Good evening everyone and welcome to this STUDIO Radio Show. I'm Malika Steed and I shall be co-hosting tonight with my fabulous friends and co-hosts. Shall we go round the table and introduce you all to our friends listening to us?

Hello, I'm Ellie. This is my second show, and I'm studying English Literature with the Open University.

Good evening all you students! My name is Aine and I am studying Environmental Science with the OU, and this is my second year.

And I'm Michael. I'm sure you know me by now as the full-time student. It's my third show. Welcome to you all.

Excellent. Welcome to you all. Thank you for listening to us. I know you're listening to us from home or wherever you are on Facebook live. Tonight we'll be discussing a few things and we will be talking on a few subjects that you may find interesting, so stay with us throughout the show.

We'll be talking first about Christmas and what sort of strategies we have to keep up with all our studies whilst at home (inaudible) to some kind of places. But actually I don't even want to think about my own home at Christmas to be perfectly honest! Then we will be talking about what happens to people when they are lonely, and I know there are a lot of people. That's quite a sad topic that we will be introducing to you. So stay tuned because this is a very, very important topic with a must listening to recording brought to you to by Ellie.

We will be then moving on to online modules. So if you're now listening to us and you want to contribute to that, please feel free to send your comments to us. We will be reading some of them live on air tonight. How are you coping with our new online modules that the OU has put on us more or less? I know some of us have a few views around the table and we'll be sharing them also. But please feel to contribute to that for us.

Coming up after that we will be talking about cyber bullying, a very important topic. If you can remember, we just celebrated the anti-bullying week which the Open University Students Association took place. Michael will have a guest joining us, a must listening to, please stay with us for that as well. We will then move on to World Aids Day, which is celebrated today and commemorated around the world. Of course the OU Students Association has done its bit, and we will be talking about that too.
Moving on then with a final interview/recording that I did take, which I think you will enjoy listening to as it is an OU graduate telling us everything about his Degree and how it's helping him in his studies. So if you're listening to us tonight please feel to contribute on the Facebook live, do use our hash tag OUstudents, and also find us on Instagram and on YouTube afterwards, we will be putting a recording with some scripts for everyone to be able to access.

But first of all, let's move on to our first topic. What are you folks doing around Christmas? I did say about my home already. Mike, tell us everything about your Christmas. What are you doing?

**Michael**

My Christmas isn't really anything special, it's much like any other day really, it just means I don't have to go into work! But yeah, I'll be at home or with some family friends. I've got enough to keep me busy through that period so it's not a problem. I enjoy spending time with my family every day of the year so Christmas doesn't mean too much different to me personally.

**Ellie**

My Christmas is the opposite. I will be going into work on Christmas Day. That's what working in the hotel sector does. So yeah, it will be just like any other day, except it's a shorter shift and I will be having a Christmas dinner before as well.

**Malika**

Awh Ellie, I feel for you. I did work in this industry back in France, and did some retail as well, and yeah it wasn't very...

**Ellie**

It's not too bad. Everyone's pretty chirpy on Christmas Day and can wear a little Santa hat and stuff, so yeah.

**Malika**

What about you, Aine, tell us all. The cats probably.

**Aine**

Well actually the cats are having to go to their Uncle Peter's house for their holidays at Christmas because I won't be here. For the last couple of years myself and my mother, who's almost 84, we have gone to Spain, and that's where we're headed on Christmas Eve. It's a bit different from what we have been used to, but it's kind of nice to be on the beach until about four o'clock in the afternoon, and then mosey off for your Christmas dinner. It's quite nice.

**Malika**

I'm actually jealous now. It sounds lovely.

**Aine**

It really is, Malika. And we are so glad we bit the bullet and grasped the nettle and did this for the first time a few years ago. It's very good, yeah.
Michael: We'd love to hear what all you guys out there are doing over the next few weeks, whether it impacts your lives in any way and how you get around that. We'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

Malika: Yes. Because quite frankly I think, Mike, you are juggling a few modules, aren't you, if I'm correct?

Michael: Yes.

Malika: I'm kind of like looking at you wondering how on earth you cope. As Mike said, if you have any strategies to keep up with your studies over that time please let us know, we'd love to hear your thoughts and what you can share with us. My Christmas is probably going to be sheer and utter chaos. I've got family coming from Spain, I've got family coming from Belgium. It's going to be a very international Christmas. Nephews are going to be around, nieces, everyone's going to be charging around the houses. So yeah, I don't even know how I'm going to cope with any study whatsoever. But that's what we do, OU students, isn't it.

But Christmas can't always be and isn't always a time of joy and happiness, we know that a lot of people struggle with that time of year, and I think Ellie you went out and did some investigations to find out what it was like.

Ellie: Yeah.

Malika: Would you like to talk to us about this, Ellie?

Ellie: Yeah. We wanted to tackle the issue of loneliness at Christmas time because I think people can feel it more than ever at Christmas time when everyone else is out having fun and going to social events and stuff. I was reading an article the other day and it said that 7% of the UK spend Christmas Day on their own, which is really, really sad. I think as OU students as we do online learning, I think we can be quite familiar with the feeling of isolation at times, we study on our own. I think all uni students can be. Sometimes you have to go through periods where you shut yourself away and just study. And maybe some of our listeners out there are feeling isolation and loneliness in their personal lives as well, if maybe they've moved to a new area, or they don't know anyone, or there may have been a death in the family.

So I wanted to think about ways that maybe we could help people who are feeling like that. I went and did an interview with Age UK, I spoke to two lovely ladies who told me about Age UK's Befriending Programme. Age UK deal with the elderly and a load of issues surrounding them, things like finances,
legal stuff, discrimination, and they also tackle loneliness. The Befriending Programme is where volunteers can go and spend maybe just an hour a week or so with a local person in their area who may be feeling a bit lonely.

Malika Awh that's lovely.

Ellie They get paired with people who have got the same interests and hobbies and stuff like that so they've got something to talk about. I thought students who have maybe got a few hours to spare in a week, or just want to get out the house away from studying around Christmas time, this would be a really, really great thing to get involved with. So yeah, I went and did an interview.

Malika We're going to shortly be hearing about that, we will play that interview for you everyone. I understand that half a million people are alone at Christmas in the UK. I find this figure quite compelling and it gives us some time to actually reflect right now whilst our gurus are preparing a recording, and to talk perhaps about the things that we will be putting in place at the Students Association.

I understand that Stephanie Stubbings, our VP community, is going to be running an event on Christmas Day. Stephanie, hi if you're listening, we'd love for you to contribute if you're listening right now, please tell us everything about what you'll be doing. Obviously if you are struggling at Christmas please do not suffer alone. You remember last show that we did we talked about mental health and we said that it was important that you reached out, and do not forget that we have mechanisms at the Students Association such as Nightline, such as our peer supporters.

It's all on the website www.oustudents.com. Please look on the website, reach out as we know that we have mechanisms and things available for you. And obviously do call or contact The Samaritans also. I do understand that you can now text them. It's very important that you reach out and talk to someone if you are feeling lonely, if you feel like you can't cope at all. So we will be having this interview played at some point during the show.

Michael I've heard about what Stephanie's doing, and it's great that people are coming together and doing that. I think the message there is that we're not supposed to do it on our own, we're not built to be on our own, and it can be a dangerous sort of slippery path if you consider that that's your place in society that you need to do it all alone. Because the fact is that we can't. We're here to support each other, and the more community we build and we have the easier it is for all of us. So it's a really important thing to remember that when things are rough, and it's usually at the times when the chips are down that
we tend to isolate ourselves and just try and get through it without bothering anyone, but those are actually the times when you most need to be going to people that can support us that we trust.

Malika That's absolutely right. That's absolutely right. I feel that sometimes we do think that we're not meant – as you say rightly – to talk to anyone about our problems, that we're going to bother them. But it's really important to share those feelings, isn't it. Like I said last time, I did say that this year has been a rough year for me, and my comfort's been into making sure that I was able to talk to people that I trust, to confide into them and to say to them that actually I'm not coping.

Regards tutors as well, they can do something. If you have a deadline that you can't meet it's really important to actually contact them and ask them to give you an extension if you feel that you need one. I haven't yet asked for an extension this module, but obviously last one I probably asked for three, I think it was three that I had to ask for. Did you reach out to your tutor in times that were difficult to you folks? Do you mind sharing that to those students who are perhaps listening and feel that actually they daren't talk to their tutor or contact them. How have they been?

Ellie Yeah, I mean on the Facebook group page for my module, and people are talking all the time about asking for extensions. People do it a lot. You're definitely not going to be the only one. And if you are struggling, it's so much better to reach out to your tutor, explain the situation, and they will be supportive.

Malika Aine, have you got any experiences?

Aine Yes I have. My last module I had to ask for I think two extensions. I'm not quite sure of the reasons why, I can't remember now. I think that once you sort of get over the initial fear of approaching your tutor for some help in that respect, you realise that really you're not alone and that many other students are in the same boat that will have asked for extensions as well. And it's not a reflection on your ability as a student or your ability to organise your time, it's just that we are part-time students and life sometimes gets in the way. And that's the beauty of the OU is that it's flexible and that it can fit in around everyone's individual needs.

Michael I believe we're now going to be hearing the pre-record from Ellie's interview earlier on.

(Pre-record)
Ellie  I’m here with Jane and Shabnam just to talk about the Befriending Programme and services that Age UK can offer to the elderly at Christmas time. So Jane, approximately how many elderly people face loneliness at Christmas time?

Jane  Throughout England and Wales there’s about 1.9 million older people in this country and Wales who don’t see somebody from one week to the next. So the latest figures that we have, probably out of those there’ll be maybe half a million people spending Christmas Day alone, and for them Christmas Day ends up being just like any other day when they don’t see somebody, are not able to talk to anybody, where perhaps the television is the best company they’re going to get.

Ellie  That’s awful. So what kind of services can Age UK offer to relieve that situation?

Jane  Well we’re actually from Age UK Coventry so we look after people within the Coventry area, and it will differ depending on where your listeners are throughout the country anyway. So if they wanted to find out in a bit more detail what happens local to them, they can go on the Age UK website and they’ll be able to find out their locality.

Here in this area we have a number of different services that we put on to try and help older people. So for instance, we have things like befriending where somebody will go into someone’s home and meet them once or twice a week to actually speak and talk to them and keep them company. We have things like friendship groups where they can go out in a more social environment, some are maybe in a pub, some are in libraries, depending on what the people actually like to do. We have our craft and computer centre for instance where you can come along and have a very sociable time, where you can learn different crafts, computing, art, knitting, we’ve got a woodworking room. So there’s lot of different activities for people to get engaged in. So we’ve got quite a wide spread of different services that we can offer to try and alleviate the loneliness.

Ellie  Brilliant. And Shabnam, you’re part of the Befriending Programme, so if you just want to explain a little bit about what you actually do?

Shabnam  I’m a student social worker on my placement here, and I work within the Friendship Department, and what we do is we use different activities and social groups, and even the befriending services, to tackle isolation and loneliness within older people. So what I’ve been doing is I’ve been doing social buddying. What that is, it’s like a 10 week intervention that I will work
with an individual and I will make set plans and goals for that individual that the individual creates itself, and we try to promote them and help them gain confidence for them to go and attend groups. Because what I have found that a lot of older people tend to shy away from social groups because they feel like it's too much. So with social buddying it's to encourage them to go out and meet new people.

I've also done befriending, and what I do is I go on a weekly basis to go and visit this person and we have a chat, this person tells me about their life experiences, what they've been up to. A lot of them have a lot of life experiences and changes in their life. It's quite good for me to understand as a student social worker because I'm very interested in working with older people, and it's good to see how they cope with change, and what affects them in their later life.

Ellie So what can our OU students do to help Age UK help people who are feeling isolated around Christmas time?

Jane Well your students may have noticed that there are a couple of campaigns that are running at the moment. Age UK itself is involved in ITV's 1 Million Minutes, and what we're trying to do there is to get people to actually pledge time to help people in isolation. And they can do that by becoming a volunteer essentially, either on the befriending side going to visit somebody in their own home, maybe leading one of our groups that take place across the city.

Shabnam And also having awareness, I think that's a crucial thing for students, that even if you're in the local area and you see an older person that needs help, or you know they need some information about something, being aware of the different social interactions that they have in your local area, I think that will bring a big change to older people, and having that interaction as well for them.

Ellie Yeah. And I think obviously at the Open University we're very aware that it's online based learning, so I guess some of our students could be feeling a little bit of isolation maybe this time of year as well. So I guess getting involved in these kind of programmes can really help to reduce their loneliness as well.

Shabnam I completely agree. Also, for students I think they would gain immense experience working with older people, especially if they want to go into health sector or something like that. But also you're giving time to older people but you're gaining so much. Like I'm gaining how to crotchet and knit with my lady, and that's a really important skill that is going to save me so much money with sewing and everything. So I think it's a really good idea.
Jane  But you’ve also seen that it’s had a real impact on the people that you’ve actually been engaged with, isn’t it, and chatted to.

Shabnam  Yeah, exactly. Because they feel like they’re giving back to me as well because they’re teaching me how to do it, and it triggers their memories of their childhood and stuff, which is really nice.

Ellie  That’s lovely. So if some our students were wanting to get involved, roughly how much would you say spare time a week would they need to have to get involved with Age UK?

Jane  I think it depends on where they want to get involved. I mean with befriending it’s possibly at least an hour a week to be able to actually go out and do a befriending. We realise some people can’t actually do that, but for other people it may be a case of spread the message, if you know other people tell them about the situation with older people so that more and more people are aware that it’s out there. Make some sort of donation to be able to help other people give support to older people so that there is someone there for them when they need it.

Ellie  Brilliant. Thank you very much for talking to me ladies.

(Pre-record ends)

Ellie  So a big shout out to Jane and Shabnam from Age UK there for spending some time with me and giving me that interview. After speaking to those ladies it’s really inspired me to do some volunteering with Age UK myself. I really want to get involved with the marketing and the media and join the Befriending Programme as well, I think that’s a really lovely thing to do, especially this time of year when people are feeling lonely and vulnerable.

So if you want to get involved just go on to the Age UK website, which is www.ageuk.org.uk. Also, if you know someone who is vulnerable and could get something from Age UK’s services, then send them over to that way as well. And like Shabnam said, if you’re thinking of having a career in the health and social sector, it's definitely something that's good to get involved with and be a part of.

Malika  Absolutely. There's so many initiatives going on with regards to looking after our elderly or vulnerable people, and it's extremely, extremely important that we all get involved at any level possible. So thank you very much for that, Ellie, for going out there and getting that interview for us.
Michael: We've just had a message from Al on the Facebook chat saying, I've got a TMA due on 20 December, then on night shift for Christmas.

Malika: Oh!

Michael: That sounds fun!

Malika: Ow! We feel for you. We absolutely do.

Michael: On the plus side, Al, then you've got all your days to do your TMA! (Laughter)

Malika: I'm very sorry, I've done notes and oh goodness I don't even want to go back over how hard it is.

Michael: It's interesting because I've done nights as well, not five days a week, but I've done the odd night shift, and I find I'm actually almost better the next day than if I finish at like 10 or 11 at night.

Malika: Really?

Ellie: Really?

Michael: Yeah. I find I have a few hours sleep either side and I'm good. Some days I can go to bed at 9 and I wake up the next morning groggy.

Ellie: I always say to the night team in the hotel I don't know how you do it because on your days off your day must be completely flipped round and you must be still getting up at night and sleeping during the day.

Malika: Oh yes. It messed up my body clock big time, and I was doing it as well as juggling being a not a young mum, I was going to say a young mum, I'm showing my age there, but having young children and then working in a school as well.

Michael: But Al, if you're still listening we'd like to hear if you have a plan for it or if you've done it before what you did.

Malika: Yes. I think that your advice would be very handy and useful to all night shifters listening to us or students that are doing night shifts. Yeah, please share that with us, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Next topic, as we said we would be discussing online modules. Now this is a complete mystery to me, and I'm looking at Aine hoping that she will enlighten
me, because I absolutely know nothing about completely online content. My current module is books as well as online material, and I cannot go without my text book, I just can't, I'm a reader, I need my text book.

Michael And do let us know if you're listening if you've had any experience of online modules, if you know anyone who has, or if you have an idea of the concept or opinion. Do let us know and we can get the conversation flowing with you.

Malika Aine, tell us everything.

Aine The hashtag for that is #OUstudents of course on Twitter and Facebook. So Malika, you haven't had any experience of online modules?

Malika Not at all.

Michael Neither have I.

Ellie No.

Aine You haven't Michael, and Ellie no. Okay, so I'm the only one around the table who has. My current module is being delivered entirely online. Like you Malika, I like books. It's nice to be able to have something that I can carry around, annotate and refer back to. I don't know, maybe it's because I'm old school – pardon the pun – but I'm a visual learner and it's nice to be able to colour code things and to put little stickers on top of pages to mark it. When you have actually physically done that, if you're an experiential learner as I am, then it sticks with you, you know where to go back for the thing.

I am struggling with the online format. I have done modules that have online components, but again they have been mostly based around text books or the blocks. The entirely online format is something that I am struggling with.

Malika I'm trying to visualise this. So in effect my whole reading experience you have to do this online then?

Aine It's all online, yeah.

Michael So no books or printouts?

Aine You can print out some of the parts of the blocks if you like, but then you will come to a part that will say this part isn't available and it's only interactive. So even if you do print out the material there's only so far that you can go without having to go back online. In order to do this module I have had to set up an
additional monitor on my computer so that I can toggle backwards and forth between different things that I'm working on. I think that with our current lifestyle, just the way things have gone say in the last 15 years in particular, we spend so much time online now for various things, paying bills, social media, you name it.

Malika We do, that's right.

Aine I would just love to be able to study using books, I don't want to study online. (Agreement) I don't want to do it.

Malika See, I join you with that one. Although I'm doing Environmental Studies, and I'm going to have people screaming hearing what I'm going to say because it makes sense to go online for environmentally friendly reasons, it makes complete sense to move towards a more online society. However, as a learner I would find that difficult to cope with. If I'm on the go and I've got my tablet and I want to read a chapter and think, 'Oh yes, I'm going to get ahead, I've got a couple of hours spare now', which never happens by the way, I'm making that up completely. But say if I wanted to bring up that chapter that I'm into at the moment, it comes up as a PDF, and then I've got the whole waiting for it to load, and then if I move my fingers or if I'm on the laptop or on the tablet, I get in a right flap.

Aine Or if your battery goes flat.

Malika I do, I get in a right flap because I like to actually see the lines, I like to read, I like to appreciate the academic content that's coming to me and make sense of it. And I can't make sense of reading something on the screen, I just can't.

Aine Yeah, I really struggle with it. I don't even possess a Kindle. I have the Kindle app on my computer. it has never been used. I have tried to read a book on a Kindle, I can't do it. I like the feel of paper, I like to be able to underline things and scribble notes in the margins and things like that.

Malika Yeah, me too.

Aine To be perfectly honest, if this were my first OU module, being that this is my first one being delivered online, but if I had chosen an online module as my first one, I'm not convinced that I would ever choose another, I would ever study with the OU again.

Malika Yeah, I can see that.
Aine I had studied with the Open University in the 1990s as well and the experience has changed – and I alluded to this in the previous STUDIO edition that we did a couple of months ago – in that you have an online component now with forums and Facebook and that where you can touch base with other people. I don't feel that moving everything to an entirely digital format is conducive to... I don't feel that that will suit everyone's individual learning style.

Malika Yes, absolutely.

Ellie You're right.

Michael Do you find that you can still approach your tutor in the same manner, or do you feel like it's slightly more removed now?

Aine I don't want to be too critical but I am feeling that the content of the module that I'm doing is very rushed.

Michael As in the actual...

Aine Yes. There's a lot of material to cover, and it just seems that we need to constantly be keeping up with everyone else. It seems like there's a pressure there to keep up with everyone else because there's a lot of online collaboration.

Malika I would hate that.

Aine The view of the OU is that you can study at your own pace, but with this module I'm not finding that. I'm finding that we're having to constantly try to keep up. I don't know, it's almost become a bit competitive.

Ellie Yeah, I know. I completely agree.

Malika What do you think, Ellie?

Ellie I mean I grew up with technology, I was a teenager during the time of the big social media boom and everything. But no, even I agree, I prefer books. I don't own a Kindle either. I don't really see the appeal of them. I was thinking earlier about why I joined the OU, and that was because I did try to going to a brick university for a time, but I'm like you and I'm a visual learner and I felt like lectures are quite – and this is probably just me – are quite an ineffective way for me to actually absorb information, because the average concentration span of a person is about 20 minutes, so as soon as you've switched off from
that you try and tune in again and you've completely lost where everything's going. I joined the OU because I like working at things at my own pace, I like seeing things written down in a book, I like underlining, annotating and stuff like that, yeah.

Aine That was one of the reasons why when I decided to study again that I chose the OU. Because there are other environmental Degrees out there that are being taught online, but I didn't want to be studying a Degree that I was having to do completely online. That is what set the Open University apart from the rest for me was the fact that I'd had experience previously of OU study and all of those materials that would come through the post, and everything was so structured and so supported, and it all made perfect sense.

Now if there's a move towards online delivery with the Open University, has it lost its unique selling point then? Is it running with the...? It's sort of losing that thing that has really set it apart from everyone else.

Malika But certainly something that any of the student reps listening to us, which I'm sure there will be many because they do enjoy listening to our radio show. Hello everyone. We could or will take forward any of your comments. I'm wondering if we had anyone contributing to this as well now?

Michael Yes. Al's been back. One in response to the earlier questions, he says he does a mix of days and nights working for the Ambulance Service.

Malika Oh wow! Amazing job.

Michael And says my body clock doesn't know where it is. (Laughter)

Malika We feel for you, we totally do. Bless you.

Michael Thank you for your service, Al. He also says the current module he's studying is completely online, and the previous module he was doing was hard copy, and it does make a difference in the sense that he has to motivate himself to turn on the PC or laptop and log on to the website, then find a good solution on how to highlight and use post-it notes. Also there's the temptation to swap pages to social media or notifications pop up.

Malika That is very true. Procrastinating. Facebook, Twitter, emails. Yes, procrastinating.

Ellie I do that anyway!
Michael I wanted to say from what Ellie was saying, it's interesting the transition from a brick uni where you've got lectures and you're literally being like loaded with information. And it's full-on going to those lectures, it's not just an easy thing. The OU has stepped away from that and gone there's a framework that you need to study in but here's your own way of doing it. It seems like they've almost taken it like either one step too far, one step back with the online only, in that it's no longer giving students who obviously have commitments due to being an OU student, not giving them the space to do things.

Aine In fairness, now that I have experience of studying entirely online, I am quite certain that my subsequent module choices will be sort of dictated or decided on the basis on whether it's taught via hard copy and materials through the post or online, because I don't want to do another online module.

Malika Wow!

Ellie I think it's probably an interesting thing to trial. I mean obviously this is just our opinion. What do our listeners think? Do you guys prefer books or are you really liking the online stuff? If you've had experience of that let us know.

Malika There is also the pressure obviously as we know the current times we are living in, so there is also that question of are you trying to save costs there. Yeah, I can see all the arguments around this, but as you rightly pointed I'm very concerned about those students with specific needs not being met. In that sense I'm wondering what is the alternative for them? I'm sure the Student Support Team will obviously offer something should they contact them, but to kind of like have an online based module I'm not too sure about that.

For example, yesterday I just managed to post on the forum that I was supposed... the week you're in sort of thing, I'm a week behind this week because it's been absolutely manic. Those of you who know me know exactly how I work, it's very, very manic in my life. But I managed to join that forum discussion on nuclear energy, and the forum was closing today. I met that deadline yesterday! It wasn't a requirement for me to contribute, however I felt the pressure and I thought, 'Hang on a minute, I need to go on that forum and I need to post, I need to bring my contribution to the table to that debate'. I'm not quite sure how I would feel if that always the case, quite frankly, because I find that I just have to fit in studying around my crazy life working full-time, having two children, volunteering for various things. And yes, sometimes I go to bed at 8.30 completely exhausted and I have no energy whatsoever to do any studying.
Michael  Just to let any new listeners know, so far in the show we've covered the big topic of Christmas and how we're dealing with that, be it studying wise or just generally in life. There's a great interview done by Ellie, one of our co-hosts with Age UK, a couple of interviews there that were played at the beginning. So if you've just joined us now do go back and listen once we've published the whole show and have a playback of that. We've now started discussing online only modules and how that affects OU students as well. Coming up to go we've still got a conversation/interview around cyber abuse, we've got a segment on World AIDS Day, and another interview with some graduates of the OU uni. So lots to look forward to there.

Ellie  Can I just give a big shout out to our co-host, Graham, who isn't with us today.

Malika  We wanted to say hi to Graham.

Aine  We miss you, Graham.

Malika  Absolutely. He can't make it tonight and we are all very sorry and gutted that he is not round the table with us, but he's got other engagements tonight.

Aine  He's a busy man.

Malika  He is, very much so. So we will be bringing some of Graham's stuff into this show obviously as we are going to commemorate World AIDS Day. But talking about the online only modules it's a nice transition to actually discussing the topic of online abuse. I was wondering if we are going to be able to do that straight after? We have got a guest coming on the show, but first we are going to have a break everyone.

(Musical interlude)

Michael  Hello, and welcome back. Just quickly to follow on from before the break, we've had a few comments on the Facebook feed. The Vice-President of Equal Opportunities, Cherry, is listening very carefully to the excellent points made about online only studying. So someone's listening!

Malika  Thank you, Cherry, that's great.

Michael  And Colin says my laptop warranty does not cover the use of highlighters on the screen. (Laughter) I sincerely hope you didn't learn that the hard way, Colin.
Malika  Love it!

Michael  Up next we've got a segment about cyber abuse, and this is following on for any of the listeners who tuned into our last show we were talking about mental health. Cyber abuse plays a big impact, there is a toll on mental health that comes from that, and in all its shapes, forms and sizes, so whether it's a comment on Facebook or full scale abuse online, it does take a toll. Today we've got a guest in the studio or calling in to the studio, and that's Dragana Brown, and she is a member of the not for profit organisation All Rise Say No To Cyber Abuse. Hello Dragana, thank you for joining us.

Dragana  Hi there, thank you for having me.

Michael  I guess the first question is for our listeners just briefly, what is All Rise Say No To Cyber Abuse and what's its path or what does it do?

Dragana  Basically All Rise Say No To Cyber Abuse is a not for profit organisation that has got international membership if you like, there's about I think almost 20 people or so. All the members are volunteers. The organisation's not sponsored by anybody, we contribute and fund ourselves and all our research and everything. What's remarkable about it is also that it's kind of deliberately put together the team which has people from all kinds of professions, from legal to filmmaking to people working in hospitality, teachers, people within the NHS and social workers, students like yourselves, and even younger students from secondary school. It's an absolutely amazing mix.

The idea is really that each individual brings something to the table if you like. The organisation was started by a lady Simone Benhayon who is somebody if I could just describe her in a nutshell I've never met anybody who loves people as much as she does. And this is no offence to anybody who claims that they love people. She's absolutely amazing. It was out of that love really for people and observing what's happening in the online world, that she got an impulse to start this and we just all jumped on the same train.

Michael  That's very cool. Just to ask, there's a lot of organisations and charities and stuff that do work in this field. What is it about All Rise that separates or distinguishes it from those other companies?

Dragana  The thing that All Rise really focuses on very strongly, I have spoken to so many people and so have the members, I do extensive research daily, literally everybody's under the impression that this is a kid's game, that cyber bullying or as we like to really put it correctly cyber abuse, is a kid's game. But it isn't. It's actually much more rife amongst adults than it is amongst children. It's
only that of course because of the laws that we protect our children quite
rightly so, because most of the time they're not really able to do that for
themselves, that there's more attention and more focus there.

But what All Rise is saying, yes that's all great, and yes let's continue, and
yes let's do it, but let's not forget that actually the adults are the ones that are
running riot in terms of abuse, and they're the ones who are the role models
for the children. So what can we expect from our kids if we as adults are
being very abusive online?

Michael  Well yeah, because that's what I was going to say, it's interesting because it's
adults who first moved into the social media world, and it was adults who first
sort of experimented with those. When Twitter came onto the scene and all of
that sort of stuff it was adults who jumped onto it. From your research and
from your involvement with the whole scene I guess, what's the situation out
there? What does the internet look like at the moment?

Dragana  (Laughs) Oh I don't know, shall I...? It's quite late at night, maybe we don't
want to get people to feel really down. It's quite dire actually. It is pretty, pretty
bad. And I must say, I feel deeply grateful that I have been given the
opportunity to work with All Rise because I too was once blind to the level of
abuse that is going on. I won't even go into that. If anybody wants to bother
they can find it very easily, you just go on one YouTube site where it's either
political discussion or religious, anything with celebrities, you name it.

Michael  Or even a video of a cat!

Dragana  Or even a video of a cat. They will turn it into a totally different conversation.
There will be no mention of a cat, but there will be 'f' words and 'kill yourself'
and whatnot. I mean vile, things I physically could not repeat. So it's pretty
bad. This is not being pessimistic because I am no such person, but this is
just being very realistic. We do need to pay attention.

Another thing that All Rise really keeps stressing and bringing focus to is,
there's something in the adult world that working with both adults and children
what we've noticed is that adults look at the two worlds, the offline and online,
like they're two different, like one's Mars and one's Venus, like it's just
somewhere out there, I don't know where. Kids are so attuned, they actually
know there's only one world, one in the same, it's just two different platforms.
It's like two playing fields, and if you've got one football pitch and another
football pitch it's still a football pitch and there's nothing different. So they're
very, very smart there, but the adults are pretending. There's a bit of
ignorance going on in the adult world as well, not to be harsh on adults, but like I said I once too was quite ignorant to what's going on.

So part of what All Rise does is really educate and so we go round and do presentations and stuff. When you put the stats and when we do workshops and stuff people go, "Oh my God, I never realised it was like this".

Aine I hear what you're saying about that some people struggle to reconcile that what happens online that they can be held legally accountable for the things that they say. It's almost as though 'oh it's the internet, it doesn't matter', but it really does matter, you're still subject to the same responsibility as a citizen as what you are in the offline world.

Dragana Very, very beautifully said. 100% agree with you.

Ellie I think we've had recent examples of this as well with a lot of celebrities getting held up for what they've said on their social media accounts back in 2012 or whatever. I know Jack Maynard was just taken off I'm a Celebrity for what he'd been tweeting.

Malika Oh right. I'm not watching it. But it is true that there is this notion of personal responsibility for each and every person's actions, our own actions. I always say I can't be responsible for your actions, I am responsible of my own.

Dragana Absolutely, yeah.

Malika It's very interesting to hear what you have to say and share with us, Dragana. In terms of celebrities and politicians and things like that, do you think that the time has come now to actually take society in a different direction perhaps? Perhaps we have run out of role models that could actually show people how to behave properly. Because I wouldn't dream of posting some nasty comment to Mike, who is sitting to my right at the moment, I wouldn't think and dream of posting a nasty comment to him. I wouldn't think of saying that to his face. So why do people think it's acceptable to do that online behind some anonymous screen name? They're not even held accountable for their actions because perhaps do they not want to, or is it all a game for them? What do you think?

Dragana Do you know what's very interesting. If you look at life in general we seem to be always kind of on the back foot. We create a road, let's say, and then we put the traffic lights after quite a few accidents happen. It's all like in some sort of... do you know what I mean? We unleash this mega-mega platform, like a huge gigantic, and just let it... like giving kids your wallet and leaving them the
house. Or a 3 year old, 4 year old, 50 year old, whatever, saying okay, off you go, just do whatever you like. Nobody would do that in their right mind, would we? With the internet we just created a field and said off you go and play and do whatever. And now we're thinking hang on a second, we can't really say that. You go on a bus in England, on every bus certainly in London there will be a notice that you cannot abuse staff. You go to any doctor's surgery you cannot abuse. I cannot go in to my surgery and say you – I don't know – don't know, I can't... do you know what I mean?

Malika You can really say any expletives to them, yeah.

Dragana I can't do that. So why can I say that online? It makes no sense. That's what you mention about the celebrities and politicians, because I have spoken to quite a few and had chats with them, but almost unanimously they come up with this line, they say this line, which is fascinating, and I can understand where it's coming from because they get tonnes of abuse on a daily basis, and they say, "Ah, but it comes with the territory".

Malika Well it shouldn't really.

Dragana And we go, "No, it doesn't". Like they don't come to Parliament... I have to strip myself to walk into Parliament. If I said one word I'd be taken out of Parliament. But why would you allow that, it doesn't come with the territory. But also what that shows us is how much the goal posts for what's allowed and where our moral barriers are have gone, they've disappeared. Look at the TV now, I mean you couldn't even dream of hearing the 'f' word not that long ago. I know I'm a child of the 60s so I might be older than most of you in the room, but it was just there was none of that was ever heard. And now with all these programmes that are around, I don't even watch them, I can't remember what... those live shows and whatever, it's just despicable the language that goes on. And the younger generation watches that, and these are their role models so that's what they like to copy.

Michael I just wanted to ask, we've covered a lot around the state of the internet and what's accepted and what's not. What's your experience on how is it allowed? What is there that's stopping people being held to account? And if there is an answer to that, what's our responsibilities as a society and as human beings to actually take a stance against this?

Dragana Regards to what's all right, we do a lot of different surveys, and the survey results are actually used to affect government, UK Government but also we work with other governments as well, to understand that there's a huge lack of
accountability online, and we all have to be accountable for what we say and what we do.

Also, we work a lot in partnership with lawmakers and politicians like I said, to actually ensure that although there are certain laws in place, (inaudible) easily be applied, but there doesn't seem to be huge willingness. Partly we feel also because there's not the depth of knowing what's really going on there is not there. And I must say that social media sites are just playing... because they've got their rules unleashed and they make up the rules as they go, they're not accountable to anybody so they can just do whatever they want. Money's a big factor, as long as there's traffic allow a bit of abuse or allow a lot of abuse.

We all actually need to sit around the table, everyone, us who are using the internet, social media sites, government, lawmakers, and just say come on, we need a society where the abuse is just not on. We have got that human right to be free from abuse.

Aine I think that with the internet in particular that perhaps the crux of the issue is that it is a global phenomenon and it doesn't fall within one particular jurisdiction, that the lines are very much blurred there, and therefore it is difficult to police it. Who is accountable for what? I know that the UK Government back in I think it was in 2013/2014 actually introduced some more laws to protect people from online harassment. But because of the nature of the internet it seems that we are playing catch-up, that it's moving much faster that what we can create laws to protect people, and therefore we have become reactive rather than proactive.

Michael It's a bit like the medicine versus illness thing.

Aine Yeah.

Dragana Yeah, you've got a very valid point there. And in some ways yeah that's true and it does make it hard. But in truth it isn't. Take for example in the real offline world, take Harrods for instance or Selfridges or any of those huge home stores, and you know how they have all these – what do you call them – different companies.

Michael Concessions.

Dragana Concessions, sorry. Yeah, that's the word. So they have all these concessions, and so these different concessions have got their own rules and whatever what they're selling or how they're promoting etc. But say if one of
those concessions suddenly produced a leaflet that was pornographic of some nature, or condemning Muslims or black people or whatever, what would happen? How long would they last in Harrods? It just wouldn't.

So it's the same thing, we have created those platforms where we say it's not our contacts. But you are the host. Harrods can say Bobbi Brown's not my contact, but they're under my roof actually and they need to follow the rules that we have. The rule is you can't promote pornographic literature, you can't do this, you can't do that. But nobody's doing that because there's a lot of money involved and they have made it about profit and not people. In a lot of aspects of our life, not just that.

Michael We've had a comment from Al on the Facebook feed saying they, who I presume 'they' means abusers, seem to think that the internet is not the real world. It's an interesting point because you almost want to talk to these people who do abuse people online and get them in a room and just see if they're actually aware of what they're doing, aware of the consequences.

Dragana True. Very true. But you know what, I've raised four children, and yes children might think that the world's not real or that the world spins round them or whatever, but you introduce consequences and tell them okay if you do that, if you don't tidy after your toys you won't be able to watch your favourite whatever for a week, you see them running around and tidying up like there's no tomorrow!

Adults are not really different, but there's nothing to tell them you can't cross, and if you cross that line this is what's going to happen, then of course they're going to. You were talking earlier about people being lonely at Christmas and stuff, but there's a lot of people who are not alone as in there are people around them, but people haven't got a clue what they're doing, and because people are truly not connecting with each other. You would think in this day and age where I cannot remember how many billion tweets a day, or trillions or gazillion or whatever, and you think we're all connected, but actually there's a lot of people who are deeply disconnected and they do need help.

Aine If we look at how life has changed so much on a global scale particularly post-war, since the middle of the 20th Century, and that loss of what was known as social capital. That has been replaced with other things, and we have lost by and large a lot of our community spirit where people did rely on each other. Maybe there's an opportunity now, maybe something that we need to look at as citizens and as a society is a concept of education for citizenship in the 21st Century to reflect the needs of modern living and where we're at. (Agreement)
Dragana: Beautiful. Beautiful. We're not really catching up, you're so spot on. Like I give an example, whenever the latest iPhone comes people are queuing for miles are they not? And all it's changed is a little bit of camera, I don't really know, to me it's all a bit foreign, although I do have an iPhone. But everybody's running. But when it comes to those things like how we are socially, what's going on, nobody is running as you said to sit around and say okay well maybe it's time for us to actually look at... you know. In the olden days we had a Post Office where I used to remember I used to get my mum's pension without any ID because the guy in the Post Office had known me for 25 years.

Aine: Yeah, that's right.

Dragana: (Inaudible) to ask me for ID one day. So the more we knew each other the more connected we were the more we knew what our children were up to. We talked with each other. Now it's a very disconnected world, and really ironic with all this internet that you're supposed to connect. It's great in so many ways that we can do this, that I can sit in my home and talk to you and everybody else around who's listening, or I can talk to an auntie in New Zealand or somebody in India, whatever, it's amazing, it's really amazing.

Michael: On that note, we might just need to wrap up the discussion because of time, a great discussion it is. The final statistic I think that I'll leave the conversation on is, 72% of people have witnessed or aware of cyber abuse happening, and 1 in 3 have witnessed it at least 6 times. So this is not something that affects the minority of people.

Malika: No. I'd call it endemic. (Agreement) I would call it an endemic problem that needs to be tackled and needs to be addressed urgently by those people who need to do so.

Michael: And just to say, for anyone who wants any more statistics or wants to see what All Rise is about, you can find them at www.allrisesaynotocyberabuse.com. There's lots of information on there and some great media campaigns as well, some great films.

Dragana: And also can I just mention the film competition for anybody under 21?

Michael: Of course, yeah.

Dragana: There's a great film competition taking part, the deadline's 31 January. Go on the website, have a look. Some amazing prizes. It's really brilliant. You can see also the winners from the last two years, this is our third one running. So go for it!
Malika Thank you. That's amazing, thank you.

Michael And also there's been a link published on the Facebook feed below, which is www.oustudents.com/anti-hyphen-bullying-week where there's a pledge for students to sign around the topic of online behaviour, there's a link to the All Rise videos, there's the Dignity and Respect Policy, and just some more information about bullying. So we'll let you go from here, Dragana, thank you very much for spending the time with us.

Dragana Thank you guys. Keep up the great work.

All Thank you.

Dragana You are all amazing. Don't wait for the Diploma to tell you that, you're all amazing.

Malika Awh, we appreciate that. Thank you ever so much.

Aine Thank you so much for doing this.

Malika Thanks for coming on tonight.

All Thank you.

Malika Well, this was absolutely amazing in terms of everything I feel I've learned, and I'm sure you're sharing that view. We really appreciate guests coming on to feed in to us and tell us what they're doing on the topics we're covering.

The next topic we are going to cover will be World AIDS Day, and obviously that is a topic that is very dear to my heart for various reasons, including personal reasons. I do not feel at ease sharing them live on air with you, but I do care an awful lot about this personally, and I'm sure a lot of us around the table and those of you listening at home will share that view that we ought to commemorate. I would like to thank Graham Rimmer, our PLEXUS guru, who actually asked us to do this tonight. He needn't do that because we obviously all care about it, but we are doing it, and thanks to him for bringing this up even though he can't be here tonight.

Some statistics for you. Graham within the PLEXUS organisation has kindly shared an article that was published by Becky Eaton-Garrett. If you are listening Becky, thank you very much for that because I found it quite compelling reading your research and your findings. First of all to say that obviously there's still no cure for AIDS unfortunately even though this was first
identified in 1994, so it's been going over 30 years. According to the figures I'm reading – thank you Becky for your research – 34 million people died. Over 100,000 people live with HIV in the UK alone and 36.7 million globally, so it is something that will affect us if not already one way or another. 6,000 British people are diagnosed on a yearly basis according to the figures I'm reading.

We are obviously aware of all the cases that were made famous, I'm thinking particularly of Freddie Mercury who obviously passed away, may he rest in peace, and George Michael's partner, Anselmo Feleppa, both now have gone, but he was affected by it. George Michael struggled to deal with his passing and wrote Jesus to a Child, a beautiful song which I absolutely adore, in his memory, and the album Older was dedicated to him.

We know this is endemic, we know that there's still no solution, and we want to commemorate all those who have passed and those living with HIV nowadays. We are going to be having a moment of reflection, but first of all I'd like to hear your views, listeners at home, if you'd like to say something to commemorate at this moment in time before we actually go onto a moment of reflection. Aine, have you got anything you'd like to share with us regards HIV and AIDS? Have you known people?

Aine I have, yes. Yes, I have indeed. A very good friend of mine lives with HIV. Still there is a stigma around HIV and AIDS. We are moving in the right direction on that but not quickly enough. But it's good to talk, it's good to get these things out to public discourse. Particularly I feel that perhaps soap operas are in a unique position to challenge stereotypes and stigma around issues like this, and mental health and all of those things. But the stigma is still very real, and the perception that only a certain cohort of society can live with or will contract HIV and AIDS, that's frightening that that myth still exists, it's still there.

Malika Yes, I can't believe it's 30 years later we're still fighting that myth and that stigma. I know.

Aine Oh my goodness, absolutely.

Malika I remember the first campaigns when I was young.

Aine So do I, yeah.

Malika Back in France we were demonstrating wearing the red ribbon. Obviously this is wrong to tackle people and be prejudiced because there is that prejudice
particularly from people towards the LGBT community, and as we say it is totally unacceptable, it is not right, it's unacceptable. Our job tonight here around the table is to continue that fight and continue to challenge prejudice and tackle discriminations in all forms. Obviously this is what Graham and his friends are doing for the OU Students Association with the PLEXUS platform, and if you are interested in looking at what they're doing their website is fantastic, it's got loads of information. I know I struggle to read a lot of stuff as much as I would love to, but I really encourage you to have a look at it, including the article that Becky wrote which kind of like made me think about all of this.

Ellie, I know you're slightly, I was going to you're slightly younger than me, a lot younger than me, but obviously this is not something that you have known at the beginning in 1984. Sorry, I'm showing my age everyone! But obviously growing up, how have you found things growing up among your peers? Has it been difficult to discuss AIDS and HIV, or is it again one of these conversations that needs to be had?

Ellie Yeah, definitely. I think there is still a stigma around it definitely with the whole STI thing in general. I think it's something that needs to be spoken about a lot more. I remember actually when I was younger watching Home and Away and there was a storyline on there of a heterosexual couple who contracted AIDS. I think it is really great that TV soaps are speaking about this more and more and people are thinking about it.

Malika Yeah, perhaps bringing it to the fore and making people realise actually it could affect any one of us.

Ellie Absolutely, yeah.

Malika Blood transfusions, anything really, it doesn't really matter whether you have unprotected relationships with anyone. Yes it does in terms of make sure that you protect yourself, but it could happen in any other ways, and this is one of them that obviously is also one that affects people, so we could all be affected one way or another. So it is important to discuss this and to commemorate those people who are living with the condition, which can give people an effective therapy I suppose because there's been progress, medicine has made progress in that sense.

Aine It has, yeah. All the time that we're learning more about the condition and armed with knowledge, then we can tackle it. We know that medical science is wonderful and progressing all the time and that a cure is out there, we need to find it.
Malika  Yeah, we do.

Aine  There are other illnesses that have throughout society claimed many people and cures for those have been found as well. So medical science can do wonderful things.

Malika  Is there a question there of continuing to invest in research and science and try and find cures for all these things, because at the end of the day when I hear that figure, which breaks my heart, 36.7 million people live globally with this, and 34 million died. Is that really necessary in this day and age? Is it really necessary?

The access to medication obviously in the sub-Saharan countries is probably a big problem, and yes perhaps in Western countries we have access to medication. We are lucky here we've got the NHS and we do cherish the NHS as I do, I do cherish the NHS very much. But in other countries this is not the case, and people are having to rely on aid and on the good will of perhaps all of us maybe throwing crumbs at them I would say. So quite frankly it is important that we remember maybe the sense of inequalities and that we think about these things when we commemorate a day like today, and perhaps that we do not move on the day after not trying to change things perhaps for the better.

Aine  And with that in mind, I'd like to lead us all in a moment of reflection in solidarity with those who live with HIV or AIDS and in memory of those who have been lost. (Pause)

(Musical interlude)

Malika  Welcome back to STUDIO Radio. I'm Malika and tonight I'm hosting along with Ellie, Aine and Michael.

Michael  Sorry to interrupt. We've just had one comment from Al on the topic of AIDS. He says that he's learnt about the blood transfusion issue in his last module and was horrified to think of the consequences of contracting this through healthcare, and we've moved on with the treatments and prevention but not stigmas. So that pretty much sums up and is a great reflection I guess on that topic.

Malika  Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. We appreciate that contribution, thank you very much. Coming up now we will play you a recording of an interview that I did with Ross, who is hopefully listening to us right now, and if he can't he will
probably do it in his own time. Ross is an OU graduate and has kindly shared some thoughts with me. So stay tuned.

(Pre-record)

Malika  Hello, this is Malika Steed, your OU Student radio host talking right now from Norwich to Ross. It's 13 November, and I've just got Ross with me who is very pleased to talk to me about his experience as a graduate. So Ross, can you tell us who you are first of all please?

Ross  I studied with the OU probably in 2008. I left college with really poor grades and I sort of worked in a few different industries before deciding to embark on my journey with the OU. I did it for two reasons: I thought it would be really good in terms of my career; but also in terms of my own personal development I thought it would be a good thing to have under my belt.

Malika  Fabulous. Thank you for that. When did you graduate?

Ross  2015 I graduated. I studied for seven years part-time.

Malika  Fantastic. Seven years, that's more or less what we would expect really.

Ross  Yeah.

Malika  But we know we can do our Degrees in however long it takes us really with the OU. Can you tell us what your Degree was in?

Ross  Well I actually went on to the Open Degree, so you could pick and choose modules, and based on the percentage of the BSc part or the Arts part you'd either get a BSc or an Arts Degree. So I picked mainly maths and physics modules.

Malika  Is that because you like these subjects?

Ross  Yeah. When I first started my Degree I kind of had it in mind to go into teaching, and I really liked the maths and the physics, I had a really keen interest in physics so I went down that route.

Malika  Went for it, brilliant. Can you tell our listeners where you did your Degree. Did you study here in Norfolk or...?

Ross  Yeah, I studied in Norfolk, and I did tutorials in Norfolk and in Cambridge. I did a project course which involved people in Scotland and Cornwall, and we got
to use an observatory that was in Majorca, so we were actually accessing it from our houses across the country. It was really interesting.

Malika  A bit of an international experience to your learning there, wasn't it.

Ross   Yes, it was.

Malika Wow, that's amazing.

Ross We had to use Skype as well to be in contact with each other, so there was always different things we had to keep tabs on. It was really cool, really good.

Malika Wow! Sounds intense, doesn't it.

Ross Yeah.

Malika Did you struggle family life with this? Juggle not struggle, but juggle family life or struggle with that?

Ross I'm one of these people I'm quite laid back so I didn't find it too hard. But then my wife would probably say otherwise! (Laughter)

Malika We kind of like know our other halves are really struggling with us sometimes. I've got a couple more questions for you for our listeners. Can you tell us how your Degree helped you in terms of either your skills or personally?

Ross I mean I always think back to when I was in Sixth Form and I struggled with maths then and I kind of gave up. So one of the things my Degree gave me was a perseverance and determination to challenge myself and push myself to actually try things that were difficult. In terms of my job now teaching, I kind of use that to relate to the pupils I know that often they come from areas where they find it hard to do a certain task or find learning difficult, and I can relate that back to them.

Malika Fantastic. You're really inspiring them to learn and to not take any obstacles as something that will hinder their learning really.

Ross Yeah, definitely.

Malika You're the ideal person to do that really, that's really good to hear that. You were talking about you're teaching now. Can you tell us how you are using your Degree now?Obviously being a teacher, I guess.
Ross  Time management’s really crucial, and I think my days in Sixth Form my time management skills were really poor. I didn't have any study timetables or didn't create mini deadlines for things along the way. Whereas now I'm quite organised in terms of being there for a deadline, or even being early for a deadline, and just keeping on top of things. So time management I think is one of those critical skills that you develop.

Malika  Yes, you do as you go along. That's fantastic. Would you have any comments that you wish to add, or something you would like to say to the person who’s starting on their OU journey now? I know you talked to me about the UEA being not so aware of the Open University. How did that pan out?

Ross  When I applied for teacher training initially the UEA were kind of confused with what the OU Degree was. They didn't realise that it’s equivalent to a normal Degree from any other university, so there was lots of questions from that. I kind of see myself as an ambassador for OU students getting that knowledge out there that actually it is just the same as any other Degree.

Malika  Absolutely.

Ross  And actually I would argue it's better because you have to be so self-motivated to do it, and often you're juggling work and family life and you're studying at the same time. I rate it probably better than a normal Degree.

Malika  That's brilliant.

Ross  There's not so much partying as well!

Malika  No, exactly. Because we’re focused, aren’t we, and we have to just literally as you say juggle family life and all those challenge that life throws at us basically. Thank you so much for being an ambassador.

Ross  That’s all right.

Malika  And thank you so much for talking to our listeners. This is Malika Steed signing out for OU STUDIO. Thank you ever so much, Ross.

(End of Pre-Record)

Malika  And thank you for listening to this interview, I hope you enjoyed it. That's it now folks, it's 8.30 so we are coming to an end. This is the saddest moment in our lives, isn't it, when you broadcast live, it's coming to an end. This show has gone very, very quickly, hasn't it.
Aine But we're back on air in January.

Malika At the end of January, yes. We haven't got the date yet but keep posted. If you want to listen back to this show remember you can access it on Facebook on the OU Students Association page. You can also find the Students Association on Instagram, on Twitter, and this will be also posted on YouTube as always with a script of what was discussed tonight. So I hope you enjoyed it.

Michael If you've got any more comments, even off of live, we won't be able to respond but feel free to make a comment and use the hashtag OUstudents, and our digital team will surely receive your message.

Malika Absolutely, and pass that on to us. So, final words Ellie?

Ellie Well I hope everybody has a good Christmas. Or if you don't celebrate Christmas then I hope you have happy holidays and a great New Year, and we'll see you all in the New Year.

Michael Yeah. It's been a great show. There's been a lot of information here, so for those listeners have a good sleep tonight! It's always a pleasure talking to you, and have a great restorative holiday.

Aine Brrrrr, it's cold out there tonight. "Oh the weather outside is frightful, and the fire is so delightful, and since we've no place go let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!"

All Woo-hoo.

Malika That's it from us. Happy holidays! Be merry. Be wild. And we are wearing our hats as we speak.

Aine What's a pelican's favourite TV show?

Malika No idea.

Aine The Bill!

Malika Ha-ha-ha-ha. Right, I need my hat everyone, so wherever that is. That is it from us. Thank you for staying with us, thank you for joining us, and we will see you soon.

All Bye.
(Music plays out)