

Demystifying Social Media 5th October 2023

ROB MOORE: Hello, everyone. And welcome to Student Hub Live. I'm Rob Moore. I'm one of the presenters at Student Hub Live. And it's great to see you here with us today. We've got a packed show for you. And we're going to be talking specifically about social media and where it fits into your study. We've got a number of helpers in the chat room. We've got Hannah and Tara. And they're going to be answering your questions.

And you can see their names in the chat because they will have SHL next to their names. And they'll be giving you lots of specific pointers, and advice, and some links to use. And of course, we've got Heidi with us. Hello, Heidi. Great to have you back with us again. And Heidi is going to be looking at your messages and your conversations and tell us what you're thinking. So Heidi is my view into your discussions. So Heidi, who have we got today and what are they talking about already?

Hi, Rob. Hello to everyone. So busy in the chat already this morning. I've been having some lovely conversations with our students. Good morning to Dilanjani-- I hope I've pronounced your name correctly-- studying 90 credits this year. That's three courses.

We've got Jessica in Hampshire who's studying BA honours Business Management year one hoping to learn more about networking and how it may help me with my business degree and/or job prospects in the future. We've got Melissa from Lincolnshire who is studying CMDA. And I had to Google this, Rob, I have to admit. That's the Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship. I should know that off by heart but, no, I needed to Google it. We've got Robert. I live in North Devon and I'm in my last year studying bachelor of laws, the LLB. Oh my gosh, Robert. In your final year. That's so impressive.

I did look into starting the LLB and it looks like an amazing course. I am tempted. Pauline, she's the new rep for the Faculty of Business and Law. Lovely to have you with us, Pauline. Lisha, you've joined us for a few of our freshers shows so it's lovely to have you with us again this morning. She says good morning all from a sunny Colchester in Essex. And Andrea is also in Essex this morning.

And we've got Wynn who's up in Wrexham. Wynn's been to a few of our freshers events. He says bore da, good morning. I'm about to start on my first OU module towards Q52, which is Environmental Science. So Wynn is representing our STEM students today.

And then we've got some students studying B100. So we've got Rosanna from Staffordshire and we've got Jennifer in Dorset and Maisi in Derby and then B302 students. We've got Susan in Staffordshire, Rosanna in Staffordshire, and Susan in Staffordshire. Susan studying my last module for my degree, B302, Management Strategy. And Deborah is from the Lake District who's also studying B302.

Now if you find that the chat is moving quite quickly, in the top right hand side-- I keep pointing this side. But when I watch it back, I realise it's actually on this side because the camera flips me around. So on the right hand side, there is a little pin. And if you click on that, it will slow down the chat and it will help you be able to keep up with everything that's going on.

And we've also got some widgets. Let us know on the map-- if you're joining us from the UK this morning, pop your location on the map, there you can have a click and you can see where people are joining us from. We've got some people right up in Scotland, Northern Ireland, fantastic. So have a little play around with that.

Let us know what it is that you're studying on that widget and also the level that you're studying at. And then we can keep track of what everyone's doing. So lovely to have you with us.

ROB MOORE: Fantastic. And thank you, Heidi. It's like my CV reading through there because a lot of you are studying modules I work on. So B100, B302, the CMDA-- they are all modules I'm involved with, which is great. Our guests today are all from the Faculty of Business and Law.

And we're going to be talking about two broad areas. We're going to be talking about how we use social media in our studies and building our learning. And then we're going to talk about collaboration, and how to use it, and how to get the most out of it.

So I'd just like to say hi to my guests today. I've got Ash, Sam, and Charlotte with me today. Give us a wave, guys, just to prove they're not photographs. They're real people. We like to see real people in Student Hub Live.

And we're going to be going and asking our guests some specific questions. And they're going to share with you their experience of working with students as we move forward. So should we have a quick-- we've all been busy on the word cloud at the moment. So shall we have a quick look at the word cloud and see what you're studying?

So I like this because, as I say, most of those are subjects I'm directly involved in, which is brilliant. So B100, fantastic module. And B302, strategy, you're going to have a lot of fun with that one when we come to the activities early next year.

OK. We're going to move on to the first topic, which is around demystifying social media. And what we want you to do is there's a small question going across the screen at the bottom asking you what your favourite social media platform is and what do you use it for. So if you can pop that into the chat and what we'll do is we'll come and find out what you've said in a few minutes. I'm going to start off with Ash. And Ash, what I want to know from you is, how can we use social media in building learning communities? What can we do with it?

ASH: Well, I think it's important to reiterate actually that some of the modules that some of the students have been talking about, B302 and some of the level 3 law ones, there's going to be some aspects of collaboration involved in those directly. So it's really important to build these communities.

And at the university, we offer a very flexible learning experience to accommodate that. And I think the main reason why we feel that building these networks is important to help you with your collaboration is that it makes your learning more accessible and inclusive. It's user friendly. And lots of people can participate in it. And that's one of the important reasons why networking in this way can be very useful. And also, it allows you to work in real time and interact in real time with each other, which improves engagement and interaction.

What you'll also find that in some of your groups you might have students from around the world. So it does help break down geographical boundaries. And you get to get a diversity of views from students that you might not necessarily have the opportunity to, which again makes it very flexible and accommodating. And it's also a very good space for informal learning to take place because people can more readily share their insights, their personal insights, which helps reinforce the more traditional concepts that you'll be studying. And on top of that, obviously, it then allows you to build those relationships and allow mentorship, strengthening engagement. People feel very familiar using these kind of tools. People use them socially so it's a very much more relaxed environment.

I think one of the crucial aspects of it too is giving people a sense of belonging because we are not working in a traditional sort of red brick university style way here. It allows us to bring that sense of belonging and for people to share and give each other feedback in a way that might not be that possible. And I think one of the main reasons why building these networks is so important is because it allows for continuous learning. You might be building networks with students that last beyond the course. And in particular, in the future, you might have very valuable networks that you could draw upon in your workplace and as you go forward.

ROB MOORE: OK. So we've asked the audience what social media are they involved in, what do they use it for. Heidi, have we've got any answers to that yet? Have we've got what sort of things are people using and why do they use it?

HEIDI: Yeah. We certainly have. So we've got a few people talking about their favourite social media channels, the key ones that they use. So Jessica says I spend a lot of my time watching Student Hub Live and business school videos on YouTube. So I guess that's part of learning, which is absolutely accurate, Jessica. I totally agree. Danielle has a preference for Instagram. She says she likes Instagram for making friends with people doing similar things to me. Lisa says I use X, which is formerly Twitter, to keep up to date with OU pages but don't use much social media as I find it a bit too toxic on the whole.

Andrea says WhatsApp groups and Facebook. They are the chosen social media platforms for Andrea. And then Stephanie says I don't really like or get on very well with social media but I do use Facebook sometimes, so a few people sharing their thoughts in the chat. So please do let us know which ones you like to engage with. It's really interesting to find out.

And we had a conversation before actually we came on air and we were talking about the different ones that we use. And it's interesting to see. I personally am having a little break from social media at the moment. So I'm just left with LinkedIn. That's about it, which I find a bit dull, personally, if I'm honest. But yeah, interesting to see what everyone engages with.

ROB MOORE: Yeah. I'm very similar. I'm on LinkedIn maybe just if I want to keep in touch with people but not active all the time and then have an immediate family WhatsApp group. That's my limit. So Ash, what sort of social media do we use within the OU and are there any tools that we use that you would class as a social media?

ASH: Well, we have our traditional tools, essentially. We've got a tutor group forum. And that tutor group for them allows tutors to essentially create threads where students can input into those threads, and generate ideas, and respond to each other.

Now it might not necessarily feel like it so much in real time in the way that traditional social media tools are. It's quite useful for people to use-- people who are kind of finding social media potentially quite toxic because social media can be quite an unregulated space that is a good place to go to. We do have one-to-one calls. Tutors do call their students. I know it doesn't fit in, essentially, like in the way that social media does. But sometimes you can have group sessions in tutorial rooms which can allow those kind of conversations and networks to build.

We use Adobe Connect, which is our main kind of platform. And some tutors do use that space to have group-based sessions. So when you are undertaking collaborative learning, for example, you would be advised to use that sort of private tutorial room if you like as a safe space so that groups can get together and collaborate without using some of the other tools that people might be a little bit apprehensive and wary of. I just wanted to add some of the non-OU tools that I've heard students use.

Some students are using Reddit which is similar to a forum-based tool. I've started to use something called Discord, which is quite a nice little space where you can create groups and post more freely and readily. I find it a little bit less clunkier and a bit more dynamic than WhatsApp.

ROB MOORE: And it's useful to see the different ways of approaching these tools or using them. So thank you for running through those different points, Ash. And we're going to move on. I'm going to ask Charlotte now about how we can use social media to keep us up to date and keep us on track with developments.

And the ticker question has just changed now. The question is now, do you use social media already-- and this is within your studies-- and how do you use it to keep up to date? So I'll tell you my example in a few minutes. But Charlotte, what do you think in terms of using social media to keep you on track with your studies?

CHARLOTTE: Thank you. Really good to be here today with everybody. Yeah. We've talked about some of the benefits of social media in terms of building learning communities and social connections.

Professional contacts is another area that we can use it for. But also there's a really good opportunity to use social media to keep up to date with developments in our field of study. We can do that in a number of ways.

So I think we've already referenced LinkedIn. That's quite a powerful tool for following people in your field of study. So for example, if you're studying law-- I know that some of the students here are studying law. You may wish to follow leading practitioners in particular fields of law so that you can keep up to date with the cases that they are working on.

Also, leading academics will post on LinkedIn and link to articles that they have just published, in particular legal topics. And I think that's a really good way of linking and connecting with leading practitioners in a particular field. You know that they're going to be reliable sources of information. And you can get up to date really good cutting edge articles or information from those spaces.

You can also use other platforms. So for example, X, formerly known as Twitter, there's all sorts of people. I think most leading academics would have a social media profile on X or similar platform such as Mastodon or Blue Sky I think is one of the other ones. And think it's really useful to follow those people. And they will be often quite active on social media building up their profile and trying to promote their own engagement with the outside world. So I think there's enormous benefits to being on various platforms if you want to broaden your outlook beyond the particular topics that you are studying in your OU module.

ROB MOORE: So question for you there, Charlotte. How would you know if somebody is worth following because one of my concerns would be if I recommended something to students, said have a look on Twitter or have a look on Facebook, how would a student know that this is a reliable or a robust person to listen to and then not just listening to somebody that's just sounding off? And that's my concern that we just get irrelevant or dangerous content that's shared. What can they do to check?

CHARLOTTE: That's a really, really good question, Rob. And there's no easy answers to that because we have to be sure of the reliability of the information that we're receiving on social media and of its truth. How can you find out that this article that somebody has written about in a field in which you're interested in is reliable?

So you have to be quite intellectually curious I would say. You would have to do a little bit of background on the credentials of that author. So for example, if it's a barrister writing an article in a particular academic area of law or an academic, you would follow their profile. You would see that they are either

based in a university or in a barrister's chambers for example. So you could be quite satisfied about the credibility of that author.

I think we also have to ask ourselves whether an author might have any vested interests in what they're writing about. You might wonder, or ask, or find out about whether they're being paid to promote or even push a particular perspective. And it's not always easy to do that. You would have to do a little bit of wider research I think to find out whether people are always publishing from a certain perspective. Are their articles peer-reviewed, for example? Are they promotional type articles?

It is quite difficult sometimes I think to find out those inherent biases from an author's particular viewpoint. So I think it's really important for us to all to bear those things in mind when browsing through any social media platform looking for content. Just be really, really curious. Question the truth and the reliability of what we're being presented with. Take a little bit of time to scratch the-- yes, sorry-- to scratch beneath the surface I was going to say.

ROB MOORE: I was just going to say is it very much the same critical approach that we recommend to reading things on the internet. Don't just take what you see at face value. Do the research. Check the pedigree and judge who's written it as much as what is being written.

We've had a few comments. And I don't know if Sam or Ash might want to come in on this. A few students are saying that the OU's forums seem a bit outdated and not as flash or as user friendly as some of the social media we're used to using. There's a challenge for you. Anybody like to answer that question before we move on to the next point? Nobody. Go on there, Sam. You go first.

SAM: They are. They're not new forums. They were cutting edge one day but perhaps not now. But changing platforms is quite a tricky, time consuming thing. And it is what it is. They are quite old fashioned but they are safe spaces. And for those who are nervous about social media because they find it a bit toxic, well, these are moderated spaces so, yes, they're old fashioned but they are safe spaces or should be safe spaces that are monitored.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. I totally agree. I think one of the great things about working at OU is we try and make it accessible to absolutely everyone. And not all of our students are technologically savvy. And for some students, the forums are quite challenging and quite new.

So we do have that bit of a tradeoff where we have these safe moderated spaces that we-- and when I say control, I don't mean we control what you say but you can feel comfortable that what goes on in the forums is monitored and looked after by the OU. And that's one of the challenges with the broader social media because we don't always get to see it.

I have a lot of sayings I use with students and one of mine is read feedback, not faceback. Now that made sense when it used to be called Facebook. But my comment there was about don't listen to-- don't take your module advice from what people in Facebook groups are saying because, however well-intentioned, it's not always correct. And I spend a lot of my time correcting things that are incorrect that have been propagated in social media.

So as Charlotte was saying earlier, always be careful. Always look at who's saying what, on what basis are they saying it, are they experts in the area. So yes, I agree with you about the forums. They may not be the sexiest thing. They can do a lot more things than we normally do with them.

So you can definitely get threads in a range of different things in there. Feel free to play in them. But they are definitely areas that we can help you to feel safe in. But you're not restricted to them. We're not saying

for a second don't go anywhere else. And we use social media a lot in our communications with students and letting you know what's going on.

We're going to come onto the next session now. This next session is looking at how you collaborate. So you heard Ash talk earlier about collaborations and working in collaborative groups. And we're going to have a quick look now at what that actually means. Now I'm not sure if the word cloud from earlier is ready yet. Just have a quick look. Somebody's going to flash me a message and say either yes or no. Subject workload. OK. Oh, we've done the subject. OK. We'll come on to the workloads in a minute. So here I am asking them to show me the one I'm about to ask you to fill in. Think about one word that describes your feelings when you heard the word collaboration or group work. So does it get you excited, the opportunity to work with other students? Does it fill you with fear? Does it fill you with dread? So in the word cloud, just in your one words just tell us what you think about when you heard the words group work or collaboration. And then in the chat box, we want to know what sort of experiences you've had working in groups. So think about your working life. When have you had to work with others? And we're going to come back and look at some of your comments in a few minutes.

So back to you for this one, Charlotte. We're keeping you busy in this session, back to back questions. So we're talking about collaboration. Why do we use it in the Open University? And if a student's told they're going to be collaborating, what might that mean because there are different ways of collaborating?

CHARLOTTE: Yes. And I think it's really important to pick up on your point, Rob, and acknowledge that some people might be filled with dread when they see that they might have to collaborate in an assignment because you might think, quite reasonably, I joined the OU so I wouldn't have to do that. I want to work alone. It fits in with my lifestyle and so on and so forth. Why am I being asked to do this? So there's some very good reasons why the Open University does use collaboration as one of its assignment methods. And I suppose the single most important reason is employability. So for example, many OU modules might ask you to work in a group to produce something as a collective group, a project for example or, in one of the modules I work on, a podcast.

If you can demonstrate evidence of being able to get a complex project such as a podcast over the line by a particular deadline, then employers are going to find that a highly desirable skill. There's tight deadlines that need to be met. If you think about working in, for example, a legal practise area, solicitor's office for example, you will need to produce work for a client.

And the client is not necessarily going to be interested in how or who produces that work. They just want to see that finished piece of work by a strict deadline. So employers are going to be very greatly interested in skills that you can demonstrate that allow you to produce something like that. And there might be quite a lot of different strands involved to this project. And that's what the assignments that we set are trying to draw out. Lots of people have very different skills.

So for example, if it's a legal assignment that you're being asked to work with others in, some people might be really good behind the scenes doing legal research. So when you're working out together in your group who's going to do what, some people might say, yes, that's what I want to do. Other people might want to say, well, I'm really good at weaving everything together and making it a coherent whole so that person can be assigned to that particular task.

Others may be really good at making-- let's say if it's a podcast which I referenced earlier for W302. A podcast involves quite a lot of creative input. So some people might be really good at that side of things,

deciding the look and feel of the podcast, finding musical jingles or whatever to link the different strands together.

Some people might be able to write the transitions and so on. You can see that there's so many different skills involved in that and that's what employers are really looking for, not just the particular skill that you demonstrated in that but also how you worked with others to make all of those skills weave together to produce this amazing finished piece of work.

ROB MOORE: So collaboration is really important. Lots of different ways we can use it there. And I'm wondering, Heidi, what are people saying about collaboration? Are they excited? Are they looking forward to it? What sort of comments are you getting?

HEIDI: Loads of comments around collaboration. It's interesting to see. Some people seem to really enjoy it and others are completely against it. I personally do struggle with the collaborative work and the team work. I'm very much like a lone wolf. I like to just kind of get my head into things and I need to get better at working as a team.

Lisha. "In collaborative groups in previous modules, there wasn't much engagement. Everyone was trying to be the loudest voice. There wasn't very much sort of working together." So that's interesting.

Rebecca said this doesn't apply so much to work life but in school I was the one that had to do all of the work. Deborah said my previous experience has been poor. Only two out of a group of eight actually collaborated. Sometimes there was that sense that you're carrying other people.

Anthony says, "Group work for assessment is far from ideal. Being dependent on others who may not share the same level of motivation is difficult." Absolutely Jessica. "I enjoy working collaboratively as it allows you to get different outlooks and perspectives."

And Andrea's got a great example here. Andrea worked on a painting project with three other people all very different in their style of painting. It was very difficult to be constructive but it was good for team building and listening to other ideas. Andrea found it OK but several found it stressful. I can't even begin to imagine working on a joint painting project together when you're all going to have such different styles and such different ideas. That's really, really interesting. But yeah. Loads of comments. So please do keep putting them in the chat so we can share them.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And we're just going to have a quick look at the word cloud you've created. And let's see the sorts of things that you've raised up. So what have we got here? We've got working in teams, concerned, controversial, dread, worried, scared, some dream work, viewpoints. Some really interesting elements there. Some of them are a little bit on the negative side. I work on a lot of modules that have collaborative work.

And one of my modules on marketing, the group have to come up with a marketing campaign and a poster together, so not quite the painting one you were talking about, Heidi, but the group has to come up with a group output, which is effectively this marketing campaign. And I know a few of you have mentioned B302. And what you do on B302 is you do some collective analysis and you produce a collective report that you do as a group.

And we're going to come back to all the good reasons why this collaboration is there to help you. But we're going to move on to Sam now because Sam's next point is really pertinent to the word cloud. It's how do we get the most out of this collaboration and the group work.

And the ticker has now changed. And we want you to write your tips for a successful collaboration. So if you've been involved with one and it worked, how did you make it work? What did you do? So Sam, over to you. How do we get the most out of collaboration?

SAM: Hi, Rob. Hi, everyone. I was like most people. My first degree was in law. We didn't do any collaboration in the 1980s. Then when I did my open science degree with the OU, lo and behold, one of the level 3 modules involved a big group work project. And I was worried. I don't want other people's work contributing to my degree. I think that's a very natural thing to feel.

But what I learned very early on was you have to accept it. It's the module. You can't get out of it. It is happening. Group work is happening. And so you have to move on from that fear and find a way to make it work. It helped with my project that it was remotely controlling a telescope in Mallorca so it was a very interesting project and the subject matter was so interesting that actually very quickly we forgot it was group work. It was just something that we were doing. And yes, there were other people helping us because you need four people to run the telescope in Mallorca, including one person to shut the doors if it starts raining in Mallorca. So you had somebody else looking at the weather.

So it was a project that could not be done by yourself. There was an awful lot of literature to review. We had to design the project. We had to decide what we were going to study. And then we had five overnight sessions with four of us staying up till 5:00 in the morning, controlling the telescope, taking the observations. And then we had to analyse them and then we had to put the report together.

So it was a huge project. And it could not have been done by any one person. I'm quite good at study I think but I couldn't have done it by myself. And I think once you've got over the I don't want to do it and accepted that it's happening, then you're one stage further to having a good group work experience.

My other top tip would be look very closely at what the assignment is actually asking of you because it isn't necessarily that you're being marked on other people's work as such. This particular module I did, S302 for anybody who wants to do it, was 50% of the marks were the group project output. 50% was what I wrote about the process and my research log. So not all of my marks were down to the group work.

So very important. Not all group work is like that. Sometimes there will be a group output but you're being marked on your contribution to the output. It's still group work but it isn't necessarily that you are being marked on the work or lack of work from others. So read the assignment. Be very clear on what you're being asked to do and engage with it and engage with the group.

Talk to each other. Communication is by far the key thing to making a group work. You have got to find out about each other's lives. You're not all the same. Some people will work very well late at night. Some people will work in the morning. Some people like email. Some people want to WhatsApp.

You've got to have some method of coming together and deciding how are you going to communicate with each other, what works for everyone, not just one person, and also find out if there are people who are going to go on holiday. Don't expect them to do something while they're on holiday. You will only find that out if you talk to people. And yes, you will come across people who don't engage. Focus on what you can control. You can't control other people. But you can find out what's going on for them.

ROB MOORE: Thank you, Sam. And I think it's worth emphasising as well that you say this is part of the module but, actually, the OU is instructed by Universities UK we have to have collaboration in the assessment. It's not because the OU has decided to put it in. Every university in their degree has to have

this in. So it's right across the board. So wherever you go, whatever you degree you're studying, you are expected to have some collaboration.

I did a degree with the OU. And my group work-- there were five of us-- we had to come up with a website that delivered some training. And that was our great group work. And what I will say is that what you learn from the other students and how you have to negotiate and put things together, that is far more than you would ever get from just sitting there and studying on your own just looking at your own computer. And that's why we did it. And that's why a lot of modules now have this element of discussion and collaboration in so that you can develop your learning beyond just watching the screens yourself.

So some really good points there. And again, you're absolutely right, Sam. There's different ways of being assessed. In a lot of modules, you have to do collaborative work but it's not the output that's assessed. It's your reflection on how well it went. So a session that didn't work at all can score you the same marks as one that went brilliantly because it's your reflection on how did it work, what could have been improved. And if you want to get the most out of it, get stuck in. Go on, Sam.

SAM: Yeah. Well, I was just going to say that, actually, a fairly negative group work experience ironically can help you get a job because there will be many interviewers, and I would be one of them, who would say can you tell me about a time when you've had to do some group work. An employer is going to be far more impressed by, oh, it was a really dysfunctional group. We had to organise because several people dropped out.

Other people were-- you fixed it. You're talking about how you got that group to work. And that is far more impressive to an employer than, oh, it was absolutely lovely. We all had tea with each other and knitted. And it was all marvellous. In an interview situation, that's not that impressive. It's lovely. It was probably a beautiful experience. But actually a little bit of dysfunction within group work is going to be quite useful. I think Ash wants to say something.

ROB MOORE: Yeah. Ash wants to come in so over to you, Ash.

ASH: Yeah. I just wanted to, as you were both sharing your experiences, I wanted to share one of my experiences actually. So I did my master's with the Open University. And one of the assignments was a group collaborative task working in the context of international law and business.

Now a lot of the students in my group were working overseas. And they were NGOs. They were working for governments. Very busy people. And we did have this quite strict timeline in terms of we had to do this great group activity as various stakeholders. And one of the ways that we overcome the fact that we did have very complex lives was, yes, we actually used WhatsApp and we all set out our sort of background and biographies if you like.

One tutor said I'm going to be off to whatever country working with whatever government so I'm not going to be contactable then. And so we all had an understanding of each other's complications. We weren't assuming that everybody was going to be there instantly putting things in.

And what I did is I did my bits for the group and left it there. And a couple of days later, somebody else would pick up their part and respond to it. So if it does sometimes feel like it's impossible to talk in real time with people, you can also work in group work just by understanding what other people's situations are and constructively working around that.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And having worked in modules with collaborations for many years, one of the things that stands out to me is that the students who struggle the most are the ones who are always

playing catch up and they're playing slightly behind in the calendar. So my top tip-- and I'm going to come to everybody else for their top tips in a moment.

My top tip if you've got collaborative work is make sure you've had a look at it and you know when it's coming up. I had an email from a student this morning on B205, one of the modules I teach on. And she's told me about a wedding that's coming up so she's already anticipating when she's going to have a challenging time where she'll struggle to get involved. And even though this is happening next spring, we're already starting to plan it in. So I'm going to come to Heidi first for any comments from our audience and then I'm going to come back to the panel and ask you the best thing about collaboration. So Heidi, what are people saying?

HEIDI: Well, I'm going to digress slightly if that's OK. Is it possible for us to get Sam back up on the screen because we have a question? Our students, they're really keen to know what's sitting behind you, Sam. So Lisha said, I have to know who or what is that on the piano behind Sam. And then we've got people making guesses around, oh, there we go. People are saying, is that a LEGO Titanic? And then what is the-- is it a doll or an owl behind you? Can you explain it to us please?

SAM: It is indeed the LEGO Titanic. It's a marvellous model. Took me a month to do. I do have a job so it was in the evenings. And this-- no, that side-- this is Claude the owl barrister who was a present from my parents when I went off to study law age 18. And he's still with me now. And he appears in all of the Student Hub Live broadcasts because he's a good talking point. So it's Claude the owl barrister.

ROB MOORE: Excellent. We'll remember that for future events definitely.

HEIDI: Absolutely, we will. Thank you so much.

ROB MOORE: Interesting digression then.

HEIDI: Yes. Rob, I've also got another question. So Alex said I know that we're really specific about not encouraging students to share any personal information in the chat but I thought this was a really good question from Alex. Is it OK to share LinkedIn profiles to connect to fellow peers within this chat here? I know normally we say go across to OUSA, the students association, and share information in the forums if you want to connect, but is LinkedIn OK to use, Rob?

ROB MOORE: The problem is we've got no control over who watches and that's why we normally say no personal information. And I would say if you could be identified from something, you shouldn't share it here. But OUSA is very happy to make those links. And it's only because we don't want to be in the position where you get unwanted attention through something you've posted here. And that's why. We're not trying to stop you talking to each other. We want you to talk to each other. But it's the fact that this is a public broadcast. And that's why we suggest you don't do it. And that's why. So don't want to spoil your fun but we don't want to be in the position if somebody gets upset from something that's been shared. That's right.

So I'm going to come back to our guests and I'll start with Charlotte. Charlotte, best thing about collaboration. And I'm just going to give you 90 seconds, 90 seconds to tell me the best things about collaboration.

CHARLOTTE: Well, that's a bit of a challenge. Well, we've had some amazing feedback from our students studying W302 although they found it really challenging. They've said that some of them have formed lasting friendships as a result of working with others. So I think that's just a real testament to the benefits that collaboration can bring, the ability to form those connections, form friendships that go well beyond the confines of your study.

But also I think we've referred again to the employability skills. It's so important to demonstrate to employers that you can work with others and, as Sam said, when things go wrong and you can solve problems, and you can demonstrate evidence of those problem solving skills, I think you're going to have the real edge over other prospective employees. So I hope that was within 90 seconds.

ROB MOORE: No, that was nice and concise. And I've been corrected. Apparently, LinkedIn is a professional profile so, yes, you can. So I've learnt something new today as well. So if you want to share a LinkedIn profile in the chat, apparently that's absolutely fine. So thank you for correcting me. I'm not quite sure who corrected me but I stand corrected. So over to you then, Ash. So Ash, best thing about collaboration in 90 seconds.

ASH: Well, I can do it in less than 90 seconds. For me, it was finding out things that I wouldn't have found out, so being surprised essentially, having somebody give me a totally different perspective on something and being surprised by that because it's very easy to get into your own way of thinking.

ROB MOORE: And totally endorse that. I've had students come to me where they've worked in the armed forces, or the public sector, or in manufacturing. But talking to people with a different work background and a different context themselves has really helped them to understand what these different things mean.

We're going to come to you now, Sam. And I've got to say I'm sitting here thinking about the telescope now. And this will put me in a certain category. And if you get the reference, you are also in that certain category. But I can just imagine you sat in front of your telescope, talking to Bernie the bolt saying up a bit, left a bit, right a bit. If you got that reference, you're very old like me. So Sam, the best thing about collaboration.

SAM: I'm pleased to say I didn't get that reference. Best thing about collaboration. For me, it was being able to talk to people. We might well have started our OU degrees because we want to do things by ourselves and the OU can offer us a pathway to do that through our very complicated lives. But for those six months, it was hard work.

For a 30 credit module, there was an awful lot of work in it. For those six months, I was part of a group. And I was talking to people very regularly. And when we had the overnight observations, we were on Skype for five hours. And we weren't working all the time. Sometimes we had to wait for clouds to pass before we could take a few shots with the telescope. So just that ability to connect with people in a very real way as if we were all together, that was key for me, that it was such-- it was a very intense group work but not all group work is like this.

It was the nature of the project. But it was like we knew each other. And we were from Scotland through Sheffield down to Hampshire. It was all over the country. We couldn't possibly have met together. We've still never met each other. But it was just such a beautiful experience connecting with other people as part of study that we were all so interested in it. And it went very well. So that was the other good bit about group work. It went well.

ROB MOORE: Thank you, Sam. That was great. And David in the chat, you're as old as me and, yes, it was indeed the golden shot when people used to-- the contestants used to control somebody with a crossbow and they had to shoot an apple with a crossbow live on TV many years ago.

We now come to my favourite part of the show. And I love this part. The panel always gets a bit nervous. This is where we're going to answer your questions. So if you've got a specific question that you want answering, pop it into the chat. And we'll get through as many as we can. If it's a question for a specific

panel member, put that in your question as well. And Heidi is going to select a range of questions and cover as many as she can. So Heidi, have you got any questions to kick us off with and then we'll move through them and see if we can make the panel sweat a bit?

HEIDI: Yeah. So I'm just going to give people a couple of minutes to put their questions in the chat because we only just asked them. Can I just very quickly share some of the collaboration tips that our students have shared in the chat, Rob? Is that all right?

OK. Great. So we've got some great tips and advice here. So Susan has said, get everyone involved. Lisha. Having an overseer helps a lot so everyone has their voice heard. So having one person like a facilitator, somebody that's accountable. Helen says taking responsibility to do the work required on time so as not to hold up or impact on others.

Stephanie says clear but also flexible plans. They're really, really helpful for collaboration. Hazel says ground rules, clear roles, regular scrum meetings. I like that terminology. I haven't heard that before. Set progress, and communicate, and ask questions. And then Danielle says [INAUDIBLE]

Anthony says get in fast, set the tone, and set tasks. And Melissa says keeping in touch, made my group work go really well. And then Stephen says assign tasks and ownership. Record clear and concise notes and share with all in the group. So I thought there was some really good ones there.

So I've got one question that's come in already. So please do feel free to put your questions in the chat. We would love to put them to the panel. Debra says, is there one social media platform that is better for OU study than others?

ROB MOORE: Oh, good question. Anybody like to take that one? Anybody? Go on, Ash. What would you recommend?

ASH: Well, I'm going to be a bit of a politician here and avoid the question a little bit by saying, there's not really one that's better than the others. I think it's probably more which one is used the most. If people use WhatsApp the most-- I certainly find that most students tend to be using WhatsApp. That seems to be the most popular. I think it depends on how you use it. I think if you're very clear on how you use it and you have, like the students were saying before, pretty strong ground rules over how it's going to be used, it can be the most effective.

ROB MOORE: Absolutely. And I think there's a really interesting point to bring out here that, as the university, we can't insist that students use social media. So in your collaboration, we can't tell you to use WhatsApp, or Facebook, or X. And in fact, I've had students in the past where, because of their job, they actually can't go on social media. They can't have a social media presence. So when we're setting up these collaborations as tutors, we have to keep all these things in our own mind.

And we will only encourage a group to use social media if everybody in that group is happy to do so. If they're not, we have to remain within the OU tools. So it's one of the things to bear in mind. And I know in my groups, I do ask the question if there's anybody that doesn't want to use a particular form of social media, I'll make sure they're not put in a group that's using it. But it's a good one there. I think WhatsApp is probably the one most used in by groups as well. So oh, back to you, Ash, and then to Charlotte.

ASH: Yeah. So I just wanted to add one more thing. When there was a question earlier about or a point made earlier about the tutor group forum and it looking quite antiquated and quite rickety compared to what the modern whiz bang tools that we have at the moment, I think I want to say that we should look at the good side of it actually.

And one of the good sides of the tutor group forum is that it gives you the time and the space to think about what you're writing before you put it on because it's not that instantaneous in the same way that one of the downfalls of social media is that people can sometimes, because it's instant, suddenly just fire off things.

It's almost like sending a letter. In the old days, you used to send a letter. You used to sit down. You used to write it and think about it before you posted it. I think on the forums, there's a bit more of that involved, a considered way of communicating with people, which is why it can seem more of a safe space. So in some ways, the forums are a very good way of working with groups.

ROB MOORE: Definitely. Charlotte, did you want to come in on that and talk about the best platforms to use?

CHARLOTTE: Yes. Thank you. I was going to echo Ash's point that there isn't really a best form of social media. It really depends what you want to use it for. So for example, if you want constant access to updated information in your particular field, so for example, legal cases, judgments that have just been handed down and so on, that's all over X, or Twitter as it used to be known. People will be posting about that. You can follow the Supreme Court. You can get notifications from people when updates are given. So if you want quick access to updated information, X might be a good platform.

But I really think, picking up on Rob's point, LinkedIn is a really good platform for us if we're thinking about our studies and how we can use our OU studies to further our professional profile. So LinkedIn can be used to follow people, network with people, post updates about the skills that you have developed throughout your degree. You might even choose to write your own blog article about something.

You can link to that on your LinkedIn profile. And although I know we've said it's a little bit dry, it's not exactly a dynamic platform as some others are, I think because it's safe and people don't have access to your personal email, they can contact you but they don't have your email address. I think that's a very safe place in which to build up a bit of a professional style profile. So do consider LinkedIn for that particular purpose.

ROB MOORE: Well, thank you, Charlotte. And we're going to come back to Heidi for some more questions. So I'm just going to make a quick point about LinkedIn as well. And this is mainly for people who are out there and for my students. I don't accept LinkedIn invites from students not because I don't want to talk to students. It's just that I get about 500 a year and it would just absolutely swamp it. And I wouldn't be able to cope. So there are some challenges as well with doing that.

So Heidi, what other questions are we getting? We've got about 15 minutes left for a few more questions.

HEIDI: OK. So we've got quite a few LinkedIn questions that have come in and that follows them perfectly from what Charlotte was just talking about. So Stephanie, I promise I am going to come back to your question because yours is a really important one. So Jennifer-- do you have any tips on striking the right balance of how much information to share about yourself when creating a LinkedIn profile?"

ROB MOORE: Ooh. Well, I'll start off and see if anybody else wants to jump in for me. I'm quite a private person. I give it the minimum. So I like to give a bit of background where I've worked, the experiences, the qualifications I've got. And so really my LinkedIn is for keeping touch with people I've met with professionally.

I do know a lot of people go into a lot more detail, but, personally, I like to keep it fairly minimal, mainly because it is such an open platform. And then I share more when I get to know people better. So I don't

know if anybody else has got something you wanted to add to that. Go ahead, Sam. We'll just have Sam on this one, then we'll move to the next question. So go on, Sam. What's your thoughts?

SAM: I'm the opposite to you. When I first created my LinkedIn page, I did look on it more as a CV. So there is an awful lot there because I've had quite a varied career. And if I didn't put on all of the things I've done, there'd be periods where it would look like I'd been in prison because I don't appear to have done anything professional. Yeah, I'm a lawyer but haven't been a lawyer all my life. I've done lots of other interesting things that I think add to my employability.

I mean I'm not using it for employability now. I'm very happy at the OU just in case the OU people are listening. So there is an awful lot of information there because I think it tells people what I'm like because usually they're finding me on LinkedIn because they want to know about me. It is usually my students. Sometimes it's people I work with. But I find it helps me explain me. Then I don't have to have really long conversations with them.

ROB MOORE: Brilliant point. And I think that shows different approaches. I don't think there's any strict rule. You need to be comfortable with what you're sharing. So I use my OU blog to share things about me with students, partly because it's nice and I can put lots of things into it but partly because I'm lazy. And if I write it in the blog, I don't have to write it in each forum every year. But you know, so I probably use my blog as you would use LinkedIn but I restrict that to my OU colleagues. So Heidi, next question. I know you've got somebody you wanted to go back to.

HEIDI: I've got a couple more LinkedIn questions, then I'm going to go back to Stephanie if that's OK. We'll just stay on the LinkedIn theme just for a couple more minutes. So I think we've touched on this. Charlotte gave some good advice there. So Lisa said, tips for a good LinkedIn profile. So I'm just going to leave the panel just for a few seconds to have a think about that so if there's any specific tips they want to share. I do have one tip personally for LinkedIn.

As I mentioned earlier, I don't have any social media at all. I came off at the beginning of this year. I don't personally miss it at all in the slightest but I do have LinkedIn just for work, and that kind of thing, and networking it's useful to keep. I've noticed-- and this is probably something that's happened years ago but I only recently noticed it. You can actually link directly now. You can put links into your LinkedIn profile. So for me, for example, I'm alumni engagement manager at the Open University. And we produce a lot of printed publications for our alumni. And I'm able to now put links in directly so essentially people can see the PDFs. They can download the PDFs then from my LinkedIn to see some of those key outputs that I've been working on, which I think is a really nice additional element to LinkedIn.

And also I connect to some of the Student Hub Live events-- not when we've had any technical issues. I pretend those ones didn't ever happen or didn't occur. But when they run really smoothly, which 99% of the time they do, I connect to those on there as well. So when I say I'm a co-presenter on Student Hub Live, I can actually prove that I'm a co-presenter on Student Hub Live. So I'd like to put that one to the panel now if they've got any tips like that for Lisa on how to make a good LinkedIn profile.

ROB MOORE: So who would like to go first?

SAM: I have a thought for people, which is put a photo of yourself, a recent photo, an honest photo, of what you might look like if they met you for coffee. Unless you're in the Witness Protection Programme or you have other very good reasons why you don't want your image on the internet. then whether you're networking for employment or learning, I think it is good practise to have your picture on there, not a

picture of your dog, cute though Heidi's dog was rolling around in the background, because it shows that you're a dog lover.

But I feel like sometimes people hide behind that type of picture. So if there's a good reason, it's fine.

You've got a good reason. But if there isn't, then I think people want to know what you look like.

ROB MOORE: Yeah. Mine's definitely got a lot less salt and pepper in on my LinkedIn picture, I've got to say. It's at least 11 years old at least. So anybody else? Charlotte, yes, and then we'll come to Ash.

CHARLOTTE: Hi. And just picking up on what Sam said about an honest picture I think it's really important to be honest about yourself and your achievements. So just as you wouldn't make any unsubstantiated claims on your CV about the amazing work that you did with your previous employer, which you can't demonstrate, just be really careful about being quite honest in the claims that you make on your LinkedIn profile. Make sure that you can back them up with evidence. So that would be one of my tips.

ROB MOORE: Excellent. Honesty and not too much photoshopping of the picture. That's what we like. So Ash, who always looks photoshopped to me, what are your tips?

ASH: I would say that it's very easy to start the process of creating your own profile and uploading stuff on there. I think one of the challenges can be is that it gets out of date very quickly because you don't use it as often as maybe Facebook or other types of things. So I would say staying active and keeping it up to date. And it can take quite a bit of work if you're actually that active on that platform because we have so many platforms now. It's very difficult sometimes to keep on track of them or it's actually a full time job or a part time job just keeping hold of your Insta, and your Facebook, and your Snapchat, and whatever else. It's just another one of those things. If you are going to be using it in a more professional context, it's important to invest that bit of time in it and make sure that it's kind of up to date.

ROB MOORE: I think that's a really good point. Why are you using it? What are you there for? And I have a number of very good friends who have changed jobs purely through LinkedIn. That's where they found the jobs, had the interviews. They're a bit sneaky there. They normally get me to go and check out the company so they don't show up on the company's history, which is a bit strange. But yeah. So they use it very deliberately and with a lot more purpose than I do. Heidi, is that us done with LinkedIn or have we got any more LinkedIn questions?

HEIDI: Yeah. I think we're done with LinkedIn now. Thanks so much for the panel for those responses. Really, really great. So we've got a question from Stephanie which I really want to prioritise. So Stephanie says, I'm very sensitive to emotionally loaded news and negativity on social media. Can you recommend a good way to keep up with news in the field that is less intense? And I actually I really want to know the answer because, Stephanie, I'm with you on that. I really don't absorb much news.

ROB MOORE: Yeah. My advice isn't very good. It's just don't read it. So I'm interested to know if the panel have got some good tips. How can we stay away from that depressing news and the emotionally charged news? Any tips? Yeah, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: I would endorse that. Just stay away. I mean there are filters that you can apply to all of your content that you get from your Facebook, and X, and all the rest of it. But yeah. Just don't engage. You might go to trusted sources say once a day, you know, Sky News, BBC, or whatever, if you want to keep up to date with significant news stories, or you could access podcasts. There's some brilliant news podcasts out there which are updated either daily or weekly. So they will just limit your exposure to stories

to things that are discussed in those podcasts. So yeah. Just be really, really kind to yourself and stay away really if nothing else works.

ROB MOORE: Yeah. We've had a question pop up which says if you stay away, how do you keep up to date in your field? And I think this comes back to something we said earlier, which is be selective in who you subscribe to. And rather than just randomly click-- I mean it's very tempting all of that click bait that you get at the bottom of the screen when you open up a social media that entices you to go further. And for me, those are the things I don't go anywhere near. And very much like you, Charlotte, I go to some of the reputable news channels and stick with those. If I don't recognise the news channel, I won't read the news from there. So Sam, you've got a suggestion for us.

SAM: Yes. With my commercial awareness hat on, it is actually quite important that people are aware of what's happening in the news. And if terrible things happening is not what you want to see, then social media probably isn't the place to get it because it's too instant and it is unfiltered. Lots of people wake up in the morning and read Facebook.

I wake up and read the BBC News page. But if you want even more filters on your news, there is nothing wrong with getting a newspaper, particularly a broadsheet. And if you want a commercial aspect to everything, then I'm told that the Financial Times is a really good newspaper. It gives you all the commercial information you need. It will still report on news events but it does it in a non-sensational way. You can get the Financial Times online. So I would say don't use social media for news if you wish to avoid it and use either time as a filter, because newspapers will be a day behind, or, as Rob says, go to a reputable news website and read it for yourself. And if it doesn't look like something you want to click on, then don't click on it and don't subscribe to news via social media is how I would avoid it.

ROB MOORE: Lovely. And just got one last question, which I'm going to take this question before we close. It's from Susan. And it says I don't recommend hierarchy and collaboration such as a project manager. What are the OU views? Well, I will tell you a tutor view. I won't pretend that this is the formal OU view. But in the collaborations that I've seen that have worked, having distinct roles definitely helps. Now I don't necessarily use the word hierarchy but having somebody who has agreed to take on the role of the checker and the allocator of tasks can definitely help a team perform better. So I don't think I would put somebody in charge of a group but the groups that I've worked with that have come back and been really effective have been those where the group roles have been very clearly set up in advance. And I think the word hierarchy is quite emotive there because you're almost attaching importance to it. They are different roles and they are all important. So that would be my answer to your question there about the hierarchy.

So I think we're just about out of time so I'm going to-- oh, Sam, I'll let you have one last point, Sam, and then we'll go to Heidi for the final comments.

SAM: Yeah. Just on that hierarchy, I can give you an example of where hierarchy works and sometimes it doesn't and where sometimes not having hierarchy doesn't work. I used to lead working holidays for the national trusts. 12 volunteers come together. And as the leader, I would usually prepare the menu, buy all the food.

Everybody cooks and eats what I've said because I've bought the food for the menu that I want. Toad in the hole always featured. Sometimes I would experiment with not buying the food in advance, not creating the menu, and letting the group decide for themselves what it was they wanted to eat and who

would cook it. And sometimes it worked brilliantly and the group would come together and they would take turns. And it would all be fine and we'd all have lovely food.

And then there were other groups where we ended up with curried egg for Christmas Eve because it was just a bizarre group, it did not work, and I spent the rest of Christmas Eve writing a menu and very quickly buying some food before the shops shut because it didn't work. So hierarchy, as Rob says, tends to work a little bit better if people don't know each other. If people do know each other quite well, then that's the situation where not having a hierarchy might actually be better.

ROB MOORE: Thank you, Sam. A great addition there at the end. So Heidi, final comments from the chat please.

HEIDI: So I'm going to go to David for our very final comments. So David says, if you want to follow politics and policy making in a bite size manner and perhaps with less emotion than many other sources, Simple Politics can be good. So hopefully one of our moderators in the chat can dig out that link and pop it in the chat for people. So thanks for that, David. And David also said, a thought for a future session-- this is one for you, Rob. Could the careers team perhaps run a session purely on LinkedIn?

ROB MOORE: Oh. That's an interesting question. We will talk to them and we will ask them. So yes. We always like your suggestions which brings us straight and very nicely into the feedback form. The feedback form will be-- the link to it will be popped into the chat now. We really do use your feedback.

The sessions that we've run are based on what you tell us you want us to run. So please tell us what you want to cover in future, what did you like about this session, what didn't you like, and the things you want us to move on to. So that LinkedIn we'll definitely put it in the feedback and we will look at that.

Just some of the events that are coming up in the future. So we've got a whole range of Student Hub Live events coming up. We've got on the tenth of October next week, I've got some academic conduct officers joining me. And we're going to be talking about academic conduct. So if you want to know what happens to your assignments and how to make sure you don't get investigated for academic misconduct, come along and see us on the tenth of October at 11:00 or watch the recording afterwards.

And we also have a number of events helping you with planning and writing essays. Now some of them are fully booked so there's only the waiting list available. But those are running over the next couple of weeks. So have a look on the Student Hub Live website. Have a look at the upcoming events and see if you can get booked in or on the waiting list.

And that's it for me. So I'd just like to say thank you again to everyone. I'd like to say thank you to Ash, to Sam, to Charlotte for being fantastic and joining in the chat. And Hannah and Tara, I'm sure you've done a sterling job in the chat box. So thank you for your help there.

And as always, Heidi, you've been fantastic. Great to have you with us. And to everyone who's been with us today, it's been a lovely show. Thank you for being here. And we look forward to seeing you at the next one. So till we see you again, bye bye.