

So for example, I'd be interested to know are all the modules in design, for example, having the same kind of issue? Do the students feel that, for example, the design modules would be much better if they had, say, more textbooks or more printed material, for example? Or do they really, really love a certain widget, like the design studio that's in their model material?

And so we want to try to put all that together if we can. And then as I said, when we pull together on an annual basis, we then have to bring that back to the student body and share it with them, along with our kind of running action plans. So I see it--

RACHEL Yeah, can I just--

GARNHAM:

JAMES WARREN: --if the old questionnaire was much more of a static snapshot, this one should be much more of a continuous thing, where we're trying to make it better for students as we go along.

RACHEL And I think we want to be much better at telling students how we've acted on their feedback.

GARNHAM: Because, I think, we do, but students aren't necessarily aware of it. And every year, these surveys are pored over. The consultations are considered.

What are we going to do? How are we going to make things better? And then students don't necessarily realise that these changes have actually happened as a result of what they've said. So we're actually launching a new Student Voice website in a few weeks time that will sort of gather together all the opportunities to be involved, but also everything we've done and are doing in response to what people have said through all these different channels.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant, so that's one to look out for. We asked people what their feedback was, and there's been a lot of feedback in the chat, so let's go to HJ and Lee and see what people have been talking about.

HJ: Mm. Uh--

LEE: Well-- sorry go ahead.

HJ: Oh, I just want to pick up on Peter's comment. He said the induction the other day was great and lovely to chat with other students and familiarising myself with Adobe Connect. That was a great induction.

And we were just wondering, is it just modules that you want feedback on, or can we feedback on things about, like, how we're finding Adobe Connect, or other outside resources as well? What's the best thing to do?

JAMES WARREN: Well, certainly within the open comments section of the SEAM survey, one of the general questions in there is about if there's anything they particularly liked or if there's anything that

particularly helped their study, we'd love to know about that. And conversely, if there's anything that they really hated, or if there was something that really was a barrier to your study, that really didn't work for you, that's really useful for us to know about.

So although we look at the student learning experience within a module, of course, anybody that's helped you within the OU in student services, other people, like your moderator within the forum, or if you've got a student buddy, we want to hear about those. And we'll definitely be looking for those kind of examples within the surveys.

KAREN FOLEY: And as we said earlier, it's about the positive things as well as the negative things that you want to get feedback on. You'd mentioned this website that's being developed and will be launched in a couple of weeks. How do students find it?

RACHEL GARNHAM: If you go on to your Student Home Page, there's a Community tab. And if you click through there, it will be appearing in the next few weeks. And that's also how you find out more about student consultation and some of the other things that we're currently doing--

KAREN FOLEY: And will take us to the Student Voice, will it?

RACHEL GARNHAM: And that's where the Student Voice website will sit and where you can find it, and find out all these ways of getting involved, but also what we've done already, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant-- let us know if you've been navigating your module website. I know a lot of people have already found their tutor, so I assume that you've got on your module website. But for those of you who are continuing students, you might find a pleasant change and refresh, and new tabs out there, as well, that may be very helpful.

So do check out that Community page. And there's also, of course, the Qualifications page, so if it's important for you to feel connected to your community, then those are good places to find out how you can get involved.

All right, so the Student Experience on A Module, as you said, for B starters, those are the people who've been in February. They might be getting an email soon. You really want them to fill that out and also go to the website and check out other ways of getting involved. And I get--

RACHEL GARNHAM: Oh, sorry. Can I just say, there's also an opportunity, at the moment, to sign up for face-to-face consultation meetings? We've got meetings coming up in November in Belfast, Croydon,

Leeds, and here, in Milton Keynes, at the sort of OU headquarters. And it's an opportunity we'll be talking about, how the Open University might develop its teaching model over the next few years, about what digital design by design means for students, looking at sort of the flexibility of study.

And so we've got quite a few places available, and people should-- if they follow through the Community tab to Student Consultation, the volunteer page, they can apply to attend one of those meetings. We'd really love to see people and hear from them face-to-face, and have a chat face-to-face about what they can do to be-- what they think the OU should be doing in those areas. And if people can't travel, there's also an online forum-based alternative they can sign up for.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Well, Fran says that the Community tab-- which says, ooh, it looks very snazzy. So it's good to see people in action going and finding that now. OK, HJ and Lee, what are people talking about, and are we going to have a little break for afternoon tea when we have our replay session?

LEE: We'll definitely have a break for afternoon tea and I'm going to eat another chocolate biscuit because Ronald tells us that he would make no improvement to his module at all. His last module was brilliant all the way through, and he continues to grow, academically, the more he studies with it. So I did ask if anyone would make any improvements at all, and Ronald has no improvement, so we awarded him a biscuit of the day, which was a chocolate hob-knob.

KAREN FOLEY: Is that like a badge biscuit?

LEE: Yeah, very much so, very much so. But unfortunately, due to the cost of postage, we decided to eat it. So--

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHING] Hm, I think that's a bit of a lame excuse, Lee. And I hear that Haley's husband has bought her a hoodie, and he's an OU student too, so Heidi is wondering whether she should buy him one. I think you should, Haley. Then you can-- but not the same colour, maybe get different colours. Be good, excellent. OK, so lots going on. One piece of advice, if I may, from both of you for our new, excited students out there?

RACHEL GARNHAM: Get involved, I think. Yes, do study, but use the opportunities online, face-to-face, where possible, to meet other students, to meet with our academic staff and nonacademic staff. And then tell us what you think because you're the ones at the coal face, you know? You need to

tell us how we can do better.

KAREN FOLEY: And you're not allowed to say fill in the survey, James, because you're also a staff tutor, so you oversee all sorts of student--

JAMES WARREN: That's true, that's true.

KAREN FOLEY: So you know a thing or two.

JAMES WARREN: So what I would say-- I've also been an OU student, so this is what I would say is as Rachel said, get involved, but if something's not right, tell us that it's not right. And if you've got an idea for an improvement, or you have a suggestion about this would be better, if it was like this, or why can't it be like this, then let us know.

And as Lee was saying, if it doesn't need improvements, then let us know that, too. That's useful. But don't be afraid to be detailed as well, because the module teams really appreciate that. And we will try to take it on board as much as we can.

If we can't change something, as well, this is another thing that we've said we're a bit guilty of, is that we will say this can't be changed, and this is the reason why. So there's just some things that are a bit stuck. But little by little, we'll make it much better, we hope.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, Rachel and James, thank you very much for your advice and for telling us all about how students can get involved. So you've got lots of ideas about that in the chat. We're going to have a break now from our live sessions.

We're going to show you some replays. What we're going to show you is about the Careers and Employability service, and then we're going to replay Boot Camp 3. Now this was our Boot Camp from last week, and we covered all sorts of study skills that are very important. Now you can watch this on the catch-up if you've got other things to do this afternoon, but we wanted to continue the live chat so that you can talk to each other, share your tips and ideas throughout the afternoon's programme.

So that covers things like reading and writing, and our next Boot Camp, if you liked that, is on Monday, the 9th of October. And we're going to be taking a look at assessment, one of the most popular topics. So do join us for that Boot Camp.

We'll be back live at 6:00 with a very, very exciting session. Susanne Schwenzer is going to be

Skyping us, but we don't know where from. It's going to be Space Science chat. And if that can't get you back for 6:00, I don't know what will. Then we're looking at managing your study workloads, so all sorts of time management tips and techniques are called for in that session with Ruth McFarland.

And then we've got David Healy back here. We had a brilliant session with him earlier today about learning styles. And what we're going to do in the session to close the programme is think about your expectations for your module. What are you hoping to achieve on TMA? How do you know that's realistic, and how does that then feed into your plans for your qualification more broadly?

So join us from 6 o'clock live. We'll see you then. Do you keep the questions and chat coming. Email us your feedback at studenthubopen@open.ac.uk. @StudentHubLive is our Twitter handle and the hashtag is #studenthublive17.

Lee and HJ, you've been absolutely amazing. Thank you so much for all of your comments and feedback and biscuit-eating and zoodie-wearing activities going on, and keeping everybody focused. Right, we'll see you back very soon. Bye for now, everybody, from our live session. Enjoy these replays. I'll see you at 6:00.

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