

KAREN:

Welcome back to the Student Hub Live. Well, this is our induction for tortes post graduates and education, childhood, and youth. And in this section, we take a look at childhood and youth. And I'm joined by Martin Robb and Jane Cullen. We've also got lots of widgets, these interactive tools that you can see on your screen if you are in the Watch and Engage Option.

So we've got our old map there. We'd like to know where you are. We've had lots of people coming in from various parts of the world. And Michelle said bye bye. She's off now and feels very supported. So if you have just joined us, I hope you feel very supported, too. Do ask any questions that we can try and put to our panel. And if you are watching this on catch up because we know people have very busy lives and there is something that you haven't heard covered, then do email us, StudentHub@open.ac.uk.

So in addition to telling us where you are, we'd like three words to describe your identity. We keep clearing these down by the way because different students may come into these different sessions. So if you could fill those in, that would be absolutely brilliant. And about your work setting. Now, that could be while you're studying or where you're working. Ideally where you're working because a lot of the time, these contexts will have a real impact into your studies.

We'd also like to ask which module you're studying. You'll see a lot of numbers here. You might not know what they are, and then I'm going to ask our panel to explain what E807, K802, and ED841 mean, and then this other also there, and which age group are you most interested in studying, notifiers 6 to 11, 12 to 18, or other. So if you could fill those, just open the widget that you'd like to vote on, click on the answer that applies to you, and then return the results and that will send.

And if you are new to us, you'll notice that there are different ways that you can have the interface. On the bottom right hand corner, there are different ways to lay out your screen. So do choose the one that suits you best.

Lee and Zach are fielding in any questions and general chit chat from the audience at home. They also work on our student support team as well as being OU students. So they're in a very good position to answer questions you might have if you're new to The Open University like where do I find my assessment? So do put any questions to them, and they will do their best to help you. Lee and Zach, are you both all right?

- LEE:** We are fantastic. We're having a great afternoon. Lots of chat is in there today about all sorts of modules, postgraduate studies, lots of people looking forward to this session childhood and youth as well.
- KAREN:** Thank you very much. Well, without further ado, let me introduce you to Martin and Jane. What are all these modules all about? Can you briefly explain them? Martin, you're our expert in childhood and youth.
- MARTIN ROBB:** Well, maybe Jane can talk about the overall structure, but basically, there are two core compulsory modules in the master's in childhood and youth, E807 and K802. Maybe, Jane just tell us-- remind us what E807 is.
- JANE CULLEN:** OK, so if I can step back a bit and just think a bit in concurrent-- concurrently with Martin about the overall structure of the master's in childhood and youth. And perhaps to explain first that unlike the master's in education, which is what we've been talking about earlier in the afternoon, then the master's in childhood and youth offers is a measure of flexibility in terms of module study. In other words, unlike the master's in education, the master's in childhood and youth doesn't have to be studied in any particular order so that the three modules-- there is still as ever 360 credit modules-- but these modules can be studied in any particular order.
- And and it's what-- I hope it doesn't sound too flippant-- but it's what I always refer to as a kind of mix and match approach so that students might start with a module that they particularly like, or they might start with a model that they find particularly challenging. But it gives them the option of actually suiting the way in which they order their study to the time that they've got available to study it. So these-- and this particular qualification is always studied over three years.
- So this isn't one with a fast-track option exactly. So it's studied over three years either three consecutive years, but as always with, Open University study that-- then study can be interrupted. Students can take a year off and come back to it a little later.
- So if we start with E807, and I think one of the things that has been referred to by you, Karen, I think quite a lot during today, is the way that we love letters and numbers in the Open University. And I've been-- I think I was saying earlier today that I've been with the Open University for 10 years. And I think for a lot of those 10 years, I've been completely flummoxed by the way that letters and numbers are used. I think--

KAREN: The other day I was in a meeting, and I said what does that mean. And nobody actually knew. And we realised we'd been talking about it. But I suddenly clocked that I actually didn't know what it meant. It is funny is it? And speaking of letters, Lisa's got another birthday cake, which Lee has said can be posted in a jiffy bag. That sort of letter is absolutely fine as well. [LAUGHS] So the letters and numbers, Jane. Sorry.

JANE CULLEN: No, no.

KAREN: I digress.

JANE CULLEN: No, no, but you didn't digress because I think one of the things that is only gradually permeated through to me over the course of 10 years is that the letters and numbers in important ways don't mean anything if you understand what I mean. There is a kind of randomness in the sense that E might stand for education, but an 8 might in some way stand for postgraduate. But the actual E807 as a description of a module is something that is just assigned. It's not necessarily preceded by E806 or followed by E808.

So but E807 is the module that is often taken as the first module. In other words, it's the one that the students choose to take first. And it focuses on childhood. And it focuses on that idea of children's worlds if you like. I think that that would be a good overall description. So it is childhood in the broadest possible way. This is moving away from a specific focus on education. And this is seeing childhood in all of its manifestations.

So, for example, some of the early part of the study on E807 is about childhood and the politicisation of childhood. Some of the early study on E807 is about childhood and gender. Some of the later study on E807 is about childhood and family and, for example, the ways in which that very private space, which is family and childhood, interacts with tensions with childhood and the state.

So as always with postgraduate study I think-- and this is following on from much of the conversation we've had earlier in the day-- that at postgraduate level, this is about the interrogation of those states. It is also seeing childhood across the world. So there is a real global perspective to this look at childhood.

And, for example, there are case studies within E807, which are based on film from Hungary, and which are based on film from South Africa. So this is looking at childhood not simply within a UK context but childhood within some very different contexts and contexts in which childhood

is very differently viewed.

KAREN: I wonder if we can take a look at the other module because some 25% of our students are studying K802. I didn't want to put any embarrassment in here by asking you the title of the module, which I think is-- I can never remember the title of the modules I teach on. K802-- Critical Practise with Children and Young People. It's one of the core modules isn't it, Martin?

MARTIN ROBB: It is, and there are a lot of similarities with the way Jane's described D807. and they do go together. They were conceived as two brother or sister modules some years ago. But there are some substantive differences as well. You could say that in-- very crudely if E807 is the theory, then K802 is the practise. And K802 is much more focused on working with children and young people.

But again, as Jane says, this is postgraduate level, so it's not a how to course. We're assuming that people have maybe studied childhood and youth or working with children and young people like psychology or related studies, undergraduate level. They may be experienced professionals or practitioners who want to go deeper, who want to understand the broader context of the work they're doing.

I should say you don't have to be working currently with children and young people. You could be a parent or just somebody who's got a general interest in the field. But you want to take that interest deeper. You want to look at the political context, the policy context, and take some of those issues like gender and the role of the state and the role of the family a bit a bit further in a practical way.

But I know from going-- I've been on the module-wide forum for our module for this intake. I know a lot of the student who I've talked to there have done E807 first. As Jane says, you can take them in either order, but we do find a lot of students have done E807 and that's now saying hello to each other on the module-wide forum on K802 and recognising old faces and old names they've met before.

KAREN: Oh, that's a nice feeling. Oh, it's lovely isn't it? And that good just goes to show how important community is. I wanted to ask about this whole age group thing because we asked everyone at home which age group they were most interested in studying. We had 20% of our audience saying naught to 5 years. And then 40% saying 12 to 18 or other.

So it seems some quite big polarisation here between childhood and youth, depending on, of

course, how you define those, which I imagine is not an argument we want to get into it right here and now. What is the relationship between age, and what sorts of things might be covered then in this very broad childhood and youth programme?

MARTIN ROBB: Actually, with regards to K802. We've deliberately made K802 and I think the whole qualification about both and not try to impose barriers and say, you're now going to move on to-- from the 5 to 11 to the youth. And we have a very diverse student audience. Again, going-- looking at the module wide forum, we ask people to introduce themselves, and most students have already. And we ask them to say where they're working just as you do with your little emojis and so on.

And it's incredibly broad. We've got people who are working in early years, who-- probably those 20%-- who are saying naught to 5. We've got people who are youth workers. We've got teachers. We got health workers, social workers. And some of the approach on 802 that we take is we'd like all students to study all age groups. We think it's important that you don't just study the age group you are working with, that you have a sense of what comes before, what comes afterwards.

And you don't just study the sort of professional contexts in which you're working. But it's really good if you're a teacher, for example, to know what young people are doing outside of school in youth work or scouts guides whatever. So it's a very broad interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and diversely organised course if you like, or module.

KAREN: So what sorts of topics and subjects can people expect to be studying? Maybe, Jane, if you tell us about E807.

JANE CULLEN: Well, I think I mentioned earlier that there is, and if I can just roll back slightly again because I think one of the things that you mentioned there, Karen, was not going into definitions of childhood. But I think interestingly and, again, it's one of the things about studying at postgraduate level that courses like this actually rehearse those tensions in those definitions.

So that one of the things that E807 is doing is-- and it's a word I've used already today-- is interrogating those conceptions of childhood. And you know there are legal definitions of childhood as we all know. There are folk definitions of childhood. There are folk definitions of early years. And I think-- very often, I think one of the starting places for students is the fact that those don't map onto each other in particularly easy ways.

And through culture-- through studies of culture, through studies of gender we're all ways-- not just through the study of a module like E807 but in our everyday experiences of the media, for example. Looking at the ways in which those senses of when does childhood end, when does adulthood begin, what's the bit in the middle being rehearsed. And they are being questioned. Children's sexuality-- there is I think an incredibly healthy but complex debate at the moment about gender and transgender issues, for example, which is being enacted I think across not just social media but in television, the newspapers at the moment. And it's questions like that which a module like E807 will be addressing.

MARTIN ROBB: So, yes, if E807 is looking at aspects of children's current lives globally as well as Jane said, what we do and where we switch the focus in K802 is to look at the the professional context in which people are working with children and young people find themselves. So we got a whole block on what we call the organisational context-- so how service is changing. What are the pressures on workers who are working with children and young people in all these different contexts who are now being asked to work together in inter-agency ways?

And so how's that environment changing? But we also look at some of the boundaries between the personal and the professional, which I think is really interesting. How-- to what extent is it OK to bring some of your personal life, your experience as a child-- a former child yourself or a young person, your experience--

KAREN: Ex-child.

MARTIN ROBB: Ex-child.

[LAUGHS]

MARTIN ROBB: We were all-- some of us were always young once.

JANE CULLEN: [INAUDIBLE] behind.

MARTIN ROBB: Or as a parent into your work. So we got some readings on people writing about being a mother and being a nurse or being a mother and being a teacher. And in a way, do you draw the line? Is OK to bring that experience in? Can you use that professionally? Do you have to critically reflect on that? Or do you need to draw some sort of boundary?

So that slight difference with E807, which is focused on-- very much on the lives of children and the context of children's lives, how it is framed, the K802 is very much about the context of

work with children and young people, how that's changing and what are some of the issues that professionals and policymakers are having to face.

KAREN: How do people negotiate that dimension of how much is appropriate to bring into it because this is an applied course. And often people are in these settings where they are working with children or young people anyway. So how do you manage that tension then between the theoretical and the practical?

MARTIN ROBB: Well, it's quite a lot of emphasis in 802 and I think probably in the degree generally on reflective practise. In fact, there's a week of the whole unit in K802 on reflective practise. And we've got a really nice video of a practitioner doing that with some young people and with some children. So we're getting practitioners to really reflect on their practise critically and to use the ideas that they are engaging with in the module and relating them to their own personal experience and professional experience as well.

KAREN: Let me take a quick trip to Lee and Zach and see how everyone is at home. And Lee and Zach, I hear we've had some lovely feedback from Atuko.

ZACH: Yes, Atuko said that he felt very much supported and gave us a goodbye from Japan. He's gone back to return to his studies. And Jane's just come back. She was I think in this morning's session or early this afternoon, and she's just had a gooey chocolate and beetroot cake with ice cream and toffee sauce, so I'm pretty jealous of that.

LEE: Very jealous. We're down to our last biscuit.

[LAUGHS]

Well, we're eking out for the rest of the afternoon.

KAREN: Back to this childhood and youth thing. I do appreciate-- the reason I didn't want to go into the complexities is because I end up in hour-long discussions. And it is absolutely fascinating. Besides, you say, Jane, there are so many complexities with who is making the decisions on what and what time and what place and on what basis. So it's a massive issue.

But if I would just say, OK, childhood and youth, and we've looked at the different age groups, how much of these modules relates to children and youth? And is it that categorical or are the various themes and methods that interspersed between the two. I guess my point is that we've asked our audience at home what area they're most interested in. And you've mentioned that

it's important to look at other areas apart from the ones that you're most interested in. So how is that all played out?

MARTIN ROBB: [INAUDIBLE].

JANE CULLEN: Well, I think-- I was talking to Martin before we came in, and I said that if I was to summarise, I would say that E807 is more focused on children however we define children. And I felt that K802 is more focused on youth.

KAREN: And did he agree?

JANE CULLEN: No.

[LAUGHS]

KAREN: I thought that might be coming. See this is what I mean. It's a complex battle. I don't like discussing with you lot.

MARTIN ROBB: I'm not an expert on 807, but I'm prepared to say Jane's work that was certainly K802 that may be more on youth. And there are some issues obviously that are more relevant to a particular age group. So we've got a fair amount on child protection issues in the organisational context. And obviously, most of the sort of media coverage has been around issues to do with young children there. So that's more relevant to people who are working with younger children.

But we'd like to think that there are some cross-cutting themes that are relevant to people working with in whatever professional context and with whatever age group. And that's what we're trying to get across really. Increasingly, in the outside world-- in the world of work with children and young people, practitioners are being asked to work more and more across professional boundaries.

So we've got whole units on inter-professional working where people are working in teams, where you've got the police, social workers, youth justice workers, teachers having to work together as part of a team. And that's increasingly happening. So we were aware all of our students are in that setting or in that situation.

So we're trying to respond to that and saying, let's not think of you in terms of these silos, these lanes, and say, well, you study that bit because you're a teacher and you study that bit

because you're a social worker. It's good for everyone to know what's going on in other people's service because increasingly that's what you will face in your work, that kind of interpersonal way of working.

JANE CULLEN: And I think those tensions are being rehearsed in situations we're encountering in everyday life so that, for example, there's been some recent and very shocking cases about grooming of girls. And historical cases of sexual abuse have often been actually challenging those ideas of whether those are children, which is the phrase that is being now used to refer to them or whether they were actually at the time of the abuse being regarded as adults or young adults. So I think it is about simply that there are changing perspectives as well as those kinds of ambiguities between tomes.

MARTIN ROBB: And just one more thing on that is the other thing that's changing this definition of youth. And when we were writing this course, we were aware that some research is on the area of youth work stretched the definition-- sorry, the definition of youth to 25 with people coming back from university to live with their parents. I know that's true for my children.

And youth workers now say, well, we'll take people up to 25. It's this idea of youth being infinite almost infinitely extended. So, as Jane says, the boundaries are very porous and very fluid.

KAREN: To what extent, then, do you think age is important in this definition because we've asked our students at home which age groups they're most interested in studying, and we mention often age when we're looking at the parameters. But equally you're talking about the historical nature and the situated nature and legal nature even of what we consider in terms of this categorical children and youth thing. So how important is the age in all of this then? Is it not very important or very, very important in terms of reaching a definition?

JANE CULLEN: That's a great question.

MARTIN ROBB: That's a great question.

KAREN: Shall I have gone to another one?

JANE CULLEN: No, no, no, no. I think it--

MARTIN ROBB: I think we struggle provide an answer, and we don't want to frighten answer to our students. We want them to explore that question.

KAREN: It is-- well, the one thing I just-- I'm sitting reflecting on here-- as I'm reflecting is the extent to which you say a lot of this is rehearsed because culturally, we're very used to thinking about age in terms of numerical parameters and categories in a very Western society. It'd be very interesting-- it's a shame that some of our friends from China and Japan have maybe gone because maybe they think about things in a slightly different way because, like you say, we often approach things from a given position don't we?

JANE CULLEN: Yes, now, I think some of that position is in policy and legal frameworks. Some that is in children's charters like the United Nations Rights of the Child. But some of that is about-- perhaps takes as a starting point local cultural conditions. I think one of the things that you would know, Karen, that I do a lot of work in international development. And situations in various countries that I've worked in across Africa, in Bangladesh with child brides, with young girls being married off at the age of 10, those situations are-- actually bring that idea are about, well, is it legal age? Is it legality? Is it about children's rights-- rights in the fore of that?

And it's not simply that you don't make a decision on that. But I think at postgraduate level, you are taking all the arguments into consideration about the kinds of decisions you make and therefore about the kinds of attitudes that you end up with.

KAREN: But it's not just about age going down is it, Lee, because somebody's been saying on the chat that sometimes they agree that the definition of youth can extend into the 20s.

LEE: Absolutely. A few people have had comments on this. Jan Thompson agrees that youth does extend into the early 20s. And Janet's just asked is stage more important than age?

KAREN: Oh, very good question! [LAUGHS] Because often we do study stage theory in childhood. And that's a very interesting categorical definition again.

MARTIN ROBB: Yes, it's a hugely debated area as you know, particularly in child psychology. And I think what's interesting is about this degree is chartered new studies is a fairly new area of new territory. It's come out of sociology of childhood. And some-- a lot of the writers on childhood and youth studies have been quite critical of a lot of traditional developmental psychology and the whole ages and stages approach.

So I don't we give any categorical answers. I just want to reassure students if you find these things interesting, you will find these subjects debated. And you'll be able to bring your own experience and your own perspectives. We have a whole section on culture, for example, on

working with culture as a practitioner in K802. So there's a chance to work on those issues, write about them, and so on.

KAREN: OK we're nearly out of time. But I do want to touch on assessment and contact with students. So let's briefly cover contact. What sort of contact, especially for students who are very new to the Open University, might they expect to have? We've spoken a bit about forums, etc., but roughly how much contact might they expect to have both with their tutor and their peers throughout the module?

JANE CULLEN: I think the answer is a lot. And I think the more that they want to interact, the more contact that they will have. I think one of the things that the Open University does incredibly well, our tutors, our associate lectures are front and foremost in terms of our relationship with the students and in terms of the relationship any OU student has with the university. And they are magnificent. They're magnificent in terms of their professionalism. Anyone who's teaching on one of the postgraduate courses has a postgraduate degree. And they are incredibly expert and incredibly professional and incredibly kind. The amount of goodwill I think that goes with tutoring is not to be--

KAREN: Because they are often tutors that are employed part time, and they often work for other institutions and mainly because they love the OU and they have a passion for life-long learning and for further social mobility that they're often studying.

JANE CULLEN: Absolutely. So there is extensive formal tuition on childhood and youth as with the other-- the master's in education and that there is tuition by forum. And then there is all of that ad hoc and informal contact between tutor and student that goes on as well. And I think one of the things that tutors are incredibly good at is supporting those students most who need it most. Some won't. Some will need it more. And they will get the support that they want.

MARTIN ROBB: And also to get peer-to-peer contact, students do have the opportunity to talk to each other. I mentioned our module-wide forum. It's great for students to introduce themselves, find other people from same part of the world or a similar professional background or somebody else who says I'm new to the OU I have no idea what I'm doing. That's really reassuring. So go on the module-wide forum if you haven't introduced yourself and talk to the students who are there.

KAREN: And we'll be covering all of that in our next session when we take a look at whether serious academics can make good use of social media like Facebook and Twitter. Before we do that,

though, I want to just tackle the difficult subject of assessment. How are students assessed on these modules.

JANE CULLEN: OK, so E807, first of all, then there are four TMAs on E807.

KAREN: That's a tutor-marked assignment.

JANE CULLEN: Tutor-marked assignment and then an EMA, which is the end of module assignment.

So interestingly, three of the TMAs, tutor-marked assignments, are conventional in the sense of there being a conventional piece of writing by the individual student against one of the topics. TMA 4 is really different. And it's a collaborative wiki.

KAREN: Wow!

JANE CULLEN: So students are divided into groups, and they actually produce a group piece of writing. So this is picking up on what Martin was talking about about peer-to-peer interaction. But this is collaboration. I think it's something that frankly we don't do enough of, and we don't celebrate enough. And that is how much learning and teaching is enacted through collaboration and how important it is in our professional lives.

So that's a specific TMA on E807. And for the EMA, then it is a small project, which can either be desk based, which is in literature review, or it can be a small based-- story small-scale piece of inquiry. So either what we call a piece of empirical research, or it can be a desk-based review of literature.

MARTIN ROBB: On 802, I can't go without saying that we do have an exam. And I know lots of students on the forum are anxious about the fact that we do have an exam. For many students, it may be the first exam they've taken in half a lifetime. But the reassuring thing is that the assessment structure on K802 is if a unit hasn't been assessed-- if a unit has been assessed in the tutor-marked assignments, it won't be assessed again.

KAREN: So you can say strategic approach.

MARTIN ROBB: Students can work out which three units will be assessed in the exam, so they only have to revise those three units.

KAREN: And, of course, you can write a lot less in an exam than you can on a TMA.

MARTIN ROBB: And we understand that.

KAREN: Well, you can, and I think they're easier for that reason. And also you've got that clarity with all the adrenaline going on, a focus.

MARTIN ROBB: Nice to hear some support for exams.

KAREN: I think they're project-- no, it is because they are nerve racking and things. But having done a lot of them and also having marked a lot of them, when you see how much you can actually do in a three-hour time period, you think actually I would go for that given the choice because I think it's an awful lot easier. Lee and Zach, how are you both there?

LEE: We're doing really well. And Jane, who is now back from shopping, would love to know-- she's quite interested in youth and childhood studies. And she's got a thought that this extends throughout all aspects of our life as adults as well. And she'd like to know what our panel's views are on that interesting thought that perhaps influences in your childhood extends to your adult life as well?

JANE CULLEN: Oh, my goodness!

KAREN: [LAUGHS]

MARTIN ROBB: That's a big question.

KAREN: That is a massive question! Let's see if we can answer that in 30 seconds each and maybe with relation to stage theories and trajectories. That would be a nice finishing touch.

[LAUGHS]

JANE CULLEN: No, I think I'm certainly going to answer in terms of being the eternal child. And I think that the influences of childhood absolutely permeate our adulthood. And if we're incredibly lucky, we never stop being children.

MARTIN ROBB: And I'd like to say that our students are encouraged to bring their own childhood and youth experience into their study. And it never goes away. They're not just writing about the children they're working with. They're writing about themselves as well. And that's valid.

KAREN: Wow. Excellent. Well, there's food for thought. Thank you very much, Jane and Martin, for that thought-provoking session. I hope you've enjoyed it at home. Well, we're now going to take a

look at K802 with a short video break. And then we'll be back to take a look at social media with Alison and Azuma. See you soon.