

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to Student Hub Live for our Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences virtual Freshers' Fair. This session is called "Take Me to Your Leader". And I'm going to introduce you to Richard Marsden, Shonil Bhagwat and Jovan Byford.

Now, Richard Marsden, who you've met before, is a senior lecturer in history, and is the director of teaching for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. And Jovan is one of our three heads of discipline in the School of Psychology and Counselling, which is currently Europe's largest provider of university-level education in psychology.

And also, we run some of the largest modules in universities. So I know that there have been lots of psychology students and students on psychology pathways here today. And Jovan's own work is interdisciplinary - it includes research in both psychology and also history. And he's published on conspiracy theories, atrocity photographs and Holocaust memory.

And Shonil is the head of school of Social Sciences and Global Studies - a school at the forefront of making sense and finding solutions to today's global challenge as well. Shonil, that's a big task, if I do say so myself. And this is being done through a unique blend of all of the various disciplines within the school, which is what makes that combination so rich. And Shonil's own work is engaged with some of these global challenges. For example, climate change, biodiversity loss and poverty - among other things.

But we have some very practical questions. So I wonder if, before we find out a little bit about what's going on in the school, Damon, we could answer some of students' concerns right now.

DAMON MILLER: Yeah. I think people found the last session really helpful, particularly considering the distance that people have in the different nations across England. But one of the questions that's coming up is the difference between the tutorials. So when you have a tutorial with your own tutor and then there's larger tutorials as well, which we call cluster events. So there's a little confusion as to the difference between them and how you find out.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Brilliant. Well, we are going to be covering all of the basics on the twenty-eighth of September - so do get your ticket for that event - including tutorials, et cetera. But, Richard, can you give students a very brief flavour of what's distinct between a tutor group tutorial and a cluster tutorial?

RICHARD MARSDEN: Yeah, sure, Karen. So, yeah, a tutor group tutorial is you, your tutor, and other students in your tutor's group. So it's kind of smaller and more intimate. And often, it will kind of focus on things like skills, building for your particular module, whatever you're studying. And that could be face-to-face or online, depends on your module.

Whereas a cluster tutorial tends to be a kind of wider group of students. So it will be open to students from maybe eight or ten different tutor groups. And it'll be taught by maybe not your tutor, but a different tutor. And the advantage of that is that you can get people who are particular experts on parts of the module, teaching to those parts of what you're learning.

And also, you get a chance to kind of hear from different tutors and talk to different students. And they tend to be kind of more content-focused - so more about what the module is about - whereas the tutor group forums are often more kind of skills-based. But bigger versus smaller - they kind of both have their own virtues, I'd say.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Any other pertinent questions, Damon?

DAMON MILLER: I think people were a little concerned about the wobbling of the internet feed.

KAREN FOLEY: I know.

DAMON MILLER: Yeah. I think, mostly, they're chomping at the bit to get there. There's been a couple of questions about what team will be addressing the life science modules. But I guess that will be looked at in the future.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]. Yes, absolutely. So don't forget, we do have a range of programmes you can come along to, including Adobe Connect sessions - which is where the online tutorials happen. And we've got those lined up for module start. So check out the Student Hub Live website and book your ticket on events that are of interest.

So, let's get a chance to have a flavour of what's going on in the three schools here that we're representing today. Richard, can you tell us about arts and humanities? I know there've been some particularly interesting modules. And we've got a lot of A111 students here today. So what's been happening that's new that we can tell students about?

RICHARD MARSDEN: Yeah. Well, I'd say kind of the main thing for students starting A111 - and I think I mentioned this earlier, but I'll say a little bit more - is that we have two new modules that students can go on to after they've finished A111. And that's kind of the second part of Level 1. And that's A112 Cultures and A113 Revolutions.

And what these modules do is, they split our disciplines in two. So if you're interested in studying English, or art history, or classical studies, or creative writing, you would do A112 Cultures. If you're interested in history, music, philosophy or religious studies, you would do A113 Revolutions.

And then as you go through these modules, they kind of start off interdisciplinary with those four disciplines associated with that module - a bit like A111. But then, as you go through, you have more and more chance to specialise in the subject that really interests you. And then by the end of it, your EMA, which is kind of the bigger bit of coursework at the end of the module, you're writing specifically in one discipline - whether that's English or history - whatever you intend to, maybe, go on and study at Level two. So that's quite exciting, I think.

Also, I think I want to flag up that we have a new degree starting this year, which is the BA in Art History and Visual Cultures. So, some people watching may well be enrolled on that already. And work is going on to produce new modules for that degree as we speak today.

I suppose the other thing is that we're also looking a bit further in the future at some possible other new curriculum areas. So we're looking at introducing modules and qualifications on film and media, and also something maybe to do with medieval history - medieval studies. Because that's something that quite a lot of students say that they'd rather like to study, the Middle Ages. So it's another example of what I was talking about before, which is we try and listen to students and give them what they want.

KAREN FOLEY: That's wonderful. Thank you. And you can find out about those modules, and also the new second-level music module A234. We did a FASS showcase quite recently where we interviewed members of the module team. So, if you're interested in finding out more about those, do check out the Student Hub Live YouTube channel and you can look at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Curriculum Showcase, to find out more about those.

So, lots of new curriculum. Jovan, I wonder if you can tell us about the School of Psychology and Counselling. Any new modules out?

JOVAN BYFORD: Yes. This October, we have a new module starting, which is D241, Exploring Mental Health and Counselling. And this is a Level 2, sixty credit module that serves our Psychology with Counselling degree. It is a fascinating module that looks at various, sort of, Counselling theories and practice. It also covers a number of issues, often controversial issues, to do with our understanding of mental health and well-being.

Also, this year, we are starting to think about refreshing our Level 1 curriculum in psychology, and also our post-graduate offering. And this is something that we'll obviously develop over the next few years. So those are, kind of, the key things that we are focusing on, right now, in psychology.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And in addition to the modules - because there's lots going on in terms of both undergraduate and postgraduate module production - you're also setting up a research centre at the school. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

JOVAN BYFORD: We are, yes. We're in the process of setting up a research centre for the school. And this is going to be not just a sort of hub for research activity for our academics and so on, but we see it very much as a place where we're going to sort of facilitate the synergy between our research and our teaching, and also create a place where we can build an academic community involving not just our central academics, but also staff tutors, associate lecturers, students, and so on, and create a place and a space where we can promote and develop our research culture in the school.

KAREN FOLEY: Sounds very exciting, and very ambitious, Jovan.

JOVAN BYFORD: It is. [LAUGHS].

KAREN FOLEY: But that won't stop us. [CHUCKLES]. Shonil, your area is potentially the most diverse of everyone's - social sciences and global studies, comprising, I think it's eight disciplines, isn't it? So could you tell us a little bit about what's new, what's happening and what you are most excited about in your school?

SHONIL BHAGWAT: A lot of interdisciplinary work, Karen. And over the last couple of years, the faculty has sort of rolled out an invest-to-grow strategy. And the school has launched a number of new degree programmes - including geography, international relations, international development.

I am from a geography background, so I am perhaps biased, but I'm really excited about this new geography degree that is starting in October. One of the new things about this degree is a particular geographical view of the world. And that really kind of brings in a variety of different disciplines to understand the world that we live in today.

KAREN FOLEY: So a lot is going on within all the different areas. So my next question, then. Some of these things, I guess, are things that seem aligned with schools - some of the work and modules that we'd be creating. But can you all tell us a little bit about something happening in your school that students may not have heard of? So, Richard, can I start with you?

RICHARD MARSDEN: Yeah. What might students not know about our school? I suppose the *raison d'être* of the school is kind of quite interesting. I think the point of having a School of Arts and Humanities - or one of the purposes - is to demystify, or make accessible, subjects that are generally often seen as quite difficult, or quite elite.

So that might be enabling people to kind of understand and access major cultural figures like Van Gogh, or Shakespeare. Or big movements in the history of the world like the spread of the Roman Empire or the post-Second World War international consensus. So that's what arts and humanities is all about.

And I suppose the other thing I would like to flag up is something that Jovan mentioned earlier, actually, which is the kind of relationship between teaching and research. So in arts and humanities - and I think in most parts of the faculty, in fact - rather than having kind of people who specialise in teaching and making modules, and then other people who specialise in doing research, what we try to do is ensure that the vast majority of our academic staff do both.

So what that means is that the same people who are doing the research are writing the module. So you get to study great courses that are really well-designed, but they're also informed by cutting-edge research. And I think that's really, really important.

KAREN FOLEY: It is really important. And I think as students would say, it's so nice to see the names to the faces of people they're meeting today. But also, when they recognise how prestigious colleagues at The Open University are in other senses, it can be very reassuring for students to know that they're with, indeed, a very high-quality learning provider. Jovan, what might something be from the School of Psychology and Counselling that the students may not know about?

JOVAN BYFORD: Yes. Well, most students will know very well our module materials and so on. But many of them won't be aware that behind the work on the module materials, is a very vibrant research culture. And we have academics working on a whole host of different research projects ranging from the relationship between social media and parenting, mobile phone use while driving, relationship between literature and empathy, challenges of online counselling, eyewitness testimony, and so on.

So there's a huge range of different projects going on that our academics are involved with. And these tend to have, sort of, one common feature and that is that they very often focus on very real life problems. And our academics, also, as well as doing sort of original academic research, also are involved in developing policy in influencing various practices, and so on, linked to these matters.

And they often approach these various topics through a critical lens, looking at the broader agenda of promoting social justice and so on. And I think we mentioned earlier the research centre, and I think it is precisely that that is going to help to sort of make our students more

aware of this research that goes on in the background. And it underpins all our excellent modules.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. That's fantastic. Shonil, before I come to you, I just wanted to feed in a couple of points. Jane said that her main worry - Richard, I wonder if you might address this - is that most of the class have already finished A111 and were missing some key skills. And also, for interest, you were talking about, Richard, responding to things from students. Samantha says she's really interested in the history of medicine and wonders if there's some scope for that in the future.

Anything to say about some key skills, if most people have finished A111 and have missed some of those key skills that we've been talking about. Laying down some of these key skills as foundations, I guess, for our studies. And sometimes, we can focus so much on the content that perhaps we come away thinking, actually, I'm not really sure my essay writing skills are up to scratch now. What advice would you give to Jane?

RICHARD MARSDEN: Well, firstly, I think it's really good that Jane has spotted that. Because the first thing you've got to do if you're going to improve how you study and improve your marks is to kind of work out where the issues are and what you need to work on. So [AUDIO CUTS] fair play [AUDIO CUTS].

If you were to go on to another module - say, A112, or A113, or another kind of module at Level 1 - all the stuff that you may have kind of looked at, but not in as much detail as you would have wanted to in A111, that kind of skill side of things, is carried through into later modules. So, in fact, all of our modules - Level 2, Level 3 - they all try to build on and develop skills that you've encountered before.

So, I suppose what I'm trying to say is, if you feel you missed out on A111, you don't have to worry too much because we'll go back to that stuff in A112, and A113, and then again at Level 2, and again at Level 3. And the other thing to say is, make your tutor aware of that. Because then they can kind of work with you on specific things that you feel a little bit unsure about.

And if there's a need for it, your tutor can do a bit of extra work with you outside the kind of normal tutorials and that kind of thing. So, yeah, spot it, and tell your tutor, and go forward from there.

KAREN FOLEY: And we've got many students here who've joined perhaps at Level 2 or 3 with credit transfers from other universities, now choosing The Open University. One of the things I would say to add to is that there is so much help. I mean, we spoke earlier to colleagues from the Student Support Centre, and there's the Help Centre, which has lots and lots of great resources about studying, reading of assignment questions, critical thinking. So there's lots and lots of content that you can look at there.

But also on OpenLearn. For example, if you wanted to revisit some of those key skills, there is content there also that you can check out. So, as Richard says, make your tutor aware of these things. And if you are concerned about something, there's often a way to supplement what you're doing with other things as well as learning as you're going along.

So Shonil, I wonder if we could come to you with that question, which was about things that students may not necessarily know about your school. What can you tell us?

SHONIL BHAGWAT: Absolutely. I think some of our research strengths are probably not as obvious as the links between curriculum and research. And in my school, School of Social Sciences and Global Studies, a number of academics have been very successful in capturing external grant funding. So we have research funded by European Research Council, for example, or UK research councils. There are projects funded by the Leverhulme Trust, British Council, Global Challenges Research Fund.

So all of this really strengthens our research profile and research portfolio, which directly feeds into high-quality curriculum.

KAREN FOLEY: Okay. Now a personal question. Because you're doing these roles in addition to the academic work that you have been doing already. So I wanted to ask about something that you're most proud of - something you've achieved, each of you, at The Open University that's made you feel particularly proud of your own contribution. Richard, can I start with you?

RICHARD MARSDEN: Yeah. Well, I mean, I made a Welsh history dissertation module, which I was very proud of. I led on the production of that - and I think I mentioned it earlier, in fact, because I like to harp on about it. But maybe I'll choose something different this time which is, I suppose it's like the either end of the students coming in and leaving the university.

So I used to teach as an associate lecturer on AA100, which was, the kind of, the predecessor to A111. So that was the first module most students did as they came into the university. And it was just brilliant - it was so enjoyable and rewarding to watch people kind of get to grips with stuff that maybe they thought was of beyond them or above them and, in fact, it really, really wasn't.

And then, the other end, I would say graduation ceremonies. Before I came to The Open University, I spent ten years working at conventional universities. And graduation ceremonies at any higher education institution are brilliant. But at The Open University - where it's adult learners, and they're surrounded by family, and friends, and supporters - it's really on a whole other level. So I try and go to as many as I possibly can.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, that's all well and good, Richard. But we're nearly out of time, and I did ask you for one thing, and you did that typical academic thing of sneaking in through by saying I'm not going to talk about that.

RICHARD MARSDEN: Sorry.

KAREN FOLEY: But, luckily, Jovan, I think, will behave. Jovan, what are you most proud of?

JOVAN BYFORD: Okay. Well, in terms of my personal contribution, I would say - I've been with the OU for fifteen years, and when I started working here, we didn't have any psychology modules at Level 1. And I was involved in developing Level 1 provision for our psychology qualifications, including co-chairing the production of D100, which has been an

incredibly popular and well-liked module by students. So a shout-out to any D100 students who are watching us.

And, for us, who are working for the OU, being involved in module production is an incredibly creative and rewarding process. And I really have very fond memories of being involved in that, and I think it has achieved what we set out to achieve.

KAREN FOLEY: That's. Wonderful Thank you, Jovan. What about you, Shonil?

SHONIL BHAGWAT: Some of my proudest moments at the OU have involved students completing their PhD or postdocs, landing an academic job or a job in industry. And in the school, we have a number of early career academics. And I'm really keen to support them in their careers, whether within the OU or beyond. So I think that makes me feel very proud, to have mentored and achieved the sort of growth and development of early career academics.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. That's absolutely wonderful. Well, you guys that has been so fantastic. We are unfortunately out of time. But I'll ask Ian, the Dean, next about some of the exciting research projects - so we will sort of include those in the session. But you've given us a really wonderful flavour of each of those three schools. And thank you for coming and meeting everyone here today. Damon, is everybody at home OK?

DAMON MILLER: Yeah, absolutely. There's a lot of discussion about routes through on the different qualifications. So trying to focus on particular areas. So there's a question about focusing on the history of medicine - but I think that feeds all the way through our history modules. And also about intensity, if you're studying at full-time, how to balance, and make sure that you've got the timing right on the different modules. So studying A111 and then whichever route that you want to take through. So, yeah, maybe to get a little advice on that would be helpful.

KAREN FOLEY: That would be brilliant. Yeah, as I said earlier, I'm not sure - because people drop in and out of these sessions - but we will be running some time management sessions. My own personal advice - from hearing from other students, there are many different ways of doing these things. And the key is to sort of really focus on what's working for you, your own flexibility. You need those certain number of hours. And it's up to you in terms of how you want to manage those.

But we do know that planning and timetabling are so critical. If you are studying at full-time intensity. Because the way that The Open University modules are structured is that, very often, they have similar assessment points. If they start at the same time, and end at the same time, and have a lot of work in between, sometimes there can be times when there's a lot going on in that particular space.

So it's very important to plan those and manage the guidelines, but also be flexible. Because I think, very often, we start thinking this is how it's going to be. And when it doesn't work like that, we're so confined in our own ideas. And from what I've heard students say, it's important to be flexible - to be able to reflect on things and also to learn from other students about some strategies that work for you.

But do come along to our time management sessions. It is an issue for so many people. And that is why we focus on it at Student Hub Live in so much detail. So I hope that's sort of

given a very brief answer for that. We're also going to be just talking about time management in our main event.

So if you are a new student, if you are coming to us with credits from other universities, a general Freshers event on the twenty-eighth of September will tell you everything that you need to know and introduce you to other services - like careers in the library, et cetera - and plenty of support available for you too.

So thank you very much for that session. We're nearly at the end of today's programme, but we're going to end with meeting the Dean, Ian Fribbance. So we're going to show you some videos before we do that. We are going to look at why art history matters, and then show you some videos about the BA in Economics and the BA Honours in Criminology. So I'll see you back after this next video break.