

145 Enhancing study Equality diversity and inclusion - 26 June 2024 - small

ROB: Hello, everyone, and welcome to Student Hub Live. You're here with Rob again. And I would say I'm in the study shack, but actually, it's more of a study sauna today. I had to shut the windows. And I've had to turn the fan off. Goodness me. But we will survive. We will survive. Great to have you with us. And today, we've got our got some guests from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. And we're going to be talking about the topic of equality, diversity, and inclusion, and what that means within our modules and how we work with our students.

In the chat, we've got Mel, and we've got Tina. And you will see messages from them because they will have SHL in front of their names. So they're there to help you with any questions and answer any specific issues you might have. So they've got lots of resources to share. And, of course, I'm here with Heidi. Hi, Heidi. How are you?

HEIDI: Hello. I'm fine, thanks, Rob. I'm a bit warm. I am melting a little bit. This is my dedication to showing off the OU brand, having my winter hoodie on in this heat today. It's very warm, isn't it?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ROB: My hoodie's packed away now. It can't be--

HEIDI: Very sensible. Yeah, yeah. Very warm today. And my neighbours are doing loads of work next door, loads of construction work, digging up their garden, which is perfect. So if you hear those noises, I do apologise.

ROB: So who have we got with us already, Heidi? Who's in the chat?

HEIDI: Yeah, we've got a few people introducing themselves in the chat already. We've got a couple of students in Scotland. As I always say, we always get a great representation from students in Scotland, which is brilliant. So we've got Phoenix, who's joining us in Edinburgh this morning. Now Phoenix has just finished a stage 1 Arts and Humanities Module A111, which I also studied. I did all of my undergraduate with FASS.

I did English literature. So FASS is the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. And our panel are from FASS today. So Phoenix, hopefully you enjoyed that one. I loved A111. And then we've got Fiona, who's also in Edinburgh this morning, who is doing English literature and creative writing. And next up in October, Fiona is going to be studying A125, and A233. Are you doing those two at the same time then. Fiona? Pop that in the chat. Just let us know if you're going to be doing two modules at the same time.

Heather is joining us from Berkshire. And Heather, I imagine you're feeling really pleased, Heather, because Heather has just completed DD105. And then we've got Emily, who says, good morning. I'm in South Wales, and I've just finished studying A112. And I'm going on to focus on art history next year. And then we've got Andrea, who's in Essex, who has just completed A226, having done A111 like Phoenix and A112 like Emily.

And Andrea has signed up for A237 but would like to do classics. So we've got lots of students, unsurprisingly, who are studying in FASS, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, with us today. Just to note, so you might find that the chat goes quite quickly. If you press the pin on the top-- I think it comes

out on the right-hand side for you, but I'm just trying to show it on the other way around here on the screen.

If you click that, it will slow down the chat for you. So it's easier for you to read and manage. And I use that all the time because I can't keep up with the chat over here. And there's also a widget. So we're going to be using widgets. So we like to make our sessions really interactive. So if you have a look on the screen, you'll be able to see the widget there. We've got a question for you and please do let us know your thoughts on that. But otherwise, pop your questions, pop your thoughts in the chat. I'll be feeding them through to Rob and the panel in the studio. And enjoy today's show.

ROB: Absolutely. Thank you, Heidi. And just remember, whatever you put in the chat is going to be publicly seen. So just make sure there's no private information, nothing that you don't want to be out there. OK, so enjoy talking to us because that's what this is about. We want to hear from you. And later on, there'll be an opportunity for Heidi to take your questions to the panel.

OK. So I just want to say hi to the panel. So today in the room with me, we've got Sue, Arabella, Pepta, and Jen. Great to see you, guys. And I'm going to let you introduce yourselves. So Sue, if you'd like to go first, tell us a little bit about yourself.

SUE WATKINS: Thank you very much. Yes, my name is Sue. I work in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences along with the others. My title is manager, Student Experiences, Nations, as it says on the screen. What else would you like to know?

ROB: No. Well, we will find out more about you as we go through the questions. So that's great. So, Pepta, tell us a little bit about yourself before we start.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Thanks, Andrew. My name is Pepta, and I am the EDI, or Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion manager. We also should have accessibility on the end of that. But this is my first time, a bit nervous. And I am the EDIA manager for the student facing side of FASS.

ROB: Wow. Oh, you don't need to be nervous. You just promoted me to super hero status of android, which is great. But that's fine. Andrew's our producer.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Sorry, Rob.

ROB: Keep us all under control. No, that's fine. And Arabella.

ARABELLA COX: Hi. I'm a student, or was up until the 3rd of June this month. And I was doing a criminology degree, taking me five years. And I live in South Wales, too.

ROB: Excellent. Excellent. And we do love it when we manage to get students come and talk with us because we do have real students. They're not fictitious. They do really exist. So anybody out there who's watching this and thinking, I'd love to be involved, get in touch with Kat. And let them know, say, Is there any chance I could get on one of these shows? We'd love to have you with us because there's always opportunities to hear from you. And last but definitely by no means least, Jen, welcome.

JEN ISAAC: Hi. Thanks, Rob. Hi, everyone. Lovely to be here. I'm Jen Isaac. I am coordinator for Student Experience and EDI, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, working closely with Pepta and Sue as well.

ROB: Thank you. So we're going to start off. And to begin with, we're going to talk with Sue. And we're going to have a chat about the student awards. Heidi told you there's a ticker question going across the bottom now. And it's the question is, Did you know that FASS has students awards, and your students can nominate themselves? Just give us a "yes" or "no" if you know about that. And I'm going to ask Sue some questions about it. So, Sue, tell us about the FASS Student Awards. What are they?

SUE WATKINS: Right. Well, there's something that the Faculty's put in place so that we can recognise our students' outstanding performance and achievement. Now, what we mean by "performance" and "achievement," because sometimes they can be interchangeable, performance is basically the student's score. So the people with the highest score on a particular module that they're studying will get the award. The achievement is more-- well, it's very much different from the performance side because it's how the student has engaged with their studies, what sort of progress they've made. I'll give you an example. We had a student who nominated herself, because although she didn't pass her TMA01, she interacted with her tutor. She took their advice on board, and she made a lot of progress. Didn't get the highest score in the modules, but her progress was really quite a steep one from there on in. So she took everything on board and her progress was amazing. So she was there for the Achievement Award.

ROB: Absolutely. So you're able to recognise people that can overcome difficulties, overcome challenges, and, yeah--

SUE WATKINS: Yeah, I struggle to use the word, but it's a good word. It's "journey," because it is your study journey. It's what you go through in order to attain your particular goals.

ROB: Yeah, don't worry. We like cheesy on Student Hub Live. Journey is perfectly OK.

SUE WATKINS: I can give you cheese.

ROB: [LAUGHS] Absolutely. So when we talk about an award, what do students actually get? What is the award that they receive?

- Right. It's multifaceted. First of all, they get a certificate. They get a trophy. And they also get 250 pounds. So it's well worth putting yourself forward for one of the Achievement Awards just for the money, really, but also to celebrate your own success.

ROB: And how do the students nominate themselves? What do they do? Is there a link that they follow? And when is it open, for example? Is it open at the moment, or is it--

SUE WATKINS: No, it's closed now, but what we do is we send out emails to all of our students because they are open to all students who meet the criteria. And we also put a note on the Student Hub-- not Student Hub-- Student Home, so that they can see it via various means.

ROB: I see. And despite the fact that I'm a fantastic FBL student, I probably couldn't apply for this one. So totally open.

SUE WATKINS: Absolutely. No, I'm afraid. So sorry about that. It is only open to FASS students. That's not to say that in the future we might not collaborate with other faculties. But at the moment, it's just us.

ROB: OK. Thank you. And I think the team have managed to put a little bit more information in the chat. So if anybody's got any questions about the awards, feel free to pop your questions in the chat. And if you don't get answered in the chat, we'll come back to the panel later with Heidi. So thank you, Sue. So another quick question on that, and this will catch you out because it's not in the list. Roughly, how many awards do you give out each year? So is it one award or is it 150? I've got no sense of how many you actually award.

SUE WATKINS: It's 11. I have that figure at my fingertips. No, it's 11. There are the original four awards that we gave for specifically Black, Asian, and minority ethnic students. And they were our opening towards the suite of awards that we've got. And then last year, we introduced the seven executive dean awards to add to that suite. Hope that helps.

ROB: And no, no, that's exactly what I wanted to know. And how do you feel the awards helps support the topic today, which is in encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion? How do the awards actually work towards that?

SUE WATKINS: Well, because they're open to anybody, and it's-- the Performance Awards, for example, are based on scores. So it doesn't matter who you are, everybody is on an equal footing. So it could go to anybody. And the four awards that I mentioned earlier, they are specifically-- they were introduced to go some way towards addressing the degree-awarding gap.

ROB: Excellent. And we put a widget out asking people whether they knew about the award. So we can show that. And I think we'll bring Heidi in as well, because I think, Heidi, we've got some comments that you'd like to share with us. So I'll let you talk through the widget, Heidi, because I'm too far from the screen without my big, thick glasses on. And then I'll let you ask your question.

HEIDI: Yeah, sure. So as you can see on the screen there, so we've got seven of our guests with us today have said that, yes, they were aware of the FASS Student Awards. And 11 of them said no. And it's actually lovely to be here. As I said previously, I studied with FASS because I did English literature. And then I was working, I covered a maternity post at the OU for 14 months in the development office as alumni engagement manager.

So I worked closely with Sue. And I worked with some of the amazing high profile celebrities that sponsor these awards. So yeah, it's lovely to actually meet Sue face-to-face in person, which is great.

SUE WATKINS: Nice to meet you, too.

HEIDI: But yeah, we've got a question for you, Sue, actually. So Heather asked the question, Is the award presented at graduation ceremony? So she just wants to know a bit more about then when people are actually awarded their award.

SUE WATKINS: Right. Thank you. That's a good question. No, it's not awarded at graduation. We are currently awarding them at our faculty assembly that's held in November. And originally, because it sort of started during lockdown, so we did everything online. Last year, we were able to invite people for the first time. We invited our students in. Four of them were actually able to make it and joined us for the assembly.

And that was an amazing experience. Their stories were so wonderful. And they were so pleased to be able to be students of the OU and FASS in particular. And it was a very emotional and inspiring day for us as well as for them. And so we're definitely going to be inviting them again in person if they can this time round.

ROB: Thank you, Sue. And that was a really good question. So keep your questions coming because we want to make sure we cover the things you want to know about. So we're going to chat now with Pepta and Arabella. And of course, Sue's going to be there to jump in, if you have anything to add, Sue, as we go through. And we're going to be talking about the inclusive curriculum. So the ticket question is now changed. So it's going across the screen now.

And the question is, thinking about a module that you're currently studying, What would you do to make it more inclusive? OK, so what could you do to your module to make it more inclusive? OK, so Arabella. Oh sorry, Arabella. Sorry, Pepta first. Sorry, Arabella. Suddenly sat up, then got worried. So, Pepta, tell us what we mean by inclusive curriculum, and what is the Inclusive Curriculum Review?

PEPTA JOEFIELD-BEEBY: Thanks, Rob. So what we mean by inclusive curriculum, I think we have to start from recognising that the Open University recognises that we have awarding gaps, and there's

different contributory factors creating that gap. The inclusive curriculum, it's almost an intention to make our curriculum accessible to or equally accessible to all of the students that we have.

And so the Inclusive Curriculum Review is an exercise in inviting students and associate lecturers to look at module material. When we invite students to look at this module material, we ask students not to be studying on the module because what we're really looking for is their point of view on the material they're reading. So we ask them to look at the material. And we ask them to pick out things that they might consider in needing review or change.

It varies what they find, but I can give you an example. So sometimes it's just about imagery. The text in the module could be fine, but the image might not offer a diverse representation of authors or other people referenced or mentioned. So essentially, this is an exercise in reviewing texts, reviewing images, reviewing module material to see what can be updated or changed or improved to make that module more inclusive to more students.

ROB: OK. So when we talk about accessible, we're talking about making sure students can actually get to the materials and understand it. And so it would be appropriate for somebody who's perhaps got a visual impairment or something like that, or if they have trouble with the internet to make sure they've got that sort of access. And I suppose with inclusivity, is that so they can understand the context that it's delivered in so that we're not looking from a particular angle? Is that what we mean?

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Sort of. Inclusivity, yes, understanding, of course, what you're studying and reading is important. But the inclusivity part of it includes accessibility and representation. So we want to make sure that-- I think in some of the guidance, so just to backtrack a little bit, as part of this review process, the students and ALs use a tool created by our access and participation team that is called Inclusive Curriculum Tool.

So this tool is a series of prompt questions that the students are encouraged to use as they read through the module material. And it just highlights-- it highlights points that you should think about as you're reading the text. And that for one prompt, I think will give an example of text that we're reading at any level to be inclusive. I think it's-- I don't want to say grade because that will sound American, but it's coming from my background.

I would read an age of 10, you should-- your text, someone who is 10 years old should be able to read and understand what you are saying. So the inclusivity element is quite-- it's broad, but the use of the tool helps to bring it all together and helps the students participating in the review to give us their point of view, but also to look for others that they might not have considered.

ROB: Absolutely. And I'm not doing a review in FASS, but in FBL where I work, I'm actually using the tool from the AL perspective. And it is very detailed, and we have to consider things like, Are there examples from all four nations of the UK? Is it available in Welsh? Is it representative for international students? Are we using examples and terms that are only locally used? So it really does challenge some of the things that we do I think. So I'm definitely enjoying that.

So students get involved. So you ask students to come along. And I know we're going to talk to Arabella in a moment because Arabella has been involved in this. But how would a student volunteer to do this sort of work? So if somebody who's watching today is sitting there thinking, oh, I wouldn't mind getting involved in that, how would they do it?

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: So they can get involved-- and we say "volunteer," we don't ask students to do it for free. They are offered something in exchange for their time. But around April of every year, we

will put out an advert-- and we have done for the past four years inviting students to participate. We post this information on the module sites asking students to apply. The criteria is very-- it's quite open, it's quite broad.

We want students from every background to apply. And we want to hear what they have to say. So we send out an invitation. Students apply. We select the students that meet the criteria and qualify. And we offer them some training, because we don't want them to just be handed some module material and say, oh here, let us know what you think about that. So they're offered some training, a briefing on the tool so they can have an idea of how the tool works.

And we ask an external agency called Advance HE to also offer them some training on inclusion, diversity, and those aspects of the tool so that they feel a bit prepared to attempt the review.

ROB: Wow, that's great. And some new transferable skills that they can take on board. And yeah, things that used a really practical sense. And I totally agree with the point about asking students to look at a module they're not on. I'm reviewing a module I teach on, and I almost have to try and forget what I know about the module in order to look at it objectively. Yeah, so if anybody is out there and thinking, oh, I wouldn't mind a go at that, then watch out for those adverts. And yeah, it's a great way to get a little more involved, gain a new skill. Heidi, I believe you've got something that's come up in the chat that you like to bring forward?

HEIDI: Yeah, we've had a few great comments in the chat. So Phoenix has shared, as an autistic student who struggles with attention, I felt disappointed in myself by not being able to keep up motivation for units involving disciplines that I couldn't connect with fully. And Phoenix says, I love how wide ranging the module is because for most people, that's wonderful. And Phoenix, just as a reminder, I did a hello, an introduction to Phoenix at the start. Phoenix has just finished A111.

Fiona says, I think tutors should be visible throughout tutorials. It adds another dimension that can aid learning and make students feel connected. It would be nice if students could see each other as well if they're happy to turn their cameras on. And Heather agreed with that comment and said some of the sessions would be good in this kind of forum. So like Student Hub Live, where the tutor is present and visible for all the aspects of communications, including non-verbal. So just like this one with Student Hub Live rather than just the voice we hear. So just some great comments and ideas and perspectives that are coming in there from students in the chat.

ROB: I absolutely agree. I think that's a really good point. And when it comes to students having the cameras on, I think it's-- first of all, we don't want to force anybody. Not everybody's comfortable, but it's nice. My record is 64 students in the room with the cameras on at once to get a group photo. That was great. And when it comes to the tutor being visible, sometimes I get a request to turn my camera off. Nothing to do with bandwidth-- they just don't want to see me.

[LAUGHTER]

But yeah, no, some really good point. And thank you for this. So these things that would make it more accessible. And I do training with tutors. I help to train my colleagues on the use of some of these techniques. And one of our things that we suggest is always have your camera on. And any student or live sessions you come to, we will always be there. And I always give you the tip on how to get rid of my camera, my view if you don't want to see it, which a lot of people do.

But Arabella, I'm going to bring you in now. And I'd just like to hear some of your experiences because you've been doing the interactive curriculum review. And I just want to know what your experiences were. How did you find it?

ARABELLA COX: Well, I first did it a year before last. So I've done it two years in a row. And my take on it is that we live in a very diverse society and diverse world. And when you're a student and you're reading a module, reading a text of a module, you want to see yourself represented in that and included in that. So looking at me, you might make assumptions about, oh, she's white, privileged, middle aged, unfortunately, and, you know, probably got maybe quite an easy life.

But in actual fact, I was diagnosed having bipolar when I was 21. And during the course of my studies, the last five years, I've discovered I have ADHD. And so I looked at doing the review from my perspective. I can't talk in terms of-- I can't put myself in the shoes of a person of colour or a person in a wheelchair. So I thought, right, I'm going to review this chapter because you're given a chapter of a module to review. And I'm going to look at it in terms of am I represented in what I'm reading? Or where could I be represented? I think the module makers have a lot to do. And it's incumbent on them to not necessarily go down the obvious route. I feel like people with a severe mental illness and the neurodiverse community, we really are at the bottom of the pile, and we get left out. And we're not considered.

And I think one of the reasons for that is because of the lack of understanding of what it means to be neurodiverse. So it was a great way for me to have my little input and just to say, actually, have you considered this? Or maybe you could use this-- oh, excuse me. I'm so sorry.

ROB: Sorry.

ARABELLA COX: Perfect. Yeah. So maybe you could consider doing this instead for the student community to feel included, because 10% of the student community have volunteered that they have a mental health issue or are neurodiverse. And that's quite a large chunk of the student population.

ROB: Absolutely. I just want to say, thank you for being involved because as somebody who's written content for modules before, it's very easy to get focused on what we want to get over, the actual learning materials. And because we don't know everybody's background, we can't always see easy ways to bring it in. And it's only through activities like this where you get the opportunity to talk to people with different perspectives and get that view.

This would be better if we had this, or could you bring this in? And yet you can't bring it into every single element. But over the course of a section of a module, you should be able to have something for everyone. And that's why I think--

ARABELLA COX: It's impossible. It is impossible. As a module maker, it's impossible to think-- and why would you think of something that doesn't affect you?

ROB: Yeah, exactly.

ARABELLA COX: You wouldn't consider it. But having these reviews are fabulous because it gives the module makers insight into what it's like to be in that person's shoes. And I think 2024, we need to be in a place where we are thinking of everybody. And this is a great way of doing it and for students to get close to the module makers as is possible.

ROB: And I'm guessing if your experience-- because again, I'm doing it from a tutor's point of view. But the changes you suggest don't need to be big changes. Sometimes they're quite small, subtle things that would make a big difference. And so--

ARABELLA COX: Very subtle. I mean, it's right to give attention to equality and EDI in terms of colour of skin, sexuality, and disability. But on the end of that, people with a mental illness and/or are neurodiverse. We really don't get a look in. So I would encourage any student out there who knows what it's like to have ADHD or to be on the autistic spectrum or to have schizophrenia just to say, mm, I'm reading this. And actually, that's not how I take it. This is how I take it. Or this is what you could do to make me feel like I exist. And just to sort of level up the playing field a bit.

ROB: Yeah. And I use the same tool as you. And one of the questions I really like when we're doing the review is, Has the module team taken on board feedback from the students in adjusting the content? And the reason I like that is because it means the module teams need to listen to students if there's something that's missing-- I'm not saying just say what you don't like, but be constructive.

If you've got a suggestion as to how something could be improved, make sure you let the module team know. And you can do that through your tutor or through the feedback on the module website. That's a great way of improving the material that we've got, and bringing it to you. And that doesn't matter what faculty you're working, that should be the same. So we want to hear from all students.

So thank you for that, Arabella. That was fantastic. And we really do appreciate you being involved in that. I'm going to open it up-- before we move on to the next part, is there anybody else who wants to make a comment on the curriculum tool? Or Heidi, if there's any more comments in the chat, pop in. But anybody who'd like to add to that?

ARABELLA COX: As far as the curriculum tool goes, I would--

ROB: Oh go ahead, Arabella.

ARABELLA COX: Well, the first year was obviously two years ago. I used it, and the irony was, it was the EDI. It was the inclusive tool, and I couldn't use it because of my ADHD. I couldn't get my head around it. So I thought that was quite funny. So I basically chose to review the chapter in my own way. And the lovely thing was, that was perfectly acceptable. And then since then, they've gone on to make more tools to fit everyone else's way of reviewing.

ROB: Yeah. Absolutely--

ARABELLA COX: Yes, initially.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ROB: And I can tell you that I'm using the latest version. And there was a lot of emphasis made about how it's been changed because of the feedback from the people who'd used it before. So if you saw it today, it'd be very different to the-- I think the questions are the same, but the way it's approached is different. And again, it just shows the feedback's working. OK, Heidi, what-- I think you've got something. What are people saying in the background?

HEIDI: Yeah. Got some more comments from the chat to feed through. So Lisa says, this is a powerful discussion. And Lisa shared that she's particularly interested in autism, given females having-- so basically, I think how autism presents itself in females, because as we know that it's very different. And Lisa says that this has been massively under-researched and underplayed.

Phoenix says, DSA has been really helpful. I think SHL and PLA online events were what kept me engaged enough during those lower points when I was feeling really demotivated. I do know that watching tutorials can be overloading for some people, though. So that may not always be enough for them. So yeah, just some ongoing conversations in the chat and reflections that are being shared at the

moment, but that was a really interesting session. And Arabella, really interesting. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us.

ROB: Definitely. And it might be a good opportunity to remind people that Heidi-- oh no, I think it's Margaret and Isabella run a session specifically for neurodiverse students, where they can look at specific issues. So not being involved in those before. So if neurodiversity is something that affects you, keep your eyes open for those sessions. Perhaps go back and consider watching some of the recordings. I think some really sensitive and detailed topics are being covered that-- [LAUGHS] Isabella does a fantastic job. I would struggle, to be honest, to handle things the way she does. But if that's the sort of area that affects you, then definitely look out for those specific sessions because we want to learn from you as well. What works best for you where you are? Any other comments before we move on to the next topic?

JEN ISAAC: Yeah. Oh, can I come in, Rob?

ROB: There you go, Jen.

JEN ISAAC: Just on a couple of points, one to Arabella's point about the accessibility of the Inclusive Curriculum Tool itself. I know for many years, it was created in an Excel document. Now Excel is great for a lot of things. I am a fan of Excel, but in the case of the Inclusive Curriculum Tool and inputting data, but particularly, free text and writing chunks and paragraphs of text in response to each question or prompt, it's not that user-friendly.

So one of the things that the Access and Participation team took away has been to make other formats, particularly like a Word document or something which is clearly designed for word processing, for typing. And as Arabella said as well, if there's not the format that you find useful there, there are other ways you can find your own ways of doing things. So that's been really helpful.

And the other thing I wanted to pick up on was from the chat. It's really interesting to hear what works in terms of your engagement and community. And one of the things we'll come on to talk about in a little bit is engagement with students about their overall experience, what works, what makes them feel like they belong, et cetera. So thanks, Rob.

ROB: Thank you, Jen. That's great. And it's learning. I think sometimes-- I know when I was a student, I spent a lot of time studying with the OU. And I used to think those tutors, those module tutors, they know everything. And I used to get this-- not quite a God complex because they weren't gods, but I used to think that they knew everything that they needed to know.

Now that I'm a tutor, and I do some of the writing for the OU, I realised, actually, there are bits I know really well, and there's bits I don't know. And the opportunity to learn from students, what they actually experience, what they actually need is absolutely vital. And that's going to bring us into our next topic, which is about student consultations. So we've got a new widget. So this is a Word cloud widget, and we want you to put three words-- you have to put three words in, and three words about the OU that makes you feel included.

If you can only think of one, put it three times. But what we want to see is, What is it about that makes you feel included? And the more times a word appears, the bigger it will be on the word cloud. And Heidi will be looking at your word cloud in a little while. And then we've got a couple of ticker questions that will be going across during this conversation. The first one is the opposite, really. What sort of things might cause a student to feel excluded?

And so what is it that stops you feeling included? And what would you change to-- the second question is, What would you change to enhance your overall study experience? What could we do that's going to make it a better experience for you? So those two questions will be going through as we have this next chat. And then we'll be reviewing your comments at the end. OK. So I'm going to bring Jen and Pepta to back into this. So, Jen, first of all. Tell us about the student consultations. What are they, and why do they exist?

JEN ISAAC: Yeah. So the student consultations in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences kicked off sort of mid last year. What we were finding is that we were analysing data within the faculty about these awarding gaps. Now we've heard the term "awarding gaps" a few times today. Just for clarity, what it means is the difference between two groups of students in terms of what their degree outcomes or module outcomes might be.

So it could be white students versus Black students, or it could be those students with mental health declared conditions versus those who haven't got a mental health declaration. And our sort of view was that we need to get the feedback and engagement from students from those diverse groups in order to understand what we can do as an institution to kind of close that gap, I suppose.

What is there about the student experience-- whether that's studying curriculum, whether it's assessment, whether it's the level of support that's available either from the tutor or student support team that is potentially preventing our students from doing the best that they can do. So we really wanted to hone in on that and address those awarding gaps. And the faculty's EDI students team, of which myself and Pepta are a part of, we worked closely with our directors of teaching. That's one for each of the schools. And the schools you may know are Psychology and Counselling, Social Sciences and Global Studies, and Arts and Humanities. So for any students studying on those modules. And we found that we had an opportunity to reach out to those students and really start the conversation. So we held a series, I think about four or five online events last year in 2023 with students from a variety of backgrounds.

And that was really, really interesting. Really good, like we've got Arabella here today, to engage directly with our students. And I think it's more important perhaps for somewhere like the Open University where everything is done at a distance, it's done remotely. We've talked about having online events without cameras on and things like that. So really getting to know our students. And that was kind of where it stemmed from.

ROB: So have you any examples of any particular changes that you've put in place as a result? So we have the consultations. And we ask, How can we make it better? How can we improve your experience? Have you got any practical examples saying, we did this? So the cameras is one. Anything else that you've done that you think has been really successful in helping to address some of those gaps?

JEN ISAAC: Yeah, so what we did as a result of the feedback and asking our students about a sense of belonging, we've continued this consultation process. And Pepta is going to talk a little bit more about how to get involved this year, but really creating a community of students that would follow that student journey throughout their time with us at the Open University.

I think the other thing is looking at induction. There's so much information available to students when they join the Open University, and it can be a bit overwhelming. So actually looking at what it is that we're telling our students when they join. What's the most important information for them to hear? I'm working with relevant teams in the University and the student support team to kind of improve that, to really focus on the things that the students need to know.

ROB: Absolutely. So from last year, I know you had a lot of information that came through last year's consultation. What sort of things were students feeding back? What sort of comments did you get?

JEN ISAAC: So there was a lot in terms of support from tutors and the varying support. Some tutors are very much more hands-on. Other tutors are only available via email, for instance, and the impact that that could have. Students liked to be able to know that they can contact their tutor at any time. Also with the student support team, again, having that resource there to support them in their studies, whether it's a random question or a technical issue that's come up, really having that kind of wrap-around support available.

I think the other thing was very much about the curriculum. And it kind of links into the inclusive curriculum. So these consultations give us an opportunity to pass on commentary to the module teams directly outside of that Inclusive Curriculum Review process to really help to feed that. I'm going to bring in an infographic on screen in a moment which shows a snapshot of some of the things that we heard, what students wanted from their student experience. You can see it on the screen there.

And then some of the things that we are doing, how we've been working with the student support team and the module teams closely in order to implement some of that feedback. Definitely, the development of the student community and continuing to engage with students is really important to us.

ROB: Excellent. And yeah, it's good to see-- I always like a good infographic that shows, this is what you said. This is what we did about it. Nice and simple. Not overly complicated.

JEN ISAAC: Absolutely.

ROB: Brilliant. So I know the widget is filling up. So let's have a quick look at the word cloud and let's see what sort of things we've got floating up there. What is it that makes you feel included? And this is where I have to get close to the screen. So if you get a big nose, it's so I can read what's written conversations. Student Hub Live-- oh, we like that. Student Hub Live helps you feel included, which is great.

Forums. Absolutely. As a tutor, I'm always encouraging students to engage in the forums more. That's your social element. That's where you can really get to talk to other students. The OU mission. Yeah, the tutor's attitude. Good. I'm glad when people feel that the tutor is actually supporting them and making them feel included. Other students support. Now, I don't know about everybody out there, but when I was studying, we set up our own little study group.

And we used to meet regularly in people's houses or in cafes or in the local pub. And I would have really struggled to have got through my studies without that individual student support. So there are lots of things there that help you feel included. But when I look back to my studies, as you can probably tell, I'm a bit bolshie and a bit pushy, anyway. I've felt included by making something that I could be involved with. And I'm glad that I did. And this was well before I was a tutor. When I got imposter syndrome, thinking everybody that's studying on this module is much cleverer than me, and I don't deserve to be here. That's what I was like when I started. But I very quickly found everybody felt the same in the group, and we got together. So I suppose my point there is you don't have to be passive and wait to be included. There are things that you can do to include others.

So if any of those suggestions on the word cloud are things that you could influence, things that you could perhaps start doing and getting involved with and make others feel more included because you're part of this as well. As students, you've got a responsibility to include others as much as we have as the OU to make you feel included. And so I'm going to move on to Pepta now. And I think Pepta, you're going to talk to us about this year's consultation and what's coming up. So I'll hand over to you.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Thanks, Rob. So this year's consultations is-- we did it in three parts. And today, I think you will see an infographic or a poster about part 3. But just to say, as Jen mentioned, we started last year with online sessions. We started this year with an online-- don't want to say questionnaire, but it was sort of a questionnaire where we were letting students know we are having some consultations, and it was our starting point.

So we asked them a few questions and also used that questionnaire to invite them to our online session. We had an online session a few weeks ago now. We had some students attend, and they gave us really good feedback. It's really been refreshing to hear students talk about their experience in a just a very relaxed setting. And for part 3, we are very excited about this, and we hope that students find it an exciting prospect, too.

We want to meet students face-to-face on campus in Milton Keynes. And we are going to do that on July 11, where if students are interested in attending, there is a forms link that they can fill out. But we'll meet the students face-to-face. We'll have a chat about the experience. And again, it's going to be a relaxed session. We want to hear from them. And we want to take that information and share it and decimate it throughout the University to all the right people so that the students' views are heard.

And we can implement the changes to make their experience more in line with what they want, expect. Please come also if you have good things to say because we appreciate good feedback, too. But yeah, we're trying to build this community. We want to support students. And we want students to support each other. And we really want feedback to flow. And hopefully, we can demonstrate to students that we're really interested in listening to what they have to say, and we care about their experience at the OU. I don't know--

ROB: So just to clarify, the forms link you mentioned, is that the one that we've just put in the chat box? Is that--

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: It would be the one that's just been put in the chat. It has information about the day and the time. And if students don't notice, we're also interested in covering travel up to 100 pounds. So if they are thinking, I might like to come, but my train ticket might be expensive, please get in touch with us. Hopefully, our email address will end up in the chat soon as well. But do get in touch with us and speak to us because we're happy to cover the cost of your travel. And for your time, I think we're also happy to offer some vouchers to say thank you for coming. So, hopefully--

ROB: Yeah, I've just had the confirmation that Tina has put the link into the chat.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Brilliant.

ROB: And I'm sure Tina will put the email address to contact. And for those of you watching the recording, we'll make sure that the same link is available on the home page in Student Hub Live so you can access it there.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Yes, absolutely. And if someone is watching the recording after the date, as part of that form, we've left an online forms link open for those who don't want to attend or who would rather give their feedback online. There's a link to some questions, and they can let us know their thoughts online the easy way. Or they can, of course, scan our snazzy QR code.

ROB: Oh, and there we go. We're getting all technical now. There's a QR code on the screen. And I will talk slowly-- impossible for me-- to give you enough time to take a quick snapshot of that if you want. And I've got to say, if you've not been to Walton Hall, if you've not been to the home of the OU, it's well worth

going and coming and joining the team. So I'm about to ask the rest of the panel if they've got any more comments on the consultation.

But just before I do, I just want to remind you that once we've had this part of the chat, we're going to be coming to your questions. So Heidi is busily reading all of your points. If you've got a question for the panel in general or for somebody in particular, pop your question in the chat. And then Heidi will ask it on your behalf. So anybody else got a comment on the consultations before we move to the interrogation round? Arabella?

ARABELLA COX: Well, as a student, over the last five years, it's been my experience that whenever I've been asked my opinion, it's not been to placate me or to humour me. Tutors and staff at the really do take on board our opinions. They want to make everything better for us and just to get involved, whether it's a consultation or it's a forum, whatever, and get involved.

ROB: No, thank you. And I'm glad you feel like that, because we do take feedback and comments and consultations very seriously. A lot of time and effort goes in. And as we saw from that lovely infographic earlier, we can actually say we have done this because this is what you said, this is what you asked for. So thank you for that. Anything else on the consultation before we go to questions? All I'll say is the more time you talk now, the less time you'll have to answer questions.

[LAUGHTER]

Says he, with an evil laugh.

[LAUGHTER]

OK so, Heidi--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ROB: Oh, sorry. Yes, carry on. Carry on, Pepta.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Sorry, Rob. Just to add, so the online event, we'll encourage students, if they are interested, to sign up quite quickly because we are limited to 25 students.

ROB: Oh, I guess that's important. So if you want to get involved, do it as quickly as possible. Yeah. So we just got a question come in. So the face-to-face session is limited? Yes, on campus to 25 students. Yeah.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Yeah.

ROB: OK, Heidi, what questions have we got?

HEIDI: So yeah, I just want to pick up. So you were talking a few minutes ago there, Rob, about having the imposter syndrome when you were studying with the OU.

ROB: Yes.

HEIDI: And I just want to give an example of one time that I felt exactly the same way. And it was one of my first modules studying literature. So it's now English literature, but at the time it was literature. So it was lots of translated texts. And it went along to one of my first tutorials, and it was a face-to-face one. And we all sat down and we were talking about where we're at. And there was one guy, and, of course, he was six weeks ahead of everybody else. He'd done all of his reading. He was the pro. He was the expert sitting there making the rest of us feel like, oh god, right? OK.

And then we had quite a big bit of text that we had to read. I can't remember what the book was now. But he put his hand up, and he made a comment that he'd already read the book. And the tutor said, oh, that's excellent. That's really good. And he said, yes, and I read it in French as well. I didn't read it in

English. I took the time to translate it myself. And I thought, oh my god, like, what does everybody else feel like in the room?

But what I want to say is you do get some individual overachievers, and that's wonderful. And I applaud them, and that's great. But for everybody else, that's just kind of just trying to get through juggling life, studying with the OU, perhaps if you're not retired or you've got lots of time, lots of free time, they're always going to be people within the groups that make you feel, Am I doing enough? Like, Am I supposed to be here?

But yes, you are. Yes, you are. You're absolutely fine. So I thought I would just share that little anecdote there. And then I've got some reflections as well, just some bits that I can pull out of the chat. And then we've got a question as well. OK, so lots of chat. We've got a bit of a smaller group today, but some wonderful students that have been sharing some really fantastic experiences. So Fiona has been really honest and open with everyone, which is just wonderful. And thank you so much, Fiona.

So Fiona says, I live with complex PTSD. And it's only through my journey with the OU that I've started being able to recognise and engage the issues that this can cause me as a student. So it's wonderful to hear that the OU has helped Fiona in that process. It's days like this that are stimulating me to engage, and it's so useful. So days like this is in this Student Hub Live session, which is wonderful.

And Fiona's put a lovely comment saying, please keep this great work going. Fiona does say that we could do with having more signposting directly for mental health learning assistants. She says that would be really good, though she does say that in the last year, this does seem to have been increasing quite a lot, which is wonderful. Now some other comments. People have been talking about how they engage with the different forums and the different platforms and ways that they can engage with their studies. So Heather says it would be good if cameras similar to this one for the forums monitored by the tutor. Essentially, Heather is saying about having cameras on within the forums and tutorials. And Heather would find that useful. Phoenix talked about how the sessions with Isabella-- so you talked about that earlier, Rob, that Isabella and Margaret hold wonderful sessions for our neurodivergent student community.

Phoenix says, these sessions have been great and have been such a boost to my personal confidence levels, which is so good to hear. And we'll definitely feed that back to Isabella because I know that she'll want to hear that, Phoenix. And Phoenix says that I'll definitely be recommending these to others.

Phoenix picked up on that conversation around the different formats that people prefer.

So says, there seems to be certain students who do better with a chat room environment rather than a forum setting. I know many have preferred to make discord servers. This means the forums feel rather empty, which can then lead to feelings of isolation. And this is something that Amy then responded to Phoenix about, saying, 100%. I feel a lot safer and comfortable during chat sessions than with the forums. And Amy says that the forums can actually feel quite overwhelming. So quite rarely contributes, which is absolutely fair enough, Amy.

Amy finds that the module-specific WhatsApp groups are very helpful, but again, they can be overwhelming. And I know that we've discussed this in previous sessions. Some people love to have the WhatsApp groups, they love to have that engagement. And some people are just finding their phone pinging dozens of times an hour, and it's just too much. It's too overwhelming.

So one of the questions that we have then, so for those that do find WhatsApp groups and the study groups with their peers really useful, what advice would the panel give to somebody, one of our students

who's looking to build a local student support group with their peers, whether that's digitally or face-to-face? What would be the first step? And where would be best for them to go?

ROB: Whoa, good question. Who'd like to have a stab at that? Arabella, go for it.

ARABELLA COX: Excuse me. Well, I've always avoided social media when it comes to the Open University, because I felt like if I asked a question or if I was going down the wrong road or path, I wouldn't necessarily know in a WhatsApp group, whereas the forums are great because tutors read what you're talking about, and they can put you straight. Saying that, I've found the last two years when it came to the EMA, I actually set up a small WhatsApp group. There were like half a dozen of us in both years. And I found they were great for just the support side of things and to vent our frustrations. And they were very useful then. In terms of local getting involved, myself, I wouldn't. I'd stick to the online until you know these people, because just because you're studying in the OU doesn't mean to say that's necessarily a safe thing to do.

ROB: And I think it's important that you do what you're comfortable with, that you don't feel pressured to do something you're not comfortable with. Some people don't want to be in WhatsApp groups. I've had students who aren't allowed to be in WhatsApp groups because of their job. And they're not allowed to have a social media presence. So they're not allowed to.

But for those who do, that's great. And we need to embrace different ways of being in touch. I'll give a quick example here about one of my groups this year. One of the students came to me and exactly the same comment we've just heard about, not wanting to be part of the forum. And he said, Rob. He says, How can I have a remote chat with people? Is there any way that we can have a remote support group where we could just spend some time together?

And in this particular module, there wasn't-- some modules have student-led rooms, but in this one, there wasn't. And I just said to him, I said, you sought out when you want to meet, and I will open up our tutor group room and just leave you to it. And that's what they did. And they had two or three meetings over the course of the last two months of the module. And they had a lovely time, just meeting together.

And all it took for me as the tutor was just to go in, open the room up so that they could go in there and chat, and just the Adobe Connect room that we use for the tutorials. And they love that. But it's exactly that point you were making, Heidi, about not everybody feels comfortable putting things into a forum, but they still want to talk. They still want to be involved. And if the thing that you want isn't there, ask your tutor about, Can they get it? Can they arrange it?

There are things that we can ask and we can request even if they're not already built in. But doesn't hurt to ask the question. Might get some good suggestions. So any anybody else want to contribute on that point? How would you encourage students to build a community? I thought your hand was going up there. Yes. Say that again, sorry. I didn't see who was talking then.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Sorry. I think Jen and I started answering at the same time.

JEN ISAAC: You go.

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Yeah, I was just going to say, it's always great to hear that students want to follow up their learning with further conversations. I know it's a tricky topic for the OU advising on or encouraging the use of WhatsApp groups or meetups. I mean, as Arabella said, and I think whilst the forums are not for everyone, there is something about them being monitored and tutors being present on there that is obviously why it's the preferred way forward.

So it's what we will suggest. And I really liked your suggestion of the students getting in contact, Rob, and you opening up the forum. That one feels a bit-- not that the others are bad, but it feels a bit more OU to do that. So I'll advice-- I know the students might be thinking they're not actually answering the question. My advice would be talk to your tutors and try and use the forums.

ROB: Yeah. Maybe I'm being subversive here, but as a student, take control of your forums. You can start new messages on your forums. I mean, don't create hundreds and hundreds of new threads, but you could create a single thread called Social, where you can put stuff that's not necessarily related to your module, but just nice to chat about.

We don't want 500 different message threads on different topics that have got nothing to do with your subject. But if you just create a single thread that's there just for chatting and you can put things inside that, that's a good way to start things off. Oh, Arabella, go ahead.

ARABELLA COX: Yeah, I've been chatty every year, as you can well imagine, on the forums. But this year just gone, I just started a thread called Points of Interest. So they were all under the criminology banner, but different things that came up in the media, iPlayer, documentaries that were coming up on Channel 4 and stuff. And that's quite a nice sort of like icebreaker as well. But it's astounding how the amount of students don't want to post on the forum.

So the idea of going somewhere and start opening up your camera feels even less likely to me that they would do. But that's how you can start just a conversation. And then anyone else-- other students came along and put their points of interest in as well. We can all share.

ROB: Absolutely. And yeah, this is why we have our study buddies with all the pictures that hopefully you saw at the beginning. Be able to share different things. Sue.

SUE WATKINS: Yeah. I wasn't sure about joining external groups until I started studying my current module. A lot of the learning is done through critiquing other people's works on the forums, in the workshops. And it's proved so valuable that a lot of people are starting to think, oh, how do I get my work critiqued by like-minded people after the MA is finished?

And so someone suggested, I'm going into the online room. If anybody wants to meet me on this day at this time, we can create a group because the people who go there will be of a similar mind to that. So something was set up for the people who want to stay in touch after we've completed our MAs, and to help each other going forward. And that's sort of one of the things that you get from the OU is a sense of community, albeit online at the moment. And you can help each other going forward, not just while you're studying, but in the future as well.

ROB: Yeah. I think that whole sense of finding a way that suits you. And for me, this is the big theme. It's not this is the way. It's there are different approaches that you can take, but you need the one that works for you. Jen.

JEN ISAAC: [LAUGHS] Yeah, thanks, Rob. I think the other thing I was going to say as a previous OU student myself, is that I would reach out or take a look at the OU Students Association, the OUSA website as well. Because outside of the module work or whatever it is, your study topic, there are other things and other ways, I think, to connect with people that are also studying at the OU. You might have other things in common. So that might be a good channel to explore as well.

ROB: Really good point. Yeah, definitely get involved in OUSA and use some of the resources. And if you're feeling like it, volunteer and go and work at OUSA. OUSA is all run-- so the OU Student

association, OUSA, is all run by students. And there's plenty of opportunities to get involved there. Heidi, did you have another question that you want to bring in?

HEIDI: We've got a few other questions, but I wonder if I could sneak one in, actually, Rob, if that's OK--

ROB: Of course, go.

HEIDI: --for Arabella. So Arabella, I did my undergrad with the OU, and then I went off and I did criminology for my postgraduate studies. And I did that for two years distance learning. And I'm about to come back and start a PhD in October in criminology. So I'm really interested to know, so you've finished your degree now with the OU criminology. What's your next step? Are you planning to go on and do more postgrad study or are you able to apply this within your employment or the work that you're doing? What's sort of your next step now?

ARABELLA COX: Yeah, good question, actually. I mean, I never started a degree because I wanted to enhance my career. I did it because when I should have gone to university, I was at home looking after my disabled mum. And so once my children had fled the nest, it was a great way of filling this massive void with the OU. But I still-- I'm looking into doing an MA now in crime and justice. But I also did say I wanted to write a book, but I might have to do both. Yeah, that's what I-- it's almost like having tattoos. It gets very addictive, studying with the Open University. And, you know, once you start, it's like I might just go and do another qualification. [LAUGHS] So yeah, hopefully, I'll be doing an MA.

ROB: I know what you meant. I came along to do a six-month course 30 years ago, and I'm still here.

[LAUGHTER]

OK. So another question then, Heidi, from the audience.

HEIDI: Yeah, we can't get rid of you, Rob. We've all been trying for a while, but he sticks around.

ROB: He sticks around.

HEIDI: No, we love him. So for Pepta, what's been the most satisfying part of working on the Intensive Curriculum Review?

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Most satisfying part of working on the Inclusive Curriculum Review, I think it's just I think handling it day-to-day and maybe the students are coming in and offering their feedback. I don't know if myself or the students posed to think of how huge that change that is being created is. It's a big deal. These are modules that have been written and mulled over.

And someone's given us the opportunity to go, well, actually, could it be different? Could it be more inclusive? So I think getting module teams as they continue to create and adjust and review their material, just getting them thinking about inclusivity and all aspects of it whilst they create more modules and review the ones that they have. I think it's huge, and I find that bit really satisfying knowing that the comments that our students are given are being considered when these modules are being created. It's amazing.

ROB: Yeah. And, of course, it's not just about the modules that exist. Whatever we learn, we can then apply to the new modules that we create. So everything's--

PEPTA JOEFILED-BEEBY: Yeah, making huge change.

ROB: Yeah. There's so much that I'm learning through running these sessions that I'm now able to apply.

And so this is why I love having guests like you guys along. I learned so much just from having you and me in the room. It's fantastic. Oh Arabella, yes.

ARABELLA COX: Yeah, I've got a word here written down, I wrote yesterday-- "empowering." And I haven't used it, and I must use it before we finish, because that review exercise, I feel, is very

empowering. And it could be underestimated, but the staff do listen and, you know, in your own small way, you're making positive change happen.

So it's not just reading a chapter. It's not just getting a voucher or whatever. It's making a real difference for the future students that are coming along. So I would recommend it to anyone.

ROB: Yeah.

PEPTA JOEFIELD-BEEBY: Thanks, Arabella.

ROB: Absolutely. I've got a little anecdote of my own from here. So we're talking about people on the forums. And Heidi gave an example of somebody that was always ahead. When I was studying, there was this one lady. And if you're studying, you'll know. You've probably got somebody like this in your group that every time a message goes up, they're the first one there.

They write really long messages and somebody writes. And they'll comment right back. And there's lots and lots of discussions. And it just happened that this was a module that had a residential school on. And I noticed that this particular lady was going to be at the residential school. So I thought, oh yeah, that's nice. I bet she's really keen and really overbearing.

And when I went to the residential school, I met this lady. And she was a vet. And she worked in Barcelona. She was English, but she worked in Barcelona as a vet. And her only opportunity to communicate in English was on the OU forum. Now, this was before the times of the videos and everything. This was way back when we had first class. Those of you who remember first class, you're really old like me. But I felt so guilty because I said the nicest lady you could ever wish to meet.

And it was a real lesson for me that I was judging somebody based on what I was seeing without seeing the full picture. And so I wasn't a tutor at the time. I was back studying. But it's one of those lessons that stuck with me that when you look at what people write and what they post. Be careful you don't make assumptions or judgments on that because you don't really see what it is.

And like I say, for her, the opportunity to engage in the forum, that was it. That was her English because all of her friends were Spanish. Her partner was Spanish. And yeah, she just wanted to do something in English occasionally, which-- yeah, so that was my sort of wake-up moment because forums can be really important as well. Because for her, it wasn't just about studying the modules-- it really was that social part. OK. Anybody want to add to examples, or if we've got any more questions?

JEN ISAAC: I suppose the other thing about forums is that some a lot of the modules have an assessment portion which is forum-based. Now whether that's-- it's more of a formative type of assessment. So it's to see how you're progressing as you go along. But the idea, I guess, is to encourage students to use the forums, but also read and engage with other students' posts as well. So trying to expand and develop that community. And they can be really helpful when they're used well.

I know they're not for everybody. And again, we've kind of touched on that, but I would definitely encourage students, even if you're not as confident and comfortable in writing posts, just have a read through of what's there and what your fellow students are going through.

ROB: Yeah. No, that's a good tip. I know Mel on the chat has been saying to people, if you live close enough, why not arrange to come and meet some people on campus? Come up to Walton Hall and meet in the library. Go to The Hub, which is our sort of cafeteria area, and meet up there. So just because you're not based at the University doesn't mean you can't go.

Now, of course, if you're too far away, that doesn't become a practical thing to do. But why not use the facilities? It's probably worth mentioning as well, SCONUL. I don't know if people have heard of SCONUL.

This is the scheme that the OU is part of, and it's where as an OU student, you can get access to other libraries and other university libraries around the country. So that might give you a place to meet up and spend time with people as well.

You can find out all about that on the Library webpage. And don't forget, we have social events on Student Hub Live as well. We had one the other week, didn't we, Heidi? Lots of people turning up for a bit of a giggle. And we've got--

HEIDI: We did. Yeah, we had our end of year party, which was really good, really good fun. Lots of games and lots of things for people to get involved with. We had a really good turnout for that one.

ROB: And we've got Freshers Week that's coming up in September. And Freshers Week isn't just for brand new students. Feel free to come and get involved and have a play as well. So anybody else want to make a comment, any hands there? Any tips, any anecdotes that you'd like to share?

ARABELLA COX: I suppose there was something you said earlier about don't wait for things to come to you. I mean, there is only so much others can do. Sometimes you have to step outside of your comfort zone and make that move on to the forum or into a WhatsApp group. You have got to make that effort.

ROB: Yeah, I think the responsibility goes in both ways, doesn't it? We've got responsibility to provide you with the access to the things you need. But you've got some responsibility to take advantage of it. And those of you who are tutors in the room at the moment, I'm sure you have the same frustrations as me that we can only help students with things they tell us about. If you don't tell us what you want or don't tell us what you need, we can't do-- we're not mind readers.

Because we don't physically meet with you regularly, it's very difficult for us to pick up on some of those subtle ideas you might pick up on if we were meeting regularly. So yeah, if there's something you want or you've got an idea or something you'd like to see happening, ask the question. Nobody is ever going to be upset for you asking a question. And we might have some ways of helping you with that.

And just to let you know that Mel's put the link to SCONUL in the chat. So if you want to find out about that, that's great. I'm just thinking. So we're probably getting to the point now where we're more or less at the end. So I'm going to say thank you all for coming in and talking to us today. It's been really interesting. And I'll say I know a little bit about the EDI agenda from FBL, but it's always good to get another perspective from another faculty. So that's been great.

And I've really appreciated talking to you. And thank you for being so open about the things that you've talked about as well. And I'm sure everybody's enjoyed that. Heidi, what have we-- any final comments? As we come towards the end, anything else that's in the chat that we want to highlight?

HEIDI: We've had a few people that have had to leave us now, I think with the timing. So bye, Samantha. Samantha just said, I have to go now. Thank you for such an amazing session. So thank you so much for that nice feedback. But like I said, we've had smaller numbers in the chat today, but people have been fantastic with the conversations that they've been having and really open and sharing their own experiences.

And actually, I think there's real there's real value in that when the chat is going slightly slower and people can really engage with each other. So thank you to everybody that has engaged in the chat and sent their questions through and shared their perspectives and their experiences because we really do appreciate it.

ROB: Thank you, Heidi. Just a reminder for you all, there is a feedback form. And I think the link to the feedback form will be appearing in the chat. As we've said, we seriously take this on board. Your

feedback determines which sessions come back, which ones we repeat, how long we spend on them. So please make sure you fill out the feedback form. Because if we get no feedback, it will be assumed that you don't value what we do. So please give us feedback.

And I'm going to finish this with a couple of events coming up. I'm back again tonight for my sins. And we're going to be talking about how to learn from feedback, how to take your students comments and turn them into something productive, something useful. So that will be me and Margaret tonight at 7 o'clock. That's a Student Hub Live workshop. And then tomorrow, because obviously I haven't got enough to do, I'm back again. And I'm going to be looking at applying other people's ideas with confidence.

And all I will say is I'm with Nikki Me. If that doesn't mean anything to you, don't worry. But some of you will be laughing at that point. So I'm back with Nikki tomorrow night, looking at other people's ideas. So effectively, How do you use concepts and theories that are in your module effectively? So yeah, look on Student Hub Live for a range of events. And we've said, we've got a few more before the end of July. And we're back in September for Freshers Week.

So thank you, everyone, for joining us. Thank you for your comments. Thank you to all my guests. And Heidi, as always, you have been brilliant. And thank you for looking after the chat. And we will see you all at the next event. Enjoy the sunshine. And yeah, Pepta, you can put your fan back on now. Thanks, everyone. Goodbye and have fun.

[AUDIO LOGO]