

RESPONSE TO STUDENT CONSULTATION ON BA in ARTS AND HUMANITIES (R14)

Summary

This is a response to the student consultation on the multi-disciplinary qualification BA (Hons) Arts and Humanities (R14). This took place from 24 February to 6 March 2023 on the [Arts and Humanities Board of Studies Student Consultation Forum - February 2023](#).

All active and stalled students currently registered on R14 were invited to take part. There were 497 posts.

R14 is a wide-ranging programme of study and one of the School's most popular and successful degrees. The purpose of the consultation was to learn more about the experience of students as they work their way through the programme. The Board of Studies was particularly interested to hear about the reasons for choosing to study this qualification, whether students had changed their mind about the subjects they wished to study, how important it is to be able to meet with other students on the same qualification, and the experience of assessment. As R14 is unique in combining the study of different disciplines, the Board was also interested to hear views on interdisciplinary study.

The forum was divided into four main threads, which addressed the following questions:

1. **Motivation:** Why did you choose to study R14 Arts and Humanities (rather than a single/joint honours degree)?
2. **Pathways:** Did you have a clear idea of the subjects you wanted to study from the start? Have you changed your mind? Are there any choices you would like to see? Would you be interested in studying an interdisciplinary module at later levels?
3. **Support:** Is it important for you to feel part of a community of students – and, if so, how would you describe that community? Do you feel supported as an R14 student? Do you use the Arts and Humanities StudyHome website, including the forum and careers resources?
4. **Assessment:** Do you feel that assessment at Level 1 prepared you for assessment at Level 2? What was your experience of choosing between disciplines in assessment at Level 1? What do you think of having the opportunity to study an interdisciplinary module assessed by the completion of a project?

A Welcome thread along with an additional thread, set up by a student, also gathered views on the experience of new students, in particular at Level 1.

As part of the consultation, students were invited to complete a survey in which they were asked whether or not they agreed with a set of statements reflecting some of the views on the forum. A total of 76 students took part. The survey shows a fairly even split between those students who knew what they would like to study on registering and those who did not know. Even though more students know what they would like to study on registering (59%) and choose options in advance (68%), many students change their mind about modules as go along (54%) or have not got a clear idea at the start (41%). The majority of students feel that they have enough support when moving between disciplines (75%). In terms of community, students

regard connecting with others on the same module (77%) as more important than connecting to those on the same qualification (however, 56% thought that was also important). There is an interest in studying interdisciplinary modules at levels beyond Level 1 (66%), being assessed by an independent piece of work on such a module (63%) and a clear wish to be able to choose between disciplines in assessment on multidisciplinary modules (85%). Most respondents wanted the name of their degree to include the discipline they have studied (74%).

Although not within the initial scope of the consultation, students raised some concerns about their experience of tuition, including concerns about low attendance at tutorials and forums (compared with relatively high participation in non-OU environments) and how online events did not offer the equivalent experience of face-to-face events (although the flexibility of online events was appreciated). These concerns have been noted.

The forum was moderated by Richard Jones (Deputy Director of Teaching, Arts and Humanities), Beth Michael-Fox (Associate Lecturer), Emily Chambers (Associate Lecturer), and Hannah Lavery (Director of Teaching, Arts and Humanities).

Full response

You said	OU response	Next steps
You value the breadth and variety of R14 and the opportunity it provides to discover and explore unexpected strengths and subjects of interest.	There are no plans to change the breadth or variety that forms part of R14. We will continue to help students to follow their own interests and provide opportunities to do 'something different'.	
Many of you have changed your minds about what you want to study and were pleased to find that other students had also changed their minds. You value the flexibility and 'openness' of the qualification.	We will continue to support the flexibility of the qualification and improve the visibility of the choices available.	We will feature case studies of students on this qualification on the Arts and Humanities StudyHome website to show the different ways of progressing through R14 and the flexibility it offers.
You appreciated the way Level 1 modules had opened up new areas of study, sometimes prompting you to change your study intentions.	It is good to hear that our Level 1 modules have inspired new directions for study.	We will review the help we give students in making choices at Level 1, including the visibility of the R14 degree.
You thought that some of the language used to describe R14 (e.g. 'discipline', 'interdisciplinary') was unclear for new students.	This is carefully introduced within Level 1 modules but we will check the language used outside of modules and in public-facing material.	We will review the way that R14 is described on the Arts and Humanities StudyHome website and in the OU prospectus.

<p>Most of you want your subject specialisms included within the name of your degree, e.g. 'BA (Hons) Arts and Humanities (History)'.</p>	<p>Subject specialisms are currently included in the name of the R14 degree. We will continue to offer named pathways and make the options more visible.</p>	<p>We will provide more clarity on named pathways and how subject specialisms are incorporated into the degree name.</p>
<p>You were interested in the possibility of studying interdisciplinary modules at Levels 2 or 3, including a module assessed by a project.</p>	<p>We will continue to explore the opportunities for introducing interdisciplinary study at Levels 2 and 3.</p>	<p>Your feedback will be fed into annual curriculum planning discussions.</p>
<p>Some of you would like more help with academic writing skills at Level 1, especially where your previous study was in an area other than arts and humanities.</p>	<p>A new Writing Centre will be added to the Arts and Humanities StudyHome website this summer, which will provide a single point of reference for guidance on academic writing.</p>	<p>Links to the new Writing Centre will be sent as part of course materials and introductory module emails for those starting 23J modules.</p>
<p>Many of you felt that community was important but did not necessarily feel part of a community of students.</p>	<p>The Arts and Humanities StudyHome website is intended to provide one way of bringing arts and humanities students together. It is available all year round and is particularly useful to keep in touch when you are not on a module.</p>	<p>We will continue to raise the profile of the Arts and Humanities StudyHome website, specifically the forums and live events for arts and humanities students.</p>
<p>Although you generally feel supported as an R14 student, you would like to see improved signposting to materials relating to multi-disciplinary study.</p>	<p>At the end of a module, students are usually directed to materials relevant to their subject of study on the Arts and Humanities StudyHome website.</p>	<p>We will review end-of-module communications in order to incorporate specific guidance for R14 students.</p>
<p>You thought that more could be done to help set expectations for students new to the OU or Higher Education.</p>	<p>A new student induction is planned for students on A111 from 23J. A new technical induction session has been piloted and will be embedded in tuition at Level 1 from 23J.</p>	<p>We have been collecting views on induction materials through a questionnaire on the Arts and Humanities StudyHome website. We will add your feedback to this ongoing review.</p>