

Karen Foley: The Arts Hub was an online interactive event. And you're about to watch a session from that. But I wanted to explain to you how it all worked. You're about to see the video stream of the studio, but our audience participated online through chat and through interactive widgets. And those ideas were fed through into the studio from the social media desk. Of course, because you're watching it on catch up, you won't be able to do those activities. But I do hope that you enjoy the discussion that follows.

Hi, and welcome back to The Arts Hub. This is our second session of the day, if you're watching in real time. Although you may, of course, be watching this on catch up, because we're going to be putting these on the website very soon, so you may well be enjoying it in that format, also. This is a live and interactive event. We've got lots of you in the chat room, but I know that there are lots more of you who are in the watch only room, as well. And there, you will only be seeing the screen.

You won't be seeing all the lovely chat. You won't be seeing the selection of widgets that you can click on to vote and tell us where you are and how you're feeling. If you come into the watch and engage room, you don't necessarily need to do anything. But it does help to see what other people are talking about. So it's just a slightly different interface. And the video that we showed will hopefully just give you an indication about how that works and what it might look like when you're in that room.

So if you'd like to do that, all you need to do is go to the studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk websites, click the Watch and Engage button, and then if you don't have an OUCU, an Open University Computer Username, you can get one just by filling in your name and email address, et cetera. And then you can use those details to log in to the room. And it's a lot more fun doing so. We've been filling in a wordle about how we're feeling. We've been feeling lots of things, actually. But I'd like to show you that.

And I'd like to just take a minute to reflect on how people are actually feeling out there on this glorious Friday. Well, it's very glorious here in Milton Keynes. So let's have a look at this wordle and see what everybody is saying. So you've got three words that you can add to this, and we're going to take a look at it in just a moment. HJ-- before we do that, HJ and Rachel, how is everything going in the chat?

HJ: It's going really well. One question, which I think is very good. Owen's just asked is, is it

possible to watch these sessions after they've broadcast, just in case we missed anything? And yes, it is. We're going to have the sessions put onto our website. If you go onto the main page, there's a little Catch Up button. Quite soon, actually, shortly after the day, we'll be replaying some during our break as well. So fairly soon. So keep an eye out for them coming up. And you can watch our previous events, as well. So if you can't get enough of us, then--

Karen Foley:

Yes, some people do watch this whole event, from beginning to end. But yes, absolutely. So we're working on the catch up. And then during the afternoon, we're going to have a short production break, but we'll be replaying some of the morning sessions as well that relate to various modules that we're talking about. And you can see all of those details on the programme. I haven't given you a comprehensive run through of the programme, but do take a look at it on the website.

And I hope that there's something there that will really appeal to a lot of you in the various formats that we've got going. Right, so let's take a look at this wordle and see how you're all doing out there. We're excited, happy, interested, intrigued-- ooh, good. I bet that's about the cabinet of curiosity. Motivated, now that's a really interesting word. I wonder if those people who are very motivated are motivated about studying, or maybe motivated about something else.

I guess some people are feeling a little bit anxious as well. And that's quite a common feeling, especially if you're an OU student. I hope that being involved in this room and being involved in this chat can add to that sense of community. And that's really what these events are about, is being able to come together, talk about things. And in the Chat Box, you can talk about what we're talking about, you could talk about tea and biscuits, or anything else for that matter. You can ask questions. And those questions can be about any sessions. So if there's something you want to know, do put it in the Chat Box, or do send us an email. So if we don't know right now, we will get back to you. And that's studenthub@open.ac.uk.

OK. This session now is all about studying the arts. And I'm joined by Siobhan Flint from our Career Service, and Kim Woods, who is the Associate Dean and oversees a lot of the curriculum in the arts. And this session really is starting to look at what we're going to be talking about throughout the rest of the session, which is both modular content, so the things that we're studying in terms of the arts, and also to look at how we're studying the arts, so what we're actually doing. And to some extent, why we're studying it. And in this context, it's really about vocation.

So Kim, I'm hoping you're going to be able to answer a lot of questions I've got here about studying the arts, about various levels, et cetera. And Siobhan, if you can add in some aspects from your experience here at the Open University in the Careers Advisory Service about how you're actually using some of these ways to help students to identify some of the skills that they've got, that are useful from studying the arts. And also how they can use those if they're wanting to change careers, or actually use them in their current vocations. Lovely, so thank you for coming along.

Right. So the first thing I wanted to talk about was this whole idea that with students with the Open University, as many of you will know-- and do let us know, actually, if you could put in the Chat Box what modules you have or are studying at the moment, that would be really useful to know. In fact, we've got a widget there also looking at which level you're studying. So if you're studying Level 1, 2, or 3, or postgraduate, so Level 1, as you know, is the first probably two years of study. So that would be something like A105, et cetera. And the Second Year would be a second level module. So let us know vaguely where you're at with that.

But for people who are starting studying the arts, it's very interdisciplinary, isn't it, at Level 1. And there are two modules. I wanted to talk about why that was important. Because often students will come in and say, I would like to do this. And then all of the sudden, they see this interdisciplinary module here. We've spoken before in the previous session with Richard about how you can look at one thing quite specifically, but yet, there's this whole context. So Kim, could you talk us through a little bit about why we're doing that, and why it's so useful for students?

KIM: I think there are a number of different things here. I think one is around opportunity, because we offer students a choice of subjects that they won't necessarily have encountered before. So for example, not many students would have studied art history in school. But you can at The Open University. So it's about verifying that you really are interested in the things that you think you're interested in. But I think there's a better reason than that. And that is because the arts are genuinely interdisciplinary.

So if you want to study history, for example, you'll be a much better historian if you know a little bit about religious studies, or if you know how to use art as evidence for historical periods. So I think by starting our students off at a broad base, we're actually equipping them with the kind of skills that they're going to need for their study in the future, whatever they go on to study.

But also, I think some students end up thinking, end up changing course, that they don't do what they think they're going to do because they get so captivated by something else.

I think the other thing to say is that it's a very common way for students to start studying. In Scotland, for example, students always start studying a broad range of subjects. And it's generally thought to be a good way of building your skills gradually, so that you move from the general to the more particular, as you carry on.

Karen Foley: HJ and Rachel, have people put what levels they're studying and what modules?

RACHEL: Yeah, we've got a couple of Access students, as well. Petra has been studying an Access to Art module, and she's also going on to continue to study Design and Innovation with Arts, which is really good. And we've got A100, as well. That's popped up. What else we got?

HJ: Well, we're looking at the levels, as well. We've got a little widget to the left. And I'm actually surprised, because 21% of people are saying they're post-graduate art students, which is very interesting. So we'd love to know what you're doing, because the OU has some really like fantastic post-graduate arts modules.

RACHEL: It's like a secret society, isn't it? Let us all know. Let us know what you're studying.

HJ: We'd love to hear. Especially the music ones, as well.

Karen Foley: Let's take a look at that widget, then, which is basically just an interactive tool, and see how, which levels people say that they're doing. Let's show that on the screen. 36% at Level 1, 45% at Level 2, excellent, and 9% at Level 3, and 9% at post-graduate. So that's a really lovely spread. HJ and Rachel, is that you at the post-graduate level? Have you been--

HJ: It might be, we'll see.

Karen Foley: 9% though, not quite. Yeah, brilliant. Excellent. OK. Well, it's wonderful to see such a broad range. And so do put things in the chat there, in particular if you're at Level 1 or 2, and also how you're finding study further at Level 3. And also, if you are further along your journey, what advice have you got for students who may be right at the beginning of that process, as well. So those are the sorts of things that we'd love you to share with each other in that Chat Box.

Yeah, Kim, it's a really interesting idea, isn't it? How then are students sort of working through

that process? So they're going through things, they maybe have an idea about what they want to do. As you say, they're going along and learning lots of different things. How do you think they deal with that thing that, I really want to do history, but actually Classical Studies is really interesting in a way I didn't think it would be. Is this a common thing for students to experience?

KIM: I think it happens more than you think. Yes. I think some students come in with quite fixed ideas of what they want to do, and surprise themselves. And I think a lot of it, as I say, is around not having had the chance to do things before. But I think also, the kind of way that you study is not just about what you study, it's about the kind of methods that you use. And I think some students can find that one method of studying suits them better than another. So I mean, again, to go back to history example, you've got a lot of stuff to get through with history. There's a lot of reading. There's a lot to keep in your head. And you have to work quite quickly.

With philosophy, you're dealing with concepts, with ways of thinking, with ideas. And the pace is different and the kind of way that you approach it is different. So it could be that a student will actually decide that the philosophy approach suits the way that they work better than the history they thought they were going to study.

Karen Foley: So how do they know then, what they most enjoy? And I guess, Siobhan, in terms of careers, do you get students who then are saying, well, I really enjoy this, but is it useful? You know, what could I do? How do they know then, if they're actually enjoying something?

Siobhan: I think it's like anything. It's what you're interested in, you're going to do better in, inevitably. So really play to those strengths. You'll do better in that. A lot of graduate careers and opportunities require at least a 2/1. So that's, you need to do your best, obviously, but working as hard as you can to get the best classification from your degree, in the end. So choose things based on your interests and your strengths. And I think that you'll just get a sense of feeling yourself that you're doing well. And hopefully, that will show itself in the marks that you get from your exams and assignments and so on.

Karen Foley: Can you say a little bit to sort of further that, in terms of this balance then between content and skills?

KIM: Yes. I think skills are incredibly important. And there are two different sorts, I suppose. There are the skills that you actually need to get through your degree, and there are the skills that

you come out with that you can then go on and use. And Siobhan is the one to ask about that. So far as the skills for study, you build up skills like being able to get the important things out of a book, and being able to construct a coherent piece of written work, being able to follow an argument, for example.

But I think so far as content is concerned, that's a little bit less fashionable now. We talk about skills, partly because everybody is so anxious about the employability issue. And rightly so. But I think content matters, too. And I feel I want to fly the flag for content. Because our students, I think, often are often with us because they're interested, because they're passionate about what they do. And that's why we do it as well. And if you don't have that kind of spark of interest in the content, then it becomes a bit of a slog.

So I think it's our responsibility at the OU to provide really captivating content. And we certainly do our best with that. And I think for students, yes, there will be times when they have to focus on things that are not really what they would choose to do. But I suppose that's a challenge, and it always comes in, as well. You'd be surprised how many times something that you slogged through, thinking, my goodness, I'll be glad when this is finished. And actually, it turns out to be one of the most useful things you've done, that you use again and again.

Karen Foley:

Absolutely, absolutely. In terms of our audience, they're saying they're not sure what modules to do next. And that's brilliant because we have charged the academics from all the Level 2 modules to come and show you why you should consider their modules, and to give you a bit of a flavour about what the various disciplines are about. So that will be interesting. So we hope that that helps. That's a really good place to be in here, at the Student Hub Live for the Arts event.

Now I wanted to sort of move this on in terms of where students should be, in terms of the skills that they're looking at. So if students are at the end of Level 1 and into Level 2, and I'd also like to touch on the students who are at Level 2, because we've got a lot of them in the chat, what sorts of things should they be doing, and when should they be looking at using those skills, at owning them, and thinking well, when could I change careers, et cetera? What's your experience of when students contact the Careers Advisory Service?

Siobhan:

My experience so far is sometimes, at various stages, to be honest--it might be Level 1, Level 3, or post-grad, as you say-- but I suppose in an ideal world, we would like students to be really engaging with us as soon as they start their studies. And definitely Level 1, because

that's the key time to really start to actually explore future career ideas. Because it's a career planning process that you go through. It's not an overnight decision. It takes time to do your research and explore things. So from then, that allows you time to look into things, try things out, get some work experience, and so on.

I think, just to pick up on what Kim said earlier about some of the skills you're getting from your studies-- communication and analytical and so on-- they are transferable from your studies to your workplace now, or to your workplace of the future. So sometimes students, I think, don't necessarily see the connection between that. So yeah, very much what you're learning through your studies can be transferred, and be like your evidence and examples that you can present to an employer, for an example.

Karen Foley: And Kim, from your perspective, then, what sorts of things should these student reflecting on, in terms of the skills?

KIM: I think that depends a little bit on what level a student is working at. I think it's partly a matter of degree. Students at the end of Level 1 I think can expect to have some confidence in the kind of basic approaches of the subjects that they've studied. So that would be all the 7 subject areas that we study in the arts faculty. I think by Level 2, but certainly by the end of Level 2, but earlier as well, they would expect to have more sophistication. They've actually honed in on one discipline, and would actually be developing quite sophisticated skills.

Say, I'm an art historian, so I'll use that one. So at Level 1, you would do a fairly basic analysis of a painting, what is where, basic things about techniques. Whereas at Level 2, you'd be moving on to more sophisticated ideas about how that painting fits into its genre, into its period, the kind of meanings and interpretations that have been attached to it, the kind of person it might have been designed for, who would have been looking at it, and what they might have made of it. So kind of more complex questions. And then as you move on to Level 3, it becomes more complex still.

Karen Foley: Excellent. Thank you for that. I'd like to go to social media desk and HJ and Rachel, could you talk us through the widget, in terms of what people are saying about which module to study next?

HJ: I think that some people quite confidently know what they're studying, we've got 64% of people, and a lot of people have chosen a path. So we've got people who are doing art history, Classical Studies, so they're already on a path. But some people are just doing

modules on their own and seeing where it leads them, finding what's interesting next. But 38% of people aren't sure what module they're going to study next.

And I'm sure throughout this event we're going to have some great advice. We've got a session on moving from Level 1 to 2, which is really good. It can feel like a big leap, but the OU has got lots of support to help with that. So yes, that's what's going on. Very excited.

Karen Foley: Thank you. And I'd like to sort of wrap up the session by thinking about how studying the arts, of which we've pinpointed there will be lots of other sessions on. And we're going to be talking later this afternoon about specifically what the Careers Advisory Service can do, in particular for art students. And Kim, you'll be joining us in a lot of discussions about studying at various stages, and the arts more generally. But how does all of this relate to course choice?

Siobhan, you said do what you enjoy. And that would be your advice to students. Is there anything you would add to that?

Siobhan: I think, yeah, explore your career options and ideas, as well. Because the two may tie together, obviously, may have some influences perhaps on the modules you might choose to do, which direction you might want to take. So yeah, I think the other key message is to be honest.

Karen Foley: Brilliant. And Kim, what would you say?

KIM: I think I'd say the same thing, actually. I think studying is a precious thing. It's not a time to do what you think you ought to do. It's a time to do what you actually choose to do, and where your interests lie. And I think the kind of skills you come out with as an art student will be much the same, whatever you study. Obviously, if you study music or art history, you'll come out with slightly different things. But the kind of basic, being able to put an argument together, being able to do critical thinking, you'll get that whatever you study. So I think, yes, do what you really enjoy, is the message I'd give.

Karen Foley: Wonderful. Well, Kim and Siobhan, thank you very much for this session. We'll be talking in more depth later throughout the programme about these issues. But that's given us a really nice rounded view of some of the areas that people should be thinking about. And also very nice to connect with you at home, and see how you're feeling about a lot of these things and what you're doing. And I hope that throughout this event, we get to talk a lot more, and things become a lot more clear for you as we go through this process.

We have a session next where we're going to be looking of music, specifically. It's the first of our content related sessions. And I have Bob Samuels, who's going to come to the studio, and he's going to bring in his clavichord. So that's very exciting. We're going to have a short break while we reset and sort all of that out. And this is going to be an audio only, so there won't be any moving video.

But use this time, please, to fill in the widgets, talk to HJ and Rachel, and it's also a great opportunity, if you're in the Live Only room, to come back out and watch the Live and Engage so that you can see some of the chat and the widgets and get a more wholesome experience of this. We'll see you very soon during this audio break, and I'll be back with Robert Samuels to talk about music.