How modules are created in the Business and Law Schools. 29 June, 2023 720p

ROB MOORE: Hello, everyone, and welcome to Student Hub Live with me, Rob Moore, coming to you from the study shack in Leicestershire. It's a lovely sunny day. So hopefully, we're going to have a nice, warm, exciting show for you. Today, we're going to be talking to my colleagues from the faculty and business and law. That's my home faculty, so I'm always pleased when I talk to my colleagues.

And in the chat, we've got Sam and Kevin. And they're going to be answering your specific questions. They'll be giving you some hints and some tips. So you'll recognise when they post a message because they will have SHL in front of their names. And of course, we've got Heidi with us. And Heidi is going to be passing your messages on to me and telling us the things that you're already talking about. So Heidi, who have we got in the chat box? And what are they saying at the moment?

HEIDI: Morning, Rob, and hello to everybody in the chat. So we've got Los in Chichester. So Los is a first-year law student, joining today to see how law modules are created. Los is hoping to become a student rep. And she feels that knowing how the modules are created will help in the role. Angela has just completed W111 and is starting W112 in October. We've got Tesh in Corby, who's also studying law. We've got Chris from Merseyside currently studying Business B100.

Mel is joining us from Hampshire. And Los has really kindly put some details in the chat. So anyone that's studying W111 that started January, February, Criminal Law and the Courts, there's a Facebook page, a group student Facebook page that they've got available. So if you want to search for that if you're studying W111, then you can join the Facebook group. And Los has advised that it'll be updated to W112 in October. I know when I was studying, those Facebook groups were an absolute godsend. So highly recommended. So yeah, quite a few people saying hello already in the chat, Rob.

ROB MOORE: Brilliant. And yeah, becoming a student rep is a great idea. I'm actually an AL rep. So I go to the similar meetings that you'll go to as a student rep. And this will definitely help with those meetings and that understanding. So a couple of ways to get in touch with us today, you can email us. And the email is on the web page. Or you can join in on the chat or the widgets. Now the widget, we've got at the moment, the little thing on the right hand side of the screen, is a multiple-choice question asking what degree you're doing. So let us know which of the degrees you're actually studying at the moment.

And there's a little ticker going across the bottom of the screen. That's a question we want you to consider and answer in the chat. So what sort of things do you consider when you're selecting your next module? So we'd like to know what you're thinking about. Well, my guest today from the Law School are Fred and Sarah. Welcome, both. Fred joins me in the study sessions on Student Hub Live. So those who've been to some of our study sessions will recognise me and Fred as a partnership from there. So great to have you with us.

We're going to start off with Sarah. So Sarah, when you put a degree together, how do you choose the module topics that go into the degree to make sure it's fully rounded? What do you think about?

SARAH HENDERSON: Thanks, Rob. Morning. That's a really interesting question at the moment, actually, because as you probably know, and as many of our students know, we've been through the process recently of developing our new LLB, which has been very exciting. But we have had to really

think about, what modules are we going to include on that degree, and how is that going to be structured? And as many people will know, there has been quite a lot of restructuring and quite a lot of changes. So what did we consider? Well, law is a very professionally-driven qualification. So we have to consider professional requirements. And there have been changes there recently as well. So students who are looking to become solicitors, for instance, will be aware that there have been recent changes and that they're now not required, unless they're in Northern Ireland, of course, they're not required to do the qualifying law degree. And they'll go on and do the SQE modules.

However, students who are in Northern Ireland and want to be a solicitor will need their qualifying law degree subjects. And they will need also to do evidence as well. And students who are budding barristers, again, are going to need to do a certain set of subjects in order to enter into that profession. So we have to really consider that when we're putting our degree together. And additionally, we have a lot of joint degree students. So we have students who are studying law and languages. We have students who are studying law and criminology.

And we want to make sure that the programme fits together nicely for those students as well, and that they're studying things that are useful to them. And that they're studying in a way which has some great continuity in the pathway that they're following. So all of those kind of practical considerations, first of all. And then we really have taken into account the student feedback we've had. So we know from students that they wanted to see more choices in their degree pathway.

They wanted to have more options. And we've tried to introduce that. We have introduced it at level 2, particularly, where students, instead of studying two 60-credit modules will now study four 30-credit modules and will have those options about the sorts of topics they want to study. They've got much more variety. So they can study, for instance, family law, employment and business law. They can study evidence law. Even if they're not doing the Northern Ireland qualifying law degree, evidence law is there as an option for them. And that's a really popular option. It's a great module.

And we've also got international and space law, which, again, is a really great option for students wanting to study international law, but also bringing in something that's a bit different, that's progressive but is something that we're going to be thinking about in the future. What else?

ROB MOORE: Just to be clear, so different professions might require different modules to be chosen in the degree, is that right?

SARAH HENDERSON: Yeah, that's exactly right. Yeah.

ROB MOORE: And how do students know they're doing the right thing? Where will they find that information?

SARAH HENDERSON: They should talk to student services. So SST are really, really knowledgeable about this. And what we have done as a team is we have provided regular updates to SST throughout the development. And we engage with them really regularly. And they come to us with questions, and they ask us questions. But they have really great and up-to-date information about the different pathways. So they can give great advice.

And the feedback I've had from students is when they talk to SST, they know- they know what students need to do in order to progress on their pathway. And if they don't know, contact me or Fred or someone else on the team, and we can talk to them about it.

ROB MOORE: Because I think that's the key thing. We want students to be confident that the degree they get is going to take them to the point they want to get to in their career. Because am I right in thinking most people studying law are looking for law as a profession?

SARAH HENDERSON: They might be, Rob. So we have a lot of people who go into the legal profession, but the law degree is really useful in a number of professions. So many of our students might be studying law just for academic purposes. And they may just really enjoy the subject, or they may want to go into academia later. And we have a really rigorous programme academically as well. They might want to go into another profession, for example, the police or public services or social services.

They might want to go into the civil service. They might want to work in local government. They might want to work in a whole range of jobs and professions, where law is really great grounding, really useful, and very highly valued by employers. So you're right in saying it is very professional in nature. And there are a lot of skills, employability skills built in to help students move into the legal professions. But those skills are really transferable elsewhere.

ROB MOORE: So as a module team, you really have to bring into mind all of these different reasons why somebody might want to study and make sure that you're keeping that all accessible, as well as fitting it into the time and making it interesting. Because of course, we want an interesting qualification to study. So should we have a quick look at the widgets, see what people are studying at the moment? So Heidi, do you want to talk us through what people are focusing on and what they're saying at the moment?

HEIDI: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So I'm not sure if people can see the widget OK. If you haven't put your details in there yet and let us know what you're studying, please do. The widget will automatically update itself. So it looks like the law undergraduate is taking the lead at the moment. And that's what most people in the chat are studying, which makes absolute sense. So yeah, we've got quite a number of law undergraduates in the chat.

And then "other." Yeah, we've got "other." So I'm not quite sure what "other" encapsulates there, but that's the second most popular at 30%. So please do let us know what it is that you're studying. Yeah, so add the details into the widget. Oh, and it's updating as I speak. There, we have more people, law undergrad. So that's great to see.

ROB MOORE: [LAUGHS] Excellent. I think the "other" is everybody who isn't doing business or law at the moment, I think. So you are very welcome if you're not in business and law. But you should be in business and law because that's where the exciting material sits. So Sarah, just a quick question about developing the content. We had a comment about being a student rep earlier. How do you, as a module team, take advantage of having student reps? And how do you bring them into those broader discussions?

SARAH HENDERSON: Student reps are really important to us. So we have student reps who sit on our Board of Studies. And Board of Studies, in case students don't know, is a group whereby it's chaired by the teaching director. And we also have other academics, so module team chairs. We have head of Student Experience. But we have student reps, and we also have reps from SST, from Careers and Employability to bring in different voices.

And what the Board of Studies will do is really shape the way in which the curriculum is developing by setting targets. And having that student voice there is really, really important to us. Because students can bring in issues that they're having, questions that they've got, feedback that they've got. But in developing

the modules and the qualification, we didn't just rely on the Board of Studies, of course. You've probably seen that we have regular student consultations.

So online consultations, whereby we set up a forum to look at a particular topic. And during the course development, that was very much based on the stuff we needed to know to make sure that we were serving the student needs. So we were asking students about things like assessment. We were asking about things like induction, things like tutor support. So that we could make sure we were building that in. We also had a group of students who were fantastic who came to talk to us as a group of central academics and do a presentation for us.

So they came, and I think we had six students. They came, and they spoke to us about different topics. And they gave us all that feedback. And they were very forthright. They were very frank. And it was fantastic to hear that direct feedback from the students. And Rob, as you know, you're an AL. I'm an AL. Feedback from ALs is really important as well because ALs have that kind of really close relationship with the students.

Students often experience the Open University or generally experience it through their tutor. And so they will tell their tutors things. And by engaging tutors in those discussions, we hear a lot of what students are saying on the ground, and we can incorporate that into the degree.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And it's so important to give honest feedback because we build so much on it. So we're going to move on to the next widget now. This is a word cloud. What is your favourite law subject? And if you're not a law student, make one up. We'd like to see some invented law subjects as well. So what would make a really good law subject if you were to make one up? And yeah, what makes a good law module? What would be a nice structure?

So we're going to bring Fred in at this point. And Fred's going to tell us about how we structure a particular module. So Sarah talked about how we bring modules and topics together to make a degree. So Fred, what goes into actually making a module? And as a module team member, how do you choose what to put in and what- the thing I know is really difficult- what to leave out?

FRED MOTSON: Thanks, Rob. Yeah. Hi, everyone. Yeah, I think in some ways, designing modules and deciding on the content of modules is the most enjoyable part of our central academic role. As Sarah mentioned, many of us, including myself, are ALs as well. And obviously, we really enjoy the teaching. But with our academic hats on, deciding what goes in a module is a real chance for us to think about what's interesting, what's important, and what will work well for students to study.

Normally, that's a process that tends to start with the module team chair, the person in charge of the module, and the other authors. We also look at a lot of the same sources that Sarah's mentioned. We look particularly, of course, at the feedback on the previous module. Normally in law, we don't tend to be creating modules from nowhere. We do occasionally add new options, but normally, there is a module that's covered at least some of this ground before.

So for example, on the new degree when I was working on 112, the Tort Law module and on 212, to the Contract Law module, we were very much looking at the old W202 and looking at what students liked and what students didn't like. Because as we know in law, there are certain parts of the syllabus that are seen as being very set in stone.

But what we try and do at the OU, and one of the things we've done with the new degree, where we've switched from looking at two substantive areas of law to one in most modules, we try and include that extra area, where people don't just learn what they have to know. But also get a chance to learn, perhaps,

what we consider might be more interesting, or might be something that they might want to explore further, academically or professionally.

ROB MOORE: OK. So how do you- I'm thinking about if I was studying a module, what I would like to know is, how do we make sure that we've got enough time to study it? Because I can imagine so many topics fitting in main. How do you balance that breadth and depth aspect in a module? What's at the forefront of your mind when you're choosing them? Is there a driving force? Is there a checklist that you go through?

FRED MOTSON: It depends to some extent module to module. But certainly in the Law School, what I should say straightaway is that we do have very strict rules in terms of the workload. So each unit is intended to take roughly the same amount of time, which is the amount of time that we expect students to be able to study each week. Of course, as all of you will know who are watching this, not every week necessarily you have the same amount of time to study.

But the idea is that you don't sort of suddenly get to week 12 or unit 7, and it's 10 times more than you were expecting. So what we tend to do is try and think, first of all, well, how do we balance that out? So if we have a module with 12 units, how can we divide up what we want to cover into 12? And I think what a lot of module chairs do is we sort of try and establish what has to go in. And then we have the more enjoyable task of deciding what else we can do.

And I think one thing we've tried to do really on the new degree is give modules a bit more of a theme that runs right through, rather than it being a set of individual units. So for example, for those of you who are at or about to go on to level 2, we've got the two core modules at level 2, public law and contract law, both with really strong themes. Public law is all about the four nations and the fact that the United Kingdom is made up of these different- in many ways, very individual and different nations, and how our wider UK Constitution brings them together, or perhaps pushes them apart.

And in contract law, we've got a real focus on contracts and modern technology, which, again, runs right through the module. So the idea is that what we hope to do is give you something that week by week, you're looking at different things but that also comes together as a whole. And that's often a way of deciding what we can and can't include. Does it match up to our wider theme?

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. You've got that fictitious average student who will take an average amount of time to do a study. And of course, we know that every student is different. Some will take longer. Some will take shorter. But it's good to know we've got a measure in mind for how long a module should take. And I like the fact that you mentioned the themes and the modules should flow naturally and build up. So some real thought going into how the individual modules are put together. So Heidi, how's the chat getting on? And how's the widget looking?

HEIDI: Busy in the chat. Yeah, so on the widget, if you haven't let us know what your favourite law is that you've been studying, or your main area of interest, then please do let us in the widget. At the moment, Rob, we are seeing criminology and family law coming out top, which I can relate to. I did my master's in criminology. And I have a particular interest in criminology. Love it. And there's been some really interesting conversations going on that my colleague Samantha has sparked around bee law.

So Samantha mentioned that she owns a book on bee law. And it's all around beekeepers and who's responsible for the damage. And it sparked some really great conversation. So Dottie said, bees and law sounds really interesting. How do you even track the bees owner down to Sue them for any damage that they might cause. Dogs are insured, but never thought of bees. So I thought that's a fascinating thing

about law, isn't it? Sometimes we completely overlook these areas. And you think, oh, my gosh, there is legislation in place there. And it's really interesting to do some more digging.

We also touched briefly earlier. We were asking people around how they decide what modules they're going to take. So we've had some responses to that as well. So Los is thinking about what career path she wants to do and what modules that are needed for that job. Andy is heavily influenced by the module route plan, although I'm always looking for alternative options because the OU is really flexible, which is great. And then Tesh, I take past experience into consideration when deciding on the chosen course. So yeah, lots going on in the chat. Please do add to it, and be sure to add to the widget as well.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And I think that comment about the flexibility is really important because you don't have to start at the beginning of your six years and map your pattern out and stick to it. If you want to be flexible and change, that's great. And I really should be wearing my glasses when I do this. Because I was trying to figure out what Marmite law was. And then with a bit of a squint, it's Maritime law. So [LAUGHS] yeah, there we go.

So the next question we're going to ask you is, what's your favourite type of assessment? And we're not accepting the answer "none." So pop into your chat. Which are the favourite types of questions you like to answer in your assignment? And I'm going to bring Sarah back in for this. And Sarah, how do we consider assessment when we're building up the degree, and we're building up modules? What is it that you need to consider when designing the assignments?

SARAH HENDERSON: So in law, we don't have any exams, which some most students are always pleased to hear. Some students are disappointed about that, but what-

ROB MOORE: I heard the cheer from here, then.

SARAH HENDERSON: I know.

[LAUGHTER]

The majority of students delight in that, but we don't have exams. But in not having exams, it really allows us to be flexible in the terms of assessments we offer and we ask students to complete. And what we want to do in setting assessments is to really make sure that we're addressing the learning outcomes. So the stuff that we really need students to know and to be able to exhibit by the end of their module. So it might be, for instance, that we're choosing assessments, which are quite traditional.

So things like essays so that students can exhibit their knowledge and understanding, their ability to critically analyse, their writing skills, their skills of interpretation, all of those things. Or we might do problem questions, which are a little more dynamic and real life. And they allow students to apply the law to a situation. But we can broaden out from that as well. Looking forward to when students who want to be solicitors are taking their solicitors qualifying exam, they'll be taking multiple-choice questions for that. And so in the new degree, we've tried to build in multiple-choice questions in a way which will be useful to students going forward. So not just multiple-choice questions to test knowledge. So something like, oh, which of these statutes represents this area of law, but really thinking around how we can introduce scenarios, how we can introduce application of law, how we can get students to pick out relevant facts, relevant information and apply the law to that through multiple-choice questions.

We might all students to reflect. So that's a really valuable assessment tool in terms of academia, helping students to develop academically, looking back and saying, how did I do that? Why did I do that? And what next going forwards? But also, a really important employability skill. Rob, you and I have to reflect on our practise constantly.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely.

SARAH HENDERSON: We have to think about what worked, why did it work? What did students enjoy? And we do it on the new degree. What's the feedback we've had? How are we going to take that forward? So all different types of assessment. The other thing we've really tried to build into the new degree is authentic assessment. So we've talked already, I guess, about how law is a very professional and practical subject going forwards into the legal profession and other professions.

And so we've tried to build in assessments which are really authentic, and things like case studies that run through the whole unit. And we'll have different information, different documents, legal documents students need to refer to. And they'll undertake assessment tasks in the way they might in practise. So it might be drafting an attendance note or an email. It might be giving advice to a client, all these sorts of different things that students will be doing one day in practise or in their role. We've tried to build into the assessment to meet the learning outcomes, but also prepare students for after the degree.

ROB MOORE: I've got to say, I really like the modules where we have a case study that runs through, where you can really get into the nitty gritty. It's not just a single page article that you're looking at. But you go to do some real research into the problem, or in my case, it's normally companies. And yeah, really have some good discussions and some great opportunities on the tutor group forums as well to collaborate.

SARAH HENDERSON: And making the resources is fun as well, Rob. So last week-

ROB MOORE: Oh, yes!

SARAH HENDERSON: -on campus with a team videoing some different video clips to show different parts of the scenario developing. And it really builds life into the modules and makes students feel kind of immersed in the materials that they're studying.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. Earlier, we asked the people at home what their study snacks are. And I think this is a good opportunity, Heidi, to tell us what people are munching on while they're studying. And also, have they got any quick questions for Fred or Sarah at the moment?

HEIDI: We haven't had any responses to the study snacks yet. So I can't see any updates on my widget. So please do let us know what your top three study snacks are. And pop your details if you can choose the top three, many to choose from. But we do have a ques-

ROB MOORE: Oh, I've got a widget showing me crisps as the top.

HEIDI: Oh. Oh, right.

ROB MOORE: Is that coming from-

HEIDI: My widget's not working.

ROB MOORE: Ah, right. [LAUGHS] There we go. Crisps, hobnobs, and chocolate. So obviously, Isabella has been in voting because chocolates there. If Isabella was there, that would be a lot bigger than everything else. [LAUGHS] Did we have any questions for Fred or Sarah, just-

HEIDI: Yeah, we do. I've got a question for Sarah. So this is from Los. Are there any plans to bring in aviation law, Sarah?

SARAH HENDERSON: At the moment, no, because we have finished developing the modules and choosing the modules that we're going to have on the new degree. That's not to say it will never happen. But at the moment, there isn't a plan to do that. If you had a particular interest, of course, all of the Library Resources are available to you. And what I would say is, contact the librarians, and they can help you find information about anything you want if you want to do some extra reading around a particular area.

When I talk to the librarians, they always say to me, oh, we love it when students contact us and ask us for help in finding different research resources. So if it's something you want to read about, and it's not on the degree, there are still resources available to you.

ROB MOORE: And do students get the opportunity to do independent research, or is all directed? So can they go and find an area they want to research? Or is that, say, for the master's programme?

SARAH HENDERSON: Is that for me or for Fred, Rob?

ROB MOORE: Oh, well, Fred, because we haven't heard from Fred for a while. Sorry, Fred.

FRED MOTSON: We try and build research skills right through the degree. So those of you who are starting off, you'll know that at level 1, we very much try, and we start telling you this is where to go, and this is what to look at. At level 2, we introduced the idea of independent research. I know 211, Public Law, has a lot of really important information these days on assessing how reliable sources are and how much you can trust the sources you find online.

And then I think really, it's at level 3. So the sort of final set of modules that you'll study, where there is a real opportunity to widen out. And I think in a lot of those modules, probably more the ones that are not SQE focused. The SQE modules obviously have that more professional focus and a lot of what you're doing beyond the subject is learning about how the law works in practise and the rules around litigation. The other modules, they're the modules that are the more academic focused really do start encouraging students to go independently and research areas of interest. And of course, that's something if you really enjoy that, definitely that then if you want to go on to postgraduate study- I'm doing a PhD in my part time with the Open University at the minute. And obviously, that really does let you decide what you want to look at, which is why I've chosen VAR in football as the topic of my PhD.

ROB MOORE: Wow, that should be interesting, if not slightly controversial. So thank you, Sarah and Fred. That's a really fascinating look into how we start to build degrees and how we bring the modules together. So thank you for your time today. I've now been joined by Isidora and Charles from the Business School. And they're going to talk us through some of the research that they've been doing and how that's translated into the modules.

And also, we're going to talk about how business modules are created and put together. So it might be a slight difference to the way that we consider business degrees, business modules to the discussion we've just had on law. And there's a word cloud to join in. What is your favourite business subject? And again, as before, if you want to make up your own fake business subject, I'm always glad to see some fictitious business subjects. But see what you want to put in the word cloud.

So first of all, Charles, tell us about how you would build a business module. And what are the things you consider? So what is it that, as a module chair, what do you want to bring in and why?

CHARLES MBALYOHERE: Yeah, thank you so much indeed, Rob, for that and for being here. So one of the most important things that I would consider is what we've set as the learning outcomes. And so usually, at the very beginning when you're conceptualising a module, you have to carefully, as a team, think through what you want to bring across. And the best thing we do is to set up a set of learning outcomes, which goes through a number of iterations. It's a back-and-forth before we convince ourselves that is the set we want to have.

And usually, this is also at various levels. You have the qualification level. So the overall level, for example, if it's an undergraduate programme or the master's programme, you have to know what the final goal is. Is it be a degree in something? Is it an MBA? So you have that overall set of outcomes, which you

have to agree. And then you start cascading them down into the modules, into the various things that you're doing. So as an example, I teach- and Rob, you also teach on B302. We have module learning outcomes there which relate with the higher degree or the qualification that students are then doing. And so there's a process of linking these different units. Within the module, we have the various weeks. You have weekly learning outcomes. Within those then, we have activities. We have tutorials. We have TGF discussions. We have collaborative activities. So in all those aspects, you have to see that the learning outcomes are being reflected. And so that's one of the most important things that we do at the OU to make sure that these learning outcomes are current. They reflect what the students are looking for on the course. They are pedagogically sound.

We shall come back to that when we think of research, how we put research into this that they are also interesting. You don't want to spend your time on something that is just doesn't capture your interest. So are they interesting? Are they current? Are they inspirational? Are they clear? And sometimes then we think of smart outcomes. Can you measure them? Can the students put their hands on them? And when they finish, what will they remember, or will it just have been a dry thing to remember, an academic exercise that has no implication at all for practise? And so those are some of the-

ROB MOORE: And probably, we get ready, Charles. So this is what the students think would make a good module. So if we have a quick look at it on the screen, they think that we should be covering sustainability, innovation, international business. Are these sorts of things that you've covered? Do these crop up in all of the undergraduate modules?

CHARLES MBALYOHERE: Yeah. So these are then, of course, you'd have to think of these specific ones, like those ones which they have named, definitely. Then that goes to their module level where, for example, if it is an international module, it's covering international aspects. For example, we have a module on the MBA programme. It's called Contemporary Issues in Organisations, where we have a unit there, which is more about multinationals and how they internationalise- how they going into different markets.

So you have to think of those things they have mentioned there, that the students have actually raised. So sustainability, governance. So all of this has to be considered and at a more granular level of the module to make sure you're getting it right that at the end, when they finish, they have a very good understanding of all this.

ROB MOORE: So when you introduced the topic, you mentioned that we both work on 302. That's the level 3 strategy course. And there's a big element of collaborative working in there. So why do we bring collaborative working into a module? Why is it important? Because I know some students say, well, I don't want to work with other people. I want to work on my own. So why is there such an emphasis on collaborative working?

CHARLES MBALYOHERE: Yeah. Yeah, that's a very important question. We think in the real world of business, you have to work with others, both within the organisation but also outside. We talk of stakeholders- so internal stakeholders, but also external stakeholders. You have to interact with your suppliers. You interact with even your competitors. You interact with the regulators. You interact with the general public, with your customers. So all types of stakeholders you interact with.

So there's always a form of collaboration and taking place. You develop new projects with partners. And this usually calls for interacting with them. It can be face-to-face, but it can also be virtual, using a virtual communication tools. And so collaboration is always important. There are not many things where we do

things alone. Even on these courses that we do at the OU, many of the assignments call for some kind of working together with other students.

For example, in B302, which you just mentioned, Rob, there's that activity which involves a case study of a Scottish company. It's called ONI. So here, we expect students to come together and analyse that case. Go through the process of creating a strategy and assessing how good that strategy is. And so that-

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And that-

CHARLES MBALYOHERE: -involves giving feedback, yes, and hearing from others.

ROB MOORE: And that collaborative part, some students find that the most rewarding part of the module, and that opportunity to have that realistic interaction with people they might not have met. We're going to move on and talk to Izzy now. So Izzy, we're looking at your research into gamification and how we can bring games into modules. And there's a new widget. What games would you like to see in a module? So let's see if we can give Izzy some interesting ideas for future modules. But tell us about your research, because I know I've been involved with your research as well. Tell us about your research into gamification, and why it's important when we're considering new modules.

ISIDORA KOURTI: Thank you very much, Rob. And let me tell you that we really count on everyone's support when we do this kind of research that feeds back into the module both when it comes to the academic team today, yes, and the students, of course. So I have been involved in different kind of research that does feed back into the modules. And one of the most recent one is the one that you mentioned, the gamification. So we're looking with another colleague from the OU and the use and the impact of simulation games in FPL modules, particularly in undergraduate modules.

And the main reason for doing so is that we know that several research has proved that when it comes to teaching complex subjects like theories, models, perspectives, and most importantly practical skills, it's easier for the students to grasp this kind of context and practical skills through games. So by playing a game, they are able to learn in depth and more successfully, all these kind of concepts that in theory they are difficult to grasp.

And then it comes to practise through the simulation game when we can actually apply this knowledge and make sure that you do understand how it is applied in a somehow real context environment. So imagine that with the simulation games, we do offer to the students the opportunity to try in a safe environment where, for example, they won't cause any interruption in supply chains. They won't cause any issues in the product development or in the employees of the organisation.

So there is a safe environment that they can practise these skills and get the more advanced and learn how to do so in contrast to more traditional kind of methods. So for those, for example, at the OU, we do have the VLE. We do have the videos. We have different kind of interactives. And all of these, they are important tools in order to learn the concepts that we are trying to teach the students, but more complex concepts and practical skills that are better learned and in-depth through these simulation games.

And what we have tried to do is that we did work with this particular module, B205. And B205 is an undergraduate level module in entrepreneurship. So in B205, we have the Neo game. And Neo game is a negotiation game that maybe you can tell more about it, Rob, than myself. But I will just give a brief summary of it. It's like a negotiation game. And this is where the previous discussion on collaboration comes on board as well because we do see the collaborative element as very important for the students to be equipped and to learn how to work with others.

So we do have this negotiation that takes place with another student from the module. And the students have different kind of scenarios. And they negotiate the outcome of the scenario. So they have the possibility, say, to play the game a couple of times until they polish their negotiation skills in different kind of contexts and with different kind of scenarios. And what we try to do as a team in our research was to explore whether the use of Neo is effective, how Neo is incorporated in B205, and whether it should be incorporated and under what conditions in the new version of the module, which is going to come. And that's the B209.

And allow me here to take the opportunity, Rob, to mention something, which I think is very important, that at the OU, we make sure that all the modules are current. And they stay current throughout their life. So we have B205, which is a successful module. It runs smoothly. And the student seems to be very happy with this module. And despite of that, there is a particular element, which is after a particular period of time, we do renew the modules even if they are very successful, even if we don't have any issues, we don't have any complaints about them.

Because at the heart of the OU is to keep the modules current, to keep the debates current, and to incorporate all the changes. From a theoretical practical case point perspective and so on. So we have B205 that now we're going to update in B209. And with our research and by talking and collecting data, both from the students and from the academic member of the team, which is on the production on the presentation side along with the tutors, we are coming back with some recommendations in terms of how the simulation game Neo should be included.

Because the overall conclusion is that Neo is very successful. And overall, simulation games, they do work very well. And they do enhance the overall student experience and learning in the module material. So we're coming back with accommodations in terms of where Neo must sit in the new module, for how long, where it will be placed, and so on. And that's not only me. That's all of the colleagues. We do try to do research that is relevant to the module because what we really believe at the OU is that the module must be relevant, and they must offer the best student experience and to enhance student learning in any way possible.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And you're right- Neo is a great activity, where students anonymously engage. And because it's anonymous, you can take on different personas, try different approaches in a safe environment. So Heidi, we've got some suggestions, I think, for different games that could be included. So what sort of things would the people at home like to include in a module?

HEIDI: Yeah, we certainly do, Rob. So Sam, who's my colleague, would like to see monopoly in land law. Elizabeth would like snakes and ladders, how markets grow and shrink. And then Susie has suggested hangman. I like that.

ROB MOORE: Excellent. Excellent. And the sort of games that we've just been discussing, a lot of them are actually available on OpenLearn. So another module I work on, which is Supply Chain Management, has the Supply Chain game. And that's available for anybody to play. A simplified version of it is available for anybody to play on OpenLearn. But we use it as a significant element within that particular module. I'm going to move on to Charles, again. So Charles, I know you've been doing some research recently. And your research is being used as a significant case study in a module. Would you like to tell us a little about that?

CHARLES MBALYOHERE: Yeah. Thank you so much indeed, Rob. So yeah, that's true. And picking up on that point that Isidora was mentioning that we try to use research as the foundation for all our modules,

so I've been doing some research in the energy sector. I did my PhD on reforms in the energy industry on the African continent. So I looked at the privatisation of various dam projects. You remember traditionally, governments have owned these dam power projects and energy, both generation, transmission, and distribution.

So we perform market reforms that have been taking place. Governments have been trying to unbundle. We use the term called "unbundling," making it more private and bringing in economics in these things. So I've been studying a lot around that energy sector in various parts of the world. And also recently, I've been doing a lot about renewables. So solar, wind, biomass, how we can use these a bit more to improve access to energy in various parts of the world.

And so in B302, if we go back to that example, we have a case from Uganda. One of the dam projects is called Bujagali. We use that as to understand, especially something called non-market strategy. So there are many things when you are developing such a project that are not only related to market considerations, but also non-market consideration, which means the interaction with political actors, with social actors, with environmental actors.

And this particular project is on at the source of the River Nile. And it was very, very controversial because it meant actually flooding a whole area and flooding very sensitive cultural sites, for example, which had been there for centuries. People around that part of the world had been, in some cases, using it as their religion and cultural beliefs and so on. So it was a very, very controversial thing to do.

And the companies, the multinationals involved, had to do a lot of interaction with the local people, with governments, and various actors. So we use this case to try to explain how companies can develop their CSR strategy and how they can do that effectively and deal with all kinds of challenges. And that we also say that this is an important aspect to add to market strategy that we normally use traditionally in teaching strategy. And so we have that widget that it came-

ROB MOORE: Oh, yeah, I think it's very important that we're taking this current research, this up-to-the-minute research, and we're embedding it within our module, so your current modules. And as we said earlier, it's so important to be up-to-date and right where we need to be in current. So thank you for that, Charles.

CHARLES MBALYOHERE: No worries.

ROB MOORE: I've just got one very quick question for Isidora. And if you can do this in a couple of minutes, that would be great. How do we make sure that our modules are accessible? So how do we make sure that all students can take part? And as a module team, what's going through your mind as you're designing the module in terms of accessibility?

ISIDORA KOURTI: OK, so that's a very important question to be answering in a couple of minutes. I will try my best, Rob, though. Accessibility, equality and diversity, and inclusion is, again, at the heart of the OU. And it all starts from the production process, as you said. But even beyond that, we have to make sure that we have the right teams put in place in order to produce the module that it does. It is open to all students. So what we usually do- and I will give you an example from B329, which is an undergraduate module, a leadership one.

When we selected the production team, we made sure that we had a team that was coming from different backgrounds, not only disciplinary backgrounds. Because we do have experts in this team that they are experts in leadership, in SMEs' leadership, in entrepreneurship, leadership in Organisations, and so on. But it was also a multicultural teams. So this a team from the UK, from Italy, and from Greece as well. So

we all brought our expertise and our cultural background when we produced B329 to make sure that this multi-diversity team is actually- the nature of the team is reflected on the module material.

And we made sure that our cases, the videos that we used, the examples that we have into the module, they do actually address students from different backgrounds, both male and female. We have to make the modules accessible to students with disabilities. And we do make sure that not only when producing the module with the material that we produce, but also during the presentation, the modules they do work well for all the students.

So we do have the equality, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility champions in our modules. I am, for example, the champion for B329. And my role is to make sure that the material responds to the needs of the students currently and during production, but now, during presentation as well. We do have the inclusion curriculum tool which is, again, another tool that we use for new and older versions of the modules to make sure that all the material reflects the students' needs.

So it does come to the team that brings this together. The module, the material, and also, the material itself. So as I said, the case studies, the videos, all the interactive activities, the examples that we use, make sure that they are multidisciplinary and also multicultural as well for the students.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And it's so good to know that we've got specific teams looking at these equality and accessibility issues. So it's not an add-on that goes on once we've written the module. It's considered right at the start, how are we going to make this accessible? Are there any specific needs that we need to address? Are there things that we need to bring in? So you did fantastically well to get through all that. So thank you very much, Isidora. Heidi-

ISIDORA KOURTI: Thank you.

ROB MOORE: -what are we hearing in the chat?

HEIDI: So the conversations are continuing in the chat around games a little bit more. So there's been some discussions around how students can possibly play against each other. And Chris came up with a brilliant idea. Maybe there could be teams as in like Harry Potter houses. And I like that idea.

ROB MOORE: Oh, yes!

HEIDI: And just as we wrap things up- I know we're talking about business at the moment, but just I'd like to pick up on a comment that Tesh made a little bit earlier. So Tesh says, I'm retired and studying full-time. My objective gaining a law degree- so this is just from slightly earlier- is to assist unfortunate people who cannot afford exorbitant legal fees to defend them and therefore, are disadvantaged within the legal system. I'll act for people without charging fees. My services will be free of charge.

And I just thought that was a really lovely note to end on when we're talking there around inclusion and EDI. And yeah, Tesh got a lot of love in the chat for that, and well deserved, I think.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. The thing about teams is interesting because, again, Isidora and I both work on B205. And we do have a bit of a competition, where students have to come up with their own product. They have to come up with their new innovation that they want to introduce. And we have a Dragon's Den type approach. We all vote for whether or not we would invest. So we do have that bit of competition going. All in good fun, of course. And it's great fun.

So thank you, Isidora and Charles. That's been fantastic. And we've really appreciate you spending the time with us to just come and talk to us about how modules are created. So thank you for that. I'd just like to encourage everyone to fill out the feedback forms. These are really important. In all of the chats, we've

had today you've heard from my guests about how important it is to hear from students. We want to make sure that everything we do is tailored to what suits you best and is going to benefit you.

And these feedback forms are taken very seriously. So after the session, please fill it in because that's how we know what you want us to talk about in future and how we justify bringing you more sessions. So I'm going to finish just by a bit of an advert. So we've got some more sessions coming up. We've got "Studying with Limited Access" next week. And that's where we look at modules where students might not have the normal internet access. So how have we adjusted them? And come along and see how these modules have been delivered in prisons because that's how we're going to explain limited access.

So I've got three fantastic guests who work with the prison students to chat with me. And then we've got some of our workshops, looking at using other people's ideas, learning from feedback, taking notes effectively, and how to communicate academically. And then on the 19th of July, we're going to be focusing specifically on those of you who are moving into HE study from level 1 to level 2, and level 2 to level 3. So we look forward to seeing you at all of those sessions.

And I'd just like to say, thank you, Heidi. Fantastic as always. Thank you, Charles and Isidora. And thank you, Sarah and Fred, from the earlier session. I've had a really great time with you all this morning. So I'll look forward to seeing you at future sessions. Enjoy yourselves, and goodbye.

[AUDIO LOGO]