Graham  Hello, and welcome to the second edition of STUDIO, the OU Students Association radio show.

Malika  Hello.

Ellie   Hiya.

Aine    Hi.

Graham  Hello. So I am joined today by four hosts. My name is Graham Rimmer and I am the Chair of PLEXUS and I'm also a Masters student. So to my right is:

Michael Hi. I'm Michael and this is my second show. I am a second year student studying statistics.

Malika  And I'm Malika Steed. This is also my second show, and I'm studying environmental studies, currently in my Level 3 fifth year.

Aine    Hi everyone, my name is Aine McGrath, and I am actually a brand new host, this is my first show, and I'm in my second year of studies of an undergrad in environmental science.

Ellie   I'm Ellie. This is also my first show, and I'm just starting my second module for English literature.

Graham  That's the hard bit over with, so you can relax. We're all live on Facebook so do join in the conversation using the hash tag OUstudents. Ask us anything you want, and Michael here will tell us any comments that you may have and we'll try and get those out to you. So it's Freshers, wow!

Malika  Exciting.

Graham  Yes. Did you all have a good summer break?

Ellie   Yeah, nice rest.

Michael Very nice.

Malika  It's been amazing.

Michael South of France, lovely.

Graham  Oh wow!
Malika   Amazing.

Graham  I put up with the rain here! So we'll move on.

Malika Yeah. Went to see my family in France, and then went to see family in Spain.

Graham Oh fantastic.

Ellie I went for a little travel around Europe.

Aine And I made it back to visit some friends over in Newfoundland and Canada, and brought the guitar and had plenty of partying and plenty of singing, and it was really good. And we got the weather too.

Graham That's always good.

Aine Yeah. I was there for the folk festival as well in Newfoundland and Labrador, it was very good. Would recommend it to anyone.

Graham Brilliant. I must admit, I told a little fib, I wasn't enjoying the rain. As I mentioned at the start of the show, I'm the Chair of PLEXUS which is the OU Students Association and LGBT Support Group. We've attended two Pride events this summer, so we had a fantastic time in London where we really screamed and shouted about the OU and recommended students to come and join us. Followed by our time in London. No not London, Manchester.

Ellie Manchester, that's right.

Graham I went to London twice I was so excited. So we had a great time in Manchester. We were joined by one of the executive deans from the OU, so it was quite good to have them there as well. But what about everyone else out there, what have they been doing over the break? Are they new to OU? Are they back to OU? Or have they been doing a module over the summer? I think we'd be really interested to find out what they've been doing. I think we've been having a hash tag out there at the moment New2OU, has everyone been following that? We're all back to OU though really, aren't we.

Malika Yes, technically. But I have seen it pop up on my Twitter feed, New2OU, when it was re-tweeted by the Students Association. So if you're on Twitter obviously follow OUstudents. And I've seen some amazing things being
posted by students, students getting geared up with their new stationery, their books, and getting excited and in the groove.

Graham I do love a good pack of stationery. It's not right, is it? But we're OU students, eh? (Laughter)

Malika Or coffee and biscuits as well, that keeps us going, doesn't it.

Graham Absolutely. And I think the Students Association have been very busy this summer as well because we have a new website. I must insist you go and check that out to find out everything that's been happening, what's coming to happen. So check that out. That's www.oustudents.com. And you can find out all about the societies, the groups, and all the support you can access as an OU student. Ellie, I think you may have some comments for the new to OU students?

Ellie Yeah. We ran a competition, and up for grabs was an OU notebook, a hoodie, a mug, and an owl soft toy. Students needed to tweet with the hash tag New2OU, and we had some really, really great tweets coming in. Just to give a few examples. @katylmorris98 said, super excited to be a part of #New2OU. I finally feel like I'm doing what I want to do. So happy I get to be a part of the Open University. @lloydmanagram said, I cannot wait to take my first step. New knowledge, new friends, and a sense of purpose, what's not to like? And shall we announce the winner?

Graham I think we should. Drum roll please! (Drum roll)

Ellie So the winner was Zoe Watt @zoewatt who said, #New2OU time to be challenged, time to learn, #maed.

Malika Fabulous. Congratulations.

Graham Congratulations.

Ellie So well done to Zoe.

Malika Well done.

Graham Do they need to contact us via email, or are we going to contact them?

Ellie Yeah. We'll be in contact to organise the delivery of your prize.

Graham Fantastic.
Malika I quite fancy the owl. Don't you?

Graham Yeah.

Malika That's got to the prize you have.

Graham The amount of times I've been to a graduation ceremony to help out selling merchandise and seeing one of those owls, I could have a collection of them.

Ellie And the hoodie as well. Can't go wrong with a hoodie.

Graham Is it the pink ones or the purple ones? Or is there a choice?

Malika Might be better.

Graham Yeah. If there's a choice go for the pink, Zoe!

Michael So we've had a few interactions from students. Lorraine Brown has said she's had the summer off and she's now back doing her first Level 3 module.

Graham Wow.

Malika Like me then.

Michael Big year. And a comment on the new website. Suzanne Butler says, yay for the new website. So much better, use it to navigate around. So there's a testimony if there is ever one for you to go and have a look.

Graham I'm sure our comms team outside the studio are loving that comment right now. (Laughter)

Malika Indeed.

Graham Cool. I must admit as well, Zoe's hash tag I noticed 'maed'. I'm assuming that's Masters in education. I'm also doing that qualification as well. So please get in touch with me, follow me @rimmsie on Twitter, because I'm sure we can be study buddies! (Laughter)

Malika Technically you're a back to OU student, but really for that you're a new to OU.
Yeah, new to OU post-grad student. Why.com! (Laughter) Any others, Michael?

Adam Fergie says did an Access module over the summer and he's finding a new job as well.

Oh, excellent.

Fabulous. Well good luck, Adam, with everybody. With everything, sorry, not everybody. That's it, I've lost the plot totally! (Laughter) But yeah, it sounds good. So what else have we got?

Coming up tonight we've got a packed show as always. We're going to be talking about Freshers in a bit more detail, so everyone's experiences. I think we've even got some pre-records that you're going to share with us about some meet-ups. We're going to be talking about World Mental Health Day which is next Tuesday. We've also got some special guests coming to the studio later. We're going to have former Deputy President, Nic Morris, who I believe is in a field in Somerset. Or the cows might be in a field and she's hopefully on the phone rather than a field. And we're going to have the immediate past President, Ruth Tudor, joining us as well who's also been a Deputy President, to talk to us about the by-election.

Fabulous.

So more about that later on. So, before we go on, we talk about Freshers and what you can do during Freshers, our experiences.

Yes. Well, shall I kick off with talking about the things that went on perhaps, something that I did last week in Freshers actually.

Yes.

I did host a meet-up in Norwich. That was the opportunity, and that went on all over up and down the country. Students had the opportunity to get together and share a cup of coffee or tea or whatever they fancied, and talk and get to meet students past and present, and new ones. And certainly the one in Norwich went really well. Four new students attended, so we were delighted to have them on. A lot of other things happened. Have you all been on the chats, because I know loads of chats went on as well?

They have. Through the PLEXUS group we hosted a couple of chats, one on Facebook and one using the OU live platform. So giving people an
opportunity to talk and find out a little bit more about what PLEXUS is, and
the wider Association. But I know there's been lots of other things going on,
like the (Inaudible) Students Group, our DSG have been doing things as
well, there's lots and lots of societies out there, they had their own chat on
Facebook. Even new ways of getting involved with the Students
Association. Like us, we're all volunteers, we're all hosts, but amongst other
things I think there's a bit of competition between me and Malika about how
many things we do do for the Association! (Laughter)

Malika  Yes. We're a little bit crazy, aren't we, I like to think.

Graham  But we love it. We love getting involved.

Malika  Yes we do, it's absolutely fantastic.

Graham  What about yourselves, Aine, Ellie, what have you been doing during
Freshers?

Ellie   I was just going to say, can I just note that on the new website as well
there's a really great link to all the meet-ups that are going on. I definitely
really encourage people to go to one in your local area because it's a really
great way to find people studying the same kind of thing, you can chat about
things, bounce ideas off each other. It's a really good way of supporting as
well.

Graham  I was going to say, because there's 170,000 of us out there, we're not alone.
We might not have bricks and mortar but we're definitely there together.
(Agreement)

Michael Think that's the opportunity of Freshers, isn't it, to actually build those
connections that will support you during the year.

Graham  Absolutely.

Aine   I didn't get a chance to go to the meet-up that was in Belfast last week, but I
have been on Facebook. I did a search for the upcoming module that I'm
doing to see if anyone had actually started a study group, and of course
there was one. The one that I was enrolled on last year, that was U116, it
was Environment: journeys through a changing world. Brilliant module.
Fantastic module.

Malika  Yes, I loved it.
Aine  Really enjoyed it. Especially the piece that we had, it was a report about gorillas.

Malika  Oh yes.

Aine  That was epic, fantastic. So I didn't get to go to the meet up, but I have found another forum as well. I found it so helpful last year, because if you find that you were flagging for some reason, that maybe you were not quite on the ball, maybe fallen slightly behind, it was nice to go online and to see that other people may have been in the same boat as you. Maybe to help you motivate yourself, or to say something comforting, to let you know that you're not alone, and that it's actually okay, you're going to be okay. That reassurance as well. So that's what I have been doing.

I've also been looking at how I can become more involved in the Students Association, and have identified a few things that look quite appealing. So watch this space. I'm new to all this!

Graham  Lights and stars? What am I trying to say? (Inaudible) lights, shall we say. That's where I'm going. It's been a long week.

Malika  It's been a long day and a long week for all of us, hasn't it.

Graham  It has.

Malika  I'm glad I'm not the only one that's lost the plot today.

Graham  That's what the makes this show so entertaining for everyone listening, it's we don't know what we're doing. We have scripts and we've already gone off it! The technical team are going, "What's happening next?!". Michael.

Michael  So we've got a couple more comments from our listeners. Alan Reynolds says, hi all, first time at further education, and he's studying computing and IT and psychology. So hey to all doing TM11 and DE100. So, going to start a module shout out here! (Laughter)

Malika  There you go.

Michael  We've also got David Carruth who's just starting out this year with environmental science. So both new students. I guess what we'd love to hear is what you guys have been up to for Freshers, whether you've been involved in any way, and if there's anything you feel that you'd like to do or anything like that.
Graham: Absolutely. Definitely get in touch with us.

Michael: It would be great to hear. We've also had Colin Pritchard who said he hosted a Kendal meet-up, which was great, and he had nine students and most were #New2OU.

Malika: Oh wow, fantastic.

Graham: Excellent. A big shout to Colin, because he helped me out at graduation ceremony on the 29th. He drove all the way to Manchester from Kendal, helped us out all day, and then had to travel all the way back to Kendal ready for his meet-up. He said it was a great experience. So that's one way you can involved, actually volunteering at a graduation ceremony, because you see the end of your journey. You get quite emotional watching it. Because I was in the ceremony this year, I was representing the Association, and it might be an hour and a half clapping but you have to hold back the tears because you're being filmed. (Laughs)

Malika: Can't wait to do that. I can't wait to just be there and the end of a journey everyone. Don't you think it's going to be such a great experience? Tell us about your experiences graduating, everyone. If you're listening right now just post your comments and let us know how it was for you.

Graham: I've got a story but I think I'll save that for later.

Michael: Nothing like a teaser on radio!

Graham: I know. I love it. I think we have a pre-record about some of the meet-ups that you've done, Malika.

Malika: Yes.

Graham: I'm hoping our team are outside ready to press play.

Malika: Yes. Let's send some positive vibes from the studio, shall we? Yes. This meet-up, hopefully you'll get to hear a couple perhaps tonight. We'll see how we go for time. But this was back in July on the 29th of July in Norwich. That was my last meet-up before the summer break, and I decided to introduce students. So I hope you like it. I hope you like what you hear.

Michael: Just while we're waiting for that I'll give a special shout out to Nicky Bloomer who's a former OU student to say have an amazing birthday Nicky.
Graham Happy birthday.

Malika Is that today? An October baby like me. Happy birthday.

Graham Enjoy this recording.

(Pre-record)

Malika It is Saturday the 29th of July and this is from Norwich. We’re having a nice OU Students Association coffee chat. I’m Malika, your radio host, and I’m here with a few students and we are discussing our study journeys and some experiences. With me is Samantha who just joined the OU. I would just like to ask you, Samantha, what are you hoping to get from your study experience? I know we talked about the social aspect and what made you come along to this coffee chat etc. Would you like you say a few words to our students listening today?

Samantha Yeah. I’m hoping to have a proper university experience but more flexible than normal. So obviously more friends, slight social aspect to it, but also to see what studying is like and to hopefully achieve what I want to achieve.

Malika Fantastic. Can you tell us what module you’re enrolled on, Samantha, just so our listeners get an idea of what your path will be like?

Samantha I’m enrolled on English literature and language, and I’ll be doing this year arts and humanities for the first module.

Malika Fantastic. I know we talked about you coming along to the coffee chat. What made you come along to this today?

Samantha I’d saw the Facebook page and I really thought it looked welcoming and quite happy. I thought, ‘Yeah I definitely want to have a look and ask some questions and see what it’s all about’.

Malika Fantastic. Is there anything that you’re worried about that could alleviate your anxieties about your studying?

Samantha Definitely the timekeeping and the management of putting the assessments/assignments in on time. So I’m nervous about that. But hopefully it should be fine.

Malika Brilliant. Thank you very much for that, Samantha.
Welcome back. I hope you enjoyed that little snippet of what happened in Norwich when Malika hosted one of her many meet-ups. So if you are in the area do go and find out, I think you can find them on Facebook or our new website oustudents.com

So, we’ve been talking a lot about Freshers and being new to OU, but we need to remember as ourselves are back to OU. So Ellie, what’s been happening in the back to OU world?

We asked you to do the #Back2OU for people who are not Freshers, people who are returning, and again to win the OU notebook, the hoodie, the mug, and the soft owl toy. So I’ll read out a few of these. @fionastudy says, get up early, stay ahead of planner, plan everything and use feedback. I think that’s really good advice there.

Absolutely.

Helpful, isn’t it.

Might need to try some of that advice myself.

We can all take that. (Laughter)

Especially the get up early bit. @hannahpadgett93 says, my lesson is to prove to myself that my anxiety and depression will not stop me from doing what I want to achieve in life. I think that’s really important.

That’s inspirational.

Very important, yeah. I think a lot of people can relate to that.

Absolutely.

And @louisecheetal says, wherever possible work ahead of the planner. Real life tends to through a spanner in the works so give yourself some wiggle room. Again, some great advice there. The winner, shall we have another little drum roll, (drum roll) is another Zoe, Zoe Hall, who tweeted, telling myself I can do it even if I find it difficult at the time. Keeping organised, and ensuring I can keep a positive attitude.

Congratulations.

Well done.
Malika  Congratulations, Zoe.

Graham  So again we'll be in touch with this Zoe so you can claim your prize. So we're all back to OU students. We've lived the Freshers, we've done maybe a year or two, and I'd be really interested to know your experiences about what do you wish you knew then that you know now?

Malika  That I'm not alone. I'm going to be honest, I didn't even know there was a community. I call it the OU tribe, my OU tribe. That's in a very gentle and very loving way. I didn't even know there were all these people out there, and quite frankly I wish someone told me you're not on your own.

Aine  Yeah. I had studied with the Open University in the 1990s, and I started again last year, yeah about a year ago. The thing is that I've found that the experience this time round has been completely different from what it was before thanks to social media, and the community is much more accessible to us as students now, we can find each other, we can engage with each other. Whereas beforehand you would submit a TMA via just snail mail.

Malika  Oh yeah, the paper copies.

Aine  That's right. I found some of mine a few weeks ago when I was clearing out my little study upstairs, and yes it was the sheets that you would fill in, and then the tutor would send it back to you with comments written in. But now it's all instant, it's all done online. That means that you can engage with students that are on your module as well. Whereas that wasn't possible before. So it's a completely different thing now from someone who studied OU almost 20 years ago, and this time round it's different. It's a much richer experience this time, I think. It always was fantastic, but this has added another dimension to it.

Graham  Yeah, I must admit I remember where I used to work probably about ten years ago, it had OU students there and it was all written, and you used to send it off in a big envelope and you used to get it back and stuff.

Malika  My goodness me. I think I would have struggled with that bit, to be honest.

Graham  It's tutor feedback that I think we would have struggled with, the handwriting! (Laughter) Ellie, what about your experiences?

Malika  My idea of a nightmare, I guess.
Ellie I think one bit of advice that I'd give to new students, and one bit of advice that I'd like to give myself for starting this new module. I think time planning is so important, because we're not going to lectures, we don't have that set weekly routine, we kind of have to implement our own routine. I worked full-time during Module 1. I only had two days off a week, and I wasn't doing any studying on my work days, I was just literally leaving it all to my two days off and cramming it all in. Which has left me feeling so overwhelmed, and I had no life. So I think my advice would be to try and do like one or two hours of study a day instead of trying to cram it all in at the same time. Set yourself little achievable targets, even if it's just writing 200 words on an assignment in a day, just something to make you feel a little better.

Graham I think you're right. That's exactly the same as what I've done. When I did my undergraduate qualification I was a bit like Saturdays and Sundays are study days, and people were like, "Are you coming out?", "No. I'll see you in four years". So what happened this time round, I know obviously Masters Degree tend to be a little bit less intensive, but I'm trying to be good at the moment. So on Monday I go to the gym. Tuesday is my kind of study day because it's not a Monday, and then a couple of days I go to the gym and I do alternate Fridays and Saturdays so I can actually have a life as well. So I can recommend that kind of time planning. What I've tended to do as well is use my annual leave, so I book the Friday and the Monday off when assignments are due, so I can have time to have breaks over writing the assignment as well. Then if I write it early I've got the money to recuperate from a mental health perspective, just kind of like mind dump, clear your mind and you can start again.

Malika Yeah, I know what you mean. I need a whole week after writing a TMA generally, I'm just exhausted then.

Graham I'm very interested in hear what Michael has to say, because – bear with me OU students – Michael did four modules last year. Four! That's 120 credits. Michael, what are you doing in year two! (Laughs) Tell us your story, Michael.

Michael Just before I talk about my story. I've got Susan Timlin on the chat who said she's starting her first Level 2 module for psychology tomorrow, both excited and nervous, and looking forward to my tutorial tomorrow. So good luck with that. And for all the second/third level students, we'd love to hear about what you would tell yourself as a first year student now that you have the experience and insight. While we're going off-script as well, we've got a lot of students discussing an upcoming Leeds meet-up, so if you are listening and you're from Leeds, get involved. It's great to meet other students and
build those connections. Just as a side note as well, a link has just been posted in the chat to the OU student shop. There's all sorts of branded goodies in there for you, if you like.

Graham With the OU shop, I don't know if many people know this, but the money that is raised from the produce is actually raising money for OUSET, which is the Students Educational Trust. And when Ruth comes in I may even get her to speak about it very briefly. But basically that's where students who are financially unable to afford to pay fees for example or need some supporting equipment, maybe a new laptop to help them write their TMAs, they could potentially apply for some money from the Educational Trust. So if we get time hopefully Ruth can tell us a little bit about that.

Michael So, back to your question.

Graham Back to your story! (Laughs)

Malika Yes, we are dying to hear.

Michael Last year I studied four modules. This year I'm studying three, and one's a 60 credit, so I'm doing 120 again.

Ellie Wow!

Michael My advice to myself, although I did relatively well, would still be around planning in advance. It would be around utilising the support that you have access to, rather than being the lone soldier. Utilising the tutors a bit more. So from my experience they're all super supportive. More beneficial is to contact them well in advance of your TMA deadline rather than like two nights before. That way they can really support with your submission and how you're getting on with it, rather than just give you an extension. It's well worthwhile building that relationship with the tutor and getting that support.

Graham Absolutely. If anyone else doing more than one module, do get in touch and let us know what your plans are. But like Michael said, do plan ahead, do speak to your tutors, they're very supportive, they are very approachable, they're there to support you through this entire process.

We've touched on mental health a couple of times so far, and I'm going to introduce our next segment. On Tuesday 10\textsuperscript{th} of October it's World Mental Health Day, so there's going to be lots of activity taking place delivered by the Students Association. If our technical team could get the next pre-recording ready. I'm just going to mention very briefly that the Disabled
Students Group (DSG), and PLEXUS, are going to be hosting some chats. The DSG are going to be hosting a meet-up, I believe it's in Maidstone, so please correct me if that's incorrect. It begins with 'M'! But they're also going to be hosting a live chat through Facebook throughout the day and in the evenings.

PLEXUS are going to be hosting an 'in conversation with', so they've got a couple of students who are going to be joined by Alex Phennah, who is the Secretary of PLEXUS, and another member, talking about their experiences about breaking down those barriers and the stigma around mental health. So I think it's going to be really interesting to kind of join in that, and hopefully we'll get some questions. So hope to see you then.

But again, the OU Students Association are going to be having loads of activity and posts from fellow students throughout the day. But to tell us a little bit more about this is Sammi who works right here in Milton Keynes for the Students Association.

(Pre-record)

Sammi

World Mental Health Day is observed on the 10th of October every year with the aim of raising awareness of mental health difficulties, and to tackle the stigma still connected with mental health. The OU Students Association are getting involved by creating videos, helpful signposts and top tips, along with case studies written by staff and students. On the 10th of October head over to oustudents.com/support. You can also join in the conversation on either Facebook or Twitter. Just remember, mental health problems can affect anyone any day of the year, but the 10th of October is a great day to show your support for better mental health and to start looking after your own wellbeing.

Graham

Thank you very much for that. Mental health, it has a big stigma. Does anyone want to open up the conversation about this? I know I've talked about what we're planning on doing.

Malika

Sure, I'll go ahead. I think mental health is a topic that is still nowadays, as you said rightly stigmatised, and unfortunately people still feel apprehensive about talking about mental health and talking about their feelings and they're feeling down or they're struggling with something. But it does affect every single one of us, and us students particularly are affected.

I know that last year – and I already spoke about that last time during the show – my year was absolutely horrendous, everything that could go
possibly wrong went wrong, talking from my mother going to hospital and nearly dying, and other things that just piled on. I just struggled and I just couldn't see a way out, because throughout you are expected to carry on and to continue, continue working, continue being a mum in my case, continue doing things. There comes a time when you haven't even got the energy to deal with everything, let alone studying. I know that I had to ask for extensions to my tutor, and she was extremely good about it. I made no apologies for it, and I explained why it was that I asked her for extensions.

I think the first time the first thing I'd say to anyone struggling, it's okay to be down, it's okay to cry. I know I had that support at work where colleagues would support me, and I would turn up every day and probably be in tears and they wouldn't even know why. But the fact that there was someone to listen to me was enough to help me at that time. I think that's important, reach out for someone, speak to someone, talk to someone if you're feeling down, because we all go through things like this one way or another.

Michael Just while we're talking about this, feel free to send in your advice to anyone and everyone really on how to deal with those sort of situations when they come your way. What are your top tips? What do you do in those situations? Because inevitably life throws them at you. So what's your go-to?

Graham Absolutely. I remember a campaign last year saying I'm fine. I wrote an article for PLEXUS about saying that you keep saying I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, and actually I wasn't fine. So it's good to actually have that conversation with someone.

Michael Honesty is the best policy. (Agreement)

Graham It really is. Someone said to me, "You're not fine". "How do you know?". And I had a chat, had a cry, and put it all out.

Malika That's it.

Aine Yeah. I have to echo what you said as well, Malika, that it's an illness that we are getting better at talking about it, but we're not quite where we need to be. I too have lived with the effects of depression and anxiety as well. I've learnt how to manage it, and I live a very full, happy and rewarding life now. But there was a time when that wasn't the case. They say that one in four people are affected by depression at some point or other in their life. Those are the one in four that we know about, I think that the real figure is actually much higher. And there's no shame in it. There is no shame. I have found that by talking about it and by being very open about it I've had friends or
acquaintances have come to me and said, "Actually it's me as well". When you start to talk about it then you help other people to feel more comfortable.

Malika That's right.

Aine And it opens up the whole conversation, and only by talking about it can we challenge the stigma that comes along with it. (Agreement) I ran a charity event a few years ago for a local mental health charity back in Northern Ireland, and I had 12 participants on that day, 12 exhibitors at the event I held, and when I explained the reason why I chose that particular charity actually nine of the 12 exhibitions came up to me and said, "Actually that's a great charity. Do you know, I've had this as well". My goodness. Now if you think of the one in four, that was actually three in four judging by those statistics. I think that the real figure is actually much higher.

Michael I think what you touched on about the stigma is very true, and what we've passed down generation to generation around how we treat that illness. We've got Alan Reynolds' comment in saying, I remember my mum used to say to me never tell anyone you have depression as it will go on your record and never be able to get a job. And this was only in the 90s. That's that education piece. It's quite scary, isn't it. (Agreement) But that's that education piece around-

Malika It's almost like it was a taboo, wasn't it. Okay, you can't possibly disturb people, but actually what we forget is that we are all human and we could all break down at any point. I suppose what I'm trying to say here is that let's remember that little bit of compassion and understanding goes a long way in supporting each other.

Graham Yes, absolutely.

Malika But if you're out there and you're struggling on your own do reach out to people.

Michael Cherry Day has just posted the link to the DSG Facebook group, which is the Disabled Students Group, saying that if you're someone with a health issue that's an obstacle to studying successfully, that's where to go.

Graham I think I can answer that further Cherry, if you don't mind me saying. If it isn't relating to (inaudible), you're just having a day where you need to talk to someone, go into that forum and just say, "Hi, I need someone to talk to". There is other links that we can provide too in a second, but is there any
further comments coming in? Ellie, I think you've got a story you want to share with us.

Ellie Yeah. I was just going to touch on what Malika said about the expectation that we have to carry on and be okay with it. I think expectations play a huge part in mental health, and especially with the rise of social media I think what we see online with Facebook and Instagram, everyone's always out having a really good time, someone's just climbed a mountain, everyone's with loads of people all the time. We're constantly comparing ourselves to other people and thinking, 'Why am I just sat at home or whatever?'. Even my own Instagram, I've just been travelling in Europe so my Instagram's looking like gold at the moment, but 90% of the time you'll find me at home on my own with just a cup of tea.

I found a really good website called studentminds.org.uk and they ran a really great campaign called #bestnightsin. I was just going to hop on that campaign as well, so if any of you want to join it at home. This is just for people who want to share their normal everyday life, just them sat with a cup of tea, them sat at home watching a film, or if you're listening right now just take a little picture and pop it on your Instagram and #bestnightsin and put the #OUstudents as well, we might read some of them out. Just to show that you don't need to be out having the most amazing incredible experience of your life, normal everyday life, you know.

Graham Isn't that the best night in though, sticking Netflix on?

Ellie Yeah, absolutely.

Malika Yeah, I know. I was just thinking that the whole time. The whole time I was thinking, 'That's what I do'.

Michael I'd say a shower and clean sheets has got to be one of the top-

Ellie Oh yes, clean pyjamas.

Malika And a cat.

Graham Absolutely.

Malika Give me a purring cat any day, yes.

Aine A nice hot bath, light the fire, a bit of roaring fire, and the cat's at your feet. And a sloe gin in your hand!
Malika  Oh yes, even better.

Graham  Okay, after this I think! (Laughter)

Malika  Yes. Would I like to talk about it on air? No, I don't think so!

Graham  I can tell you where she lives! (Laughter)

Malika  We'll have a little soiree after that.

Graham  I think we've got a pre-record Ellie made a few weeks ago telling us a story, so we're going to head over to that in a couple of minutes. But like I say, we've got lots and lots of activity taking place on Tuesday the 10th of October, and please use the hash tag WMHD17. So that's #WMHD17. I hope Sammi will thank me for saying it because before she left the office today, "Don't forget the hash tag".

Malika  Well remembered.

Michael  We've just had Michelle Hare say, after years of working in the health industry it is still felt as a taboo, as you've been saying, but people who have gone through it like myself take a breath guys you're not alone. And Stephanie Star Stubbins says, there is so much support for you through the student community and the OU students' community. The Disabled Students Group is a safe, positive environment where you can talk with others who may be going through a similar experience whilst studying. So some positive reinforcement there.

Malika  These are great comments. I think the thing that I want to stress there that I've picked up from what has just been posted by our friends listening to us, is that actually the non-judgemental aspect of things is very important. (Agreement) There is a community of students out there that will not judge you if you are struggling. There is a community of peer supporters, and there are also students available through the Nightline as well, which are all mechanisms and things available for us at the OU Students Association to use whenever we feel we need to talk to somebody. So do not suffer on your own please.

Graham  Yeah, I must admit there's a massive community. I mean I got involved in 2014, I'd been studying for two years before I found the Association, and it was just like a whole new world. I've kind of gone, "Hello, come talk to me about things like that and stuff", and we were ready and I wasn't alone anymore.
Malika That's right.

Graham And the meet-ups for me are the best thing. I look forward to doing them. They're once a month and it's absolutely fantastic. Ellie, do you want to introduce your piece and then we'll listen to that?

Ellie Yeah. I did an interview with a lovely man called Peter who is a mental health sufferer, and in this clip he's just telling us about his own experiences, his experience of suffering with mental health while studying, and his advice for any new students who may be in the same boat.

Graham Thank you very much. Over to Peter.

(Pre-record)

Peter My name is Peter and I've been asked to answer a few questions for Open University radio. I have a fairly long mental health history. I was sent to a special needs school from the age of 10 to 16 for an unspecified learning disability. I would say I've probably had depression on and off since I was 16. I was formally diagnosed with depression in 2005 where there was concern for my liberty and I ran away and hid for quite a while because I thought they were going to lock me up. Apart from depression, I also have Asperger's and ADHD. Asperger's was identified by a former partner about six years ago, and it was formally diagnosed along with ADHD in the spring of this year at about the same time as I started my current course of study at the Open University.

I'm studying arts and humanities. It sounded interesting to me. I like art, I'm an artist. I like learning, and (inaudible) it's the best thing to do.

How does mental health affect my studies? Fortunately happily so far I've yet to have had a bout of depression whilst studying. I've certainly felt a bit down at times, but nothing that's so crippling as to prevent me from working. The last time I had a full blow bout of depression was a couple of years ago where I didn't actually want to do anything, and for the most part was incapable of doing anything apart from sitting down and being very anti-social. I'm happy that it hasn't been like that recently, and I sincerely hope it doesn't.

Certainly Asperger's and the ADHD don't help. ADHD means I want to get up and do 100 different things in the space of 15 minutes, so it can make sitting down and studying for periods of time quite a challenge. I refuse to take medications or tablets for this condition, hell I don't even take
paracetamol. So it makes life interesting. However, I like challenges and it's good fun.

What advice would I give to new students who have mental health issues or have concerns in this direction? One, I would say please don't wrap it up, please don't hide it, speak to somebody. It's not catching, it's not taboo. Somebody will wish to ignore it and pretend it's not there. Find somebody you trust, be it a mate, be it a doctor, be it a therapist, be it somebody. People in the Open University listen to you, your tutor will listen to you. Find somebody to speak to, it's the best way. It's much, much easier than bottling it up and putting it away, that doesn't do any good, it just makes it feel a whole lot worse.

Graham    Thank you, Peter, for showing that, and Ellie for producing that piece.

Ellie     I just wanted to reiterate what he said at the end there, and what we have been doing throughout this whole segment. Obviously reach out and talk to someone if you're struggling, and you'll probably find that people will turn around and tell you their experiences too. It's not uncommon at all and you're not the only one.

Graham    Thank you. Michael.

Michael  So we've had Noressa Gordon contribute, I have always let my tutor know about my mental health issues and they have been the most supportive during my course. And Amanda Pratt has shared, I am amazed by the support and advice available so far, even though my course officially starts tomorrow, after declaring my mental health issues to the OU. I am a returning OU student and the last time I studied I did not declare my disability. So reaping the benefits of upfront and honesty there.

Graham    Absolutely. Be open, it's okay not to be okay.

Malika    Absolutely.

Aine      Yeah.

Graham    Cool. So we're going to end that segment there. If anyone else needs support there's a multitude of ways of getting support, as we've just talked about. We have the Disabled Students Group. We have PLEXUS, the LGBT Support Group. We have Nightline. We also have Switchboard. And we also have the peer supporters, which are all delivered and run by students.
We're going to put all those links the comments section, but you can get them all on oustudents.com.

So we're going to take a short break now and we've got a piece of music called Wondering by Robbie Boyd. After the break we're going to bring in some special guests. So we're going to hand it over to our technical team who are going to play you some music and we'll see you in about three to four minutes. See you all soon.

Malika Stay with us.

((Music interlude))

Graham Okay, so welcome back everyone. I hoped you enjoyed that song. So Malika, how many listeners have we got so far?

Malika Well, amazing news, we have had 500 of you tuned in so far to listen to this show. If you've not been able to listen to it live, the show will be available on Facebook afterwards, obviously we play it then. It will be also on YouTube next week, so watch this space, do find the OU Students' YouTube channel. Also, on the oustudents.com website you will be able to listen to it then. And for those of you who would like a transcript, this will also be made available at the earliest opportunity. So stay tuned and keep checking for the show if you want to listen later.

Graham Thank you very much. Michael, have you got any comments?

Michael Yeah. So just to round off the previous discussion around mental health. Stephanie Starr-Stubbins has been in touch again saying she had her first mental support worker session today. That was allocated through the Disabled Students Allowance today, and made her feel really positive and motivated for the academic year, which is fantastic.

Graham Fantastic.

Michael Amanda Pratt has been in touch as well saying, I think whatever we label mental illness there will always be stigma, but gradually it is lessening and hopefully we'll see a time when the stigma is greatly reduced. And the last one on this topic is Kitty Laurens who says, so far I've received nothing but understanding with regards to my learning disability, and the OU has done everything they possibly can to make things more comfortable for me, like providing alternative or additional ways to study. I'm quite happy to be honest, keep it up guys. So, fantastic.
Aine: Well done.

Malika: Fabulous. Thank you.

Michael: Moving forward, we'd love to hear your thoughts on the conversation to come, and if you have any questions for our special guests please send them in.

Graham: Absolutely. That's a really good sidebar there. I don't think our guests are going to appreciate this very much, but we are joined by Association royalty. We have two honorary life members. Joining us from a field somewhere in Somerset we have Nik Morris, a former Deputy President, and we also have our immediate past President and former Deputy President, Ruth Tudor, who's come to talk about us about the by-elections. So Aine, what's the by-elections all about?

Aine: Okay. Well our Association is holding elections now for new Deputy President. This role is for the Association for students, and the role involves some self-support as well. You will see our candidate list by visiting ersvotes.com/oustudents, and you can have a look at their profiles there and join in the conversation. Those forums will be open until next Friday, which is Friday the 13th – ooh – of October. Hmmm. All OU students are eligible to vote in this and will receive a voting code via email, so keep an eye on your email for that with the instructions on how you can vote. Voting is open between Wednesday the 11th and Wednesday the 18th of October, so that's for a full week.

The Deputy President is part of the Student Leadership Team, also known as the Central Executive Committee, and these are all students who dedicate their time to focus on specific areas of student support, communications, and community as well. The President leads the group alongside the Deputy President, and as a team they represent the Association to the University. To find out a bit more about that again visit ersvotes.com/oustudents. The new Deputy President will be announced on the 20th of October, which will be a Friday, so that'll be two weeks from today.

Graham: A very quick process then, isn't it.

Aine: It is, yes. It's a very quick turnaround. There are eight candidates in total as well by the way, I forgot to mention that. Ruth, it's really lovely to have you here in the studio. How are you this evening? (Inaudible) And Nik, you join us on the phone from Somerset. How are you this evening?
Nik: Hiya. Yeah, not too bad.

Aine: Can you hear us okay there, Nik?

Nic: I'm trying to hear but I'm trying hard.

Aine: Okay. Is that a little better?

Nic: We'll see how well we do.

Aine: Excellent. No problem. Okay then. Nik, now that we have you on the line, what attracted you to the role in the first place? Why did you put yourself forward?

Nic: I'd been involved with the Association in various different roles for a number of years actually before I stood for Deputy President. But something that I actually found quite useful, because I actually had a big knowledge not only of issues affecting higher education and Open University students in particular, because we're quite an individual group in higher education, but also how the University operates, how the Association operates, the various different levels of representation in the University and the Students Association. I felt that I actually really had something that I could offer with this sort of fairly wide knowledge. Some of it not necessarily in depth, but a fairly broad general knowledge which I thought I can actually put to some use as Deputy President.

Along with Ruth, who is the immediate past President, who was my President at the time of me being Deputy President, I actually felt that we could make a really good team. We had a brilliant CEC, lots and lots of students that were really interested in volunteering, fantastic staff team in the office, and I felt at the time that we really could move things into a really good place for the Students Association to be able to represent the student voice. And I felt that I had something to contribute for that.

Aine: And yourself, Ruth, what attracted you to the role as well, and why did you put yourself forward?

Ruth: For me it was slightly different when I became Deputy President, because I hadn't had any involvement centrally. I had been very involved in Scotland, but not centrally. So I was slightly unusual in coming into the role as Deputy President. In fact, I was approached and asked if I would consider standing for Deputy President through my involvement in Scotland, and so I thought yes I'll give it a go.
Again like Nik, I thought I had something to offer. I thought I was able to have that voice and be able to stand up and speak, and to give students the voice that perhaps some students because they're nervous or just because they don't have the time to come to meetings and things like that, that we could do that. So that was sort of my motivation for getting involved. From a Deputy President point-of-view that was how I ended up getting involved, it was ever so slightly different.

Aine So you both have a very different sort of back story as to how you came to be involved. That sort of brings us on nicely then to when you did get involved, when you got stuck into the role as it were, what did it involve? What were the nuts and bolts of the whole thing?

Nic (Laughs) A lot of hard work. (Laughter)

Aine A lot of hard work.

Ruth Yeah, lots of hard work.

Aine Tell us about it, what did it involve?

Ruth It depends whether you want me to talk about being President or being Deputy President.

Aine Deputy President.

Ruth Being Deputy President again we were both ever so slightly different, because obviously we brought our own selves to the role, and so we both handled it ever so slightly differently. For me there was a lot of concentration. Again there was a very big learning curve for me because I was coming into the role centrally for the very first time, so I had a lot to learn and so I had to get my head around everything first as well. I was lucky in that I had a lot of experience in Scotland, so I did that bring that experience with me. But I had to learn a lot centrally as well. But again I was very lucky because I had a lot of support. And I think actually Nik provided me with a lot of that support when I first came in, in her role as VP rep at the time, so I was quite lucky there.

A lot of the work that I did was sort of providing support to my then President, Marianne, and I did a lot of work around the forums and moderation. And I was Chair of staffing, so there was a lot of work around that as well. It was just really a case of just chucking myself in and getting on with it and just getting my head down and being part of it. Really the role
of the President is very front facing and very University facing. Whereas the role of Deputy President, certainly for me, and I think to a certain extent for Nik as well, is very inward facing and very OUSET facing. It is doing a lot of the support for OUSET and making sure that OUSET is kept running and kept going. So certainly for me that's how it was. I don't know if Nik feels the same?

Aine Yeah, how do you feel about that, Nik?

Nic Yeah, to a certain extent our experiences were similar. But I suppose, as Ruth has said, she came from a sort of slightly different route to me. And I suppose because I was obviously very involved as an officer centrally, I was aware of the general direction that the Students Association wanted to take, and certainly that student members had suggested where they wanted the Association to go. So quite a lot of the things that I was involved in were sort of helping to steer or set up projects that were around taking the Association in the direction that the student membership wanted it to take and that the CEC wanted it to take. So I suppose from that point-of-view mine and Ruth's experiences were probably quite different.

Having said that, our Presidents at the time were quite different people, and as an officer under Marianne I was able to see what Marianne had set up that Ruth had then taken on and made her own, as well as some of the new initiatives that Ruth came up with as well. So in a way I almost had a perfect set up really! (Laughs)

In and lot of ways, and Ruth's very right when she says that Deputy President is quite an OUSET facing role. And because you are quite involved with some things that are perhaps not quite so happy, so there could be problems with forums or technical issues and things like that that you might get involved with, which can be a little bit difficult at times. It's absolutely essential that you can be quite calm, quite level headed, very articulate, and really have the ability to bite your tongue when things are really not going well. But actually losing your rag is not going to help anything, it's not going to solve anything. And sometimes those problems are actually with the University as well, and you have to be able to go in and say very politely and sweetly, "This isn't working for us, would you like to look at it perhaps yesterday and get it resolved?". There's ways and means of putting that across.

I think that's quite a fundamental aspect of the Deputy President role, you get thrown into a lot of different places and you have to adapt yourself quite quickly and maintain that sense of calm, even if – and I'm sure Ruth will
probably back me up on this – there are times when you feel like you've just been flung off a cliff. (Laughs) Just keep that sense of calm and know that actually you've got the Association behind you. You've always got your President, your officer team, the staff, to turn to when you really need some help and back up. So it's keeping that sense of calm and equilibrium for everybody else, even if you feel like you're thinking, 'What on earth have I done?'. (Laughs)

Ruth Because equally the Deputy President is the President's back up role.

Nic Yeah.

Ruth And equally sometimes a lot of the stuff that the Deputy President does is stuff that the President perhaps doesn't have time to do, and so the Deputy President can end up picking up the President's slack. So they can end up turning round chasing my tail saying actually Ruth says this or Ruth says that, or Ruth thinks that perhaps this might not be such a good idea type of thing. There is an element of that as well that yes you can find yourself being chucked off a cliff because I've not got the time to be there to do that, therefore Nic ended up doing it type of thing. So that happened on more than one occasion, okay I can't do that, can you please go and do it type of thing, or can you go and make that phone call, or can you turn up at that meeting because I'm not going to make it. So that happened as I say more than once.

Michael Sorry, just to jump in. Just an update for any new listeners, or a reminder for those that have been tuned in, we've got Ruth and Nik, former Deputy Vice Presidents, with us on the line. We've locked the studio door so please fire away your questions! (Laughter) They can't escape, so send in any questions you have and we'll get an answer for you.

Graham I think one of the key questions to ask to both candidates. Candidates?! It's been a long Freshers fortnight! I think one question to ask to both former Deputy Presidents, is what advice can you give to students who are wanting to engage in the selection process? Obviously we have the eight candidates now. How can the candidates get involved with the electorate, and vice-versa?

Ruth I think you have to do your research. You have to think carefully before you answer your questions, because some of the people asking the questions are people that you're going to have to work with. So you have to be moderate in your answers because you might end up working with those people, and so you have to think about that.
I think you also have to think that even though you have your ideas and you have your way of thinking, when you are Deputy President or any CEC member or any role, you're not just thinking for yourself, you're thinking for the entire student body. And that's what you have to remember, it's not just your view that matters, it's not just your point that you're putting across, you're speaking for the entire student body. So no matter how strong your conviction is, and I had my soap boxes, I had my hobby horses, the great and the good of the University knew what my hobby horses were, but they also knew that when I spoke I was speaking for the student body not just for myself. And that's what you have to remember.

Malika I think that's very important to point that out, Ruth, because that is the role, isn't it. In a sense that is the role.

Ruth Yeah. You're not there for yourself.

Malika We are going to elect the Deputy on to make sure there is a voice for all of us, a student voice.

Ruth Yeah, exactly. They're a voice for all of you. They're not just a voice for themselves but a voice for everybody.

Malika That's right.

Ruth I don't know whether or not, Nik, there's anything you want to add to that?

Nik I think probably where the hustings' process is concerned, I would absolutely 100% agree with Ruth that you need to do your research. You need to know what you're talking about. If you're answering a question and you don't know what you're talking about, those people that Ruth mentioned that you have to work with will see it a mile off, so will lots of other students, because Open University students are generally quite well informed people, that sort of comes with the territory. And it's actually okay to say do you know what, I don't know the answer to that so I will go and find out. But if you go and find out, come back and say what you've found out. Don't just say I don't know, say I'm not sure about that, I don't know enough to give you an answer, but I will go and find out and I will come back to you. And make sure that you do come back with the answers that you've found out.

I absolutely agree with Ruth 100%. And Ruth and I have probably both been in the same position where our own feelings, our own personal thoughts, have not been shared by the majority of our student membership. It's not our personal thoughts that get that represented in that situation, it is the
thoughts of the student membership. And that is crucially important in a Students Association, because no matter whether you're absolutely convinced that the way you feel is the right way to go, if that's not what the majority of the student membership want then you might have to admit that perhaps you're the one that's wrong. Being able to take that on board is actually a very useful skill, because not only is it useful to student membership, but it's also useful to the University, because sometimes they are actually right. (Laughter)

Aine Nic, what would you say was the most rewarding thing for yourself having been a past Deputy President?

Nik There are a number of things. I think probably the most rewarding thing for me was some of the friends that I came out of it with. It wasn't what I expected, and it wasn't what I got involved for, it's just a very happy by-product. But actually there's a number of things. The levels of confidence that I had. The ability to speak in public, something I could never have done before, and by the time I'd stopped being Deputy President it wasn't unusual for me to sit in a room full of 400/500 people. Things like that people pay good money to learn. I didn't have to pay anything, the Deputy President role dropped it on me. (Laughs)

Aine Would you echo that as well then, Ruth?

Ruth Yeah, absolutely. I mean I have obviously met people and made lifelong friends that I would never have ever come across. Nic and I studied in completely different faculties and we would never have met each other if it hadn't been for OUSET and for our roles within the CEC. So that's an absolute prime example.

And yes, I picked up skills. I mean okay I'm a teacher by trade so I am used to standing up in front of people and speaking, but I've stood up in front of Counsel, I've stood up in front of policy makers in Paris and made speeches. And these are things I would never have done if it hadn't been for the skills that I'd picked up through being President. So yeah, that sort of opportunity and things like that.

But it's not even just that, it's little things like things that have changed within the University or things that have changed within OUSET, things like doing this sort of stuff, we would never have got to do this and things like this would never have happened if we... you wouldn't have more staff, you wouldn't have the things that you have.
Graham  We couldn't do this, like you said.

Ruth  No. So there's so much.

Aine  So there's so many reasons to get involved in the Open University Students Association.

Michael  I've got a comment from Cherry Day on the Facebook live video. Sherri says, listening to the great team that was Nic Morris and Ruth Tudor. Just hope the candidates for Deputy President are listening to this great advice. So I hope that butters you up for the interrogation part now. (Laughter) Stephanie Starr Stubbins says, what three key skills should the candidate have for the Deputy President role?

Ruth  Diplomacy. The ability to listen and take on board that you're not always right, and be prepared to change your mind. And, ooh, I don't know what the third one would be.

Graham  Nik, what do you think of the third one?

Nik  Hmmm! (Laughter)

Graham  It's a two key skill role!

Nik  Actually the ability to think on your feet.

Ruth  Yeah. That's important.

Nik  Comes in handy on numerous occasions in numerous situations.

Michael  Just one quick last question from Suzanne Butler. How many jobs/meetings would the Deputy President attend roughly in a year?

Ruth  Oh my goodness. That depends what you make of the job really. Because the role is entirely what you make of it. It depends how many committees you end up doing, it depends how much work you end up doing through the office and with OUSET. So there is no set number, sorry.

Graham  Unfortunately we're out of time. I just want to say a massive thank you for Nik for being on the phone for us this evening, and also to Ruth for being here. I did want to talk about OUSET, but the people outside are saying stop talking. But I covered it slightly I think earlier. I think I got it right what OUSET is. We talked about the shop and how the money raised from that
goes to OUSET, and then students can apply for funding for a variety of different reasons, and to check out the website for more details. So listeners, we're going to go to a very quick break and when we come back we will have the results of the student voice competition.

(Pre-record)

Malika I'm now talking to Danielle who's been coming along for quite some time, right from the start haven't you Danielle. Do you want to share your experience with us and tell us what your experience has been so far? Do you want to say a few words about that?

Danielle Yeah. I've been a full-time student for two years now doing two courses every year. I now start October on my Level 3 module for my third year. I've learnt quite a lot about myself through this process, like you learn life skills, your time management is so much better. The whole experience has been brilliant.

Malika I'm so glad to hear that. What has been helpful to you, Danielle, in your experience?

Danielle This chat once a month, this meet-up, is brilliant, because you get to see other students who are all different, we all have different courses, different life experience. And it's great just to talk to other students who know what you're going through.

Malika In which ways? For students that might be listening to us, in which ways do you think that might help them to come along to things like this?

Danielle Just to talk to someone who's with the OU, because it's different to what my friends experience in a (inaudible) uni. They live with their classmates, or they get to know people through their tutorials and stuff. Whereas the OU is quite independent, you're not with someone all day every day. You meet people through gatherings like this, and they are very good.

Malika Excellent. If you had any advice to give newcomers to the OU? Because I know Samantha joined us today and I'm really delighted to see her, and hopefully we'll see her again. What sort of advice would you give newcomers?

Danielle Definitely look for these groups. And if not start one up yourself, get word out there through social media to say there's this meet-up, anyone else want to come?
Malika  Fantastic. I know you work as well, Danielle. How have you been able to manage your time?

Danielle  My time management has got a lot better through the two years I've been doing this now. You have to write your shifts down. Because I do shift work so I know my shifts ahead of time, so I work around them. So when I'm not at work I'll study (inaudible). Then I get that social aspect, I make plans with someone, right I won't do studying then, I'll do a different day instead. So you can be quite flexible with that.

Malika  Brilliant. Okay, that's fantastic. Thank you, Danielle. That's Malika signing out. All the noise you can hear around us, Norwich Pride is in full swing as we speak. Thank you folks.

Graham  Thanks, Malika, for another pre-record about one of your meet-ups in Norwich. Have we got an update on our listeners?

Malika  We do indeed. Really pleased and delighted to let you all know that we are now on to 667 listeners. (Applause) Big round of applause everyone. Thank you so much for you all out there listening to us. As I say, if you have not been able to listen to the show live, it will be available through Facebook Listen Back, through YouTube, and on the oustudents.com website, including a transcript at the earliest opportunity.

Graham  Thank you very much. Michael, have you got any more comments/questions?

Michael  We've got a couple of comments to wrap up the show with. We've got Amanda Pratt who says thanks for all the information and advice provided during this event, I've found it very useful. And Suzanne Butler says great show and talk guys, very informative and refreshing.

Graham  Oh, this is brilliant news.

Malika  Thanks for your feedback, and that you from all of us for listening to us, we appreciate it.

Graham  Fantastic. So we're nearly at the end of the show. We have one very, very important thing to do first. We've had a competition running with our Student Voice team. A Kindle may have been involved or something. Ellie, more details on that.

Ellie  A Kindle and £25 voucher was up for grabs on this one.
Graham Woo!

Ellie This was to do with student voice. Student Voice obviously means a lot of different things to different people. We asked you what it meant to you, and what your student voice can achieve. The winner is (drum roll) Rihanna Bonsal who said student voice makes me as a student feel welcomed. I feel like it is the whole of the student body working together to make sure no-one gets left behind and that everyone has the chance to thrive at the OU.

Malika Oh, I love that very much.

Graham That is amazing.

Malika Do you know what, that is so true that no-one’s left behind at the OU. The Students Association, diversity, equality, we are all together, aren't we. (Agreement)

Michael That was beautifully reinforced by the comments we had earlier during the mental health portion around how the OU deals with those.

Graham Completely agree. Obviously I’ve been here on campus today at a number of meetings with different members of the staff team, and one of our technical team was saying we’ve got a space on a wall and we need to have a photo in it. I don't think we should have a photo, I think we should have that framed. (Agreement) Have it built into like a piece of artwork or something like that. As everyone comes in, any student visits, any staff members visit, they can see that on the wall and they will know that an OU student's written that.

Malika Yeah, that would be amazing. A great testament anyway isn't it. So congratulations on your prize.

Graham Yes. So, I think we’re nearly there.

Malika Yes. Sad to finish the show unfortunately.

Graham I know. I hate when we have to finish.

Malika I know.

Graham We could be here all night, literally.

Ellie It's gone so fast though, hasn't it.
Graham: It has.

Ellie: It's flown by.

Graham: It has. They're faster than the chats, because I mean I've done a few chats and they're an hour long and they rabbit on about it. But this seems to have gone faster.

Malika: We're going to have to have longer shows.

Graham: Longer shows, absolutely. Start them early, finish them later, that's what I say.

Malika: Yes, sounds good to me.

Graham: I feel myself I'm a bit of a veteran doing these shows. I mean I think I've taken the Sue Goodyear mantel tonight, which I've thoroughly enjoyed. I'm not too sure Sue will be too best pleased that I've taken her seat and it's mine. But to our newbies, how have you found it?

Aine: Awesome. That was fantastic. I used to present a show on hospital radio back home a long, long time ago, and it's just really good to be back on this side on the mic. It's been a different experience because there have been five of us in the studio tonight co-presenting, and that has created a lovely dynamic because I feel that we all bounced off each other.

Malika: Yeah, that's right.

Aine: It was a lovely experience. What I would say to anyone out there who's listening, look out for an opportunity to join the team here at STUDIO, you will really enjoy it. It was fantastic, I loved it.

Ellie: Yeah, I did too. It was awesome, and I hope to back again. I think there's so many opportunities that you can get involved with, with the OU. So definitely look online, there's lots of things to do. I'm really glad that I took this opportunity.


Malika: Yes.

Graham: So, we swapped! (Laughs)
Malika: We did. I had to let you have the show tonight, Graham, because you and I we get on so well. But yeah, loved it. Second time here and absolutely love it. It's a pleasure to be here to share this experience with all of you, an amazing team of hosts, and to share with the people out there listening to us, our student body. Absolutely loving it, I could do that forever. What about you, Michael?

Michael: Yeah, I enjoyed it too. It's my second show and I guess what enticed me to come in the first place and what motivates me to keep coming, is knowing that there are so many people around the country that listen in, and to be able to connect to people who otherwise I wouldn't be able to is quite something. I guess it's one of those things that technology is good for. (Agreement)

Malika: As you said earlier as well, didn't you.

Michael: So yeah, thank you very much everyone for listening. Without you it wouldn't exist.

Malika: Absolutely.

Graham: Absolutely. So keep clicking that button, because every time someone listens it adds to the view count.

Malika: It does. And share as well. Share it. If you like what you heard tonight please share, please let everyone know.

Michael: If you'd like to boost up our numbers go on your laptop and your iPad and your phone as well.

Aine: Which is #OUstudents.

Graham: Cool.

Malika: So, back with you early December.

Graham: Yes. I can't believe I'm going to get the last word, which is great. Thank you so much everyone for joining. It's been a great show. I've really enjoyed working with you all. As Malika alluded to – taking my line – we will be back in December with our festive edition. So for now enjoy your studies.

Malika: Have a good evening everyone.
Michael    Ciao.
Malika      Thank you for listening. Bye-bye.
Aine        See you later. Bye.
Ellie       Bye.