



Students
ASSOCIATION



THE HOOT

Student Newsletter

Issue 2 - November 2022

A copy of the latest newsletter will be posted to your facility every 6 months. For enquiries or comments, please ask your learning facilitator to get in touch with us at oustudents-media@open.ac.uk

Welcome to your newsletter!

As Vice President Engagement at the OU Students Association, I am delighted to introduce our second edition of The Hoot for Students in Secure Environments (SiSE).

The Hoot is the Association's online magazine, where we regularly publish content for OU Students, by OU Students and the staff who support us.

We've produced this newsletter designed with you and your studies in mind, paying careful consideration to recent feedback to ensure content remains relevant to you. We hope that you enjoy this edition including bespoke articles from Samaritans, Library Study Volunteers, and one written by a reader.

As valued members of the OU Students Association, we would love to feature your writing too and have included a pre-paid envelope for you to submit your own article to be featured. Articles should be no more than 500 words and we feature a range of themes and formats – you can submit anything from poetry and short stories to general interest articles on your hobby or studies.

Wishing you all success with your autumn/winter studies from everyone here at The Hoot, our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Student Welfare Team and our Student Leadership Team. We look forward to reading and sharing your submissions for our next edition.

THE **HOOT**

The Hoot History

- The Hoot was founded in 2019 after OU students' hunger for content outgrew the Association's previous print and PDF magazine.
- Over 600 online articles have since been published.
- The name 'The Hoot' came about because the OU's mascot used to be an owl.
- The Hoot's third birthday was celebrated on 8 April 2022



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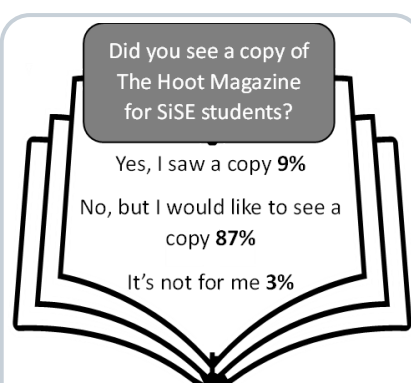
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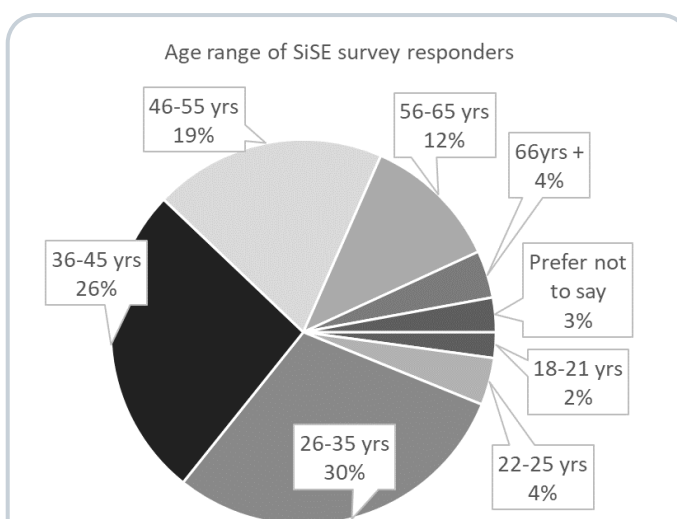
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SiSE survey highlights

In July 2022, the OU Students Association released a survey to all its students currently studying in a secure environment. Thank you to all the students who took part in providing this valuable feedback and helping us to achieve our strategic aims. Here are a few highlights from the survey.



Following your feedback about issues accessing the newsletter, we are improving our coverage by including a copy of this issue with each pack of printed research material you request through Library Study Volunteers, and will include a colour digital version on your Student Home page.



As the first SiSE survey for England and Wales, the 2022 age demographic sets a baseline for future surveys. The results show us that the largest group of SiSE respondents studying with the OU are in the 26-35 years age range at 30%, closely followed by the 36-45 years age group at 26%.

"Personal interest in the Arts and wanting to expand my career prospects as a writer."

What motivated you to study with the OU?

"I wanted to better myself and build towards a better future."

"Develop my Maths skills, use my time in prison wisely."

"wanted to fulfill my potential."

What faculty are you studying with?

| | |
|-----|---|
| 15% | Faculty of Business & Law |
| 4% | Faculty of Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies |
| 24% | Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences |
| 26% | Open & Access |
| 24% | Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths |
| 7% | Not sure |

The results showed that 4% of Students in Secure Environments are studying with the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies, compared to 9.6% of the wider student population studying in the same faculty, as found in the Annual Membership Survey.

"I wanted to overcome some of my previous failures with education and make myself employable."

Seasoned students give their TMA top tips



Whether you're working on your first Tutor-Marked-Assignment (TMA) of the year or your first TMA ever, these top tips will make studying a breeze. We asked seasoned OU students for the top tips they'd give new students for their first TMAs. Here's what they said...

1 Don't panic

"Try to keep in mind - it doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to be done."

"Leave your introduction until the end. You can't introduce what you've written until it's wrote."

"Remember, if you knew it all, you wouldn't be studying. You've got this!"

"Remember, people work at different paces. Just because someone else is halfway through the TMA and you aren't, doesn't mean anything."

If you're feeling a bit anxious about getting started, make sure you're looking after your mental health first and foremost.



2 Get organised

"Make a rough draft as you progress through the content, add references and number pages, so when you go back, main points are easier to find."

"Learning Outcomes are your friend. Read which ones are being assessed for your TMA & consider how you can relate them to the question."

"Print your TMA questions and use it as a bookmark while you read the relevant book chapter, and annotate on the printed TMA the pages or sections that are relevant to each question."

You might find it useful to have a separate notebook for each TMA, and it always helps to have a neat and tidy study space.

3 Prepare

"Highlight all the key words from the prompt. This will help you actively read the case study or TMA materials so you then are able to answer everything that is being asked, and thus deliver a strong TMA."

"Make sure you have a look at the TMA in full as soon as you can. More often than not you'll end up finding some of the answers as you are reading through the work."

"Always have the question and guidance notes to hand, refer back to them all the time whilst you're writing."

"Make sure you know what the tutor will be marking you on, if for example, the TMA says they'll be marking you on your method and not the final product, take it as it is and focus on explaining your methods."

4 Jump right in!

"Just get something on the page, doesn't matter if it makes full sense or not. It's always easier to go back and edit an answer than just stare at a blank page."

The first step is sometimes the hardest, but once you're over that first hurdle, you'll be on a roll.

5 Get into good habits

"Post-it notes marking the recommended reading pages in textbooks - makes it so much easier to reference quickly."

"Reference as you go along, not at the end - much easier especially with longer assignments."

6 Be concise

"Answer the question!"

"Don't add any extras to the answers. Only give what is requested."

Sometimes it can be tempting to get over-excited with showing off your knowledge. Keep in mind that you have a specific question to answer and a tight word count to stick to.

7 Always double check

"1. Read the question.
2. Answer the question.
3. Read the question again and see if you have actually answered the right question accurately and fully!"

"Edit always on a paper copy."

It can be tempting to skip proof-reading and click submit, but this might lead to missing a typo or worse. Make sure you check you've answered the question, used the correct terms, and maximised readability if you can.

If you have access to a printer, you may find it helpful to proof read on a printed copy of your assignment. Use highlighters, make notes for adjustments, and circle spellings that need to be changed.

8 Give yourself plenty of time

"Don't leave it to the night before."



"Start early, at least so you can relate what you're learning to what's needed of you. I keep a checking list and a 'notes' document so I can thrash out ideas as I go, then hopefully pull it altogether."

"Print/book them early, read them and work out what part of the course each question relates to. Then answer questions as you progress. Nothing worse than starting a TMA and thinking 'Urgh I did this weeks ago now, can't remember how I did it!'"

"Get it done with time to spare."

9 Be content once you've submitted

"Once it's gone, forget about it. You're bound to think of 101 ways you could have made it better, or notice a spelling error that wasn't there the first 100 times you checked it!"

10 Join our community

All of these tips were submitted by your fellow students. Got a tip we've missed? Write to us! Happy studying, and good luck!

A splash of colour

In our May edition we invited you to send us your own contributions to the magazine. Here, one reader does just that.

Now in my 6th year as a SiSE student, I have found that the use of colour in module materials has a significant impact on my learning. I ask why this is, and whether it should be a consideration in developing future module materials for SiSE learners.



Since SiSE learners in Scotland have no access to the 'virtual campus' all module materials come as hard copy readings, AV files or printed versions of the online weekly activities. These print-offs are occasionally printed in colour but mostly come as monotone.

Why different modules appear in different formats is unclear. Perhaps there is a cost consideration, or it is left to random chance where 'black on white' is simply the default; this mix in the provision of media provides an opportunity to explore the impact of

colour versus mono.

There are two questions: are there practical reasons to print in full colour and are there aesthetic reasons to provide attractive resources?

Firstly, many diagrams, images or graphs do not easily translate into monotone from full colour; demanding extra effort on the part of learners to glean the necessary information. In fairness I have rarely encountered an entirely incomprehensible graphic which defied understanding while in monotone, although with

graphs with coloured lines this has been irksome!

Secondly, are materials which are well designed using colour more engaging and effective? My experience suggests that working through resources with colourful diagrams and images is more memorable, conveys information better and sustains one's ability to study. Indeed, in modules where there has been a mix of colour and monotone booklets, those in colour have had positive effects on my motivation.

Lastly, despite the

excellent efforts of the OU, SiSE learners are often constrained by their environments, reinforcing the need to make the most of every opportunity to ensure they feel a parity of esteem with mainstream learners. Ensuring all students can

access well-designed and engaging materials 'on' or 'off-line', is possibly an easy win. Indeed, it is a disservice to underuse these materials by printing them out in a less than optimal format.

Going forward, this

question is perhaps one which demands some academic attention, researching the impact of well-designed and colourful resources on outcomes for learners. I would be interested to hear if other learners feel the same.

A response from the Students Association

Firstly, thank you for your submission to this edition of the Hoot Newsletter. It's so valuable to read about your experience and to have a student perspective on an important topic.

We wanted to be able to respond to your article so did some investigating on your behalf, seeking advice both from the OU's SiSE (Students in Secure Environment) team and the OU's printing and distribution services team. We found out that there are two reasons why we currently have to print this newsletter in black and white.

Firstly, at present the printing and distribution services team cannot print in colour for

large-scale distribution. Anything in colour will likely be from smaller printers elsewhere, where the volumes needed are not as high. This may change in the future but for the moment these are the printers we have available for bulk printing.

The second reason is that a Ministry of Justice (MoJ) directive instructs us to send printed materials to SiSE in black and white only, not colour. Unfortunately, this is of course not something that either the Students Association or The Open University can control.

While the reasons outlined here explain why unfortunately we cannot currently send you this newsletter in colour, we also wanted to look for a solution. So for those who are able to access it, we

have uploaded a full-colour electronic version to the OU home page on the Virtual Campus. We appreciate that not everybody will have access but we hope that for those who do, this will be a positive step.

Contribute to the next newsletter!

If you would like to contribute to the next newsletter then we would love to hear from you. You can write about any topic of your choosing, such as hobbies, short stories, study tips, opinion pieces or news.

Articles should be 500 words or fewer. You will find a pre-paid return envelope in with your printed newsletter, or you can ask your education officer to scan and email your contribution to us.

Break your procrastination habit!

Move from procrastination to taking action with this self coaching session from the OU's Personal Learning Advice (PLA) service.



Is there something in your life that you've been putting off? Even if you feel you are a 'doer' who gets things finished and meets deadlines, you can experience procrastination. Whether it's a small task or a large life-long goal, sometimes you'll need to find a way to move away from procrastinating to taking action. In addition, science and research into how the brain works shows us that procrastination can become a habit!

Here are our top five tips to help tackle procrastination.

1

Commit to yourself and others

Start by making a clear, specific decision to overcome procrastination, break the habit and achieve your goal. Write down your decision and for accountability tell a friend, family member or work colleague that you have decided to take action. Once you have commitment to overcoming procrastination you'll feel more emotionally attached to your success.

2

Determine the cost of failure

If you keep procrastinating you're unlikely to achieve your goal. Ask yourself, What are the costs or consequences of my not taking the actions I need to take?

To help answer this question try to picture yourself in the future. Where will you be if you don't take action? How will your life look? How will you think and feel if you've not taken action?

3

Visualise the benefits of success

Once you've determined the cost of failure ask yourself, What are the potential benefits of taking action? Write down the benefits to you, identifying what you'll have and how you'll think and feel.

Return to this visualisation on a regular basis to help keep yourself motivated.

4

Admit your fears

Fear, worry or shame can be behind why we procrastinate - Will I get it wrong? What will others think? What if I fail?

To help you acknowledge your thoughts and feelings and to move towards action try this quick three step exercise. Find 10 – 15 minutes with a pen and paper, think of a situation where you have been procrastinating and:

1) List all the sensible, rational reasons you might be avoiding this action/task.

2) List all the nonsensical or irrational reasons you might be avoiding this action/task. Don't overthink this, just write down what pops into your head. It could help to ask yourself What am I secretly afraid of or avoiding here?

3) Now review your lists and ask yourself:

- Are these reasons based on fact or fiction?
- If the reasons are facts: What can I do to change this? Who or what can help me?
- If the reasons are fiction: Where does this information, thought or feeling come from? How or what can I do to overcome this?

5

Break it down and take action

Sometimes we procrastinate because we don't know where to begin. If you feel a goal/task is overwhelming start by breaking it down into smaller steps and actions. When you're able to look at each small step individually, it will seem much more attainable to tackle one thing at a time, taking steps towards completion.

Once you've identified your smaller steps and actions it's time to get started! Often a long 'to-do list' can seem

overwhelming, instead try organising your steps and actions into a schedule or action plan which identifies key dates, orders actions by priority, and identifies resources for help or support.

Next, just do it and get started! According to Mel Robbins, author of The 5 Second Rule, there's a simple technique to help break the procrastination habit. Try saying out loud a 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 countdown to interrupt your thinking and to start taking action.

And finally...

Don't forget to reward yourself for overcoming your procrastination habit, for taking action and achieving your goal. As well as being something to enjoy, this reward is important as it helps your brain reinforce the habit of getting things done in the future.



The importance of Disability Pride Month

As part of Disability Pride Month in July, an OU Student tells us what it means and why it is important to talk about disabilities.

July is Disability Pride Month. Not many people including disabled people have heard of Disability Pride Month and the fact that it has had its own flag since 2017. Understandably, it is an awareness month that is not well known. Honestly as a disabled person myself, I only discovered it in 2020.

One of the common reasons that it is not well known in the UK, is that Disability Pride originally coincided with the Americans with the Disability Act (the ADA) which is the civil rights law prohibiting discrimination against the disabled, which was signed in July 1990. Disability Pride originally started in America when the first event started in Boston, then the first Disability Pride Day parade was held in Chicago in 2004.

Since then, Disability Pride has grown and is now a month-long series of events to celebrate

disability, and positively influence the way people think about disability while also challenging stigmas and stereotypes that surround disability. Disability Pride events now take place in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Brighton, with the hope that it will only grow further, and more places will get involved.

Some individuals are still not aware of Disability Pride and there is also confusion around Pride that takes place in June (they are ultimately different events). Some disabled people do not agree with or celebrate Disability Pride, they feel it is patronising and reinforces the idea that they aren't happy with who they are and their disability. This is completely fine for anyone to feel this way. It must be accepted that not all disabled people will want to get involved or celebrate.

When we think about

Disability Pride, it will have a different meaning for everyone.

What does Disability Pride mean to me?

To me, Disability Pride means not only being able to challenge the stigma that surrounds disability and the discrimination that I face but to try and get rid of the internal ableism that I have, which has come from society telling me that I "don't look disabled" and that I "don't need mobility aids".

This is what other disabled people said about what disability pride means to them:

"The irony of Disability Pride Month coming directly after Pride Month is not lost on me, considering disabled people are still largely unable to access pride and queer venues. I look forward to the day queer disabled are included and LGBTQ+ people learn about disability rights."

"It means my disability is my normality and my normality is my disability."

"Disability Pride means to me being able to show society that we exist and can make a valuable contribution to this world of ours. There should be no stigma attached to being disabled. We are human beings too who just have to do things in different ways to others."

"Not being embarrassed about, for example, being in a wheelchair, or asking for help when you need it."

"Raising vital awareness that we do desperately need and deserve."

Disability Pride Month has a lot of purpose and is celebrated in a range of ways. But it is generally used to promote awareness of disability as an identity, a community, a culture and the positive pride felt by disabled people. While also being able to directly challenge systemic ableism and discrimination disabled people face.

It is also fine if disabled people don't wish to

celebrate Disability Pride Month, many feel that they are already proud and may feel that it is patronising. There can also still be some disabled people struggling to accept their disability or may feel they are not disabled enough. This is all fine, and all differences should be celebrated. In the end, disability is an individual journey, but we are all in this together while continuing to support each other as a disabled community.

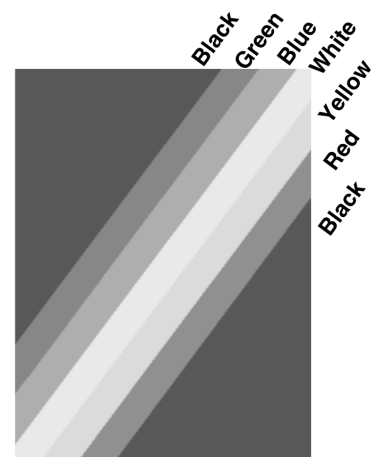
I like to think that Disability Pride Month is about helping disabled individuals feel like they have a voice and encouraging them to feel unashamed and unapologetic about who they are. We continue to raise awareness making sure we are all seen and heard regardless of our disabilities and I hope it continues to grow over the years.

This relates to being an OU student as it is important to talk about disability and inclusion when it comes to studying as well. It is also important to be proud of

all your achievements and the extra barriers that you may have to overcome when studying with a disability. The Open University also have a strong disabled community and support group with the Disabled Students Group.

What does Disability Pride mean to you?

Since 2017 Disability Pride has had its own flag, which was redesigned in 2021 to make it more visually accessible. Below, we provide a labelled version for those viewing in black and white.



The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in this article belong solely to the author, and not necessarily to The Hoot or the OU Students Association.

World Suicide Prevention Day & Samaritans

Saturday 10th September was World Suicide Prevention Day. In this article a Samaritan volunteer tells us more about what they do and how to access Samaritans while in prison.

Content warning: contains mentions of suicide and self-harm.

Suicide

Suicide can be a taboo subject even now in 2022. I do think open conversations about mental health are becoming more 'acceptable' and people are certainly more aware of the struggles that a lot of the population goes through. Depression and self-harm are issues that are quite often linked to suicide, so it is important that mental health is taken seriously, so that people are able to get the help they need before it's too late.

Suicide statistics are very tricky to interpret but they are hugely important to the work that Samaritans do – "suicide data is an important public health surveillance tool and gives us a powerful starting point to help us target our work to prevent future suicides". Data for suicides take a while to be released, currently the latest data we have is

from 2020, where it was shown that 4,269 people died by suicide in England, with men aged 45-49 being the most at risk of taking their own lives. This is where the Samaritans come in.

Samaritans history

Samaritans mission is to create a world where fewer people die by suicide. They have 201 branches across the UK and ROI, which are run by over 20,000 volunteers. The charity was set up by a vicar named Chad Varah whose belief it was, to have an emergency phone number for people contemplating suicide. In 1935 he conducted a funeral of a teenager who had taken her own life because she believed she had contracted an STD. Rather than having to face the shame of this, she did the only thing she believed was a way out, she took her life. It transpired that, she hadn't got an STD, but

rather had started her period. This stuck with Chad for a long time: he believed that if she'd had someone to turn to and share her concerns, then maybe she would not have ended her life. In the summer of 1953 Chad Varah started work on the project and on 2nd November 1953 he took the very first phone call.

Samaritans today

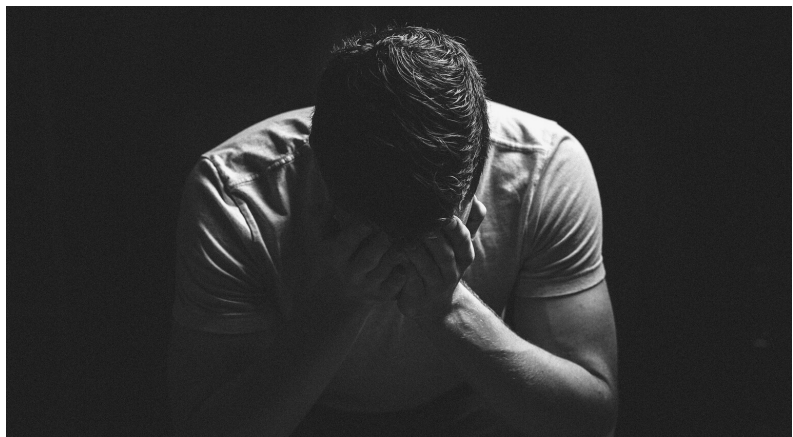
These days the Samaritans isn't just a service for people who are contemplating suicide, although a lot of the calls are from people feeling suicidal. The listeners are there to offer emotional support when a caller is going through a difficult time. The hope is that, by talking to a listener, it will provide the caller some relief to the turmoil in their head, and maybe will allow them to see what options they may have. Anyone can contact the Samaritans by freephone on 116 123.

The volunteer listeners aren't able to offer advice but will be there to listen without judgement, and to walk with you during your difficult time.

Samaritans in prisons

Statistics show that people in prison are more likely to die by suicide. Samaritans work with prison services to help reduce suicide and self-harm in prisons. All people in prison should be offered access to the Samaritans' helpline free of charge or if they prefer, they can write a letter to Samaritans using a freepost envelope, which can often be found in communal areas in the prison. There is also the Listener scheme inside prisons.

The Listening scheme was introduced in 1991 in HMP Swansea, following an increase in the number of suicides in prisons during the 1980s. Now there are Listeners in almost every prison across the UK and ROI. Listeners are prisoners, who provide confidential emotional support to fellow prisoners who are struggling. Listeners in



prisons are specially selected and trained by Samaritans volunteers, the same training as all other volunteers, but adapted for the prison setting. Once the training is complete, the Listener will receive a certificate and must agree to follow Samaritans' policies and values. They will receive regular support from other Samaritans volunteers, and they can phone Samaritans themselves anytime for support.

The aim is to have enough volunteer Listeners in prisons, to have someone available round the clock for anyone who needs them. Confidentiality is a big thing, and it is the same for prison Listeners as it is for any other Listener. The service must remain private, this way it gives prisoners the courage to

open up and talk about what is on their mind. Even once a Listener has left prison, they must keep their work confidential. Many Listeners in prison have said how fulfilling the role is, and how much it has enriched their lives, being able to help others when they need it most. If you're interested in becoming a Listener, pick up an application form from your wing officer or an existing Listener to get the process started.

Samaritans is there for everyone, and there should always be a way of contacting them, wherever you are. So, if you need someone to talk to, if you are struggling for whatever reason, please contact Samaritans and someone will be there to support you through your difficult time.

Forced migrants are people just like you and me

We have far more in common with asylum-seekers and refugees than the images and media reports like to suggest.

This opinion piece was written for Refugee Week 2022 by a student member of the OSTARS (Open Students' Asylum & Refugee Support) Club, which is campaigning for the OU to become a University of Sanctuary.

To the current UK Government, people seeking sanctuary are treated as a problem to be solved, not an asset and people to be cared for and cultivated. Why?

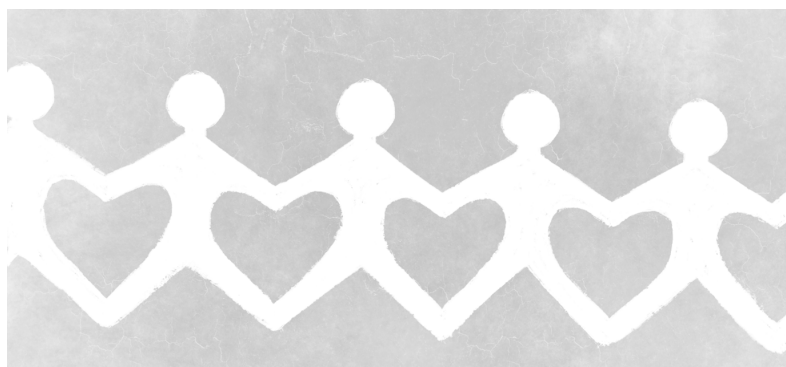
When many of us think of refugees, I imagine we have no trouble bringing to our minds visions of people fleeing war and hardship, traveling long and dangerous distances to seek shelter far from what was once their home. The image in our mind is likely coloured by what is presented to us in the media, influenced by what we are shown and often asked to believe. There is an idea of what a refugee is, what they look

like, where they come from, how they got here, and what ought to happen to them next. The UK government is clear in its opinion on the last point, and seems intent on standing firmly by its decision; to them, refugees are a problem to be solved.

Asylum seekers and refugees are not a problem, though. They are people. They deserve kindness, respect and compassion, just as you and I do. If we imagine a long paper chain of people, cut out from plain paper, how would we colour them to represent who they are? Who are the elderly? The children? Who was studying at university, or wants to be

an electrician? Who likes the Beatles? Who hates tomatoes? Who thinks the rain is wonderful? Who wants to be a famous footballer? Is anyone disabled, autistic, or struggles with anxiety? Are there any dog people, people who pet every dog they meet, or do they prefer cats? Whose favourite colour is neon green, and whose little sister thinks the world of them? And how many are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender? Forced migrants are people just like you and me.

We have far more in common with asylum-seekers and refugees than the images and media reports like to suggest.



As much as we are able to, we must stand up for those who have lost so much, including their voices in media and political representations. It is not right or fair that the government makes this country so hostile to so many migrants—as disabled and LGBTQ+ people like me will already know—and that this hostility prolongs the distress asylum-seekers arriving here face. Those seeking asylum deserve to be safe from hardships, and to heal from what they have endured. Upon arrival in the UK, they should not be sent thousands of miles away to face uncertainty and yet more suffering in Rwanda, where LGBTQ+ people face being persecuted, as the country has no laws protecting queer individuals. The UK government is knowingly sending refugees—people who have been uprooted, transplanted, and have no authority to turn to for help or protection—halfway across the world while they wait for a decision from the Home Office's bureaucratic system.



I think we can all agree, we should struggle to do the right thing with and for vulnerable people, at the worst as well as at the best of times.

I hope that one day Britain will become a kinder place to those in need, where we welcome asylum seekers and offer them a place of safety so that they can rebuild their lives and become part of ours too. I want to hear their voices, to listen to what they want and need from us during such a vulnerable time, and to show them that they are welcome, and valued and have much to contribute.

But, until that day, we should use the power we

have, and stand up and let it be known that we do not agree with anyone being subjected to unfairness, injustice or cruelty—LGBTQ+, disabled, old, young, Black, Muslim or otherwise. It is never okay. At the end of a long, devastating journey, refugees should not be denied a home, safety, or a voice. If we say it loudly enough, and often enough, maybe the government will listen. Maybe they won't. But others will hear us, and hopefully they will add the weight of their own voice in speaking up for refugees, who deserve kindness, respect and compassion just as much as you and I do.

World Book Day – my journey around the world in 137 Books

Last year on World Book Day I found an article listing the most commonly translated books from all around the world...

This list made me realise how narrow my range of reading was so I saved a copy of it to find and read a copy of each book. As I couldn't afford to buy everything new, I searched for library books and second-hand books, but many of them weren't easy to find.

So I re-thought my list and realised that I didn't need to read the most translated book from each country in the world, I could find other works of fiction or non-fiction written in or translated to English for each place on the list.

Once I started thinking about what I had read already I found I had books from at least 24 different countries which could be ticked off immediately.

There were some surprises, such as *The Hobbit* which appeared

on the most translated list for a South African, as J.R.R. Tolkien was born there, but I haven't counted that one.

South America and Australia seem to be under represented in the books I have already read so this year I plan to focus on authors from those continents.

If you'd like to try a globe-trotting literature journey of your own, here are some of my top recommendations.

North America

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Novelist, script writer and sometimes almost a character in his own stories, this is the best of

Fitzgerald's work. It's the story of an outsider, a tragic love story and a lavish description of a time and place. Read it to explore The Gilded Age.

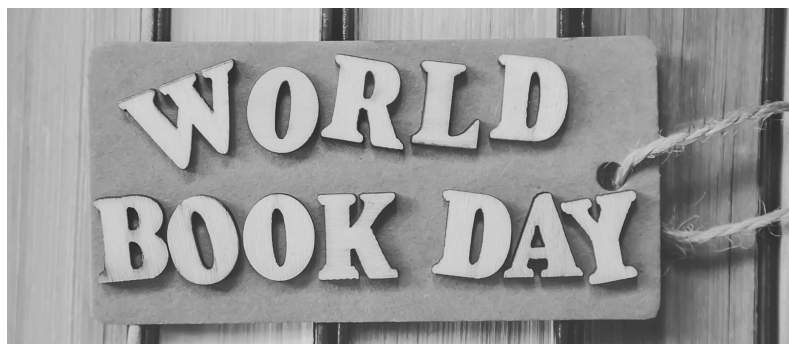
The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios by Yann Martel

Martel is better known for *The Life of Pi*. This is a book of haunting short stories, each one different from the one before. Read them and they will remain in your mind like afterimages from staring at a too bright light.

Europe

The Little Prince by Antoine de St-Exupery

St-Exupery was a French aviator and writer, who was lost flying a reconnaissance mission,



which oddly echoes part of this story. The Little Prince is a fairy story for people of all ages, quick to read but a book to return to and rediscover again and again.

The Kalevala by Elias Lonnrot

This is a collection of Finnish and Karelian folklore and mythology. This was a life's work for Lonnrot who travelled extensively noting down the stories before they disappeared. Nowadays the characters from the Kalevala appear in modern jewellery and design, in place names and enterprises in Finland. The book is worth reading to explore a lesser known mythology.

Africa

Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

In this novel, award

winning Nigerian novelist Adichie describes the Nigerian Civil War in a way that makes history about people, not just events. She takes the reader on a journey from luxury to refugee, while describing the country and its people. The descent into chaos and warfare focuses on people, not politics and governments, making this book emotionally powerful and affecting.

The Island by Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona

Athol Fugard is described as South Africa's foremost playwright and this play is created jointly by Fugard and Kani and Ntshona of the Serpent Players, drawing on their personal experiences of apartheid. Unlike some plays which are dependent on staging for full effect, this reads well and is a thought

provoking but satisfying experience.

Asia

A Wild Sheep Chase by Haruki Murakami

Murakami has said that he alternates between writing novels and short stories. In both forms, he creates a world that is both familiar and at the same time disturbingly different. For a first time Murakami reader this is a good introduction; he is a love him or hate him kind of author but his books are always extraordinary.

Reading Lolita in Tehran by Azar Nafisi

The Iranian/American Nafisi is a professor of English literature as well as a writer and this non-fiction book describes her teaching experience. It is an eye-opening book, following her classes when the schools for women are closed. It explores how the group of women establish their identity despite the restrictions and establish bonds through their interest in literature.



Being a Library Study Volunteer

The people who assist you when you make an OU Study Research Request are all volunteers, and your fellow students.

I first became aware of Library Study Volunteers (LSV) through an item on Student Home inviting applications for the role. At that point I had just finished my Level 1 modules with an End-of-Module Assessment (EMA) involving independent research and couldn't imagine undertaking OU studies without access to Library facilities. The LSV scheme seemed like a practical and imaginative way to address this issue within secure environments, and I was attracted to a role enabling me to support fellow-students while also developing my own research skills.

The system is based on volunteers self-selecting research requests from an online list; we then undertake the research and send a list of resources to be printed. Compulsory training covers data protection, copyright and searching strategies as well as the practicalities of the process. I was initially

apprehensive about finding appropriate resources across different subject areas, but these fears were quickly eased. Volunteers have access to 24/7 Library support as well as advice from Students Association staff, and experience is shared with fellow-volunteers in a friendly online environment.

It is always helpful to get as much specific information as possible about the resources sought. Volunteers have no access to individual module content, and if a request simply asks for resources relevant to 'TMA X' or 'Block Y themes', we need to ask for further details. Sometimes it is not possible to find resources which exactly match the request, and in these cases we usually attempt to provide alternatives which are as close a match as possible to the original request.

As an Arts and Humanities student, I have taken on requests

ranging from International Development to Environmental Science to Art History. I have, however, avoided Maths and Physics requests where I didn't understand even the basic terminology used. Fortunately, there is a wide range of disciplines represented amongst the volunteers. As the system is anonymous, volunteers have no direct contact with the students making the requests, and I always hope that what I have provided is useful to the student.

I have now been a LSV for a year and I have really enjoyed the experience. Undertaking the role has definitely increased my research skills as well as providing a sense of satisfaction each time a request is successfully completed. I have appreciated being part of the volunteer community, and I am glad that I have been able to contribute towards helping other students to achieve their goals.

Quiz: how well do you know The Open University?

It's quiz time! Put your OU knowledge to the test in this quiz - from famous alumni, to important moments in its history, can you get all 10 questions correct? Find the answers on the last page.

1 When was The Open University founded?

- A: 1967
- B: 1968
- C: 1969
- D: 1970

2 Where is the central campus for The Open University based?

- A: Milton Keynes
- B: London
- C: Basingstoke
- D: Nottingham

3 Which of these has had OU students written into their plots?

- A: The Good Life
- B: The Archers
- C: Fawlty Towers
- D: The Royle Family



4 Which of these former Prime Ministers has previously tutored for The Open University?

- A: Harold Wilson
- B: James Callaghan
- C: John Major
- D: Gordon Brown

5 The Open University is the largest provider for graduates in the UK for which subject?

- A: Law
- B: English Literature
- C: History
- D: Psychology

6 How many times has The Open University won the University Challenge?

- A: Once
- B: Twice
- C: Three times
- D: Four times

7 Which of these famous comedians has graduated from The Open University?

- A: Sir Lenny Henry
- B: Peter Kay
- C: Jo Brand
- D: Josie Long

8 Which of these London 2012 Olympic Gold medallists has also studied at the OU?

- A: Jason Kenny
- B: Peter Wilson
- C: Heather Stanning
- D: Etienne Stott

9 Which year was the first Open University TV broadcast aired?

- A: 1971
- B: 1972
- C: 1973
- D: 1974

10 Which year was the last Open University TV broadcast aired?

- A: 2005
- B: 2006
- C: 2007
- D: 2008



About the OU Students Association

All Open University students are automatically members of the OU Students Association.

The OU Students Association was born in 1972, just a short few years after The Open University was established by Royal Charter.

Our mission

We're on a mission to make a positive difference for all OU students. This is a mission we believe in and that we use to make all of our decisions.

We work together. We genuinely care about each other, offering compassion and safety. Our best ideas, projects and events are born from truly listening to one another. We work collaboratively with integrity, openness, kindness and compassion.

We celebrate our differences. We understand that we will never all agree. Some conversations are hard, but they need to be had. So long as we share our individual perspectives respectfully and with acknowledgement for others' hardships, journeys and barriers, there is always something we can learn from one another.

Our vision

To support, encourage and empower OU students by:

- Offering students the support services that they need.
- Creating opportunities for students to engage in a vibrant and inclusive student community.
- Being a strong, effective and accountable representative body.
- Working in partnership with the OU to enhance all aspects of the student experience.

Our values

Integrity - Equality and inclusivity - Openness - Collaboration - Kindness and compassion

How well do you know The Open University? Quiz answers:

1 A: 1967

2 A: Milton Keynes

3 B: The Archers

4 D: Gordon Brown

5 A: Law

6 B: Twice

7 A: Sir Lenny Henry

8 D: Etienne Stott

9 A: 1971

10 B: 2006