

RESPONSE TO THE LAW (UNDERGRADUATE) BOARD OF STUDIES STUDENT CONSULTATION (NOVEMBER 2020) ON INDUCTION TO THE OU LAW SCHOOL

SUMMARY

This is a response to the Law Board of Studies consultation on Student Induction to the OU Law School, which took place between 9th and 23rd November 2020.

Purpose of the consultation

The forum was set up to obtain feedback from students on various aspects of the induction experience. Students who had started W101 (An Introduction to Law) in October 2020 were invited to participate. An important aim of the consultation was to inform the development of the new level 1 LLB modules starting in October 2021.

In spite of additional promotion, comments made by students were notably fewer than in previous consultations. Because of this, it was decided part-way through the consultation period to set up a short questionnaire as an alternative to posting forum comments. This attracted more student engagement and 81 students took part.

Details of Student Participation

Consultation forum

- The forum was open to all students who began studying W101 in October 2020. It was promoted by email, on Tutor Group Forums, on the LLB forum, via the Law Study Home page and during events taking place for Student Voice Week.
- Posts by students: 23
- No. of students posting at least once: 14
- Total ratings (likes and favourites): 4
- Estimated readers (minimum): 77

Forum threads were set up to cover the following areas:

- Initial tutorials
- Induction materials
- The wider OU community
- Tutors and the Tutor Group Forum
- Student Hub Live FBL Freshers Event

Questionnaire

81 Students responded to the questionnaire.

Students were asked about:

- Their concerns when starting the course
- The induction materials they used
- The thing that helped them settle into their studies the most
- Whether there was anything additional that would have helped them during the induction period.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Consultation forum

Overall, the comments posted to the forum were positive. Students mentioned that they had found student services helpful and that the initial contact with tutors was both reassuring and informative. There was, however, some variation in the ease at which students had been able to contact their tutor and the use of Tutor Group Forums.

The induction materials were felt to be useful in building confidence, in particular the 12 introductory steps to law, and the introductory Adobe Connect and Student Hub Live sessions were well received.

In respect of tutorials, it was mentioned that the instructions on using Adobe Connect could become a little repetitive when this was explained in successive sessions. There was also some confusion about whether tutorial materials needed to be accessed in advance. Additional information regarding the various types of assessment would also have been welcome. One student commented that a glossary with links throughout the materials would have helped with unfamiliar legal terminology.

Students reported that there was lots of information communicated about the wider OU community and, if this was not communicated directly, online information was easily accessible. One student did comment that it would have been useful to receive additional written information on the function and purpose of the OU Students Association and the OU Student Law Society, although it was noted that this was required as she could not attend the available live session.

It was commented that students would benefit from studying W101 before W102 as the materials on W101 help to build the skills required for W102.

Questionnaire

Students were asked four questions, the responses to which are summarised below.

1. Which of the following concerns did you have when you started studying with the OU? (tick as many boxes as you want)

Response	Number	% of students taking part
No Concerns	5	6%
I have not studied for a long time and am worried about getting back into formal education	45	56%
Will I be able to juggle study with my other commitments?	49	60%
Will I be able to get help if I need it?	29	36%
I just don't know where to start	19	23%
Will everyone else be better prepared than me?	40	49%
I won't have an opportunity to meet other people on the course	10	12%
Other (unspecified)	2	2%

2. Which of the following did you use/attend during the induction period (tick as many boxes as you want):

Response	Number	% of students taking part
Induction materials on the OU Study Home page	65	80%
Student Hub Live	17	21%
Induction tutorials on your module	56	69%
Student Services Team	7	9%
Phone call with your tutor	28	35%
Tutor group forum	57	70%
Welcome forum	50	62%

3. If you had to pick one thing that helped you to understand/settle into your module the most, what would it be?

This question allowed for free-text and students mentioned:

- Tutor calls and welcome emails
- The welcome forum
- Tutorial time
- The week-by-week structure of the module website
- Student discussion groups using social media
- The induction materials on the Law Study Home page
- Prior experience of the OU, including Open Learn courses
- Information on study skills
- Prior reading undertaken on introductory law
- Use of printed materials
- The website and resources
- YouTube content and Student Hub Live

4. If there was anything missing from the induction process that would have helped you, please tell us.

This question allowed for free-text and students mentioned:

- Tutor did not take the time to get to know the students' circumstances
- Library sessions felt a bit fast-paced
- Access to the tutorial materials was initially difficult
- No forum was pointed out
- Some students would have liked to receive printed materials/books
- Advance tutorials to become familiar with the course materials and Adobe Connect would have helped
- More contact was needed with Disables Student Services
- Some students found the materials on the website difficult to navigate
- Availability of some reading before signing up to the course to assess whether law is the right subject for a student to study
- Course materials to be available earlier
- A straightforward path to work through
- Induction materials seemed a little overwhelming with lots of reading
- FAQs with links to important sites/documents would have helped
- Clearer referencing instructions
- An overview of how the module will be presented including the types of interactive activities to be used
- A face-to-face event

FULL RESPONSE

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
There was some variation in contact by tutors during the induction period.	<p>All tutors are required to contact students in the initial weeks of the course and offer the opportunity for a one-to-one phone call/online meeting.</p> <p>Tutors should also post a message on their tutor group forum, as well as sending a welcome email to their group/s introducing themselves, giving contact details and indicating when they are generally available. They should also set out how long it</p>	<p>Tutors will be reminded at module briefings that they must send an initial email to students and post their contact details on their tutor group forum. They will also be reminded of the requirement to offer students the opportunity for a one-to-one conversation. These requirements will continue to be incorporated into tutor module guidance for all new LLB modules.</p>

will generally take to respond to emails.

Students have the opportunity to attend an online drop-in session, either with their tutor or an alternative tutor, at the start of the course. This is to give an overview of the course, allow students to ask questions and to ensure that the Adobe Connect setup is working for students before the substantive tutorials begin.

<p>The start of the tutorials became repetitive in relation to the instructions on using Adobe Connect and this used up time which could have been spent on substantive content. An advance tutorial on this would have been good so that it was not necessary to go through this again each session.</p>	<p>Adobe Connect guidance is built into the drop-in session at the start of the course. Following this, tutors should check with the group whether there is anyone present at the tutorial who needs guidance on Adobe Connect before starting each session. Tutors do not need to go through this if all tutorial participants are familiar with the setup.</p>	<p>Tutorials for the new LLB will explore giving instructions of various aspects of Adobe Connect as the need arises throughout the tutorial rather than starting each session with an explanation of the platform.</p>
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<p>It was not always clear how and when to access the tutorial materials.</p>	<p>Tutors should send all students who have signed up for a tutorial an email around a week in advance of the session. This will contain any materials required for the session if applicable. However, at level 1, the majority of tutorial sessions do not require specific preparation in advance and the reading students have done for the course should be sufficient to enable participation. Where a student requires materials in advance as a reasonable adjustment, the tutor will be made aware of this via the student profile. Following each tutorial, tutors will post the slides and any other materials on their tutor group forum.</p>	<p>An explanation of the availability of tutorial materials will be built into the initial drop-in session, which provides an overview of the course. Tutors will also be reminded at the briefing to let students know how/when materials will be made available.</p>
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<p>Helpful additional resources could have included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FAQs with links to important information and pages. 2. A clear pathway to work through in the induction period. 3. Directions to the forum. 4. A Glossary with key legal terminology. 5. Clear referencing instructions at the outset. 6. An overview of how the module will be presented, including the types of 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This idea has been put forward for development. 2. This is something that can be presented as a step-by-step to induction together with the FAQs. A video is also planned for students who are starting the induction process to show them the resources and induction pathway. 3. This could be included as an FAQ. 4. We do not include a glossary of terms on the law website materials because we want to encourage students to make use of the 	<p>Discussions are underway to put together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a FAQ document containing an induction pathway and links to key documents/pages. – A step-by-step induction pathway – A video for new students guiding them through the induction process and resources. <p>Students will be signposted to this in early correspondence.</p>
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interactivities students will encounter.	law dictionaries in the law library. However, these resources could be signposted from the FAQs.	
7. A face-to-face event.	<p>5. We do not provide referencing instructions as part of induction as they are not required at this early stage and students have enough to get-to-grips with. Referencing instructions are built into the course later but students can make use of the OU Law School Undergraduate Assessment Guide at any time.</p> <p>6. To be considered as something to include in the initial tutorial session.</p> <p>7. Face-to-face events are currently on hold due to the pandemic. However, we aim to reintroduce these as soon as possible.</p>	
In advance of signing up for the course, a reading list would help potential students to decide whether law is the right subject for them.	This is not relevant to induction materials as it relates to a request for materials before students have signed up to the LLB. However, students can make use of free Open Learn courses in law.	
Students would like course materials to be made available earlier.	Course materials cannot be made available earlier as they require updating annually and the law team must fit in with schedules for the editing, updating and release of materials.	
Students would like to receive printed materials/books.	All law modules are set up as online modules. Some modules have supporting textbooks but this is not the case at level 1. All materials are available online and are produced in a way which allows for student interaction with the materials. No plans are in place to change this delivery method and it is not felt to be advantageous to students to move to printed materials. However, materials are available in a variety of forms (word, pdf, Daisy books for audio and as eBooks) to give students options as to how they would like to access these. Furthermore, where students require printed materials as a reasonable adjustment then these will be provided.	
Not all students were clear on the role of the OU Students Association and the OU Student Law Society and how these organisations are relevant to them.	Representatives from the OU Students Association and the OU Student Law Society took part in live and recorded induction events. This resulted in a large increase in	The OU Students Association is arranging for additional information to be made available. A featured post on all SST forums across all faculties has been agreed.

membership of the Student Law Society this year. That said, it is recognised that not all students were able to attend all induction events.

Students fed back that it would have been helpful to study W101 before W102.	This is recognised by the law team as being the best mode of study and many students choose to stagger the start of these two modules. SST also provide advice to students on this.	The new LLB will allow for students to start both level 1 modules in either October or February, which will allow for greater flexibility to stagger the start of modules. This will not be compulsory as engagement with students led the law team to conclude that students would prefer the option to study two level 1 modules concurrently if this suited them best. Consequently, module teams are working together to ensure that skills are developed as required where students do need to study the two level 1 modules together.
The library sessions were a little fast to follow at time.		This has been fed back.
More contact with Disabled Students Services in the induction period would have helped.		This has been fed back.

Date: 22 February 2021