



Students ASSOCIATION



THE HOOT

Student Newsletter

Issue 5 – June 2024

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

Welcome to your newsletter!

Welcome to our fantastic fifth edition of The Hoot Newsletter. This edition is incredibly exciting, with more input from you, our readers, than ever before!

It starts with an inspirational student story submitted by one of our readers – it's not to be missed!

We have also included another collaboration with our friends at Student Hub Live – this time with a new study skill in focus.

We've packed this issue with some further emotive writing from our readers, including submissions from our wider student community. This includes student reflections on imposter syndrome and neurodiversity.

We hope you enjoy this new issue and, as always, we encourage you to send in any feedback, articles and commentary via your education contact.

Wishing you the best of luck with your continuing studies and – for many of you – your summer results.

Vice President Engagement



THE **HOOOT**

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 900 online articles have since been published.
- The name 'The Hoot' was inspired by the adorable owl we sell in our Shop.
- The Hoot's fifth birthday was celebrated on 8 April 2024.

Want to write an article for the next edition?

Find out how on the back cover!

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Studying with the OU has changed my life

Studying with the Open University (OU) has changed me and my outlook on life. It is a clear reminder that opportunities in prison are crucial and must be maintained at all costs, as they change lives for the better.

From hearing the words “I give you a life sentence” I never thought I’d be able to achieve anything from being in prison. Obviously, it has not been a walk in the park but like most other things in life, it can be what you make of it. Studying for my degree and Masters has not only given me self-esteem, confidence and belief, but it has also increased my understanding of myself and the world around me, while also unleashing my true potential. For this I am extremely grateful.

Completing my OU studies has taken ten years of hard work, determination and resolve to accomplish. I have had to embrace the challenges, overcome the obstacles and any frustrations I may have had in my quest to achieve my ambition and aspirations. Hopefully the journey does not stop here, as I truly believe it has only just begun. The odyssey continues!

Education has radically and positively transformed me for the better – it has given me a new lease of life for learning and a new perspective on life. Evidently investment in my studies has had a multi-layered effect, and I hope to inspire people inside and outside of prison that education is the solution to a more fulfilled and proactive life and future.

On a more personal note, my degrees will increase my chances of obtaining meaningful employment upon release, and also help with my goal of owning and running my own business. They will help with my reintegration back into society, and

I plan to use them to transform me from a prison number to a valued member of society that will contribute to the system which helped support me while rehabilitating me.

I am the first person in my family to have obtained a degree, and this has encouraged my youngest son to enrol into further education. He is currently in his second year at Manchester University studying Football and Business. This just shows that such achievements motivate, enthuse and show the different people out there that you can still reap the rewards of hard work, and make the most of any terrible situation if you work hard enough.

So from hearing the words “take him down” and feeling the world crashing down on me, I now hold in my hands a number of qualifications and degrees which I never dreamed even possible. These are hands which are now uncuffed, proud and belong to a person with their head held high.

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, you can write to us using the enclosed envelope or using the contact details below.

**Please mark any correspondence as:
The Hoot (SiSE edition)
OU Students Association**

**Post:
PO Box 397
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BE**

Celebrating 600 completed Library Study Volunteer requests

In January 2019, the Library Study Volunteers service embarked on a journey to bridge the gap for students in secure environments who don't have access to the library and are therefore unable to do the research themselves. Today, we are thrilled to celebrate the completion of 600 research requests, comprising 3,755 pieces of research provided to 198 students in secure environments.

This remarkable milestone is a testament to the dedication, hard work and collaborative spirit of our incredible volunteers, the Students in Secure Environments team, the Warehouse staff, and the Library staff team.

The Library Study Volunteers service began as a pilot project with a simple yet profound goal: to provide research support to students in secure environments. These students, facing unique challenges, submit their research requests through Education Officers, initiating a chain of collaboration that extends across various teams.

Our 17 Library Study Volunteers are not just volunteers; they are current students who generously donate their time to fulfil research requests. Armed with a passion for learning and a commitment to helping their peers, these volunteers dive into library databases to gather the necessary information requested by their fellow students.

The efficiency of our Library Study Volunteers service is evident in the quick turnaround time from receiving requests to completing them.

On average, it takes just five days for our volunteers to conduct the necessary research, ensuring that students in secure environments can progress in their studies.

Following the completion of research, the responsibility is handed over to the Open University's Warehouse team. The gathered resources are printed and packaged, ready to be dispatched to the waiting students. This final step ensures that students have access to the materials they need to complete their assignments.



As we celebrate the successful completion of 600 Library Study Volunteer requests, we'd like to thank everyone involved in this initiative.

The commitment of our Library Study Volunteers to supporting fellow students is truly inspiring. Their dedication to learning and their willingness to share their time and expertise make a significant

impact on your educational journey in secure environments.

The Students in Secure Environments team plays a pivotal role in facilitating communication and ensuring the smooth flow of requests. Their dedication to supporting students facing unique challenges is commendable, and we thank them for their tireless efforts.

The Warehouse staff, responsible for handling the logistics and dispatch of printed materials, are integral to the success of the Library Study Volunteers service. Their attention to detail and commitment to timely delivery contribute directly to the academic progress of students in secure environments.

Finally, our Library staff provide the foundation for the research endeavours of our volunteers. Their expertise and commitment to fostering an environment of learning are crucial to the success of the Library Study Volunteers service.



As we celebrate this milestone, we also look towards the future with excitement and anticipation. The Library Study Volunteers service continues to grow and evolve, providing invaluable support to students in secure environments. With the collaborative spirit that has brought us this far, we are confident that the next 400 requests, allowing us to hit 1,000, will be met with the same enthusiasm and dedication.

In closing, thank you to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Library Study Volunteers service. The commitment to education, collaboration and community is a beacon of inspiration for us all. Here's to the next 400 requests and beyond!



If you are currently studying and would like to request research support from the service, talk to your Education Officer at your facility. They will be able to give you the form to complete or complete this on your behalf by filling out our online form.

What students in secure environments say about the Library Study Volunteers service

“For students in secure environments, this service has been a lifeline to access academic papers for research and professional interests.”

“Without the detailed information I received, I would not have attempted my EMA. I am very grateful for the prompt service I was given and to the OU students who spent the time researching.”

“Without being able to access the research materials such as articles and reports, I would be unable to conduct the research required to undertake my PhD studies.”

“To be able to provide external resources for assignments has been very helpful – the wealth of resources provided for each study request is wonderful.”

“This service has provided me with extra study material which I would not have had access to otherwise – thank you.”

“So often module materials provide only one perspective, so extra materials to flesh out the learning really helps.”

Quiz: How Bad Are Bananas?

Take part in our quiz to learn more about the climate impact of an activity or item by comparing two things by the calculated CO₂.

Over the last 18 months, the OU Students Association has been working hard to embed sustainability into its work. We have worked with students and in partnership with The Open University, bringing our People & Planet League rating up 48 places to 67th. (The People & Planet League is a student-led audit of the sustainability practices of UK universities, using publicly-available information and data.

Part of this work has seen staff and students trained in 'Carbon Literacy' – that is understanding carbon footprint and the impact we have on the planet. This has been delivered through short courses, but also through engagement with the game 'How Bad Are Bananas?'

How Bad Are Bananas? is an interactive game based on the book by the same name by Mike Berners-Lee. The aim is to get players to think about the climate impact of an activity or item by comparing two things by their calculated CO₂e (CO₂ equivalent).

"Oh, so this is a game for climate scientists" (I hear you say). Not at all! Someone much better at maths than me has simply found a way to combine the impact of all greenhouse emissions into one simple measure – its equivalent in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions – to save us having to try and compare our carbon dioxide (CO₂) with methane, and methane (CH₄) with nitrous oxide (N₂O)!

We have converted the information into a special edition quiz below. All you must do is decide which of the two items in the question has the largest carbon footprint (and by that we mean the largest emissions by CO₂e – so the methane produced by the burping/farting of cows absolutely counts. The hydrogen sulfide from volcanic emissions too. Think greenhouse emissions as a whole!).

**Answers are located on page 16.
Good luck!**

Questions

- 1) 1 kg of apples shipped from New Zealand, or a bowl of porridge made with cow's milk?
- 2) 1 kg of potatoes grown in the UK or 1 litre of bottled water?
- 3) 1 kg of rice or a pair of trainers?
- 4) Volcanic emissions from Mount Etna in a quiet year or the South Africa Football World Cup?
- 5) Leaving a 5-watt low energy bulb on for a year or owning a pet goldfish for a year?
- 6) A pint of cow's milk or using a desktop computer for ten hours?
- 7) 1 kg of strawberries from Scotland or 1 kg of melons shipped from Spain?
- 8) 1 kg of cheddar cheese (produced in the UK) or 1 kg of cod transported by sea from Iceland?
- 9) 1 hour watching terrestrial TV or a paperback book?
- 10) 1 kg of bananas or 1 kg of vine cherry tomatoes grown out of season in the UK?

How to become a super reader

This piece from the Student Hub Live team shares a strategy to remember the information you need to become a super reader.

Information extraction

Most people read the way they were taught, start at the beginning and read to the end, which is great for learning. But as an adult your purpose is not to read the material – it's to extract and remember the information you need.

Reading is like building a jigsaw you need to prepare your mind with the big picture (the corners and edges) before putting all the details in.

Choose a section to read that will take you about 20 minutes. Write down between one and three questions about the reading material. These could be what you're curious about or they could be connected to your assignment. The reason the maximum number of questions is three is because most people's working memory can hold seven things at once, so you have three for the questions and four left to make sense of what you're reading. To help you choose your questions, think about the following:

What am I going to use the information for?
What do I know already?
What do I need to know about the topic?
What don't I need to know?

Then choose your maximum of three questions that are relevant to the purpose (not the ones above). For example if I was reading this article, my questions might be: How do I read better? What techniques can I use? Why do they work?

You've got your brain into hunt mode with the questions – now you need to empty the jigsaw box and look for those important pieces. The next thing you do is to read the summary. You then look through every part of the document but at high speed – about five seconds per page. To help you focus during this part, you can take your middle three fingers down the page as you hunt. If you're doing it on a screen then use the 'page down' button not 'scroll' as it's easier to read static text. What you're doing at this speed is not reading – you're getting an overview of what information is available in the document.

Now you know what's in the document better, you can check back to your questions. Are they still what you want to ask or do they need changing? If you change them, do the quick scan again.

If the material looked really difficult, don't carry on to in-depth reading. Leave it until the next reading session. At the next reading session, look at your questions, read the summary and do the five seconds per page again. Leaving it at least 24 hours allows your brain to work on the information, making it easier to read.

To do your in-depth read (the information extraction part), use a pen or your finger under the text to help you concentrate on the information.

Speeding up your reading

Reading is a skill that can be improved just like any other physical skill, so the first thing is to use a pacer when you read. Nothing complicated – just a pen so you can follow the text as you read (just smoothly run it under the text as you read). Then you can start to push yourself with exercises to increase your speed.

Choose something fairly easy to read.

Use the pacer to read for one minute. Remember where you got to. Now read that same material in 50 seconds, then 40 seconds, then 30 seconds.

If you do this every time you start your study session, you'll be reading about twice as fast in a few weeks.

If you don't have a timer, just push to go faster each set.

Add a third more and read the original part and the new bit in a minute. Then add a third more and read everything again to this third point in a minute. To really challenge yourself, you can do it a fourth time.

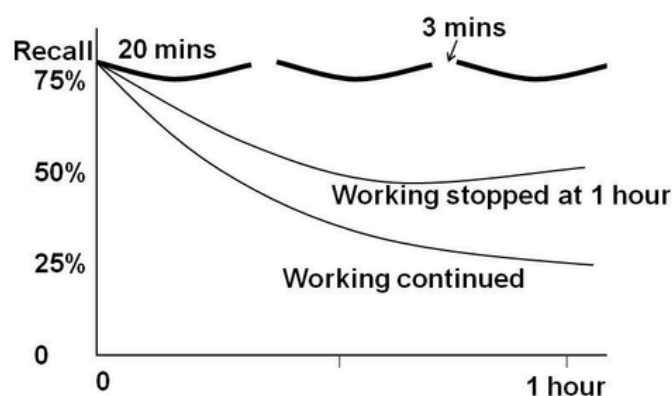
To vary the exercise, read for a minute, then work out how far you got in terms of lines.

Timing your reading

If you work for too long in one go, your attention starts to fall. If your attention is dropping, then so is the amount you can understand and remember. To help keep your focus, short bursts of work of about 20 minutes are ideal.

Have a look at the graph. The bottom curve is where someone was planning to work for two hours but got disturbed after one hour. Their attention was plummeting. The next curve up shows that if they initially set out to work for an hour, they get better attention. The top curves show what happens if you only work for 20 minutes with three minute rests. Your attention is good, so your memory and understanding will be better too. If possible, the three minute rests should involve walking around. If you have to stay seated, try to do little stretches and look away from the reading material.

Best of luck with your course,
Margaret from Student Hub Live



The Volunteering and Representation team

This team works alongside our outstanding student volunteers. They support the creation of new roles, plan training, provide support for all volunteers, and ensure volunteers feel looked after and can perform in their roles.

The team are also tasked with supporting and empowering our Student Representatives, who are key to ensuring that the student voice is heard at all levels of University governance, and are crucial to our strategic objectives. They work hard to create a volunteer community that is welcoming, open and supportive of each other.

The Volunteering team is also responsible for supporting volunteer managers across the Students Association with recruitment training, and the continuous support of volunteers who are looked after by other teams.

Volunteers are at the heart of this organisation, and we wouldn't be able to achieve our goals without student volunteers who dedicate their precious time to the Students Association. Below are some of the reasons why volunteering is important at the Students Association:

- Allows for the student voice to be heard.
- Builds the student community.
- Provides opportunities for students to gain new skills.
- Makes a difference in the education journey of students.
- Helps students discover how the University operates.
- Enhances a feeling of wellbeing.

We have 304 total volunteer roles and 214 active volunteers (students may volunteer

for more than one role). Our student volunteers are from different backgrounds and possess a range of skills and experiences, and importantly are passionate about different interests and hobbies.

Below are some of the achievements which volunteers have been able to make:

- Student Charter with the University.
- Several students in secure environments have been able to complete their studies because of Library Study Volunteers.
- Building community.
- Gaining student voice across various University committees.
- Supporting students at graduation ceremonies.

The Volunteering and Representation team are always seeking new students to get involved with volunteering at the Students Association. This is why we applied (for the second time running) for our Investing in Volunteers accreditation, and are very proud that this accreditation has recently been renewed.

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. It is a six-step process to gain and then keep this award. It is a testament to our commitment to building on (and reviewing) the strong foundation we have created for supporting our volunteers.

Who are the Strategy and Insight team?

The next team we're going to spotlight in this edition of the Hoot Newsletter is the Strategy and Insight team.



As our name suggests, the Strategy and Insight team creates and drives forward the strategy and strategic aims of the Students Association. We have just created our new strategy, and these are the aims within it which we hope to meet and achieve over the next three years.

Our strategic aims

- Create a welcoming environment and champion accessibility for all.
- Increase engagement through evidence-based decision making.
- Enable students to lead, represent and advocate.
- Embrace change to ensure we are future facing and sustainable.

Our values

Welcoming
Accountable
Bold
Adaptable
Sustainable

We are very busy in our team at present and have a range of exciting projects underway. Our Projects Manager, with the help of the amazing wider staff team, recently planned and organised our biennial student Conference. This included organising inspiring speakers and engaging

sessions, organising student debates and voting on Conference resolutions so the Association can make the changes that students want to see.

We have a dedicated staff member who conducts all our important research that feeds the student voice into all parts of the Association. You may have remembered receiving the Annual Membership Survey where we collect student thoughts on a range of topics – this data is then collated and analysed by our Research and Strategy Engagement Officer, and used to guide what services we offer OU students.

In relation to you and other students in secure environments, we want to hear your thoughts on what we're doing. That's why, in our previous issue, we invited you to give your thoughts on things that mattered to you when we were planning our Conference. If you missed that issue, you didn't miss your opportunity to get your voice heard at the Association more generally. Keep an eye out for the Students in Secure Environments Engagement Survey being sent out in the next month.

And on top of all that, we have been organising our Student Leadership Team elections! The Head of Strategy and Insight and the Projects Officer have been working with other members of the Association to organise debates, question & answer sessions and voting, and by the time you read this, we may have a whole new team of student leaders!

What is Neurodiversity and why do we celebrate it?

You may have heard the terms 'Neurodiverse' and 'Neurotypical' used before, but do you know what they mean – or which you are?

Many people think Neurodiversity refers to people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or that it includes people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), but there are actually lots of conditions that fit under this umbrella.

So what does Neurodiversity really mean?

The term was first used in 1998 by sociologist Judy Singer, when writing her sociology honours thesis. She was corresponding with the American journalist Harvey Blume, who went on to use it in an article in *The Atlantic* that same year, which discussed the rise of autism advocacy on the internet and the possible superiority of Neurodiverse brains. The term caught on quickly, resonating especially with the disability advocacy movement and those who were looking for a positive model for autism awareness. Internet forums, online organisations and awareness began to spread greater understanding, and Neurodiversity became the banner under which people with all kinds of neurological processing disorders saw they could advocate for recognition of both their disabilities and their abilities.

Neurodiversity recognises that other people have brains that function differently to our own, or to what is accepted as the expected, or 'Neurotypical', way. This includes people with ASD and ADHD, and also Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia and Dysnomia. Then there are

Sensory Processing Disorders, including Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), Visual Processing Disorder (VPD) and Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). There is Hyperacusis, Misophonia, Hyperlexia and Meares-Irlen Syndrome. Synaesthesia, OCD and Tourette's Syndrome (including other tic disorders) are also often included within Neurodiversity, and many of these conditions often co-exist, or exist alongside conditions such as Fibromyalgia, ME/CFS, migraines, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, CPTSD, hEDS, and diseases affecting the immune system.

Neurodiversity considers these conditions different, not damaged, ways of processing information – but does that stop them being disabilities? Not in a world set up for Neurotypical people, no! But these are not diseases or conditions to be cured – they are disorders that others should accept, and make accommodations for. If you're Neurotypical, your awareness of and allyship for Neurodiversity can help make a better world for everyone.

How can we celebrate and accommodate for neurodiversity?

Think about what will make a better environment for the people you see getting left out, so they can take part in activities and social events without feeling excluded or anxious. If they don't want to participate, that's fine too, of course. It's never a reason not to keep inviting someone to join in or

come along. Or maybe there are other events or types of activities they might like to do with you? Hanging out binge-watching TV series and eating snacks is also great (soft snacks in a dark room with the sound down and the subtitles on, wrapped in fluffy blankets). You may find a different way to look at the world, and appreciate how you process sensory input yourself.

Or perhaps, you've just realised that there's a name for how you think, and you're not alone after all? There are groups and resources out there, including the OU Disability Support team. Find out how you can find help, and unlock your strengths along with finding the support on offer.

None of us can know how unique our consciousness is, until we try to understand someone else's. How we think, and how our brains interpret the world around us, is part of who we are. It's easy to assume everyone else sees the same shade of blue, thinks in a constant narrative flow, or can visualise objects in their imagination as

detailed 3D solids that they can take apart or bring to life. Instead, we live in a world of people with face blindness, no visual memory, or a constant musical soundtrack to their lives. There are new ways of processing our environment being found all the time, and there is no reason to let any of them be a handicap. Autistic people are finding success in a society that accepts them for who they are, and nurtures the talents they have, rather than trying to repress their 'non-typical' behaviours. Dyslexia is now spotted early in children's schooling, and can often come with skills in spatial awareness. Tourette's and OCD are seen beyond their stereotypes as unique insights into how the brain functions, and people with hyperacusis and Meares-Irlen can be helped to deal with their external environment.

Today, Neurodiversity really is something worth celebrating!

(The writer of this article is proudly part of the ASD, Dyspraxic, APD, Hyperacusic and Hyperlexic communities.)



Imposter syndrome: a university student's nightmare

Imposter syndrome is the undeniable proof that, even when our academic achievements are right there in front of us, we can still be our own worst enemy.

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you feel like you don't quite fit in because of the impressive accomplishments of those around you? Maybe you've doubted whether you truly deserve to be part of this group, thinking that someone else must be more suited to be in your spot? Perhaps you're even fearful that you might be "exposed" as someone who doesn't deserve to be there in the first place? Under certain circumstances, this experience is known as "imposter syndrome". It's a common phenomenon that can impact anyone, regardless of their achievements.

According to a 2023 report by MR Huecker (et al.), imposter syndrome often affects highly accomplished individuals who, despite their success, still struggle with feeling like they aren't as competent as they should be. It's a feeling of inadequacy that can be difficult to shake, even when there's clear evidence that these individuals have done the work and do belong. Unlike humility, which it can often be mistaken for, imposter syndrome can affect mental health. Humility involves acknowledging one's limitations and maintaining a healthy modesty about one's achievements. On the other hand, imposter syndrome is characterised by a fear of being perceived as a fraud, despite evidence of success or significant milestones. This can then possibly progress into something like anxiety or depression.

As a university student, this feeling of

imposterism may become evident throughout your academic journey. With so many students who may share their grade results or their extensive knowledge of a subject, it's easy to feel like you don't measure up. As a student, imposter syndrome can cause you to:

- Avoid asking questions to your tutor, via your Education Officer.
- Not receive praise or positive feedback well from your tutor or those around you. You may find yourself ignoring any feedback that is given.
- Cause you to isolate yourself from speaking with anyone regarding your studies.
- Have the tendency to overwork or procrastinate.
- Feel more fearful or stressed out nearly every time you achieve a goal or a good grade. This is due to the thought of potentially failing in the future.

Have you ever found yourself reacting this way? I definitely did. When I was a student with The Open University, there were many times when I wanted to participate in conversations with my tutor, but often felt like I didn't have enough confidence to do so. This feeling was constant, always like I had to be ten times more knowledgeable than I was to be worthy of contributing.

It wasn't until I worked on my module assessment that I was able to break free from my own insecurities. It was then that I realised I was in the right place.

Overcoming imposter syndrome isn't easy, and it takes time to learn how to officially make peace with it. In my case, it wasn't until I completed an assessment that I felt comfortable sharing my knowledge and feeling good about it. When I graduated, I was also able to reflect on my years as a student, and it made me realise that I was always capable and "good enough", despite always having a nagging feeling of being inadequate. You might experience similar periods of confidence and doubt throughout your time as a student. (Even after!)

Here are some tips on how to deal with imposter syndrome:

- Reframe your negative thoughts into productive ones: Instead of focusing on that nasty self-doubt, remind yourself that you deserve to be where you are and to give yourself grace! If you can, try to make a gratitude list or a list of positive affirmations to give yourself praise!
- Celebrate your achievements, even the smallest of milestones: Acknowledge and celebrate the small successes. It's important to recognise all of your accomplishments, even if they're not considered to be big milestones.
- Build a balanced relationship with your studies: Avoid overworking or procrastinating as much as you can. Progress at a pace that allows you to comprehend your studies and balance it out with time to relax.

- Avoid comparing yourself to others: Everyone is on their own academic journey, and it's essential to focus on your progress and growth. Realistically, you're never going to stop learning, and neither are the people you might be comparing yourself to.
- Participate and engage: Take ten seconds of courage to ask questions. Your voice and presence matter, and engaging with others can not only boost your confidence but inspire those who may feel similarly to you.
- Seek support: If you're struggling with imposter syndrome, consider talking about your feelings with a trusted individual or seeking anonymous support through organisations like Samaritans.

Remember, you're amazing, and you deserve to own your achievements!



Photo: Canva

If you have low mental health, talk to someone; it could be a friend or family member or an organisation such as Samaritans. You may also have access to a Samaritans Listener. These are prisoners trained by Samaritans who can provide confidential support to fellow prisoners.

A student submission on mental health

A neurodiverse form of yelling “Help, I don’t know how to start to finish my MSc in Global Development?” while supposedly serving sabbatical!

To summarise my standpoint based on a lifetime of institutional discrimination and negative bias, I reflect on a recent prolonged experience. I am using the lens to answer a question on my mind and through which I hope to attract peer support; professional insight; alternate perspective; or even McKenzie advocacy from students, faculty and patrons in fields of human rights, politics, crime and justice, psychology and/or psychiatry.

What have I benefitted from my institution?

In the 23 months (December 2020 – October 2022) residing here (so this public ring-fenced-funded vanity programme could claim 24 months of intervention off a SiSE), I have been able to develop greater depth of understanding my schemas (Dr Freud’s “Ego”, on LSD-? / Logos Sychoph Demos). I have learned about my personality’s functional maladaptive modes and how these communicate unhelpful thoughts to my ‘vulnerable child’ (e.g. enraged mode, punitive mode and critical mode etc). In addition to understanding how the brain responds to trauma (an emerging field in US custodial Sychoph {sic}), I learned that trauma triggers the ‘security guard’ (amygdala) which then leads me into fight/flight/freeze/appease mode which prevents any rational ‘healthy adult’ response in a situation (apparently).

Furthermore, my lay-developed understanding of the amygdala (or more thoroughly, the pituitary gland) is the other

name for the limbic system of the human brain-body, I concede this is the emotionally-driven core of the brain which lends to any physical response to a stimula, as emotions cause behaviour. It would be conjectured to stipulate psychic function of this limbic system is formed at the cerebellum cortex found at the lower part of the brain. In any case, the perfect but so misunderstood ‘primitive’ function of the amygdala enables sixth sense instinctual responsiveness to any situation. Particularly when a person invests, dedicates and inculcates this ‘security guard’ to act through a ‘healthy adult’, even given any traumatic event. This is suggested as occurring as developing ‘autopilot’ modes through neurolinguistic programming of the ‘computer’ section from the ‘Chimp Paradox’ part of the brain. I consider the development of an ‘autopilot’ is the programming of the amygdala.

Nevertheless, I learned to appease the volume of bullying, and learned to freeze in the face of psychological abuse. I also experience that my conflict management is commonly to avoid conflict (flight) and that when engaging in conflict resolution, I am perceived and projected as someone who acts “entitled” or “acting narcissistic, nor valuing others’ (flight) feelings”. However, I learned that I am also empathic and supportive of others, that I am interdependent with others. This in my view contradicts the juxtaposition framing my personality presentation as “a narcissistic psychopathic complex”. Not bad for a

Dyslexic, Dyscalculic, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, Bipolar post-grad.

So, how do I begin my final year MSc module, given the psychosomatic pressures of a very elitist Criminal Justice fraternity which derogates individuals' pursuit of rehabilitation? To all my Open Alumni, Holla Back!

NB / PS:

My opinion is that this institution is part of the last decade's deployment of the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) pathway, in the English and Welsh Criminal Justice Services. The OPD is a brainchild

following the wholly failed and abusive Dangerous Severe Personality Disorder (DSPD) units which were ended, quite rightly, not soon enough. The OPD (in my opinion and service user experience) is a plaster on a wound which often misdiagnoses and thereafter is coercive to the ill-treatment of vulnerable prisoner populations, with mental health illnesses often being minimised.

This article reflects the opinions of the student in the secure environment author, and does not necessarily represent the view of the Students Association.

How Bad Are Bananas? Quiz answers

- 1) A bowl of porridge made with cow's milk with 800g CO₂e, compared to just 600g.
- 2) 1 litre of bottled water (400g CO₂e vs. just 300g CO₂e).
- 3) A pair of trainers – although at 8 kg CO₂e, their emissions are the same as 2 kg of rice!
- 4) The South Africa Football World Cup (2.8 million tonnes CO₂e – almost 3x that of Mount Etna in a year!).
- 5) Owning a pet goldfish (25 kg CO₂e) compared to just 15 kg CO₂e for a low energy light bulb (although a standard 100-watt incandescent bulb would raise this to a whopping 300 kg CO₂e!).
- 6) A pint of cow's milk (1.1 kg CO₂e) – the average desktop computer uses just 50g CO₂e an hour.
- 7) 1 kg of strawberries from Scotland (1.7 kg CO₂e compared to 1.2kg CO₂e – so close!).
- 8) 1 kg of cheddar cheese (11.8 kg CO₂e) – 2.7 times more than the Icelandic cod.
- 9) A paperback book (1 kg CO₂e) – you would need to watch TV for six hours (1.02kg CO₂e) to match this.
- 10) 1 kg of vine cherry tomatoes grown out of season in the UK (28.2 kg CO₂e vs. 0.67 kg CO₂e).

Want to study with The Open University?

The Open University has changed the lives of more than 2 million people, bringing them new knowledge, skills, interests and inspiration, and helping them achieve goals. If you have picked up this newsletter but are not a student, then read on, as the SiSE (Students in Secure Environments) team write about where to start.

Why The 'Open' University?

The reason we're called The Open University is that we are open to people based on their potential rather than their prior qualifications. You simply need the determination to succeed. Whatever the change you want to make, whatever your goal, it starts here.

Where to start – Access modules

If you haven't studied at university level before, or it's been a long time since you last studied, you may prefer to begin with an Access module. They are specially designed to help you find out what it's like to study with the OU, get a taste of a subject area, develop your study skills, and build your confidence. Evidence indicates that students who start with an Access module are more likely to be successful when they advance to Stage 1 of their undergraduate qualification.

There are four Access modules to choose from:

- Arts and languages
- Business and law
- Psychology, social science and wellbeing
- Science, technology and maths

These modules are 30 weeks long, starting in February, May or October. All study materials are provided, including books and printed materials. Most students study for about nine hours a week, and work is

assessed through short written assignments and other smaller pieces of assessed work. There is no exam.

Funding Access modules

There are various methods of funding, but in England and Wales, you may be able to study an Access module free of charge through special funding arrangements with the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET).

Although there are no OU entry requirements, PET requires that you have Level 2 Literacy and (in some cases) Level 2 Numeracy before funding Higher Education studies. In Northern Ireland or Scotland, your OU national office will be able to advise on the funding available in your nation.

Undergraduate qualifications

If you feel confident about going straight into one of our undergraduate qualifications, then you can choose from a broad range of subject areas:

- Arts and humanities
- Business and management
- Environment
- Health and social care
- Languages
- Law
- Mathematics
- Psychology
- Science
- Social sciences
- Sport, fitness and coaching

Many undergraduate courses do not require any prior knowledge of the subject, but you will normally be expected to show that you can study successfully at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 2 or its equivalent. In Scotland, you must have studied successfully at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6 in a relevant subject, such as English (Scottish Highers equate to SCQF Level 6). In the Republic of Ireland, you must have studied successfully to Leaving Certificate level or QQI Level 5 in at least two subjects.

Funding undergraduate qualifications

The arrangements for the funding of higher education are different across the four nations of the UK and internationally. The fees and funding available to you are based on where you're ordinarily resident, rather than on the location of your prison. Your education department can provide you with further information about funding options.

Interested in studying with us?

Please contact your education department for further advice and information about all OU study.



OU Regional Manager (right) congratulates a student at graduation. Photo: OU SiSE team

Prison graduation ceremonies – a celebration of success

Many people would perhaps be surprised to find out that prisoners have the possibility of studying towards university-level qualifications. Even fewer people will know that upon successful completion of their studies, students can request a graduation ceremony to celebrate that achievement.

These ceremonies are hosted in the prison and the Order of Ceremony follows the same formalities as those of our public graduation ceremonies. The graduates get to wear academic robes denoting their new status, and are presented with their qualifications. Usually attending the ceremonies are prison staff, OU staff and other OU students in prison – often families and friends can also be present.

Photographs are taken, and the prison frequently provides a buffet for guests and staff.

How to request a prison graduation ceremony

To request an Open University prison graduation ceremony to celebrate your academic achievements, you simply need to contact your education department and complete an Expression of Interest form. The information provided will help the education department and the OU's SiSE team to facilitate and organise your ceremony. These events can take time to arrange, so make sure you submit your request as soon as you receive confirmation of your award from the University.



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 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 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

Your Students Association will:

- Empower a student voice that is strong and effective in representing the diversity of our members.
- Work collaboratively with the University to ensure that students are at the centre of decision-making.
- Build an inclusive community which nurtures a sense of pride and belonging.
- Provide relevant, quality services which enhance the student experience.

Our values

Welcoming - Accountable - Bold - Adaptable - Sustainable

Write an article for the next issue!

If you would like to contribute an article for the next issue in December, then we would love to feature your writing. You can submit articles of up to 400 words on any topic of your choice. Send it to us using the pre-paid envelope we have enclosed, addressed to: The Hoot (SiSE edition), OU Students Association, PO Box 397, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6BE.

Alternatively, articles can be emailed to us at: oustudents-support@open.ac.uk

Deadline for submissions: Monday, 30 September 2024