Sue This live show has been produced by the Open University Students Association. In the spirit of the OU student community we would ask that when engaging with the show on social media and in the chat, please make sure your interactions are respectful of and not offensive to other students. Please keep your language clean and your commentary appropriate for an open audience. Views expressed during this programme are not necessarily endorsed by the Open University Students Association. If you are an OU student who is affected by any of the issues discussed in tonight's programme, you can contact the Students Association via the social media links on our website, or by emailing oustudents-media@open.ac.uk

I'm back in the room woo-hoo, but you can't see me! (Laughs)

Graham Someone's hiding.

Malika Delighted to have you back with us. Delighted.

Sue It's really, really good to be back. Changes. We can be seen now.

Graham Yes.

Malika I know.

Sue But you can't see me until I lean later on.

Graham Into my space! (Laughter)

Sue So, if you don't know me already, my name is Sue. I'm currently here as a Student Trustee with OUSET, and I've been on the radio a couple of times now.

Graham A couple?! (Laughs)

Sue Well, one or three.

Malika More or less a veteran I would say!

Sue Yeah, we can talk about it later, but yes I was the voice on one of the first shows. I kindly got asked back this evening to have a chat with you all and see how things are going here on STUDIO. Why not introduce the others who you can actually see, I believe.
Graham  Yes. If you didn't see my little clip earlier on, my name is Graham and I'm an OU Masters student now. Also, you may be familiar with me as being the Chair of PLEXUS, so we'll talk a little bit about that later on. Coming up on tonight's show we have discussions about the archive, so we've got another OU student coming in to talk to us about that. We've also got a talk about LGBT History Month. We're also going to talk about the elections that are coming up in the spring, so that's really important to listen out for that. We've also got Conference, and we also have the winners of our Freshers' competitions.

Malika  Exciting programme, isn't it.

Sue It's jam packed.

Malika  Absolutely. And finally I'm Malika Steed. You probably know me also because I've been quite a regular host on this, I'm loving this too much and I keep coming back for it. On my final push for my BA Environmental Studies. I'm now at Level 3. I'm finding this incredibly hard, I must confess. But here we are.

So tonight, as Graham has said to us, we are going to kick off with quite a few things, but let's start off with listening to a couple of speeches that happened today I believe on campus. Nicci Simpson, our OU Students Association current President, and Ann Davies from the OU Library, who I believe were handing over the archives project to the Library today officially. That is something quite huge.

Graham  Really good, isn't it, the fact that we're 45 years.

Malika  Yes, quite impressive. So let's have a listen to what happened today on campus.

(Pre-record)

Nicci  ... our OU Student Association archive to our friends in the Library who are going to look after all of our materials. Some of you will know that we've been having a project over the last couple of weeks to mark 45 years of the Students Association history. One of our colleagues here when they arrived in the Association office and brought a whole lot of expertise from archaeology, wanted to have a little lesson in what the Students Association was about, and they had a good root through everything that we had here in the office. They discovered hundreds of photographs, campaign literature, lots of things
from our past, and they took that expertise and started a Student Association project.

We've had 17 different volunteers working with us over the last two weeks archiving 1,234 separate items. What a coincidence, that's an easy number to remember, 1-2-3-4! So I would like to thank everybody who has taken part in the project, we have had students, we have had graduates, and we've honorary life members who have taken part in archiving all the materials. I would just like to hand over to Ann from the Library who is going to share a few words.

Ann

Thanks, Nicci. Yeah, I mean it's a fantastic project and we've been really enthusiastic about getting involved with it. I'd particularly like to thank all the volunteers, and I know that Ruth Cammies, our Archivist, has been really excited about having an opportunity to work with students and has all sorts of interesting things to say about that, and I think we're always looking for those opportunities, so this has been a great opportunity to do that.

So what we'll do now is obviously continue to support you and offer advice on how to do the cataloguing, and then we'll find a permanent home for the archive in the vault in the Library. Then we'll be looking for opportunities to use our Open University digital archive to make more of the stuff available and have exhibitions and special items and that kind of thing. So it's really exciting, and thank you all.

Nicci

Thank you. So the volunteers who have been here have been having a really good time looking through the photographs. For some of them there's been lots of information on the back, names of the volunteers and the people in the photos and the literature. But for others they've had to work really quite hard to try and identify who has been in those photographs, because our record keeping in the past might not have been just quite as good as it should have been. So our volunteers have been using things from the images to try and identify what the events are that students were attending and who was in those.

I know some of our longer-term volunteers were able to remember who everybody was and really, really helped the process of figuring out who was in those. For others we've had to look back at old records about conference activities, about summer schools, and see where people have been. Even using things that are available online to try and identify the very buildings that people were in through Google Earth and different platforms like that.
So without further ado, I would like to call for some of our volunteers to come up and have a symbolic handover of some of the materials. Obviously they all don't fit in this little box but it's a symbolism of the moment. If you could hand those over to Ann. Lovely, thank you. Thank you, Patrick.

Patrick is one of our volunteers who has been really leading in this project in the last couple of weeks, and has really contributed a lot. Patrick is an Access student, but as I said before we've had other students involved right through to alumni and to people who have honorary life membership who have been here. So huge round of applause for everybody. (Applause)

(Pre-record ends)

Graham Okay everyone, so welcome back to STUDIO. We've got Dee in the room now, so let's hand over to Malika.

Malika Yes Dee, welcome.

Dee Thank you.

Malika And thank you very much for joining us tonight for this live broadcast from Milton Keynes of our STUDIO show. I understand you are from the archives project. Would you be able to tell us what you've been up to this week?

Dee Yes. Well I saw a call for volunteers in the OU Students Association online magazine, and they were asking for people to help create an archive of all the photographs and documents that they had. So together with another 16 persons, I volunteered. We're in groups of about four, and my group consisted of Roy from Streatham in London, there was Katherine from Leeds, there was myself from Newham in London, and there was Patrick from Ilkley. So we're people from all ages, all backgrounds from throughout the country.

We catalogued each of the photographs. We scanned them into the computer. We've put a database on with descriptions and key words. We've already done 1,400...

Malika Wow!

Dee But I can tell you there are thousands more to do, and we haven't even started yet on the documents. It's really interesting to see all the past events and people such as politicians, a lot of politicians. Harold Thompson and Jennie Lee who of course founded the OU, John Prescott, Michael Howard, Sigmund Freud, Margaret Beckett, Denis Healey, and of course people from
the OU such as past Chancellors such as Walter Perry and Gerald Grainger who is a senior figure in the OU, and Iris Price, an OU President.

I talked to all the other members this week as to why they volunteered, what made them volunteer. We got answers such as they wanted to see the campus, because it's a real campus, (laughter) and a lot of people don't realise that.

Malika Yeah, most people don't realise that. Actually that is quite correct.

Dee It's a beautiful campus.

Malika Yes, it's amazing.

Dee They wanted to look through history to see all the interesting people. Especially Roy. Roy, who is an honorary life member, he used to be a regional member for London, while we were looking through the photos we found photos of him.

Malika Wow! That's amazing.

Dee He was particularly interested, and it gave us a good insight into the University and we had a lot of fun. Now I must say, we really did click together, we all got on so well. The only problem we'd say that we'd had all week was that it's a lot more tiring than you realise.

Malika Could you give us an indication of how many hours you were working every day? Was it just a case of you came in and...?

Dee Oh no, no.

Malika Or was it organised? Could you tell us a bit more?

Dee It was very well organised. The OU have looked after us tremendously well. The admin is really good, and Nicci Simpson in particular has looked after us fantastically. We started officially at 10 o'clock, but some days it was earlier and some days slightly later, and we finished normally about 4 o'clock. But during the day we were working solidly, apart from of course lunch.

Sue Did they feed you?

Dee The OU fed us well and even housed us in a nice hotel. It was very, very enjoyable, and I'd suggest that anyone thinking of volunteering should do it
because it's great fun just to meet the other people. Everyone here at the OU is wonderful.

Malika Yes, I feel that way.

Graham So what's next in terms of the archive, are you still carrying on? Because obviously we've just seen that it's now been handed over to the Library.

Dee Yes, today it was officially handed over even though it wasn't complete. Once it's completed it'll be open to the general public and there'll be a special collection of the Students Association's massive collection. It will be a special collection in the OU's general collection. Ruth Cammies, the OU Archivist, will be the lady who's in charge of it, and we were very proud when we handed it over to her today.

Graham Good.

Sue I chatted about the archive on a previous radio show because I was lucky enough to be able to go and see the vaults.

Malika Yes. I remember, you mentioned that on a show too perhaps, wasn't it, or the first one? I can't remember now.

Sue Yeah.

Malika But yes you did. And to us it doesn't sound like something that you can imagine, so would you be able to describe a little bit what it looks like for us to have a flavour?

Dee It was an incredibly diverse collection of photographs, posters, documents, letters, anything at all that you could imagine. We've mainly been concentrating on the photographs up until now, but as I say I will be coming back over the next couple of months one or two days a week.

Graham It's a big project then.

Dee Yes. Just to continue it and try and complete it. But it's a massive project. And even once everything's been catalogued it will take probably years to identify all the people in the photographs and reorganise it and to get it to the standard that it should be.

Graham I must admit, when I came in this evening to get ready for the show I saw a photo of staff members. I'm not too sure when that was taken, I'm not even
going to guess because some of the staff members are still here! (Laughter)
When I next come to the office I don't kind of want to go, "You". (Laughter)
Are you still looking for volunteers to help with the archive?

Dee I don't know if they're looking at the moment. I think they're going to first get
everything onto computer and then reassess what they need. It might be
helpful once everything is on computer, I don't know if they're going to allow
people to look at the photographs, because a lot of the photographs will need
to be identified. We've got a rough idea such as the year and it's a conference
or it's a (inaudible) event. But that's something for the future. The first job is to
first get everything on the computer.

Malika Yes. And then go into finer detail.

Dee Yes. Then it's down to Ruth and Nicci to decide how it's going to proceed.

Malika Yes. Could you tell us, because I'm so interested in all of this because I just
feel it's fascinating, isn't it, what sort of skill would you need to be able to do
this?

Dee What, to do the volunteering?

Malika Yeah, to do this work. Because I can imagine it's a lot of patience, a lot of
perseverance, or is it just...?

Dee Well there are several different... We had a bit of a dream team this week. We
managed to specialise in our different areas. First you have to take the
photograph, as I say it's a large number, scan them, number them, get them
on the computer. That was my job. Then we had Roy who using his
magnifying glass was trying to identify where, when, who. Then we had -
sorry, I don't want to get her name wrong, I'm terrible with names - Katherine,
who was typing into the computer the names, descriptions, key words. Also
Patrick did that some of the time as well. Then they were having to put each
individual photograph into an archive standard folder, and then these go into
binders and into boxes so that of course you can find them afterwards.

Malika Yeah, you need to be able to trace them.

Dee So there's different skills. My skill was basically perseverance, as you said,
and learning how to do something quickly. Whereas Roy's skill was
knowledge, knowing who was in the photographs. And poor Katherine, her
fingers were aching at the end of the day, she was typing non-stop all day.
Malika  I can imagine.

Dee    Of course you also have to be very careful, there are certain rules, you can't just pick up the photographs, you have to handle them carefully because these are now in the archives forever.

Malika Wow!

Sue    So with achy fingers and lots of concentrate then.

Dee    As I say, it's great fun.

Sue    You've got to go home and study at some point, have you?

Dee    I've got a TMA due in next week so as soon as I get home I'm going to start on it.

Graham I must admit I'm the same, I've got a weekend of TMA'ing ahead of me.

Malika Ditto. Deadline. I think we're on a forum this week, and then next week I've got to be writing an essay by some magical way that I will manage to find.

Dee    We manage.

Malika We manage, yeah.

Sue    So how have you found managing getting round the campus?

Dee    Well I'm in a wheelchair most of the time and this campus is fantastic for wheelchairs, it's easily the best public building I've ever been in.

Malika Lovely, glad to hear that.

Dee    Best campus for wheelchairs. I haven't had to negotiate steps once or divert from steps once. I think it's a wonderful place. And everyone has been so helpful. Every time I go in to the OU Hub at the restaurant, I have people running up to me, "Can I help?", it's wonderful.

Graham That's good.

Malika That's fabulous. This is what the OU community is all about, students and staff alike and lecturers. We're just such a nice bunch, even if I say so but it's good, isn't it. (Agreement)
Sue It makes you feel less isolated, doesn't it.

Malika Yeah. We all bind together somehow and we just are one big tribe I call it. (Laughter) To me that's my tribe, I belong to that tribe. Perhaps one more question about your fantastic work and so, so important work you've been doing for everyone. What have you found the most challenging in doing this?

Dee Just keep going. Because as I say, you wouldn't think it would be tiring but it is really tiring. You have to keep concentrating. It's so easy to put the wrong number or get confused with the numbers on the photos and the numbers on the screen.

Graham I can imagine.

Dee But keeping the concentration. I think every time we started making mistakes that's when we knew we had to take a break and go outside and have a cup of tea.

Graham A little rest and cup of tea, absolutely. Fantastic. There's loads and loads of ways of getting involved being volunteers. All three of us in this room are all volunteering our time to be here. Thank you so much for giving up your time.

Dee You're welcome.

Graham When I walked in you were still beavering away.

Malika You haven't stopped.

Graham No. We've all come straight from work. There is a life outside these four walls. So, thank you so much for coming down.

Dee You're welcome.

Malika Our most sincere thanks. Thank you for joining us tonight, Dee.

Graham Safe journey home.

Sue I'm looking forward to watching it progress as more information comes through, and pictures and that sort of stuff.

Graham Absolutely. There's more ways for our students to get involved in volunteering. Any opportunities that are coming up, do look on our website
which is www.oustudents.com and we'll put a link into the chat box as well. So thank you once again, Dee.

Sue

Malika

(Musical interlude)

Graham

Malika

Graham

Malika

Graham

Malika

Graham

Malika

Graham

Malika

Graham

Malika

Graham

Malika

You've got to tell us more now. I want to know everything about this.
Graham: We were here last Friday for the launch of the new Vision Strategy for the Association for the next three years, and I took it as an opportunity...

Sue: Strategy.

Graham: Ah yeah! Shall we do the whole strategy and play on words?! (Laughter)

Sue: Or if you know a few Steps' songs, if you don't put by your hands by your ears and shake them forward and shout, "Strategy".

Graham: That's it.

Sue: That's the only song that you're allowed to sing on this.

Graham: A swear box now I think. Obviously don't do it!

Malika: Tell us the details, I want to know.

Graham: It was the PLEXUS first birthday last Saturday, Sunday, I can't remember.

Sue: Pick a day. Two birthdays!

Graham: Well we do have two birthdays, we have one in August when we first formed as a group, and then we have our official birthday on 28 January when our Constitution was signed. Why not two birthdays?

Sue: Wow.

Malika: I mean it's got to be done surely?

Graham: It's got to be done. But my face when Peter Horrocks was singing happy birthday to me, well to PLEXUS but I was there wearing my proud hoodie, some faces may stain the video, I was a bit like, 'Ooh', but thank you so much for doing it because it was a real honour.

Malika: I'm so glad the Vice-Chancellor joins us on things like that, it's just so good. It's just brilliant.

Graham: It was great.

Malika: It's all about the fun, and it's the hard grit and all the hard work that we put into our studies.
Graham: And he said "Hi" back, so wooh! (laughs)

Malika: Anyway, let's carry on with our show.

Sue: We've got one viewer/listener then, have we? Have we got any more?

Graham: I'm sure we have more. I think we've got a traditional... no, an original host, Leanne (Godor) is also listening, so thanks Leanne for joining us.

Sue: Hi.

Malika: Yes. Thanks Leanne, and thanks every one of you listening to us this evening. I don't know how many of you there are, and hopefully we can find the figures.

Graham: I'm sure we can find out.

Malika: We can find out, yeah.

Graham: I hope there's more than two, I hope the PLEXUS Committee are watching this as well because I sent a little email earlier!

Sue: And the DSG, Disabled Students Group for those of you who don't know, because it is Freshers.

Graham: Absolutely. I'm sure Cherry will be watching, Cherry Day.

Malika: Yeah, I'm pretty sure. Nic is flying home I believe, I think she was pinging us that she was on the plane just before we arrived here.

Graham: Nicci is the President of the Association.

Malika: Yeah. She'll be on a flight home, but no doubt she'll be logging in and checking us out later.

Graham: So if you are watching do say hello in the comment section, and the technical people will send a message through to my - I feel very authoritarian with my computer now.

Malika: He does like to think that he's taken over the place.

Sue: How times have changed.
Graham: They have, yeah. I remember the first show I did we were sat there in little comfy chairs just saying what we like. Now we've scripts and computers, it's very organised.

Sue: And bigger microphones.

Malika: As well. Look at them.

Graham: At least we could probably eat sweets now and rustle. But then again maybe not.

Sue: No.

Malika: No, not quite. We're not there yet.

Sue: We don't get water. Search the room for water.

Graham: I know, things have changed. I'm parched.

Malika: We are becoming far too good at this, I'm telling you folks, we are. But Graham, I believe you've got a topic now to discuss with us, and that is LGBT History Month. I'm dying to hear everything about it.

Graham: Fantastic. I'm going to do a shout out to Callum and Kelly from PLEXUS, they're our two new Committee members.

Sue: Hi Callum and Kelly.

Malika: Hello. Thanks for joining the Committee.

Graham: And we have lots of other people, we've got Richard, Dave, Bev, Victoria, Steven and Benji. So thank you so much for taking some time out to listen to us. But I'm going to rabbit on now about LGBT History Month.

LGBT History Month was formed in 2005 as a way of celebrating the fact that Section 28 had been repealed. Section 28 was a rule in law that basically stopped not the promotion of homosexuality in schools, but all the forms of relationships. So in schools and in some colleges as part of sex and relationship education homosexuality was not...

Sue: There was no mention of it.
No mention of it at all of other relationships. So when that was repealed a group of people got together and formed LGBT History Month as a way of sharing resources and activity and engagement around those...

And for those who don't understand what LGBT is?

Of course, sorry. LGBT is lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans, or transgender as you can do that. As part of PLEXUS is the OU's LGBT Support Group. We were created 18 months ago and we're just like another voice of students coming together and we do lots of educational campaigns, we went to Pride last year celebrating everything that we do.

Yeah, you did. Manchester and London.

You went to two Prides.

We went to Manchester as well, yeah.

I couldn't come. I wanted to come and then something came up and 'boo'.

Will you come this year, we're going to four.

Four?!

Or five Prides actually.

Name those Prides.

We've got National Student Pride taking place next Saturday in London. So if you live in the local area do sign up and come along, it's completely free.

Shall I rest this here so people can see, the student magazine.

Sorry, may I just turn this around because that just made me smile, 'love happens here'. For those listeners who can't see at home, 'love happens here'. I love that, that made me smile. I hope I'm not going to make a hash of this. Can you see?

But we will share the photos in the chat box later, or you can look at our website and they're all on there as well, ouplexus.co.uk Also, because it's LGBT History Month we also recognise that obviously we're quite lucky here in the UK that we have quite a lot of rights.
Malika That were fought for.

Graham We had to fight for it, absolutely. We can pretty much get married most parts of the United Kingdom now. Unfortunately Northern Ireland you still can’t have a same sex marriage. We can adopt. We have the same tax rights. There’s loads of things that we’ve had to fight for, but there’s still a long way to go. That’s why we kind of have LGBT History Month and we do things like this to educate people not just in the OU arena but in the wider community as well.

Malika Graham, can I just ask you, can I just jump in there, because with PLEXUS I understand that if somebody is not feeling comfortable with coming out yet, they may still contact you and you will respect their privacy. Am I right in thinking that?

Graham Absolutely. You basically have two public platforms. We have our Facebook page which we tend to use now for forward kind of announcements, if you like and follow on that that's a public arena. But we have a closed group which you click on to join, and basically because it's closed none of your friends or family can see that. The only people are members of that group can see that. Obviously we have a safe space, everyone as part of that group does respect that privacy. But we also have the forums, so you have your tutor group forum, we have our own dedicated forum, and you have to be a member to join, so if you click on our website and click join now you'll get access to that forum, and that is completely closed down. I know some people have an alias so they change their name within the forums, and so it's completely hidden from absolutely everything. We respect that, people don’t want to come out.

In our recent magazine that will be going to all OU students on Tuesday or Wednesday next week, there’s two stories in there about coming out. One particular person who has remained anonymous when they sent it in, had a horrific journey in terms of coming out, and they're comfortable now but they're still not out to everyone. So things like this really kind of bring home why we do it.

Malika Exactly, yeah.

Graham 76 countries in the world it’s still illegal to be who you are, to love who you want to love.

Malika I just get so upset and so sad about this, because this brings it home that we need to continue raising awareness and I'm just ever so grateful that we have got these platforms within the Students Association where we can share our
experiences, support, and be who we want to be without any fear of judgement.

Graham  My coming out story was actually hilarious, I still remember it today. I didn't come out, I phoned my mum up one night and said, "I'm staying at my boyfriend's tonight, I'll see you tomorrow". That was it, I was done!

Malika  Brilliant. Lovely.

Graham  But then I hear some stories about people, it pulls on my heart strings.

Malika  Yeah, absolutely. So what is coming up then, what's next?

Graham  We've got four activities coming up over the next kind of couple of weeks. We've got obviously Pride coming up in a couple of weeks, which I started talking about, so we've got National Student Pride. But in February we've also got a chat happening on Wednesday night which Hannah... not Hannah, that's me looking at my screen rather than reading my script! (Laughs) We've got a chat happening with Kelly and Becky, two members of the team, talking about inspirational LGBT women. For example, 100 years ago women couldn't vote.

Malika  No, absolutely.

Graham  So a lot has changed. We've also got a special live event with some careers advisers from the OU Careers Employability Service on the 19th.

Sue  That'll be brilliant, I think.

Graham  It's going to be really good. When we go to National Student Pride next week it's more of a conference rather than a celebration event, and there'll be lots of LGBT I don't want to say friendly employers but obviously they have a vast LGBT network, so if you went to work for one of these companies you know you're going to be working in a safe space.

Malika  That is really important really, isn't it.

Graham  Absolutely.

Malika  It's the whole being accepted, feeling accepted, feeling like you belong, and no fear of judgment and things like that. Because I think you've got such adversity going on and you've overcome so much in your life, the last thing
you need really is to have any more of things that are going to upset you and make your life challenging.

Graham  Definitely.

Malika  And that's really brilliant that employers are joining in, to be honest.

Graham  Absolutely. And that's what it's there for. I work for an institution that there's a safe space there as well so it's really great. It's not all about ticking a box either, it's not about oh we need to get on the top 100 employers and the Stonewall Index, it's like they're doing it because they want...

Malika  They truly believe, that they want to be respected.

Graham  Absolutely. We've also got, which we're very, very proud of, is the first ever OU students quiz night. We're going to be hosting that on the 20th using the new Adobe Connect. Our friend, Cath Brown, who's a member of the Executive Committee, the STEM, science, technology, engineering, maths...

Malika  Hi Cath if you're listening.

Sue  Hi Cath.

Graham  Hi Cath. Yeah, so we've got the quiz night. I've seen the questions so obviously I won't be playing.

Malika  I was going to say!

Graham  They're really good. Cath's really pulled a quiz out of the bag for us. Obviously we're going to have an LGBT history round just to challenge everyone's knowledge. You don't need a team, you just look on our... we'll send all the links in the chat in a moment, but if you go onto our Facebook page or website you'll see all the information there and the link to get to the channel.

Sue  There's loads of ways to get in contact and find out what's going on.

Graham  We love it. We're going to talk about our Twitter handles later on as well.

Sue  A Twitter handle?

Graham  Yeah, the @, so how to follow us on Twitter.
You know me and technology!

I know, you and technology!

@ means a handle. Yes, I've only discovered that not so long ago as well.

Somebody's been training me very well not too far away in terms of social media and comms, everything else. Then we're going to wrap up the whole of LGBT History Month on the 28th with an 'in conversation with now'. That's just basically PLEXUS members and Committee members coming together to have a chat, reflect. We did it a few months ago for Mental Health Awareness Day and it worked really, really well. So it's just going to be an open house, some chats between us there.

Can they email in if they don't want to sort of chat at that time, or aren't able to chat at that time?

Yeah, of course. There's a multitude of ways of contacting us, of course. So obviously if you want to keep it safe and in confidence you can email info@ouplexus.co.uk, and one of the Committee members will pick that up. Or you can join the Facebook groups, Twitter. Twitter and Facebook is @OUPlexus, we've kept it all we think nice and simple. Do get in touch. If not, the office team here will contact you. Their email address again is oustudents-media@open.ac.uk

That's brilliant. Thank you, Graham.

And which Prides are you going to this year?

All of them! No. Obviously we need to celebrate that we are a four nation university, so we will be going...

So one in each?

Pretty much, yeah.

Oh, look at that.

Answer's on the tin. The first event will be on 15 June in Edinburgh. Then we will be at London on 7 July.

Is it Manchester next?
Graham  No, we're not going to Manchester.
Sue    So last year!
Malika What am I like?!
Graham Yes. I'm trying to remember. Malika, bless you! (Laughs) I want to 'shush' you so much right now! (Laughs)
Malika Between me and Graham it's always like that.
Graham I'm starting a new hashtag trend, #shushmalika!
Malika I'm going to look at you now, I'm going to stare into your eyes for the rest of this show.
Graham Good. I'm not going to look at you.
Sue    Talk to me, Graham. Talk to me.
Graham I will. So Edinburgh, London. Then on 4 August we are going to be in Belfast which I'm really looking forward to. Then the last one will be in Cardiff on 25 August. That's why I'm not in London because it's exactly the same time. No, not in London, Manchester.
Sue    Where are we going, Cardiff or Manchester?
Graham We're going to Cardiff, because we can't go to Manchester at the same time.
Sue    Right. Okey-dokey.
Malika That's why then.
Sue    That information will be up, won't it.
Graham It will be on our website very shortly. We haven't launched the dates yet because we wanted to get all the LGBT History Month stuff out there first.
Sue    So you can see the picture on the student magazine here, because I know because there's a camera, but you can't see me because I'm the invisible voice. Are you going to be wearing t-shirts like that again?
Graham: We are going to be wearing t-shirts and they are louder than those pink ones. I'm going to warn you now, pink's loud, we've gone louder.


Graham: We'll have some available, and if obviously you can't make a Pride event they'll be on our website so you can actually buy them as well. So if you're going to any Pride events in your local area and you want to kind of scream and shout about PLEXUS and the OU.

Sue: Because you mentioned sweatshirt earlier as well, didn't you, hoodie.

Graham: Yes. We've got our hoodies, yeah. You can buy all our merchandise online. So thanks Sue for that plug!

Sue: You know me! Shopping.

Graham: I know.

Malika: You are now becoming his favourite on this table. (Laughter) I thought I was, but there you go.

Graham: You're both my favourites.

Sue: Just so you know, I am here. I'm just going to lean in for a second and then disappear.

Malika: Tell us what PLEXUS stands for again.

Graham: I knew you were going to ask me that.

Sue: It's in the picture on the magazine.

Malika: I know, but I like to hear it.

Graham: Okay. PLEXUS is an anagram... acronym, I keep calling it anagram every time. On our video that's out there forever I said anagram and it's not, it's acronym.

Malika: I've probably said that before knowing me.

Graham: I have. Silly words. Okay, so PLEXUS the term means network in Latin, which makes sense for us. It actually technically means a network of blood vessels.
but we’ve scrapped that bit and just kept network. P is for Pride. L is for learning. E is for equality. X, we couldn’t think of anything so if anyone’s got any suggestions for X.

Sue No excuses for delaying your TMA procrastinations.

Graham Basically yeah, so that's what we've gone with.

Malika And cover it!

Graham Yeah. (Laughter) We've got unity, and we've got safety. So basically all those words actually mean something to us, and that's what we did.

Malika Brilliant. Thank you so much, that is amazing.

Graham No worries. I'm going to be grateful for this, but I think we're going for a little break now.

Sue You've done a lot of info-skilling.

Malika We need a glass of water.

Sue Yeah, "water, water"!

Graham We're giving our technical people outside a minute's warning to get some music ready. Thank you so much for everyone that's engaging so far in the chat. All the links for all our events and how to get in touch with us will be in there.

Sue Don't be isolated out there.

Graham No.

Malika And also just before we go on that break, if you're still listening and we're still on air, I'd like to just say that coming up next we'll be talking about Conference, and then we'll finish off with a nice little chat about Freshers and prizes.

Graham We've got elections to talk about as well.

Malika Yes, indeed. I forgot that, that is coming up next.

Sue Yeah, we need to talk about the elections, don't we.
Graham  Yes, we do.
Malika  That's the next bit we're talking about actually, elections. Apologies.
Graham  They're coming up soon, aren't they.
Sue    Well, so I've heard.
Malika  Yet again the elections. Anyway, we'll be quiet, off we go on a break.
Graham  Elections is good. Not yet again, election's a good thing.
Malika  For the OU Students Association certainly are. Yes, of course they are.
Graham  Let's be democratic. Other elections not so much! (Laughter)
Malika  That's kind of like what I was saying.
Graham  I need to stop posing like this because it feels as though I'm going to go like, "And now"!
Malika  Anyway, shall we have a glass of water?
Graham  Absolutely.
Malika  All right, handing over to our technical team to give us a little break. Keep listening to us and thank you for joining us again.
Graham  See you all soon.

(Musical interlude)

Graham  Well, that was the quickest break ever! Anyway, I'm sure people out there watching are going, "Come on, when are you coming back?". So, we are going to talk about the upcoming elections. Sue, you've done this, you won a few times.
Sue    I did.
Graham  So now tell us what's...
Sue    No.
Graham  Please.

Sue  At the end of the show! (Laughter)

Graham  Okay, so we're not going to talk about anything!

Malika  Well, the reason we ask is because there are upcoming elections so we need to know.

Sue  We do have elections. Because actually your student volunteers form a Central Executive Committee and they help to run your Association for two years.

Graham  Wow!

Sue  We have the elections so that people can put themselves forward and come onboard for various different roles. I myself was Vice-President Representation as my last role that I got elected for, which was a two year term. Prior to that I was SAR, Student Association Rep for Wales, so that was another couple of years.

Graham  Wow! I have to interrupt you, I don't like doing this.

Malika  #hushgraham I was listening to her. No, go on.

Graham  No-one's going to hush me. Although Heather has the power to.

Sue  She can. She can cut us all off in our prime. (Laughter)

Graham  We're going to talk about elections, so if any of listeners out there have got any questions at all about the elections, and for Sue obviously from your experience, there's a couple of ways you can get in touch. You can post a comment on Facebook comments. Or you can email us at oustudents-media@open.ac.uk Now I'm going to shush myself.

Sue  Are you?

Graham  No.

Malika  You can't do it, it's like me.

Sue  Can I just talk a bit more about elections?
Graham Yes. You can now.

Malika Please. Pretty please.

Graham I had a virtual kick under the table.

Sue I would say that putting yourself forward for a role is exciting, scary, nerve racking, you go through this mini rollercoaster of perhaps self-belief, self-doubt, why am I doing this? Perhaps people have told you in the past that you're not good enough, or you look perhaps at the pictures in the magazine and you think there's nobody there who's sort of representing me.

Graham Why do you think people think that? Why don't they recognise people?

Sue I don't know.

Graham Because I mean I got involved four years ago and I was like, 'I'm not alone'.

Sue I was encouraged by other students actually because I was also feeling isolated, and it was just lovely to meet other students. And the online forums, I know we've moved to Facebook and things now, but there are still students who look in but never post.

Malika Yes.

Graham I think I'm one of those.

Sue I'm aware that there are students out there who do look at other students and think perhaps yes it's okay for them but not for me. But nowhere, nowhere, nowhere, nowhere in any of the election material does it say 'you', and that's you who's reading that word you, are not allowed to put yourself forward.

Malika That's very true, yes.

Sue So you'll see in the student magazine there's all sorts of different faces, different colours, different ages, different sizes, different abilities of mobility, there's wheelchairs, there's people on crutches. So why not just join your face and your being into part of that picture? You can actually not stay in a picture because some people for whatever reason don't like their photograph in the early stages, and then all of a sudden - Graham - they're everywhere. (Laughter)

Graham I don't why that happens. I love it, but you know.
Malika: We do, you and I both! Sorry, Sue.

Sue: In the early days when I went to meetings I was scared to participate really because I didn't want to look like a wally or sound like a wally or whatever. I'd read the papers, because often these meetings do come with papers of varying amounts, and you learn sort of the language of a meeting that you're attending. There are lots of, is it acronyms?

Graham: Yes, acronyms.

Sue: You get into the acronyms. But you're already doing acronyms because you were saying the word TMA, that's part of your study, so it's just different ones. Because sometimes in my day, wait for the controller to cringe now, we called it OUSA, because you had about two seconds to talk to a student rather than saying OU Students Association. So everything gets shrunk for time. But in the meeting papers and stuff it should say the first time that these acronyms are used what it actually means.

Graham: Our own show is an acronym. STUDIO actually stands for Student Radio.

Sue: Oh, that's new to me.

Graham: We had a competition a few months ago, a year ago? I can't remember. I'm sure someone will tell us when it was. Yeah, so STUDIO is an acronym.

Malika: There you go. Because we tend to use loads of them at the OU, don't we, throughout our studies and everything.

Graham: Absolutely.

Malika: I think everyone at the OU admits that, it's part of our life.

Graham: I went on to the Senate Reference Group, which is one of the various committees, and Sue you coaxed me into that place.

Sue: I'm sorry. (Laughs)

Graham: No, it's fine. It was great.

Sue: It's lovely, because also I managed to get Steph Stubbins who's...

Graham: (Inaudible) community.
Malika: Steph is probably listening to us now.

Sue: Do you want to know how I said to Steph? I said, "Oh there's a meeting called SRG", and she said, "What's that about?", I went, "I go. But you'll love it. Just go and try it and if you don't like it say thank you, that type of meeting wasn't for me". And now Steph is all over the place with getting involved. Like I said, she does love it.

Malika: Steph is everywhere. Sometimes I just can't believe the amount of stuff some of us do, it's amazing.

Sue: But that doesn't mean if you hear or see names and faces that you too have to be all over the place all of the time.

Graham: That's not true.

Sue: Because there's volunteers who come behind the scenes, the ones who are moderating forums and stuff.

Malika: Yes, that's right.

Sue: But again, going back to elections, we digress. There's roles of Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Deputy Presidents.

Graham: So tell us a little bit about the actual process. Obviously we know they're coming, we're still waiting for some dates to be confirmed.

Malika: Yes, we've not had the dates, have we.

Graham: Spring it will generally happen. Obviously the nights are getting lighter so it should be happening soon. Sue, from your experience, obviously I know there's been some changes since you were elected, what would a student expect to go through in terms of going through that actual process?

Sue: I believe it will be via emails and then through other forms of communication that the Students Association has. It gives you all the information that you need, so you can read through what the role descriptors are.

Graham: I think it's really important as well, isn't it, to kind of know what you're signing up for.

Sue: Yes.
Malika  And the dos and the don'ts. You kind of like read it and know that if something...

Graham  That's not for me.

Malika  Exactly, yeah.

Sue    Yeah. I think if you are considering a role, look at the things that you are expected to do, understand that you might be new, you might have never done anything like that before, and be honest. But often in your daily life there are things that you bring to the table. Organisation, your studying, so you're using your laptops, your iPads and your gadgets, so you've got that skill of filing and emailing and things like that.

Malika  Yeah, precisely.

Sue    Don't be put off by the fact that there's meetings here in Milton Keynes that you'd have to attend, but they give you the calendar year or the calendar term, or they used to in my day.

Graham  In SRG they gave us all for the year.

Sue    Yeah. So you can work that round your studies and stuff, because obviously family and studies...

Graham  Working for some people as well.

Sue    Yeah. Enjoy it. Because you're talking on, or hopefully you're talking on your forums and your modules and everything else, you're getting the flavour of the student voice.

Malika  And that's a very important thing.

Sue    So often it isn't just your voice, so if you know in your faculty that people aren't happy with something then you can pass that on. Say the papers were late or something for a particular section, there are ways that that student voice of the whinging in the forums or the debate in the forums or whichever form, or the chat in the forum, whatever's going on, we have pathways of taking that through the right channels and hopefully sorting it. Sometimes the wheels of time turn slowly and we repetitiously ask for things, and then other times it's quite snappy. But overall I mean any students listening now thinking about the archive, people who are listening now who were students way back
when coming back now would see a vast huge change in the election process.

Graham We've had by-elections recently and obviously we've had special STUDIOS where we've had live hustings. My very first conference hustings was at Conference.

Sue I never knew what a hustings was and they said, "Yes, you'll have to go a hustings", so it was like, "Okay, what's a hustings?".

Graham I remember you stood up at the front of Conference and went, "Hi, I'm Sue". (Laughter)

Sue And hustings, which I believe doesn't happen now because the election results will already be known in the Conference...

Graham Hustings for the recent by-elections were all done via the forums, questions and answers...

Sue So times have moved on from the fearful stand up in front of 400 people and not forget who you are. I mean it was quite funny because one of the questions that I remember somebody in the audience asked a lot of the candidates, was something to do with the what the role was, and I froze. Because it was like, 'Please don't ask me, please don't ask me', because I can think of all the other things but I can't sum it up as what the role is, what I read on the paperwork.

Malika Yeah, I can imagine that.

Sue Thankfully they didn't ask me.

Graham You wanted them to, didn't you, secretly!

Sue No, no, no. The election process is a time for thinking what you can offer, because obviously there is a time commitment, there's a travel commitment for coming up to the face-to-face campus meetings and stuff. My role as Vice-President Representation was supporting volunteers coming forward, and I think the best bit about that was watching students who made that first tentative hello at a cup of tea student meet-up event, to coming to campus for a tour or a specific event that students have been called for, to them thinking, 'Actually do you know what, I think I can have a go at doing something like that'.
I mean I possibly sound a bit confident now, but I still... I'd turn up at meetings or I did turn up at a meeting that I wasn't supposed to be at and stuff, and I looked round the room and I thought, 'Oh we've got different people', and they looked at me and it was like, 'We've got an extra person'. But do think about coming onboard. The process is there. The role descriptions will be there. Ask people, ask on the forums if anything is unclear.

Graham The way I got involved with this from a local perspective, and obviously I was interested in more the stuff here essentially, and people like yourself and Cherry Day who was the Chair of the Disabled Students Group at that time, now obviously Vice-President Equal Opportunities, you know you'd talk to people and you'd kind of say...

Sue "We're just students".

Graham Yeah. We're all in the same boat, we're all sat at home, boats if you don't mind me saying, studying. We're all in different worlds. It's the same thing.

Malika Precisely.

Graham We all want the same thing, we all want to talk about student voice. I'm going to take this opportunity, we actually have a new Twitter account that people should follow in terms of student representation and student voice, which is @OUstudentsVoice. That follows all the committees that happens. I think it's the Central Committee representatives changed their name...

Sue Don't look at me.

Graham CCRs, I know the acronym!

Malika I've been followed by this account I believe this week finally. People need to request me unfortunately because I'm on private. You asked me about that, Sue. I've had a request follow and I was like, 'Yay'.

Graham So definitely get involved. Get the Twitter accounts, which is a really good way to find out what's going on. These students are elected or appointed to represent you, so it's a good way to get in contact with them and say I've got this particular issue on a course. I know the (inaudible) doesn't represent individual cases, but there might be 10 or 15 students that have all got the same probably and we can take that back and go, "We've got something to fix here".
And if you can't for whatever reason at this time come onboard and put yourself up for election, then why not just volunteer and be part of the voting process.

Exactly. Take an interest in what's going on with your Students Association.

We for a long time fought for one member one vote, and we finally got one member one vote.

You certainly have, yeah.

So everybody has the right to vote.

Absolutely.

So when that email comes through with the instructions on how to vote, all you have to do is read the bits and pieces that the candidates have put forward and click.

Yeah, it's as easy as that, isn't it.

Yeah. Some people give hours/days of their time. If you can give 20 minutes/half an hour of your time in your possible six and a half years of study, you know.

It is important because it determines what the Students Association...

What happens for two years.

Exactly, and what the Students Association direction will be, so it's really important that everyone takes a real interest into this and participates.

And don't be disheartened if you don't get elected as well because there's lot of other volunteering roles that you can do. Yes, there's an initial drop in how you feel, but you can spring back up.

But sometimes it's good to go through the process perhaps. For instance, for me it's clear we have to vote, we have to take an interest and we have to be actively voting and being part of a process that way. But if we wanted to go that step further and say we wanted to put ourselves forward for a particular position, I think it will be an exciting learning curve don't you think? Like you say, do not take it personally but see it as a learning curve and an opportunity to rise and develop as an individual, isn't it. That's the important thing,
because I think the crucial thing we have as a Students Association, and I may sound corny again because I absolutely love the Students Association and the community, is that we have that huge network of support between us students, and we've got superb staff that back us up as well.

Graham Yeah, absolutely.

Malika And I think that is to me key to the whole thing, that nobody is judging us. We're trying and we're doing things within our abilities and with challenges, and some of us have got many, many challenges, and I think that's amazing.

Graham Absolutely. Sue, thank you so much for coming in. Obviously I did my whole puppy dog eyes, "Can you come and host as well". Thank you for giving up your evening as well and coming back to STUDIO and obviously talking about the elections.

Sue It's lovely.

Graham I know you love it secretly deep down.

Sue I do, because as I said earlier it's watching a student go from just a shy sort of person who's never tried anything like this before, or has in a different capacity but is still nervous, to completing whether or not it's an hour of stuff or days or weeks of stuff.

Malika Exactly. Thank you, Sue.

Graham Thank you. So, Peter Horrocks has been back online.

Sue Has he?

Malika Ooh, exciting.

Graham Absolutely.

Malika What's Peter saying to us?

Graham Peter was on his way home and basically said thank you so much for the show and well done.

Malika Awwh.
Graham: We are going to take another break very, very shortly so we can just have a bit of a shuffle.

Sue: We are coming back though, aren't we.

Graham: We are, because we are going to be talking about Conference. It's the kind of end of the election process really, Conference. I've been a couple of times. I know you've been.

Malika: Yeah, once.

Graham: Sue, you've been.

Sue: I've been.

Malika: How many dare we ask?!

Sue: It's all a blur. What goes in Conference stays in Conference because they keep calling you back for the radio show.

Malika: Indeed. That is so true.

Graham: So we'll talk about Conference, and also earlier on I drew the winners of our Freshers competitions.

Sue: Of course, because it's still Freshers Week.

Graham: It is. It's the last day of Freshers, so all the new students start their courses tomorrow, if they haven't done so already.

Sue: And it's all right to have opened your books and stuff.

Graham: Absolutely. I did.

Sue: But they do worry about that.

Graham: They do.

Malika: I remember the first time I came, I was so excited. Oh my gosh.

Graham: I will tell you a little story about when I first started my Masters a few months ago, but we'll talk about that as well. So we've got Conference. We've got the
winners of the Freshers competitions. And we've also got a little bit about us. So join us back in a couple of minutes.

(Musical interlude)

Graham Okay. So welcome back to the final section of STUDIO this evening.

Malika Ooh, I feel deflated now, I don't want it to end.

Graham I literally could sit here all night.

Malika I know.

Graham Our colleagues outside couldn't.

Malika We've had giggles and everything.

Graham Yeah. Maybe we should go rogue sometime and do our own show?

Malika I think so.

Sue But now they've fed and watered us.

Graham It's the energy boost, isn't it, the carbohydrates are kicking in now! (Laughter)

Malika So what have we got now?

Graham I think we need to talk about Conference.

Malika Oh yeah.

Sue Wasn't there a prize draw?

Graham There is, but let's talk about Conference. Or shall we do the prizes?

Sue I don't know. There's so many things going on.

Graham There is.

Malika Conference. Steering Committee as well.

Sue All right, shall we talk about Steering Committee?
Malika: I'm excited about Conference because I got the whole buzz of the Students Association volunteering there in 2016. That was amazing. Sorry, I'm just getting nostalgic.

Graham: #comeback. You're very excited!

Sue: What is the hashtag?

Graham: #hushmalika or #shushmalika, which one is it? (Laughs) So I'll stop talking for you.

Malika: I don't love you anymore, that's it.

Graham: That's such a lie.

Malika: But can I just say that Conference is just amazing. Don't you agree?

Sue: It is. And partly down to the Steering Committee who organises it.

Graham: Conference takes place every two years. It used to be more often but...

Sue: Like once a year.

Graham: Oh good lord. That's a lot.

Sue: That's a lot of work going on, isn't it.

Graham: So every two years right here on campus.

Sue: And this is the year that is.

Graham: I love that.

Sue: What?

Graham: That's another hashtag.

Sue: This is the year that is.

Graham: This is the year that is. Love it.

Malika: Is that (inaudible) the #shushmalika tonight?
Graham Basically yeah, because I'm so happy that...

Malika Woo!

Sue We need to talk about Steering Committee now.

Graham Let's go. I believe you're both on Steering Committee this time.

Malika We are.

Sue I am. This is my second Steering Committee.

Graham Glutton for punishment then.

Malika I admire you.

Sue I was on the Steering Committee in the dim distant past when things were so different.

Graham Really?

Sue Yes.

Graham So tell me about Conference. What should I expect when I turn up on campus in... we can tell the date, can't we?

Malika June sometime.

Sue I don't know when the date is.

Malika Let's just say sometime in June. But students must, must, must register interest online, and we're going to talk about that a little bit more. If they go through the website oustudents.com/... no, not forward slash, that was my note, it was too complicated. In the end we decided just go on oustudents.com and then click on the community link and that will take you there. That'll take you where you need to do your little bit, to register interest, and hopefully we'll see you there. There'll be about 400 students, is that right Sue?

Sue Yeah. And another load online.

Malika Indeed, yes.
Sue  So you have the face-to-face and the online.

Malika  Yeah, online guests indeed. Or delegates rather, we're talking about delegates.

Sue  We're currently in our online forums organising the business side of it, because we do have to have the formal business side of the Students Association.

Malika  Yes, the what goes on.

Graham  That was very VP admin of you. (Laughs)

Sue  I gave it the gravity it deserves.

Graham  Absolutely. I'm sure our Vice-President Administration will be very grateful for that, (inaudible) business on Saturday morning!

Sue  That's sort of the compulsory element of the weekend. You'd arrive on a Friday and there'd be events on the Friday to meet and greet and say hello, because obviously students are coming from all over the place. Then Saturday morning tends to be business. In my day it used to be all day Saturday.

Graham  Wow!

Sue  It was a long day. And we had voting cards, we used to get given a goodie bag, and there were all sorts of different coloured bits of card that we had to bring. If there was a re-count on votes and stuff we used to have to sit with our hands in the air and try and remember what we'd just voted on. There were motions to Conference and all sorts of things in the build up. And now if there's any voting that needs doing I believe last time it was pushing an electric button.

Graham  There was buttons, yeah.

Malika  Yeah, we had I think a little gadget that we were given.

Sue  Yeah. So much easier.

Graham  You have a little card as well, because obviously people that come to Conference there's voting delegates and then there's non-voting delegates, so you have to have some sort of card, don't you. (Agreement)
Sue  It's on a lanyard-y thing round your neck or in the bag.

Malika  Yeah. You get all the info you need really when you arrive.

Sue  Yes. You stay in a hotel and so you get a chance to socialise with the students and get to know where your campus is and all about your campus, and who your elected students are.

Graham  Do you know, I can actually give you a little idea already for the entertainment on the Saturday night.

Malika  Oh. Do you know something I don't?

Graham  No. I'm making a suggestion.

Malika  Oh right.

Sue  I was going to say, did you hear viewer/reader/watcher the tension in our voice? We're on the Steering Committee and we didn't know what was going on because Graham was about to just burst our bubble. Share it with us, Graham.

Graham  I was going to suggest a quiz night. I run them at work, you see, as part of my job. I get to have lots of fun activities and one of them is a quiz. We use something called speed quizzing which is like a little device, and we're obsessed with our devices, so just to speed things up, and it's quite entertaining. I'll send you some links.

Malika  Yeah, give us more details about that and maybe we can put that forward to the group. If they're listening as well they could listen to that.

Graham  Small investment but it is the future, it'll be worthwhile. It's really good.

Sue  We tend to have a sort of more active moment of entertainment and a quieter moment of entertainment reflecting the diversity of the students really. A couple of years ago there was a bit of fancy dress and onesies, a bit of karaoke, a bit of singing, a bit of students playing their guitars and musical instruments on a sort of open mic moment.

Malika  It's just everyone can join in or decide not to. I can't remember if I was a bit... no, I think I probably went to my room, perhaps I was a bit exhausted at the end of the day.
Sue  It is exhausting as well.

Malika  And that's okay, you don't have to be if you don't want to be...

Sue  As long as you're there for the business bit.

Graham  Yes. Well find you! (Laughs)

Sue  We will hunt you down.

Malika  Definitely. But there'll be quieter rooms if those students are worried about getting a bit of space, of me time, and it all gets to you. Because I understand it's not for everyone to be mixing with 400 people you have never met in your life.

Sue  Especially when you're at home isolated.

Graham  Absolutely.

Malika  Yeah. I mean that's taken into account and I think the Steering Committee is very conscious and it is taken very seriously the fact that this is a diverse community as we said and it has to be inclusive.

Graham  I know PLEXUS and the DSG will be providing...

Sue  DSG?

Graham  Disabled Students Group.

Sue  Thank you.

Graham  Will be providing quiet spaces.

Malika  Absolutely. Chill out, yeah.

Sue  Two years ago the DSG - because you've now mentioned who it is - had an overwhelming response to the disabled students attending their workshop event/room that they'd set aside, and that went down really, really well. Will this be PLEXUS's first one?

Graham  It is, because Conference 2016 is basically the birthplace of PLEXUS. Obviously myself and the other co-founders met at Conference. Nick I met at Conference 2014 and we stayed in touch throughout the journey. Obviously
then we were re-united in 2016 and that's where we met Alex and the three of us kind of met again.

Sue Will you be identifiable if students don't wish to go to the quieter safer space?

Graham Of course, yeah. All the PLEXUS Committee members will be wearing their PLEXUS hoodies. Bright purple, you can't miss us, and we'll have our logo on the front and then we'll have Committee Member on the back.

Sue So if any students are lucky enough to manage to get to Conference.

Graham Yeah, come and talk to us and say hello.

Malika But then again the various groups and societies will also be there, so everybody will have a chance to meet with people that they have an interest with or belong with.

Sue Were the DSG green?

Graham There were in green a couple of years ago, but I don't think they'll be in green this time around, but let's see what happens.

Sue So it might have to be spot the DSG.

Malika Yes.

Graham But they'll be very visible people though because again we will have our branding. We like a good brand down here.

Sue We do. Even the staff are branded, aren't they, because it says 'Staff'.

Graham They are, yes.

Malika Precisely. So you're able to recognise. Loads and loads of exciting stuff to happen. I think what we really ought to talk about for me was to finally get to see the campus. Finally. Oh my goodness, I was no longer on my own isolated, feeling like it was me, myself and my books and my laptop and TMAs. I think that's where I finally connected and finally realised just how awesome the community is. And the campus greenery everywhere, it's just huge. We've got a library on site. What else have we got? Obviously we've got all the facilities, meeting rooms.

Graham Yeah, the (inaudible) are real.
Malika Yeah. It's like a proper campus, isn't it. It is. The faculty. There are researchers, lecturers, professors, teams of admin, IT, the IT room. Did you go to the IT room, Sue? Was it you that was talking to us about it?

Sue It wasn't me. I haven't got a selection of laptops.

Malika Someone talked to us, or to me. I've got a vague recollection of the IT place. There is just stuff everywhere, isn't it.

Sue And there's the observatory as well.

Malika That was awesome. I went in there for the tour.

Graham You got a place, you were very lucky.

Malika Yeah. I don't know how but I did, it was really, really booked. What else? I remember fond memories from the campus.

Sue Tai chi on the lawn. (Agreement)

Malika And the artwork.

Sue Societies.

Malika Societies. What else?

Graham I was going to say the society symposium.

Sue Oh, they've got a symposium. Oh, we must be at university because we're using biggie words, symposium! (In a posh voice)

Graham I'm practising. Can you tell I've got a TMA due?! (Laughs) So obviously all the societies will be in the (inaudible) I'm guessing?

Sue It's yet to be... we're in discussions.

Malika Yeah.

Graham I'm trying to absorb/pull out that information from you.

Malika Well, we can't really say too much at this stage because...
Sue We're working on it in our forums. There's an awful lot. If you think about all this ongoing work that we're doing, we have to remember that a little plug of saying that if you are successful in getting a place do please let them know if you can't, because we're always over subscribed, and it costs a lot - because we've seen the budgets - and it'll be a shame that: a) another student can't make it; and b) because money is tight as we know around the country and stuff, that...

Graham It would be a shame to waste the place.

Malika It is wasted then, isn't it, yeah.

Sue Yeah. We might have to bill you. (Laughs)

Graham Oh gosh!

Malika Do you know what, it's really interesting that we've all been open about this and we've been discussing. Sadly I couldn't make the first meeting that we had and I gave my apologies, but I'm hoping to be making the next one. We discussed this point and I think we all feel very open, very comfortable with sharing our ideas no matter what they are or might be, and we're bouncing off each other. But the major thing for us is that Conference is about enjoying yourself, about meeting your fellow students, about discovering what your campus is all about, and as I said the campus you've got be here to believe it, it's lovely.

Sue A big shout out to the Open University Students Association office staff who not only do their day job who you may have emailed or telephoned, they are also doing and organising Conference. Basically the organisation started two years ago.

Malika Two years ago, at the end of the last one.

Sue Because they have to book the accommodation for that number of students. So yes, big shout out to them.

Malika Yeah, the OU Students Association staff are awesome.

Graham Obviously they give up their weekend to support us to deliver Conference. The staff members do a phenomenal amount of work. I don't think they get enough shout outs from us.

Malika No, absolutely.
Sue: All they ask is that you communicate with them. That's all they ask really.

Malika: Yeah.

Graham: I mean tonight they're here helping us deliver the show.

Malika: Behind the scenes. We wouldn't be here talking...

Sue: They didn't give us water. (Laughter)

Graham: Note for self.

Malika: And we're getting the new techie bits now, cameras and... we feel like proper professionals.

Sue: I know. We've got a camera, we've got a massive, massive microphone.

Malika: Yes. These are...

Graham: Don't touch! (Laughs)

Malika: I know. Okay. I'm just going to stroke them very gently.

Sue: Are we allowed to make them rustle?

Graham: No, because I think you used to play with yours all the time, didn't you.

Sue: No, it was just because I fidget.

Graham: Oh, was that what it was?

Sue: Yeah.

Malika: We've moved on now.

Sue: Yeah, we've moved on.

Malika: But hey-ho.

Graham: This is because of you, isn't it! (Laughs)

Sue: Day one, get new microphone.
Graham I think we need to push us on a little bit now. The last thing I think we need to say is obviously if you want to come to Conference you need to pre-register. To do that you need to go to www.oustudents.com/community and just follow the links on there.

Sue And look out for your email.

Graham Yes, do check your emails. They will come from the Association and I know sometimes they go into your spamming box so do check your emails.

Malika Yes that's true, check that. And please let us know if you can't make it for one reason or another, give us enough notice so that we may allocate that space to another student that is desperate to get it, because as we say it's over-subscribed.

Graham I think the last thing we're going to talk about is obviously earlier on this evening I did a little bit of a tour of the studio, this is where it all happens. We're branching out continuously. We had a competition running over the past couple of weeks because it's been Freshers. Week one was all about new to the OU, so obviously we've got all our new students coming in and starting their courses tomorrow. Gosh!

Malika Goodness me. Exciting.

Graham Then we had a multitude of returning students doing their second modules or progressing, like myself I went from being an undergraduate with the OU to now a postgraduate.

Malika Yay.

Sue Woo.

Malika I aspire to be there soon.

Sue What are you graduating in?

Graham I was a graduate in - good lord - a BA Hons in Business Studies. Something business-y. I put it behind me, it was three years of pain! Then I kind of said, "What's next?".

Sue The calling. Was there a calling?
Graham  There was, it was like sisterhood of... kind of join us. So I started to do a Masters Degree in Education, because that's the sector I work in.

Malika  Woo!

Graham  I know, more letters. I'm going to get the alphabet at the end of my name. Determined.

Malika  That is it!

Graham  Something like that, yeah.

Malika  That's what we're after ultimately, we're after this goal.

Graham  Yeah. I mean I've already got, how many letters have I got at the end of my name now? Five. Because I'm a member of an association I have to have for work, so put those in as well. Anyway, we procrastinate from what we're here to do. We just love it, don't we, and it's Sue going, "Tell you all".

Malika  I'm just jealous.

Graham  I bet you are.

Malika  Yes, I am.

Graham  But you will get there.

Malika  Painfully.

Graham  The only difference, the only thing that I found different with obviously doing my undergrad is I had books, it was a bit of blended learning, but with my Masters it's entirely online. So they emailed me my book and I was like, 'What is this?'. I wanted to take part in the ripping the box open. (Agreement)

Malika  That's not happening though.

Graham  No. And there's lots of journals to read because at Masters level you're expected to do a lot of research rather than, I don't want to say spoon-fed, but undergraduate it was like you need to do this now.

Malika  Yeah, yeah, yeah. I like the fact that I need to know what I'm doing.

Sue  It's so they understand that you understand.
Graham Basically.

Sue God, that was a bit technical, wasn't it. Look at me!

Graham Are you glad you sat down?!

Malika Let's look at our results then, because I'm excited about that. I'm trying to not think about my TMA deadline.

Graham The winner of the #New2OU is Wendy Phillips. They tweeted 'interested in hearing from fellow newbie's especially from my area. Looking for possible study buddies #New2OU'. You will sing praises for this, how many coffee mornings do you do?

Malika Lately no, but once a month I try/aim to do so. I haven't done one since December.

Sue We've had Christmas.

Graham Skip January.

Malika Yeah, skip January.

Graham I've got the perfect date for you for the next one. The big Feb meet-up which is going to be on 24 February. So our Vice-President Community is leading on that, Steph Stubbins. If there's anyone out there who goes, 'Ooh, let's do something'...

Sue Dee was saying earlier London, she's happy to meet up with students.

Malika Norwich folks if you're listening, I'm aiming to organise one at the earliest opportunity. I love you guys.

Graham Unfortunately I would normally do a Manchester one on the same day but I'm in London with my mum. So if Dee does one I might go to hers while I'm in London. There is other OU students.

Malika This is it, you can just crash any meet-up, can't you. (Agreement)

Graham But if anyone is in Manchester that wants to do them just get in touch with me on Facebook or Twitter, or even the Association office here in Milton Keynes.

Sue And they can advertise it for you.
Graham They can advertise, help you out, send goodie bags, all sorts.

Sue So who are we congratulating for that?

Graham That was Wendy Phillips.

Malika Congratulations Wendy.

Sue Congratulations.

Graham That was drawn on Facebook. Someone will get in contact with you to send you your prizes.

Malika Yeah, awesome.

Graham If not, you can always send us an email to oustudents-media@open.ac.uk

Finally, we have on Twitter our #Back2OU is actually Cinnomen McGuigan.

Malika Woo!

Sue Hello Cinnamon.

Graham Hi Cinnamon. A fellow member of the PLEXUS Committee, so I'm going to say I just picked the name out of the hat, all is fair and square. Cinn wrote '#postitnotes without a doubt the most used items in any of my OU Degrees #Back2OU'.

Malika Yeah, I agree with that.

Sue Yeah.

Malika You need them. I think I've got three lots of them and every time I'm panicking because I seem to misplace them. And when I misplace them it's sheer panic, I'm literally turning things upside-down to try and find my post-it notes. Anyway, I've got them all safe now, I found them last weekend and I'm cherishing them because without them I couldn't function quite frankly.

Graham I'm the same. And highlighters.

Malika Oh yeah, highlighters. Oh yeah, that's been one of the things on my research thingy-jobby that we have to do for the forum.
Sue  It's about finding a happy medium, isn't it, of how you make notes, because I used to just write it, I just used to handwrite it.

Graham  Wow.

Malika  Yeah, that too. I do a bit of all.

Graham  I've got a couple of letters on my screen.

Malika  It's the end.

Graham  It is. It's actually half-past-eight.

Malika  Oh no.

Graham  Half-past-eight. We're done.

Sue  Is it?

Graham  Yeah.

Malika  No, it can't be.

Sue  That was so quick.

Graham  I know. We had a whole section to talk about. (Laughs)

Sue  What have we missed out that we might actually bring to our next show?

Graham  Just chatting.

Malika  Yeah, just chatting.

Graham  Yeah, telling a bit about us.

Malika  We know each other but...

Sue  I think to say that we're further down, I mean I've graduated, you've graduated, you're about to.

Malika  Hopefully. I'm getting there!
Sue  But we have been in that situation of being a Fresher student, and I think to say there are the forums, there's lots of ways of being in contact and not being isolated. You're not alone.

Malika  No, absolutely not.

Sue  Part of your learning journey is your learning and your studies and stuff, but it's also about your personal development. (Agreement) So if people in the past have told you no you can't do, just take a moment and think, 'Yes I can'.

Graham  I was exact same.

Malika  Exactly, yeah. Do not listen to anyone. Like Sue said, do not listen to anyone that is trying to bring you down.

Sue  No question is a silly question.

Graham  I agree.

Malika  Exactly. We can do it, we support each other and we are...

Sue  And we are doing it.

Graham  We are.

Malika  We are OU students.

Sue  I have no idea what I'm doing but I'm doing it.

Graham  Four years flew by. Four or five years, I can't remember, but it flew. My dad doesn't cry ever, but seeing my dad at The Barbican crying that was worth it.

Malika  Oh that's lovely.

Graham  Not the certificate, not meeting Peter Horrocks all the rest of it, it was getting my dad to cry.

Sue  Sorry Peter.

Graham  Sorry, yes! (Laughter)
Malika If Peter is still listening.

Graham When I actually met him properly, he must meet that many students. But anyway big capital letters are here now, never mind kind of gentle ones.

Malika Awh, that's it we've got to go.

Graham We've got to go. We don't know when the next show is, although I will be here next week, but I don't think the technical team will be too happy if we rock up every week.

Malika No. Although we could do that all the time, couldn't we.

Graham We could do our own.

Malika Yeah.

Sue So is this STUDIO signing off?

Graham It is.

Malika Yes.

Graham So thank you so much for listening, watching for the first time ever.

Malika Yeah.

Sue Yeah. Bye.

Graham Bye.

Malika Thank you for listening to us, thank you so much. This couldn't happen without you all really, if you weren't listening to us we would be talking amongst ourselves, which we could do but...

Sue And thanks to the techie team.

Graham Absolutely. Thank you so much.

Malika Yeah, and the team outside.

Sue And the guests.
Graham  Yeah, the guests, indeed.

Malika  Yeah. And anyone contributing online etc, etc, thank you so much.

Graham  Yeah. So that's it. I'm going to put the final hashtag to Malika so we can say goodbye, goodnight, and see you next time.

Malika  Ah.

Graham  I knew you'd get the last word!

(Music plays out)