

**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.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**KAREN FOLEY:** Hi. And welcome back to the Arts Hub. OK. So it's Saturday night, 7 o'clock in realtime, or not if you're watching on Catch Up. We're going to be having a session now called "What if I change my mind?"

Now, for those of you who are using the watch and engage, you see that we have four interactive widgets. And we would like you to vote. We would like to know which level you are studying, how you're feeling right now, especially after the quiz, have you decided which module to study next, and what factors are important to you in choosing a module?

So if you could populate those for us and write the answers in and where it's a wordle and there are three options, you need to fill it out completely and press Enter so that they will then process. And then you'll be able to see what everyone else thinks at the time. OK. So first a bit of news, the quiz was fabulous as usual.

And, yes, we have a prize. Amanda has sent us an answer that we requested before on Twitter. It's very, very good how proactive everyone has been with us. She says that the Pantheon is a concrete Roman structure. Well done, Amanda. If you could PM at Student Hub us in return your email address and your address, we will get a voucher out to you in the post on Monday. OK.

So without further ado, I would like to introduce, again, because you've just been doing our fabulous quiz.

**PETER CAVE:** We've just been humiliated on the quiz.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, I wouldn't put it like that.

**PETER CAVE:** I don't mind humiliation.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah. You didn't do so well, either of you, did you on Rachel's team. But anyway, that's fine. That's all past.

Peter Cave and Jeff Horner. We're going to be talking about "I've changed my mind." Now, a lot of students were saying this is all well and good, I really don't know what to study. So we wanted to sort of tackle this issue about what if you start studying something and then all of a sudden, you decide to change your mind.

Oh, but first actually, I have a book for you.

**PETER CAVE:** What a wonderful book.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, you wrote it. Yeah.

**PETER CAVE:** Therefore, what a wonderful book.

**KAREN FOLEY:** HJ is actually a massive fan of yours. And he's asked if you would autograph it for him.

**PETER CAVE:** Yes, after the show.

**KAREN FOLEY:** After the show. Yes, you could go and do that.

**PETER CAVE:** For a small fee, oh no?

**KAREN FOLEY:** No, you're not allowed to do that. Right.

**PETER CAVE:** If I pay him. I pay him for advertising. Excellent.

**KAREN FOLEY:** No. But in all seriousness, Peter, you have been doing a lot of various things. And they're trying to make philosophy a lot more accessible and fun. So what can philosophy say about this whole issue of mind changing?

**PETER CAVE:** Well, I'm very keen on mind changes, not the least because I'm actually rather keen on John Maynard Keynes, as I'm sure many of you know. Maynard Keynes famously said when the facts change, I change my mind. What you do, sir? When he was being attacked for changing his mind so often.

And obviously, students and other people might well want to change their mind because they actually have seen things in a different light or the fact seems to have struck them differently. So I think changing your mind is important. And it can be important in various ways.

It might just be that you have different aims in life. It might be that you suddenly see in the wisdom of changing to philosophy. I don't know why I mentioned that in particular.

**KAREN FOLEY:** They might not, though.

**PETER CAVE:** But it might also be the case that you just see things differently. Some of you may know the duck rabbit picture in which you can see a picture of a duck. And then another day you take a look at it and it appears as a rabbit. And so sometimes you can see things in a new light. And that leads you to think, yes, I go ahead for something else.

**JEFF HORNER:** And that's particularly likely when it's having done a course, like AA100, isn't it, when you're introduced to all sorts of different disciplines. You might very well decide that what you thought wouldn't be of any interest whatsoever, like philosophy, suddenly becomes--

**PETER CAVE:** Clearly a mistake.

**JEFF HORNER:** --suddenly becomes of interest.

**PETER CAVE:** There's actually a rather nice example in philosophy called Buridan's ass. It's about a donkey, an ass, talked about by John Buridan, a Parisian philosopher in mediaeval times. And the ass is stuck between two bundles of hay. They are equally succulent, equally tempting, and he just can't decide which one to go for.

And sadly in the tale of ass, the ass dies. And so maybe it's sensible to think in terms of the ass and recognising there may be two rather attractive courses, you don't know which one to go for. And yet, remember if you can't decide, you may end up like the ass and die. So you have to make decisions sometimes on impulse.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So there are consequences to not making , yeah.

**PETER CAVE:** Yeah, it can be very bad consequences. Yes.

**KAREN FOLEY:** But can mind changes be good?

**PETER CAVE:** Yes. You want a longer answer than that?

**KAREN FOLEY:** I do, yeah.

**PETER CAVE:** There's a wonderful philosopher, he's little known now, called John Wisdom. What a wonderful name to have as a philosopher. He was Professor Wisdom at Cambridge soon after Wittgenstein. And he tells a very, very short little story of there's a lady, a woman, inside a hat shop trying to decide whether this new hat is just the right sort of hat for her to wear. So she's wondering about the hat.

And her friend suddenly says, it's the Taj Mahal. And all of a sudden, she can see the hat differently and realise it's just isn't appropriate for what she's wanting for that particular occasion. So I really think it sometimes is very useful for students to look at the different courses. And they may suddenly strike them, no, this isn't really what I want.

It's going to be this one. And I need to move on. So, yes, I think mind changes can be good.

**JEFF HORNER:** Yes. I think if you, I don't know, say you come into the OU thinking you're going to do literature-- I have no idea-- and then decide that philosophy, music, whatever, would be better. You've got to be very careful not simply to go on sort of scanty information.

So little story. Years ago, we used to have these wonderful thing called summer schools. And this is not changing your course, it's regretting having chosen the course. We're at the first tutorial. And I was doing literature.

And I went around the group saying, how do you like literature? Got to one student and he said, hate literature. Why can't they say it plainly? Why do they waffle on like this?

I said, well never mind. You've got music. No, I'm tone deaf he said. Oh. Art history? No. Philosophy? Don't make me laugh, he said.

**PETER CAVE:** Well, that makes us laugh.

**JEFF HORNER:** If you don't mind me asking, why are you doing this course? He said, well, I saw introduction to the arts and I'd always wanted to paint.

[LAUGHTER]

**JEFF HORNER:** And this was, I don't know, 3/4, 4/5 the way through the course, he was hating every minute of it. There is a danger of doing that. There's a danger of, oh, that sounds-- you need to make sure you've got the information before you commit yourself to changing your mind.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Because we're talking about changing our minds. And one thing we haven't sort of mentioned is in what context people change their minds. Are they changing their minds just after maybe doing a very interdisciplinary model and they were changing it conceptually, thinking maybe I don't want to go in this direction or that direction. Or have they just finished doing maybe level 2 module and they think, actually, I really think I should do something quite different. In which case, changing your mind has different consequences, doesn't it?

**PETER CAVE:** Well, obviously, there are other problems with regard to what sort of degree you want in the end, whether you want it named as being in Humanities or open and so forth. And there's some of those consequences. There's also the consequence how you may foolishly not do philosophy, whereas you may realise that philosophy opens the mind to so many things. But perhaps I ought not to keep on advertising philosophy to the students.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Perhaps you shouldn't, yes.

**JEFF HORNER:** I think, particularly on level 1 courses, one of the dangers-- I mean, I've got a student just finished the course, actually, who said I was going to do-- I can't remember, history, can't remember-- I was going to do history. But I got my best grade in the assignments on music. So I'm going to do music now. It's a very dangerous game to just say this is what I do best.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And it depends, of course, on what you're doing it for, doesn't it, whether you're doing it for fun or to get a certain classification that will then go on to something else. We've got some mind changes in the chat room. HJ and Rachel, how's everyone feeling? And do we have any questions that we'd like to put to our panel?

**HJ:** Well, we got the widget for how we're feeling. And we're very excited and happy.

**HJ:** We're very capable as well, which is very nice, some positivity there, and ready as well. So I like that one, we're ready. But, yeah, we got I'm surprised because I changed my mind. I went from business studies.

I thought that would be really interesting. But it found it basically quite boring. And then I did social sciences. So and a few other people in the chat did the same as well, didn't they?

**RACHEL:** Yeah. Yeah. Sylvia's been really interested for this session that you're doing now. And she's obviously here asking some questions. But I've got some comments as well.

So I'll pose the question afterwards. Karen has said-- another Karen-- for 2 points, Karen said, I changed my mind during my degree from a purely art history to art history and philosophy. And she's very happy that she did that.

Daven said he changed his degree from computing and maths to just computing. And Anne said, I felt like I needed to make up my mind quickly so while she is applying for her part-time fee grant. So she now needs to know if she needs to contacts Student Services and Student Support to find out whether she can change other courses and things like that.

And what else have we got here? And we've got Sharon, who said, you're rocking the bow tie and pink jacket. So I had to get that one in on the end.

**PETER CAVE:** When you get to a certain age, you don't mind making a fool of yourself. I'm at that certain age.

[LAUGHTER]

**KAREN FOLEY:** Wonderful. And what was the question?

**RACHEL:** OK. Wasn't there points for this.

**OFF-CAMERA  
SPEAKER:** Was that the question?

**OFF-CAMERA  
SPEAKER:** What was the question?

**KAREN FOLEY:** No, Rachel said she had a question, didn't you?

**RACHEL:** Yep.

**KAREN FOLEY:** She got to find it now. She's got to scroll back through the chat because goes quite fast.

**RACHEL:** Sylvia said when someone does not like the module, is not doing that well, do they change to another module that they think is more suitable to them? So that's probably more directed at other students. But it's probably a good question to pose to see what you guys would think.

**KAREN FOLEY:** That is a really good question. So is it about getting the grades or is it about doing something that really means something? A philosophical question maybe.

**PETER CAVE:** Indeed. I had been reminded here that the great conductor von Karajan, who was a very authoritarian figure, but he was asked in his later life which musician he found particularly attractive. And came up with the answer Toscanini. And they wondered why Toscanini in particular.

And he said, well, he believed in what he did. So I suppose I'm belong to the school who will think it's much better to do something which you really think you can believe in at some level rather than just thinking, ah, I'll just do that because I think it's going to be easier. Or I just do that because I think it's more likely I get a job through it. I have a feeling that maybe things go better if you do things which you can believe in.

**JEFF HORNER:** I think they do on the whole. But it's a more complicated world these days, isn't it? And a lot of students are doing it for vocational reasons and have a much more restricted choice on what they can do. I think that's a shame but it's the way it is.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Who do you find, Jeff, that students tend to talk to, then, if they want advice about changing their mind? Because some of it is quite specific in terms of vocation they might have in mind. What sorts of areas do you think that students should or could turn to in terms of support from the OU? Do they talk to their tutor or who do they talk to?

**JEFF HORNER:** If somebody's asking about the difference between, I don't know, history and literature, then their level 1 tutor is probably a good place to go to first. But if it's anything more sort of general than that, then they should certainly go to the Studies Support Team, the SST. They got to start there really.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah. And do you find-- I mean, I'm tutor as well-- and sometimes students will come to me about something. And I say, look, I'm really not the right person because I'm specialising in this sort of thing. And I wonder then whether students think, oh, well, maybe that was a silly question. But actually it's really, really important in terms of getting that support. So what would you say to those students?

**JEFF HORNER:** I personally say to them-- they don't take a lot to notice, quite rightly-- but I say to my students for nearly everything, come to me first. I might not know the answer, but I'm almost certainly know the best place to go for the answer. So I try to encourage my students to come to me as tutor for all-- I mean, not about fees and the grant and that sort of stuff-- but anything sort of vaguely academic, go to their tutor first, I would think, who can put them onto the right place more often than not.

**PETER CAVE:** And, of course, on the different courses, it's often useful. And I sometimes do it for my students, just to put them in touch with other students who have taken those courses. And then they can have email contacts.

**KAREN FOLEY:** There are reviews as well, aren't there?

**PETER CAVE:** Yes. Yeah.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Reviews on the website, I think.

**PETER CAVE:** As early as they can get a feeling for what really is going to go on in that course.

**JEFF HORNER:** The students are the real experts, aren't they, in what a course is like, far more use than the tutors and the people at Walton Hall.

**PETER CAVE:** Of course, they may use the word, this course is challenging. You never quite know what challenging means. I suspect none of them does.

**KAREN FOLEY:** You wouldn't ask a philosopher, certainly.

**JEFF HORNER:** I tell you what's another good thing to do. If you're not certain-- this is just purely practical idea-- if you're not certain whether a module is right for you or not, a good idea, if you can get a hold of it, is to look at the assignment book for the previous year. Don't look at the last assignment, that will scare the hell out of you.

But look at the first assignment. And doesn't matter whether you can answer it, have you got any idea at all of what they're talking about and does it interest you? If it doesn't interest you and you've no idea of what they're talking about, it's probably not the course for you.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Because this is the thing, isn't it, is that while the content can be very, very interesting and ultimately might be what you're doing further down the line, a lot of this is about skills, about methods, about various other aspects and in addition to the interesting content. So that's another important consideration about course choice, isn't it?

**PETER CAVE:** And about how you're going to approach it. And as you say, the content, but also the way and the style of approach to that content. I am just reminded, though, going back to John Maynard Keynes, he started off reading mathematics at Cambridge and then he switched to modern sciences, in effect, and that led him into philosophy and that eventually led him into



economics. And so one should embrace the idea of change, embrace the idea of developing, and not feel somehow guilty that you've failed because you're not getting on well in this course. It might be you're going to move into something far more appropriate for you and maybe become another John Maynard Keynes.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Because changing one's mind is often seen in quite a negative way. And students, I think, are often surprised when they find out that actually everyone's struggling with similar sorts of things. In your experience as tutors, how common would you say this issue is? And do you think students should feel OK about going through this process? Is it a good process to actually think about?

**JEFF HORNER:** I think it's a really important process. I was talking about summer school earlier. When we had summer schools, instead of having a generalist tutor trying to cover all the disciplines, you got a specialist tutor in music, philosophy, whatever. So very large number of students used to go to the summer school saying, can't stand philosophy-- sorry about this-- can't stand philosophy.

**PETER CAVE:** I've come across this idea before, yes.

**JEFF HORNER:** And quite significant number changed after summer school, changed their course choice for the following year to philosophy because they got expert. I think that's great. I think that's absolutely wonderful, provided it's not going to have implications for the sort of degree--

**PETER CAVE:** Or being tutored by me, you mean.

**JEFF HORNER:** Absolutely not.

**PETER CAVE:** I can take the abuse.

**JEFF HORNER:** If it's going to have implications for the degree that they're ending it with, then that's obviously another consideration. But if it's what I'm going to really enjoy doing and succeed in, I think it's great to change your mind. That's what the OU is all about, it seems to me.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Lovely. And indeed some people, like Rachel, who we saw before, can often end up--

**PETER CAVE:** Sorry, which Rachel?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah, I know. Well, the one who is the PhD student who seems to have been with the OU studying for many, many years and is continuously studying and progressing. And that's part

of life's wonderful process, isn't it?

Jeff and Peter, thank you so much for coming and talking to us in that session.

**PETER CAVE:** Well, thank you for inviting us.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, that's fine.

**PETER CAVE:** Are you going to thank me for thanking you?

**KAREN FOLEY:** You can come back a little bit-- no, I'm not.

[LAUGH]

**PETER CAVE:** We can have an endless philosophical ...

**KAREN FOLEY:** It would never end. It would just dire. Because next, we have our Lucky Dip. And we're going to have a short video break before then.

You two will be back a bit later. No, sorry. You will certainly, Peter.

**PETER CAVE:** We shall be back.

**KAREN FOLEY:** You shall be back to talk about a very apt topic later, why are art students dangerous?

**PETER CAVE:** And not tutors...

**KAREN FOLEY:** Anyway. But before then, we're going to have a bit more silliness with our Lucky Dip. So we're going to have a short break. Grab a beer, coffee. Let us know what you're drinking, actually, I'm on the coffee. And we'll see you very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]