

RESPONSE TO STUDENT CONSULTATION ON: Integrated Induction

SUMMARY

This is a response to the student consultation on Integrated Induction which took place between 18th and 31st October 2021. The student feedback can be found at <https://learn1.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/view.php?id=25141>

The forum was open to students to register for from the Student Consultation Panel, along with samples of students from each faculty across the university and students new to The OU at different levels with credit transfer. The forum included 158 posts from a group of 45 students out of the 335 who registered to participate in the forum with over 98 readers and 99 like/favourite ratings. Discussion threads included questions around what 'induction' means, induction to the subject/the university/to being a student, the timing of induction activities and top tips for new and continuing students.

Key headline messages from students included the importance of induction in enabling them to start and continue well, for it to be provided before module start, to be inclusive and with opportunities to build community, both with fellow students and key support services including tutors and the Student Support Teams (SST). In addition, the current resources were highlighted as difficult to find with many students requesting better signposting and ease of navigation, including hosting OU wide induction materials in one space. Further suggestions included a form of self-assessment to allow students to gauge preparedness at the start and each level of their studies and a dedicated induction week with input from services across the university, faculties and the OU Students Association.

This feedback has been shared within the university Integrated Induction task and finish group and a summary presented to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) Social Science & Global Studies (SSGS) active presentation meeting. Initial actions include the use of student feedback to inform the development of a framework of induction principles to enhance the provision of induction for students across the university, at the start and also at key points during the student journey. Feedback relating to modules and qualifications will be shared with Faculties and Student Support Teams along with examples of activity highlighted by students as particularly beneficial. It is recognised that induction resources currently provided for students lack visibility in places so how best to improve their visibility and reach more students is being explored currently. Student feedback from this forum will also be incorporated into the work by the team currently reviewing induction across the university and relevant proposed recommendations to further enhance induction provision for new and continuing students.

Updates on these additional points will be added to the student voice website when possible.

FULL RESPONSE

The table below outlines some of the key messages emerging from the forum feedback along with the OU response, and how the feedback will be taken forward where relevant. The messages have been organised according to the key forum discussion threads and where the same topic has come up in two places, the response has been included again for completeness.

What 'induction' as a student means to you

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
You find it difficult to navigate the OU website to find induction resources or know what is available	Many students highlighted the need for an improved mapping of induction related resources with clear signposting and a site tour	Consider how to enhance the visibility of these resources

Induction about introduction to a specific organisation and how it operates; to what's ahead and orientation regarding what induction means

An inclusive and clearly signposted dedicated area of Student Home with clear groupings of related resources	The Help Centre on Student Home has begun to gather induction related resources together and can be found under the heading 'Induction' but further development of this is under consideration	Further consideration of visibility and access to 'pack' of Induction related resources
Knowing who to contact according to nature of the query and important role of tutors as part of this	Contact details for the Student Support Team and tutor are provided on Student Home but it is understood that other support services may have less visible contact details or found in a range of places on the OU website	The visibility of contact details for a wider range of support services will be explored
Understanding clearly what's expected of me and what I can expect from the OU – the Open Learn course 'being an OU student' useful in relation to this	Thank you for the feedback regarding the Open Learn short course 'Being an OU student' which is designed to provide key information for starting well at The OU.	
Role in building confidence – in how to access help and what is to come	This is useful feedback regarding the role of induction and how it can help build confidence, including how to access support when needed	
In relation to the Open Learn course – mixture of feedback including balance of content/title/applicability across devices/useful for building confidence/community opportunities not highlighted	Thank you for the feedback regarding the Open Learn short course 'Being an OU student'	This feedback will be shared with the team who oversee this Open Learn resource
Need for a simple document with key information available at the start of each module – overview to avoid being overwhelming	Key information relating to modules can typically be found as part of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) activities early in a module but it is helpful to have this feedback about the possibility of creating an overview document	This feedback will be shared with faculties along with relevant proposed recommendations from the team reviewing induction across the university
Welcome week at the start of module with virtual tours/key information /introductions from tutors/SST etc.	Current provision of introductory events includes a freshers week organised by OU Students Association and dedicated Student Hub Live (SHL) events. Further developments to this provision will be explored	Further developments to this provision will be explored

Induction to being a student

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
You noted that many skills are subject-specific but there are also those which are needed by all students including time management/using IT/writing skills etc.	Agreed and we hope the 'skills for OU study' which provide guidance on these widely needed skills are useful for students	
A number of students suggested a self-assessment test to help students check their starting point on skills with relevant links then provided related to results	Being able to gauge a suitable starting point for skills or related induction resources at the start and at key points in your studies is a key area of consideration	

Possibility of a 'map' to using the OU website as useful for all students	The Help Centre on Student Home has a useful search facility but this is a helpful suggestion	This feedback will be shared with relevant teams for consideration along with other feedback regarding request for improved visibility of induction resources
'Meet the tutor' sessions early on to get overview of expectations etc.	We understand that this is available on a number of modules but varies across the university	We will incorporate this suggestion into the feedback shared with faculties
Consideration of signposting support for specific student groups, e.g. those with a disability on module websites	All subject sites have a wellbeing section for students which includes a range of resources for specific student groups but this is relatively new so embedding links from module websites may not yet be in place	Consider how to enhance the visibility of these resources
Students highlighted that at times the information is there but easy to miss (assessment guide in addition to individual assignment information)	Again this is useful feedback regarding the visibility of available resources	This feedback will be shared with faculties along with relevant proposed recommendations from the team reviewing induction across the university

Induction to your subject

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Some students flagged the benefits of module welcome forums but the need for better visibility of these	Welcome forums are provided on modules ahead of module start to help address early questions and support academic community	This feedback will be shared with faculties and student support teams along with relevant proposed recommendations from the team reviewing induction across the university
You noted positive feedback where modules/qualifications ran dedicated induction sessions with lots of opportunities to ask questions	We understand that this is available on a number of modules but varies across the university	We will incorporate this suggestion into the feedback shared with faculties
A summer forum was highlighted for a Level 3 module where early preparation seen as particularly useful	One of the things being reviewed is how induction can work well at different levels so it's useful to have this insight and example provided	
The benefits of peer discussion, e.g. at f2f tuition events/mentoring schemes	Good to hear how beneficial these discussions are for students. The OU is planning to offer some f2f tuition events from October 2022 (22J) depending on the external covid situation and OU Students Association has a mentoring scheme, a link for which can be found in the wellbeing section of subject sites	
Request for a dedicated induction portal for key information to avoid it being overwhelming and ability to create personal links for favourites	The Help Centre on Student Home has begun to gather induction related resources together and can be found under the heading 'Induction' but further development of this is under consideration	Further consideration of visibility and access to 'pack' of Induction related resources at university and subject level
As a credit transfer student but also for students studying across disciplines it would be useful to have subject-related expectations clarified	The induction experience for students joining The OU with credit transfer is currently being considered so this feedback is appreciated	

Induction to the University

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
A number of students highlighted the work of Student Hub Live and OU Students Association as approachable and helpful but felt these were not visible enough to new students	Currently these are advertised on Student Home and also on the respective SHL and OU Students Association websites but it is helpful to have this feedback	The feedback will be shared with the SHL team and OU Students Association
Forums were highlighted as valuable but you would like to be able to have greater ability to tailor notifications etc.	At present students have a number of options in relation to forum notifications including being able to subscribe to a forum or particular discussion threads.	
Many students discussed the importance of feeling connected and community - both community as an OU student but also communities of scholars in discipline areas	The wellbeing area of subject sites includes a number of links relating to building community and feeling connected.	Additional opportunities for building scholarly community within discipline areas will be explored
The Being an OU student was mentioned as helpful in this context but with a request for new students to be provided with a guide to the basics – for example a generic induction pack used across the university with an additional induction to your subject section according to qualification	Thank you for the feedback regarding the Open Learn short course 'Being an OU student' which is designed to provide key information for starting well at The OU. The Help Centre on Student Home has begun to gather induction related resources together and can be found under the heading 'Induction' but further development of this is under consideration	Further consideration of visibility and access to 'pack' of Induction related resources at university and subject level

Getting the timing right

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
Suggestion of a single module related induction and wider OU session	We are aware that some modules offer dedicated induction sessions while others incorporate this into their week 1 VLE tasks	Encourage modules to identify induction related material more clearly and review wider university provision
A number of students highlighted the month before module start as the key time for induction to avoid holiday and work clashes/overload and means information still fresh in mind when the module starts	The timing of induction related provision is in discussion so this is helpful feedback	
Need to keep induction optional – recognising diversity of student needs	Induction is provided to support students at the start and at key points in their studies. There are no plans to make this compulsory	
Some highlighted 'keep warm' activities provided over the summer break as useful	Thank you for this feedback – some examples have been mentioned elsewhere in the student feedback and the benefits of these between modules as well as prior to beginning studies with the OU	This feedback will be shared with faculties along with relevant proposed recommendations from the team reviewing induction across the
There was a very clear message that induction needs to take place prior to module start due to the time demands once courses are underway – perhaps	The timing of induction related provision is in discussion so this is helpful feedback	

an 'induction week' before the official start date

Many students noted the benefits of having the module website open early to allow them to get a feel for the module and have more time for early weeks

Thank you for this feedback. The early opening of module websites are designed to allow students to access welcome forums and provide the opportunity for any initial queries or confusion to be resolved

One request was for induction on a regional basis to facilitate building academic community and with flexible times offered to facilitate participation

Often welcome forums facilitate regionally based introductions threads to facilitate students meeting others living nearby

This feedback will be shared with faculties along with relevant proposed recommendations from the team reviewing induction across the university

Top tips

You said	OU response	Next steps, if appropriate
A number of you highlighted the benefits of the experience of fellow students, and the key role tutors and the SST play along with the importance of asking your questions	Students regularly comment that they find top tips from other students very beneficial so this feedback and suggestion will be shared where possible	Consider provision of induction 'top tips'
Some students noted that the provision of sample answers would be useful	The suitability of this is likely to vary between subject areas	
A number of students noted activities that can be done ahead of module start including an early start on printed materials when they arrive or looking at Open Learn for subject relevant courses	As above, students regularly comment that they find top tips from other students very beneficial so these suggestions will be shared where possible	Consider provision of induction 'top tips'
You noted that it would be useful to be given a background reading list or similar before you move to the next level while another student noted the benefits on some modules of recommended/required pre-requisites for the next module	Thank you for the feedback. Similar to the point regarding 'keep warm' activities in the timing thread, it is helpful to have this insight into what is found helpful between modules	This feedback will be shared with faculties

Date: March 2022