Student Consultation Response

Student Consultation Meetings 2023

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Summary:

Student Consultation is a central part of the ongoing relationship between the University and its student body. As a part of this, a series of 10 consultation meetings were conducted in Spring 2023, 6 of which were face-to-face and 4 were online. In total 247 students participated, and The Open University and Open University Students Association are very grateful to all students who got involved.

A summary of student feedback on the three discussion topics, Retention, Induction and the Careers and Employability Service, was completed in Summer 2023. The summaries have been considered by a wide range of staff members involved in improving the student experience in these areas and beyond and is being used to inform further action.

Below is an update on some of what's happening as a result of your feedback.

Student Induction:

This is a response to the consultation on **Student Induction** which took place as part of the Student Consultation Meetings.

The OU is undertaking a project to improve students' induction experience and preparedness for study. The project entails the development of a new induction website and induction activities to be presented to students 4-6 weeks before their module start date. We hope that this will help students ease their transition to their learning environments earlier and enable them to feel more informed, supported, and confident in their preparedness for successful study. The new induction experience will be piloted across 7 modules in August 2023.

Student feedback was sought to inform priority areas for focus within a new induction experience and to help shape and develop new resources. Students were asked a broad range of questions to ascertain what they feel were the most important components to prepare them for study and what aspects they feel might be missing in existing content.

Retention Question 1: *At the very beginning, what one word would you have used to describe your first couple of weeks of studying with the OU?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Students feel excited but also overwhelmed,	The university has several strategic	Feedback will be shared with Student Systems

nervous and daunted by during their early study experience.	programmes looking at early student experience and it's important that we can offer support and address communication accordingly to alleviate concerns, offer more support and not place too much on the cognitive load on to students when they first start their studies.	Portfolio, the teams designing student communications and into the Induction project.

Retention Question 2: *What do you know now, about studying with the OU, that you wish you'd known at the start? What would be your advice to students starting out?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Students felt they wish they had known more about how to plan their studies and would recommend this is advice which should be	This feedback has provided a good steer on what resources should be prioritised as part of a future induction experience.	A new induction website, OU Ready has been developed for new students to complete before their module start. The website

passed on to new students before they start their studies.

Students also felt that they should be encouraged to find out areas of support, understand and navigate resources available and be proactive in engaging in tutorials and community spaces.

consists of 4 units, across 15 hours of study, and covers what OU study will be like, what to expect in terms of support and introduces some of the key skills students will need to succeed.

Unit 2 gives advice and guidance on finding time and places to study and sources of support available.

Unit 1 highlights opportunities for students to engage with student communities.

Unit 3 highlight the importance of participating in Tutorials.

At the end of this induction course students will be much more familiar with and be to navigate to the resource which will help them succeed in their studies.

Induction Question 1: *How many of you remember induction activities when you started with the OU. Did the induction activities give you everything you needed to get started at the OU?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Over 40% of students told us they don't remember any induction activities before they started studies.	It is very important that we make more visible induction opportunities and support on offer before students start study.	The OU Ready website has been piloted with 7 key entry/level 1 modules which is being signposted from within induction emails and on

	We are looking to introduce a formal induction period 6-4 week before modules start date to give **new** students the opportunity to prepare together and on a level playing field.	the front of the student's StudentHome homepage.

Induction Question 2: *To what extent did the induction-related information and guidance you received at the OU support you in feeling ready to start your studies?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Students told us that orientation and use of online tools were most beneficial to them in preparation for their studies.

A significant proportion of students struggled with IT requirements. | When developing induction resources and sources of support it is important that we help students understand the online tools and IT they will need to become familiar with. | Unit 1 of the OU Ready induction course introduces the students to the main online environments they will engage with as part of their studies. It also signposts them to the Online Computing Guide which provides more |

		information on online tools.
		Unit 2 signposts the students to the computer helpdesk as a source of support to help with IT issues.
They also highlighted that more clarity was needed on the level of time commitment needed for study	It is imperative that The OU makes it clear to the student the level of time commitment expected for OU study.	Unit 2 of OU Ready provides advice on time management which includes advice from a tutor and a student.
	This is not only relates to induction experience but is also applicable to advise students while making their course choice.	This feedback will also be passed on to the Student Systems Portfolio who are reviewing the advice and guidance given to potential students before they sign up and register for study.

A significant proportion of students valued a welcome/introduction message from their tutor.	All tutors should be emailing students to introduce themselves and welcome them to their course.	
A significant proportion of students thought there was too much information and they felt overwhelmed	When developing an induction experience consideration needs to be given to the capacity of the student to engage with induction resources and needs to be paced accordingly.	The OU Ready website module has been designed to completed in 15 hours over 4-6 weeks.
13% of students told us that the induction information guidance they received was not helpful.	When evaluating the induction pilots we would be looking to improve on this figure.	This question has been incorporated into the survey evaluation for the pilots.

Induction Question 3: *What activities should there be for students who register before the final date for registration?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
24% of students would have liked the opportunity to engage earlier with their module materials	The new induction experience being developed and piloted currently run between 6-4 weeks before module start date. In most cases module websites are open two weeks before start date.	Unit 3 of the OU Ready website provides an overview of a standard module website and encourages students to become familiar with their own module website (if open)
A significant proportion of students also wanted opportunities to meet with fellow students and their tutor	Promoting student community and providing opportunities for students to connect with each other and their tutors is important for student to establish a sense of belonging.	Unit 1 of the OU Ready website introduces student to opportunities for connecting with others. Phase two of the Induction project (for launch in August 2024) will look at how we can provide more opportunities to connect and share experiences.

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Induction Question 4: *What should be the main priority for the OU's induction provision?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
20% of students told us that Increase in sense of belonging and community should be a main priority within the new induction	The design of OU induction experience has been mindful to incorporate all these elements at varying degrees.	Follow-up evaluation will check that students feel they have been adequately covered.

A later phase of the induction project will consider what additional activities to highlight wellbeing support |

Question Learning Outcomes:

Students were asked to respond to the Learning Outcomes below and asked to suggest the most important areas that would support these and if there was anything missing.

The Learning Outcomes for Induction

	Students were asked to respond to the Learning Outcomes below and asked to suggest the most important areas that would support these and if there was anything missing	Audience: Online only / All	Feedback source
LO1	Describe what distance learning at the OU involves, including what is expected of me as an OU student and what I can expect from the OU What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO2	Identify available sources of help and support during my time as an OU student? What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO3	Identify current academic strengths and areas for development, and prepare a plan to support a successful start to OU study? What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO4	Explore opportunities to engage with others as part of the OU community What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes
LO5	Identify my study goals and motivations, and reflect on how I can build on these throughout my study journey What do you feel are the most important things that would support these and describe any areas you think we're missing?	All	Padlet / Student Facilitator / OU staff notes

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
LO1: Students expected to the following areas to be covered: - What involved in OU study - What can be expected from their	These aspects have been included in the new induction experience.	These learning outcomes will be evaluated against the OU Ready evaluation

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pg. 12

tutor and other areas of support - Good organisation and time management skills - Study Skills guidance - Clear guidance on what is expected from them as students. Information on how to connect with other students		
A glossary of OU terms is currently missing from Induction resources	An OU Glossary is available on the OU library website : [OU Glossary | Library Services | Open University](#)	Signposting to the OU Glossary will be considered for Phase 2
Consistency on what is expected from their tutor is missing	An overview of what a student can expect from their tutor is included in	This feedback will also be passed on to the Tuition Programme who are review tutor best practice

	the OU Ready site (Unit 4)	

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
LO2: Students expected information advice and guidance on the following: - Tutor interactions & Tutorials - OpenLearn &The Library - Student Support Team - Help centre and StudentHome - Sources of peer to peer support - Study calendar/activity planner	These aspects have been included in the new induction experience	

Communication support for English as a second language	
Students felt that more face-to-face tutorials should be offered Students felt there should be more tutor interactions	This feedback will be passed to the Tuition Programme
Students felt that more opportunities should be made available for peer-to-peer support	This feedback will be passed to OU Students Association
Students felt that a map should be made available to outline the support available, where and when	Based on this feedback a new contact card has been developed and made available to both view and download from the OU Ready website Contacts card (open.ac.uk)

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
LO3: Students expected information advice and guidance on the following to fulfil this outcome:		This will be considered for future phases. This feedback will also be shared with the Student Systems Portfolio
- Diagnostic tests		
- Face to Face induction events		This feedback will be passed on to the Tuition Programme
- Opportunities to connect with other students on a platform		This will be considered for future phases. This feedback will also be shared with the Student Systems Portfolio
- Availability of module marking criteria		This feedback will be passed on to the Assessment Programme
- Induction should be longer and resources available after completion	The new induction pilot is presenting induction resources over a 4–6-	The OU Ready website will remain available as a link (on the left-hand

week period before module start	navigation panel) on StudentHome	

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
LO4: Students expected information advice and guidance on the following to fulfil this outcome: - Face to Face tutorials		This feedback will be passed on to the Tuition Programme
- Tutor Engagement	This is included in the new induction experience/OU Ready Website	Unit 3 – Your Tutor section
- OUSA	This is included in the new induction experience/OU Ready Website	Feedback also passed back to OUSA
- Opportunity to meet other students	This is included in the new induction experience/OU Ready Website	Feedback also passed back to OUSA

- HOOT magazine	Not currently included in the Induction but a link is available out to OUSA website where this is signposted	
- Student Events		This will be considered for phase 2 of induction (August 2024).
- Generic support sessions	Sources of support are already covered with in OU Ready	Further interactive sessions will be considered for phase 2 of induction (August 2024).
- Opportunity to meet students on the same module	This is already covered under as part of the welcome forums on module websites	Further interactive sessions will be considered for phase 2 of induction (August 2024).

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
LO5: Students expected information advice and guidance on the		This will be considered for future phases and feedback will be passed

following to fulfil this outcome:		to a) the Employability team and b) The Tuition Programme
- 1:1 support with their tutor		
- Early engagement with CES	CES Support is sign-posted with in Unit 2 of OU Ready	
- Help identifying long term goals and motivations - Help identifying past experience and knowledge - Annual review of personal goals	All these aspects are introduced in OU Ready in Units 2 and 4 of the induction module but not in much depth.	Further enhancements to advice and guidance in this area will be incorporated in to phase 2 (August 24J)

Careers and Employability Service:

This is a response to the consultation on **Careers and Employability Service (CES)** which took place as part of the Student Consultation Meetings.

The aim of the consultation was to understand the perceptions and myths about careers support related to students who do not engage with Careers and Employability Services. Questions were devised to gain insights about this, in order to inform both service design and marketing and communications messaging. Feedback has been considered by the CES Continuous Improvement Group and Marketing and Communications Manager and resulting actions will be monitored via the Continuous Improvement Plan. We will also be sharing the insights from this consultation across the service and working with teams to progress various aspects.

CES Question 1a: *Had you heard of the Careers and Employability Services (CES) before signing up to this consultation?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Yes – 76%	Thank you for your feedback	We are continuing to work to raise awareness of CES

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
No – 24%	Thank you for your feedback	We are continuing to work to raise awareness of CES

CES Question 1b: *Had you accessed the services in any way?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Yes – 36%	Thank you for feedback	
No – 64%	Thank you for feedback	Continue to promote the range of services and support students to understand when they may need the support. We have introduced the 3 minute Career Check In to support this.
	Students access CES at the right time for them during study journey. We aim to raise awareness for students so they can	

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access us when is right

for them.

CES Question 2: *What should Careers and Employability Services do/What do they do?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Students commented that they think that CES should arrange internships (4%), link students/graduates to employers and vacancies (27%), provide employment/careers advice and guidance (56%), provide CV writing, job application and interview skills support (9%), and support goal setting and advise next steps for study (4%)	CES provides all these services as well others. It is useful to understand what students want from CES and that we provide all these.	We will use this information to inform our communications strategy with students providing a focus on the different elements of service.

CES Question 2a: *To what extent are you aware of these particular services – do any surprise you?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
You weren't aware that CES is open to alumni	An Alumni Working Group has been focusing on activities for this particular group including: Successful Transitions Mailing series (3 emails to students as they completed quals and moved to being Alumni) to explain services available June/July 23. Monthly Careers Express newsletter sent to all Students promotes services available to students and Alumni. Alumni landing page was built to explain what was available (early 22).	We will continue to develop our communications strategy promoting services for alumni.

We regularly contribute articles to Alumni newsletters/online content sent by the Alumni engagement team in the Development office. The engagement of level 3 students has increased from 12,491 in 21/22 to 17,550 in 22/23 which supports more Alumni being aware of our service.

| You were surprised at the range of services available within CES | We are looking at how communications are targeted and relevant to specific groups to ensure the range of services is clear. | We will use information gathered from the 3 Minute Careers Check In that is promoted with students use to check their goals and needs and find the right kind of support. The information will be used to ensure marketing messages |

		are relevant and timely related to the needs identified and times when needs are highlighted.

CES Question 2b: *Which of these services are of most interest to you?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
The top three services that students are interested in are employability events; 1:1 guidance and CV interview workshops	This feedback aligns with our service usage data.	We will use this information to inform communication campaigns and service design.

CES Question 2c: *Which ones didn't you know about (if any)?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
There are a range of services on offer that we weren't aware of	We have created a Navigate Your Future activity pathway based on your career ideas and needs which guides you through the range of services we offer.	This was launched in July 23 and will be promoted throughout the year, feedback invited through the year and will be evaluated in August 24.

CES Question 2d: *Do you feel there are any gaps and what are they?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
It would be good to have more local work experience opportunities	We have reviewed the Opportunity Hub search facility and improved its functionality to include more localised search options	Developments are in process to include a geosearch facility to enable localised searches.

CES Question 2e: *What would your dream careers service provide for students?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
We would like more guidance on linking module choice to careers aspirations	We have been working with PVC-S on supporting both Associate Lecturers with this and the Student Recruitment and Support Centre. We are also working with faculties to build activities into the curriculum to support with linking module choices to career ideas	We are collaborating across Student Support services to develop a more seamless process for effective referrals between services. We are feeding into activities as part of the Student Services Portfolio towards a seamless student experience.
Our dream careers service would have personal employment advisers with industry specialisms	Our advisers cover a wide range of career areas but we have also developed an Open Learn course 'Take	We will look at our marketing messages around the information we have available to support

control of your career' which guides you through the process of looking at information specific to your interests and local area in order to help you develop confidence in your research.

We have also improved our Opportunity Hub search facility to include a geolocation search.

students to be able to research independently with confidence.

CES Question3a: *What might be the possible issues and concerns that prevent students accessing Careers and Employability Services?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
We sometimes lack confidence in approaching CES	The 3 Minute Careers Check In has been devised to help students identify where they are on their career journey	The 3 Minute Careers Check is being heavily promoted and

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and what support would embedded into

be most appropriate Induction materials.

CES Question 3b: *How could these issues be addressed – what more could the OU do to encourage students to engage with the service?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Personalised tailored comms would help encourage students to engage with CES.	Our 3 Min Careers Check In is helping us to evolve our comms in a personalised tailored way.	The 3 Minute Careers Check is being heavily promoted and embedded into Induction materials and 1609 have accessed this so far this year
Timing of events and workshops could be varied more.	We have been trialling running events and workshops at different times of day to see how these affect attendance rates.	We will review attendance the at the Career Fest workshops (7-9 November 23) to ensure we are providing workshops at the most popular times for students.

CES Question 4a: *To What extent do you think employability and /or encouragement to engage with CES could be embedded in your student journey?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Employability/CES should be embedded at the end of a module to support next module choice.	Our Learning and Teaching Consultants will be sharing the insights from this consultation with faculty colleagues to support their work in this area.	Our Learning Teaching consultants are progressing this work and working faculty colleagues to embed employability into modules and related forums.

CES Question 4b: *How and where would that best fit in?*

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
How and where this would best fit in is: At the end of each module (to support next module choice) 26%; Embedded throughout the module	This is interesting data and will be used to inform our work with faculties in embedding	Our Learning and Teaching colleagues will review and share this data with faculty

23%; Subject specific 17%;careers and colleagues to inform

From the start during employability. improvements.

induction 11%; Summer

break 9%

Students Association:

This is a response to the consultation on **Student Association Activities and Services** which took place as part of the Student Consultation Meetings. The Association used this feedback to inform the new Association strategy.

The feedback asked students the following:

Task 1: Rank Association services in order of importance (1 = most Important & 5 = least important) The services included Groups, Peer Support, Committee reps, OUSET, Associations Individual Representation service.

Task 2: Rank Association Activities in order of importance (1 = most important & 5 = least important. Activities included, Past exam papers, Clubs, Graduations, Conference, Freshers, The Hoot, Societies, TOTUM, University Challenge.

Task 3: Seven statements about student experience below. For each statement tick how, it affects the student experience from, will enhance my student experience to not important to my student experience.

- Collaboratively work with the OU to improve the student experience.
- Quality, value, and relevant opportunities
- Effective representation and stronger student voice
- Vibrant, diverse, and inclusive student communities
- A focus on employability and careers
- Accessible and vital support service
- Embed sustainability in our work.

Task 4: How do you feel about the Association by ticking a relevant statement from Strongly agree to strongly disagree.

- I feel the Association contributes in a positive way to my student experience.
- I feel well informed about the activities and opportunities provided by the Association, and I know how to get involved.
- I find the Association events and spaces are friendly, caring and collaborative.
- It is easy to get in touch with the Association.
- I understand how the Association works with the University.

Task 5: To what degree do you feel the Association is living its values by ticking each statement from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

- The Association is living its value of INTEGRITY
- The Association is living its value of EQUALITY & INCLUSIVITY
- The Association is living its value of OPENNESS
- The Association is living its value of COLLABORATION
- The Association is living its value of KINDNESS & COMPASSION

A total of 84 responses were collected for the face-to-face consultations. The questions were replicated online using Padlet.

For the development of the Association strategy, the consultation feedback was reviewed by the Strategy Development Group which was made up of representation from the Board of Trustees, Student Leadership Team, and Staff

members. This feedback contributed to understanding student views on our range of services and activities as well as the expectations of our student members. Some of the key themes from the consultation feedback was representation, building stronger communities and EDI & Accessibility. It validated existing insight from student feedback.

Following the strategy discussions with the consultation feedback, workshops and surveys, the trustees identified key strategic areas that the Association needed to focus on. From this, the Strategy Development Group, Staff and Trustees formulated the strategic aims for the Association strategy 2023 – 2027 which launched on 1 August 2023.

Three key themes were identified in the student consultations below. This included effective representation, building stronger communities and EDI & Accessibility.

Theme 1: Effective representation

Consultations Task 3:
- 'This will enhance my student experience': 58.8% agreed
- 'This is important to me but does not affect my student experience': 37.5% agreed
- 'I do not consider this important to my student experience': 3.8% agreed

Consultations Task 1: Ranking of various Association services.
- Committee Reps: ranked no. 2 (of 5), with 31/84 students ranking it as no.1 priority.

- Individual Representation: ranked no. 3 (of 5), with 21/84 students ranking it as no.1 priority.

Theme 2: Building stronger communities.

Consultations Task 4: 'I find the Association events and spaces are friendly, caring, collaborative'.

- Strongly agree (17.7%) + Agree (31.6%) = **49.4%**
- Strongly disagree (2.5%) + Disagree (1.3%) = **3.8%**

Consultations Task 2: Ranking of various Association activities.

- Clubs: ranked no. 3 (of 9), with 6/84 students ranking it as no.1 priority.
- Societies: ranked no. 6 (of 9), with 6/84 students ranking it as no.1 priority.
- Graduations: ranked no. 1 (of 9), with 27/84 students ranking it as no.1 priority.

Consultations: Comments.

- From 84 students, meet-ups (almost all wanting more in-person) were mentioned 19 times.

Theme 3: EDI & Accessibility

Consultations Task 5: Degree to which the Association is living its values.

Value of 'Equality & Inclusivity':

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- Strongly agree (31.6%) + Agree (8.9%) = **60.5%**
- Strongly disagree (0.0%) + Disagree (0.0%) = **0.0%**

Our online feedback from Padlet has similar themes:

Comment/Observation	No. of Comments	Relevant Themes
Peer Support: Perhaps there is a buddying system in the OU that the students confuse PS with?	4	EDI & Accessibility; Association Awareness
Committee Reps: Lack of knowledge; who they are, how to interact with, how to take part.	6	Representation; Association Awareness
OUSET: No knowledge of it or what it does.	4	Association Awareness
In-person meet-ups	1	Communities & Engagement
Social media/similar: Wanting to have meeting options other than Facebook	5	Communities & Engagement
Cost of living: Comments on providing info and/or	3	EDI & Accessibility

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assistance for those struggling financially		
Freshers inclusivity: 2 x felt as though many students at freshers events already know a lot, so more intro sessions/info would be good, while 1 x felt that freshers details should be sent to those starting new modules, not only new students.	2	Communities & Engagement
Session times: More variation needed to cater for times of day when different people are available.	3	Communities & Engagement; EDI & Accessibility
OU session: People seem to like the sessions but want to know more about the results stemming from them, and 'real world impact'.	6	Communities & Engagement