

Student Consultation Meetings

Final feedback on communications



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Background

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 consultation meetings and other forums were conducted in March and April 2020. Some of these were adapted in terms of process and media due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The following is a full overview of the emerging themes from this consultation, covering the area of **communication** (tuition will be covered separately).

This feedback is based on the following:

- Online forums on communications
- Adobe Connect meetings on communications
- International student forum
- F2F Student consultations in Leeds, Glasgow and Birmingham, before the COVID-19 outbreak
- 53 students were involved in the F2F consultations, and at least 48 individuals can be identified within the online forums, including International – meaning over 100 students were involved in the process

The materials used in the consultation ... Examples 1a / 1b



Student communications Example pack

Example 1a

Subject: We'd like your feedback and views on your module

Dear [Student name]

[Student PI]

We would like to invite you to take part in our online survey to share with us your views on studying S104 Exploring Science and also to provide feedback for your tutor for this module.

Each individual response we receive increases the confidence the module team/faculty can have in its results. Every module team examines the aggregated survey ratings and the written feedback you provide on our module experience and responds to the student feedback received from this survey as part of the review processes for modules and qualifications. Your feedback is an essential part of the quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms we have in place.

Tutors review the aggregated survey ratings and written comments for their tutor group from the 'Feedback on your tutor' section of the survey. The individual feedback you provide for your tutor will be extremely helpful in understanding how their teaching and support have benefited you as a student, and identifying possible areas for your tutor to reflect on. Your feedback on your tutor should aim to be constructive and should not refer to any previous tutors. Please also remember that, if your tutor has changed during the course of your module, any feedback you give (tick box and comments) should refer to your current tutor, not the one you were previously assigned to. Please be assured that your answers to the survey will be treated in confidence and will not be linked to the assessment of your studies. We use your personal identifier only to enable us to analyse the data by student characteristics, such as gender or age bands which provide a much better picture about how well modules are received. Tutors and module teams do not see the personal identifiers of students who respond to the survey. However, if you choose to include your name in any of your open comments then your tutor will be able to attribute your comments to you personally.

If you require an individual response to any issues you have about any aspect of your module, it is important to raise them with your Student Support Team, accessed by using the contact information available from your StudentHome Help Centre.

More information about the student feedback process is available from: <http://www.open.ac.uk/student-surveys/>

The survey should take no more than 15 minutes of your time to complete. To take part, click here: www.abc.co.uk

If you have any problems with the link above, please visit your StudentHome where the survey link will be available on the right hand corner of the main page. As long as the survey is open, you should be able to access and complete the survey from StudentHome.

If you have a disability or an additional requirement that makes it difficult for you to complete the survey online, please contact the Survey Office by email: IET-Surveys@open.ac.uk or telephone them on +44 (0)1908 858853



Student communications Example pack

If you have problems accessing the survey or completing the questionnaire because of a technical issue, please contact us on tutor-student-feedback@open.ac.uk. You should note that, once accessed, the survey is not set to time-out. However, this can happen if the PC you are using has time-out settings activated. Unfortunately, if this occurs you will need to re-start the survey.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part. We hope you have enjoyed studying this module with The Open University and wish you every success in your future studies.

Yours sincerely,
Keith Zimmerman
Director, Students

Example 1b

Subject: We'd like your feedback and views on your module

Dear [Student name]

[Student PI]

How have you found study experience on S104 'Exploring Science'? Please take 15 minutes to complete the following survey. The survey can be accessed directly at www.open.ac.uk/survey/takepart or from your StudentHome page until 1 April 2020.

This survey will be used to assess how we can improve our teaching, and feedback is confidential - with all personal information removed.

We will only use your personal identifier to help us analyse the data in ways such as gender or age, as this helps give us a much better picture about how well modules are received by specific groups of students.

You can find more information about the student feedback process at <http://www.open.ac.uk/student-surveys/> and if you require any assistance in completing the survey please do contact us at IET-Surveys@open.ac.uk.

Thank you in advance for assisting the OU in improving our student experience.

Best wishes,
Claire Baines
Director, Students
The Open University

The materials used in the consultation ... Examples 2a / 2b



Student communications Example pack

Example 2a

Subject: There's still time to give your feedback

Dear [Student name]

[Student PI]

We contacted you recently to invite you to take part in our online survey to share with us your views on studying S104 Exploring Science and also to provide feedback about your tutor for this module.

We have not yet received a reply so wanted to let you know that although you do still have time to give your feedback, the survey will be closing on . The survey should take no more than 15 minutes of your time to complete and your feedback will really help our efforts to improve our services to students.

Tutors review the aggregated survey ratings and written comments for their tutor group from the 'Feedback on your tutor' section of the survey. The individual feedback you provide for your tutor will be extremely helpful in understanding how their teaching and support have benefited you as a student, and identifying possible areas for your tutor to reflect on. Your feedback on your tutor should aim to be constructive and should not refer to any previous tutors. Please also remember that, if your tutor has changed during the course of your module, any feedback you give (tick box and comments) should refer to your current tutor, not the one you were previously assigned to. Each individual response we receive increases the confidence the module team / faculty can have in its results.

To take part, click here:

www.abc.co.uk

If you have any problems with the link above, please visit your StudentHome where the survey link will be available on the right hand corner of the main page. As long as the survey is open, you should be able to access and complete the survey from StudentHome.

Please be assured that your answers to the survey will be treated in confidence and will not be linked in any way to the assessment of your studies. We use your personal identifier only to enable us to analyse the data by student characteristics such as gender or age bands which provide a much better picture about how well modules are received. Tutors and module teams do not see the personal identifiers of students who respond to the survey. However, if you choose to include your name in any of your open comments then your tutor will be able to attribute your comments to you personally.

More information about the student feedback process is available from: <http://www.open.ac.uk/student-surveys/>

If you have a disability or an additional requirement that makes it difficult for you to complete the survey online, please contact the Survey Office by email: IET-Surveys@open.ac.uk or telephone them on +44 (0)1908 858853

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Student communications Example pack

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part. We hope you have enjoyed studying this module with The Open University and wish you every success in your future studies.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Zimmerman

Director, Students

Example 2b

Subject: There's still time to give your feedback on your module

Dear [Student name]

[Student PI]

Time is running out for you to have a voice in how we design our modules. Please take 15 minutes to complete our survey. It can be accessed either from your StudentHome page, or directly at www.open.ac.uk/survey-takepart until 1 April 2020.

Your responses are kept confidential and you can find more information about the feedback process by visiting <http://www.open.ac.uk/student-surveys/>

If you require any assistance in completing the survey, please contact us at IET-Surveys@open.ac.uk.

Thank you in advance for assisting the OU in improving our student experience.

Best wishes,

Claire Baines



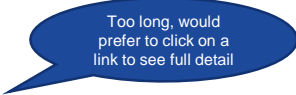


Director, Students

The Open University

Tone and style of communications

Overall, the shorter examples were preferred by students. Their main preferences for these were due to a combination of the shortcomings of 1a/2a and perceived improvements in 1b/2b...

The relative negatives associated with 1a and 2a:

- 1a and 2a contained too much text to absorb (so were often skimmed) – seen as complex and intimidating 
- 1a and 2a were also viewed as being overly long and visually off-putting 
- The links were not hyperlinks, requiring them to copy and paste to retrieve them 

- The information about the time taken to complete the survey was hidden too far down the page 
- Most simply felt they did not need all the detail contained in 1a and 2a (at this stage)
- 2a in particular was felt to be too long for accessing via a mobile phone / on the go

Tone and style of communications

The shorter and more concise nature of 1b/2b made students feel they were more likely to respond positively

The relative positives in terms of 1b and 2b:

- A more informal, friendly and to the point style in 1b/2b – more appropriate in an adult to adult relationship
- 1b/2b felt more like a call to action (because it was informal) and it was easy to recognise this call to action
- As it was short, concise and better signposted students felt they would be more likely to respond
- 1b/2b were felt to be better for students where English is not their first language
- The tone of 1b in particular was “asking” rather than “telling” (the tone of 2b also seen as less demanding)
- 2b being shorter than 2a was more appropriate for a reminder communication
- Additional information was accessible via directly clicking links (if needed)

Short, concise,
respectful

The link is
highlighted making
it easier to see

[2b] More visual,
easier to find the
information required

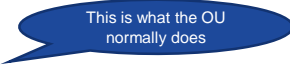


Short, snappy, to
the point

[1b] good indication of
the anonymity /
confidentiality

Option to get further
information from a link
is a positive

Tone and style of communications

However, there were a small number of advocates (mostly in the online forums) of the more formal style contained in 1a and 2a ... mostly because ...

- It was familiar (how OU currently communicates) 
- The tone itself (rather than the length) can be preferred by some, although ideally it could be shorter for them
- For a minority, 1a contained more information, which they wanted to know 
- 1a/2a were recognised as being well-written, despite concerns over length 

Communication timing – broad student preferences

BEFORE MODULE STARTS

- You have now completed reservation on module
- You have now completed enrolment on module
- Module payment confirmation
- Reminder to complete your registration on your module
- Preparing for your study
- Here are what disability services are available
- Notification of your tutor for upcoming module
- Here are what library services are available
- Your module forum is now open

- OU Students Association welcome
- Welcome from course chair
- Here are what careers services are available
- Final dates to register reminders
- Tutorial booking is now open
- Welcome to your module - have you completed orientation
- Welcome to the first day of your module
- Careers forum is now open
- Your examination timetable is ready to view
- Your examination details
- Your next assignment is due on ...

ON MODULE

- Tutorial / event reminders
- Examination reminders
- Are you intending to take a study break?
- Next steps - choose your next module
- It is time to choose your next module
- Advice for your upcoming exam
- Getting ready for your exam / EMA
- How is your study going?

AFTER / BEFORE NEXT MODULE

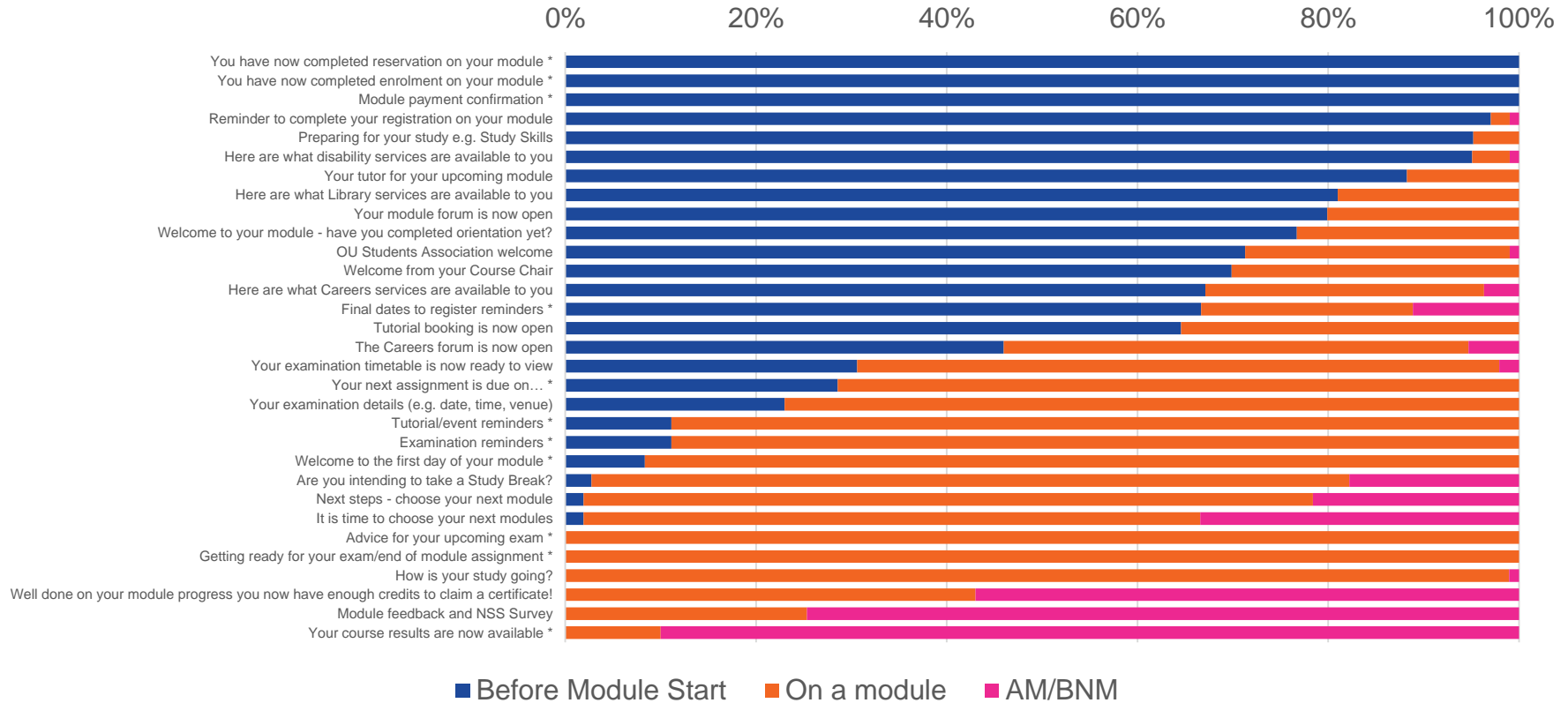
- Your course results are now available
- Module feedback and NSS survey
- Well done on module progress - claim a certificate

TO BE COMMUNICATED IMMEDIATELY AS AND WHEN ...

- Tutorial / event is cancelled
- Request to change qualification received
- Support available for re-sit / resubmission
- Marked assignment available for collection
- Request for study break received
- Your tutor has changed
- Request to change module received
- Confirmation of assignment submission
- You haven't submitted ... Is everything OK?

Communication timing – before / on / after module

Responses to exercise on appropriate timings of communication: Before / On / After module





Based on exercises in both Online Comms forums and F2F workshops – excludes factors that were deemed overwhelmingly to be "as and when required" - some factors were not included in online forum exercise (*) Bases weighted so each F2F mini-group represents an average of 5 students (as they were recorded as a group), and combined with sample from the online forums

Communication timing - detail

Detail of timings within Before / On / After module exercise - ALL

	Net BMS	Net OM	Net AM	2 months before start	4 weeks before start	1 week before start	Beginning of module	Middle of module	End of module	Week after module ends	2 weeks after end	1 month after end
You have now completed reservation on your module	100%	0%	0%	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
You have now completed enrolment on your module	100%	0%	0%	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Module payment confirmation	100%	0%	0%	89%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Reminder to complete your registration on your module	97%	2%	1%	80%	17%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Preparing for your study e.g. Study Skills	95%	5%	0%	58%	32%	6%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Here are what disability services are available to you	95%	4%	1%	72%	22%	2%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Your tutor for your upcoming module	88%	12%	0%	4%	74%	11%	11%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Here are what Library services are available to you	81%	19%	0%	45%	30%	7%	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Your module forum is now open	80%	20%	0%	2%	41%	36%	19%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Welcome to your module - have you completed orientation yet?	77%	23%	0%	8%	26%	42%	23%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
OU Students Association welcome	71%	28%	1%	21%	38%	13%	28%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Welcome from your Course Chair	70%	30%	0%	16%	11%	43%	28%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Here are what Careers services are available to you	67%	29%	4%	37%	24%	7%	17%	10%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Final dates to register reminders	67%	22%	11%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	22%	0%	11%	0%
Tutorial booking is now open	65%	35%	0%	9%	15%	41%	34%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The Careers forum is now open	46%	49%	5%	25%	12%	9%	14%	30%	4%	4%	1%	0%
Your examination timetable is now ready to view	31%	67%	2%	4%	2%	24%	39%	28%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Your next assignment is due on...	29%	71%	0%	0%	29%	0%	14%	57%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Your examination details (e.g. date, time, venue)	23%	77%	0%	4%	6%	13%	30%	40%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Tutorial/event reminders	11%	89%	0%	0%	0%	11%	22%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Examination reminders	11%	89%	0%	0%	0%	11%	0%	56%	33%	0%	0%	0%
Welcome to the first day of your module	8%	92%	0%	0%	0%	8%	92%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Are you intending to take a Study Break?	3%	79%	18%	1%	1%	0%	4%	47%	29%	14%	1%	3%
Next steps - choose your next module	2%	76%	22%	2%	0%	0%	3%	49%	24%	10%	6%	6%
It is time to choose your next modules	2%	65%	33%	0%	2%	0%	1%	20%	43%	19%	7%	8%
Advice for your upcoming exam	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	56%	11%	0%	0%	0%
Getting ready for your exam/end of module assignment	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	22%	67%	11%	0%	0%	0%
How is your study going?	0%	99%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	97%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Well done on your module progress you now have enough credits to claim a certificate!	0%	43%	57%	0%	0%	0%	5%	14%	25%	24%	14%	20%
Module feedback and NSS Survey	0%	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	2%	8%	15%	49%	20%	5%
Your course results are now available	0%	10%	90%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	40%	10%	40%

Based on exercises in both Online Comms forums and F2F workshops – excludes factors that were deemed overwhelmingly to be "as and when required" - some factors were not included in online forum exercise (*) Bases weighted so each F2F mini-group represents an average of 5 students (as they were recorded as a group), and combined with sample from the online forums

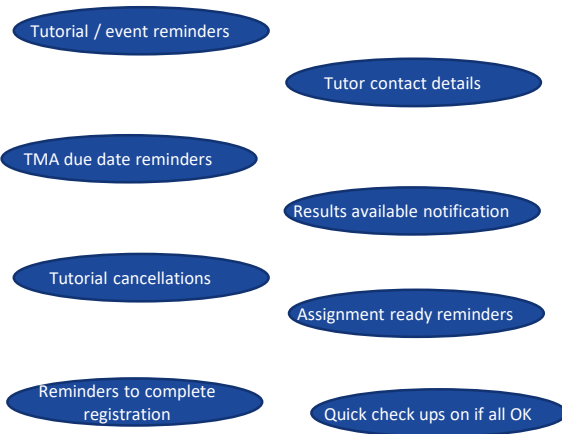
 Between 25% and 49%
 50% or higher

Mode of communications: in summary

Students identified some clear parameters regarding preferred channels of communication ...

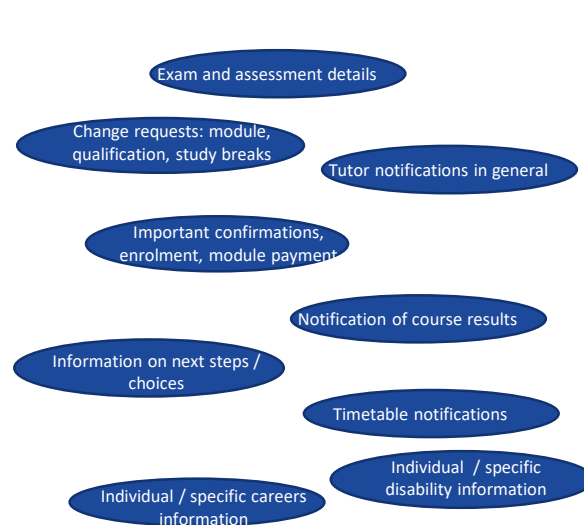
SMS

- Primarily alerts and notifications
- Short calls to action
- Reminders and prompts
- Time sensitive (urgent) requests



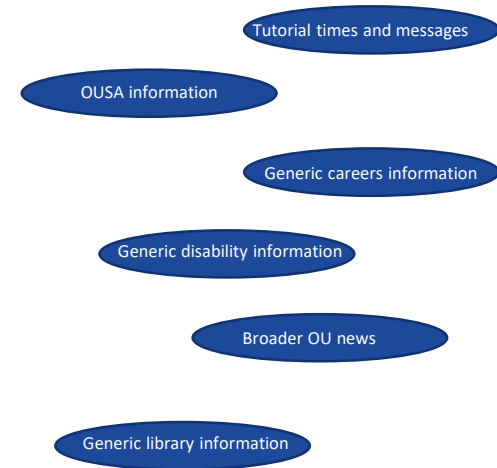
EMAIL

- Anything important you need to refer to
- Allows easy retrieval of information
- Feedback and results
- Majority of tutor communication



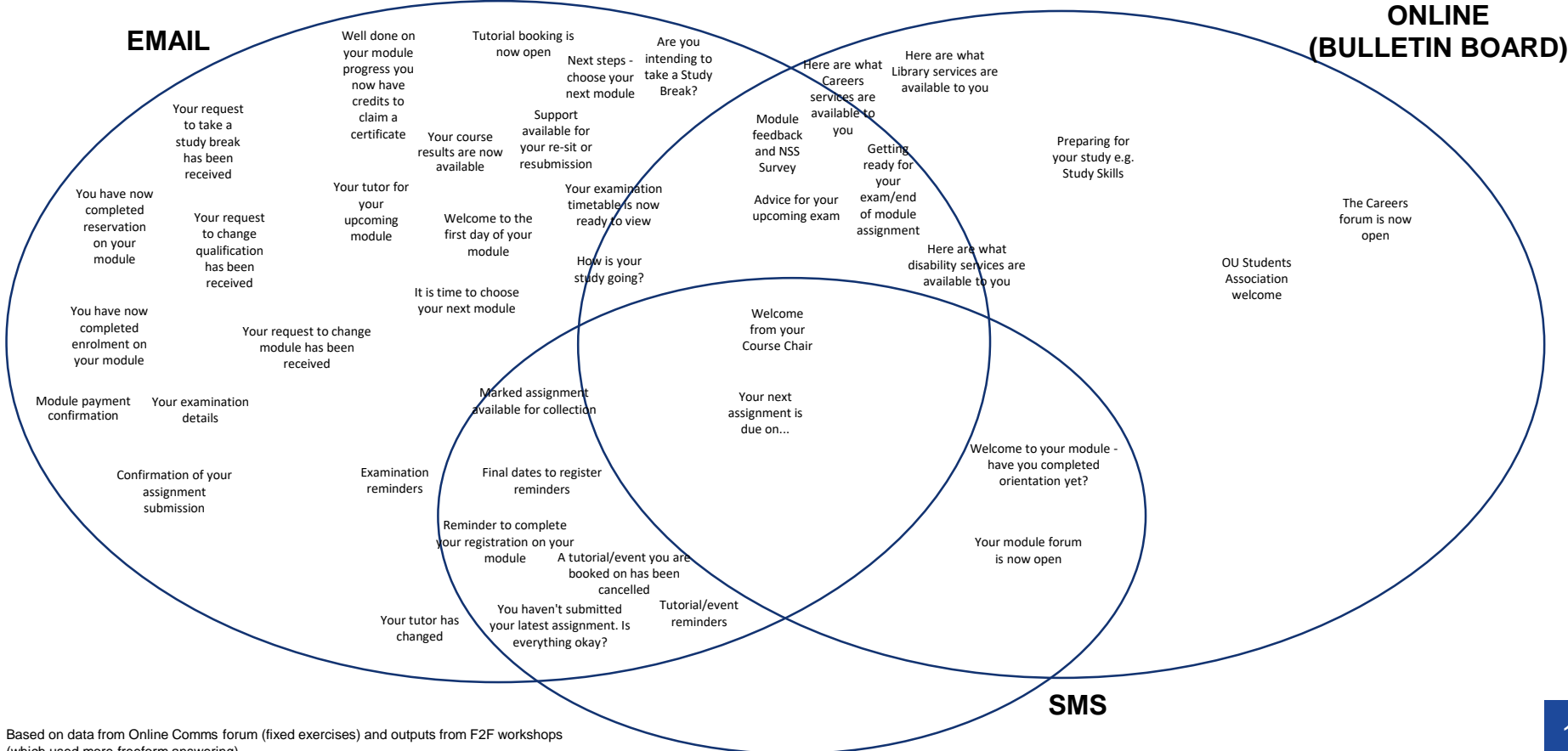
ONLINE (BULLETIN BOARD)

- Generic information on wider OU events / organisations



Mode of communications: the detail

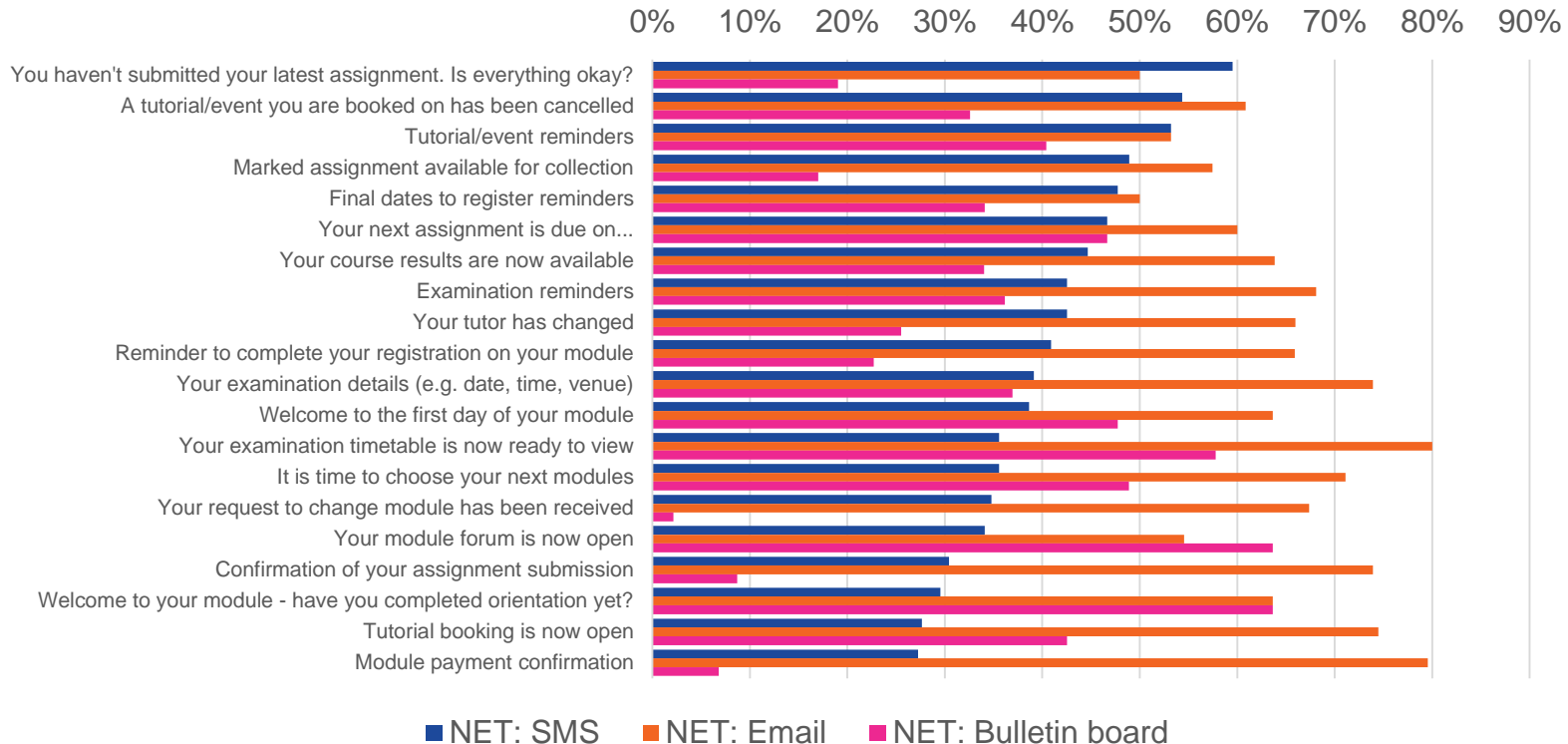
Responses to exercises on appropriate modes of communication: Email / SMS / Online



Based on data from Online Comms forum (fixed exercises) and outputs from F2F workshops (which used more freeform answering)

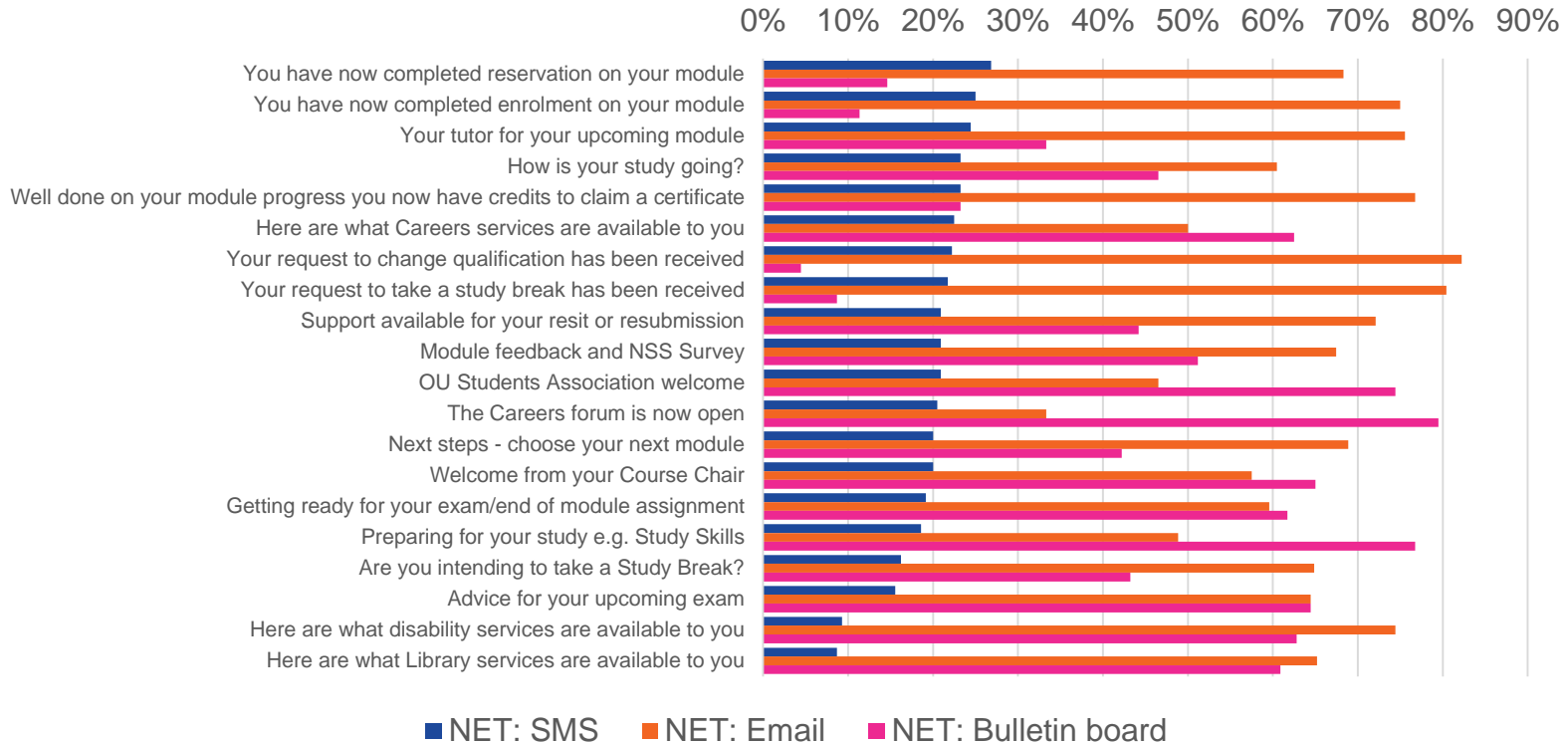
Mode of communications

Responses to exercise on appropriate modes of communication: Email / SMS / Bulletin Board (part 1 of 2): Online exercises



Mode of communications

Responses to exercise on appropriate modes of communication: Email / SMS / Bulletin Board (part 2 of 2): Online exercises



Mode of communications

Detail of modes preferred and combinations of Email / SMS / Bulletin Board (part 1 of 2): Online exercises

	Email only	SMS only	Bulletin board only	SMS and email	SMS and bulletin board	SMS, Email and bulletin board	Email and bulletin board	NET: SMS	NET: Email	NET: Bulletin
You haven't submitted your latest assignment. Is everything okay?	33%	14%	2%	33%	0%	12%	5%	60%	50%	19%
A tutorial/event you are booked on has been cancelled	30%	4%	2%	33%	0%	17%	13%	54%	61%	33%
Tutorial/event reminders	21%	11%	6%	28%	2%	13%	19%	53%	53%	40%
Marked assignment available for collection	43%	4%	2%	36%	0%	9%	6%	49%	57%	17%
Final dates to register reminders	27%	9%	11%	30%	0%	9%	14%	48%	50%	34%
Your next assignment is due on...	24%	11%	11%	18%	0%	18%	18%	47%	60%	47%
Your course results are now available	36%	9%	4%	21%	2%	13%	15%	45%	64%	34%
Examination reminders	36%	9%	4%	19%	0%	15%	17%	43%	68%	36%
Your tutor has changed	45%	9%	2%	21%	2%	11%	11%	43%	66%	26%
Reminder to complete your registration on your module	48%	7%	2%	23%	2%	9%	9%	41%	66%	23%
Your examination details (e.g. date, time, venue)	46%	0%	4%	17%	4%	17%	11%	39%	74%	37%
Welcome to the first day of your module	34%	9%	11%	9%	7%	14%	16%	39%	64%	48%
Your examination timetable is now ready to view	29%	0%	2%	13%	4%	18%	33%	36%	80%	58%
It is time to choose your next modules	33%	0%	9%	18%	2%	16%	22%	36%	71%	49%
Your request to change module has been received	65%	15%	0%	17%	0%	2%	0%	35%	67%	2%
Your module forum is now open	18%	5%	25%	14%	2%	14%	23%	34%	55%	64%
Confirmation of your assignment submission	67%	7%	0%	17%	2%	4%	2%	30%	74%	9%
Welcome to your module - have you completed orientation yet?	23%	2%	20%	11%	2%	14%	27%	30%	64%	64%
Tutorial booking is now open	43%	4%	6%	11%	4%	9%	23%	28%	74%	43%
Module payment confirmation	73%	5%	0%	16%	0%	7%	0%	27%	80%	7%

Note: Students could select multiple channels for each factor

Mode of communications

Detail of modes preferred and combinations of Email / SMS / Bulletin Board (part 2 of 2): Online exercises

	Email only	SMS only	Bulletin board only	SMS and email	SMS and bulletin board	SMS, Email and bulletin board	Email and bulletin board	NET: SMS	NET: Email	NET: Bulletin
You have now completed reservation on your module	66%	7%	5%	12%	7%	0%	2%	27%	68%	15%
You have now completed enrolment on your module	68%	7%	2%	14%	2%	2%	5%	25%	75%	11%
Your tutor for your upcoming module	49%	2%	7%	16%	0%	7%	20%	24%	76%	33%
How is your study going?	37%	7%	23%	9%	0%	7%	16%	23%	60%	47%
Well done on your module progress you now have credits to claim a certificate	58%	7%	5%	12%	0%	5%	14%	23%	77%	23%
Here are what Careers services are available to you	28%	8%	38%	3%	3%	10%	13%	23%	50%	63%
Your request to change qualification has been received	78%	4%	0%	13%	0%	4%	0%	22%	82%	4%
Your request to take a study break has been received	74%	11%	2%	7%	0%	4%	2%	22%	80%	9%
Support available for your resit or resubmission	47%	5%	19%	5%	0%	12%	14%	21%	72%	44%
Module feedback and NSS Survey	37%	5%	19%	7%	2%	7%	23%	21%	67%	51%
OU Students Association welcome	19%	5%	40%	2%	7%	7%	21%	21%	47%	74%
The Careers forum is now open	13%	5%	56%	3%	3%	10%	10%	21%	33%	79%
Next steps - choose your next module	42%	7%	16%	9%	0%	4%	22%	20%	69%	42%
Welcome from your Course Chair	25%	5%	30%	5%	3%	8%	25%	20%	58%	65%
Getting ready for your exam/end of module assignment	23%	2%	26%	13%	0%	4%	32%	19%	60%	62%
Preparing for your study e.g. Study Skills	16%	2%	42%	5%	2%	9%	23%	19%	49%	77%
Are you intending to take a Study Break?	46%	3%	22%	8%	3%	3%	16%	16%	65%	43%
Advice for your upcoming exam	27%	2%	24%	7%	2%	4%	33%	16%	64%	64%
Here are what disability services are available to you	37%	0%	26%	0%	0%	9%	28%	9%	74%	63%
Here are what Library services are available to you	37%	0%	28%	2%	4%	2%	26%	9%	65%	61%

Note: Students could select multiple channels for each factor

Length of communications

The materials used in the consultation ... Examples 1 & 2



Student communications Example pack

Example 1

Subject: Getting ready for your module(s)

Welcome to your study at the Open University,

SDK100-2020B : Science and health

Get ready

To help you get ready to study we have put together [New to OU study](#) as a guide for the run up to the start of your module.

Here you'll find:

- The key dates and deadlines you need to be aware of
 - 'Being an OU student' – a free short course where you'll get to know where everything is, who will support you and what being an OU student is all about.
 - Links to materials to help you get ready to study your chosen subject.
- Working through all of these completes your induction and ensures you're ready to start studying. You may also find it useful to start thinking about how you are going to find time to undertake your studies (you should allow 8-9 hours per week per 30 credits) and prepare a study area.
- To ensure you are prepared for the academic demands take a look at the [Science Study](#) website and under "Plan" find your subject area and module(s) details such as "Are you ready for" resources. Do also keep an eye out for the prep site for your module which will open a few weeks ahead of the module website.

Coming up

A link to your module website will appear on your [StudentHome](#) page around three weeks before your module starts. You can take a look at module materials as soon as you get access, and note the submission dates of your assignments, which you will find on the study planner. You should also find a link to your subject website for information, news and events that are relevant to you.

Your tutor details will appear on your module website before your module starts and your tutor will make contact with you around this time. Your tutor is your first point of contact. If your module has tutorials, you should be able to access the booking system from the 'Tutorial dates' link on your StudentHome front page.

If you have more time

Check out:

- [The Open University Students Association](#) website
- [Student Hub Live](#) events
- Our [Getting started with the online library](#) guide
- Our [Careers and Employability Services](#) website, which provides a range of resources to support your study choices and career planning.

your study choices and career planning.

If you have any questions, just contact your [Student Support Team](#).

Os ydych yn siarad Cymraeg a byddai'n well gennych drafod eich anghenion astudio drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, cysylltwch â ni ar 02920 471170.



Student communications Example pack

Example 2

Email A (4-5 weeks before module start)

Title: Get started now

Welcome to the OU. Now's the time to start preparing and get your studies off to the best possible start.

Why not start our short course, '[Being an OU Student](#)'. It's free and takes you through the basics of studying with the OU. You'll get to know where everything is, who will support you and what being an OU student is all about. Try to complete sessions 1-3 this week.

Current students who did this course have said it really improved their confidence to start studying:

"It has been very helpful and I am more aware of where I need to go for help, support and information."

"I was really worried about fitting study around my family life but have now agreed to have a solid weekly plan in place to make sure I always get the time I need and don't fall behind."

We'll keep in touch over the next few weeks to continue helping you get started with your studies.

Your Student Support Team, The Open University

Email B (3-4 weeks before module start)

Title: How is your OU study preparation going?

This week try to complete sessions 4-6 of '[Being an OU Student](#)', if you haven't already done so. You'll find out what it's like to learn online, the secrets of success and make sure you've got your computer set up for successful study.

Don't worry if you haven't started '[Being an OU Student](#)' yet, it's free to join and you can work through it at your own pace, but we recommend getting started now.

You're not alone in your OU journey. Start talking to other students in your [Arts and Humanities forum](#). Student Support advisors also check in on these forums so you can ask any questions you have there.

Your Student Support Team, The Open University



Student communications Example pack

Email C (2-3 weeks before module start)

Title: Get ready to study Arts and Humanities

By now you've hopefully completed at least some of Being an OU student, so should have a general grounding in what to expect as an OU student.

Now it's time to focus on your chosen subject. Try to take a look at your [Arts and Humanities induction materials](#) this week.

Continue to talk to your fellow students on the [subject] form. If you haven't already, go in and introduce yourself. Don't forget our advisors are also there to help you.

Your module website is also now open. If you haven't already, go in and explore – you'll find a link to it on [StudentHome](#). You don't need to start studying yet, but it's worth starting to find your way around and looking at what's coming up in your first week.

Your Student Support Team, The Open University

Email D (1 week before module start)

Title: Are you ready?

It's less than a week until your first module starts. Now's the time to make sure you're prepared. Have you

- Completed '[Being an OU Student](#)'?
- Looked at your [subject induction](#)?
- Found and explored your [module website](#)?

If not then take a look through the above links now. You don't have to do it all, but these resources will help you to get your studies off to the best possible start.

You should by now have been given a tutor and tutor group. Your tutor has hopefully been in touch with you already or will do shortly. Say hello if you haven't already. Don't forget they are there to support you through your module and you can go to them with any questions you have about what you're studying.

You can also contact us, [your student support team](#), with more general queries, for example if you need to change your study plans.


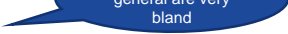
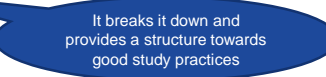

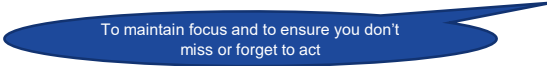
We wish you all the best with your studies.

Your Student Support Team, The Open University

Length of communications

Student preferences in terms of length varied, often depending on timing and some personal views ...

The shorter tested communication (Example 2) was generally favoured because students preferred shorter communications than longer – the key contributors to this were ...

- It was concise, clear, easy to read and used simpler language
 

- It looked more inviting and informal
- It provided a step-by-step guide to what would happen
 

- Reminders made some feel they were more supported and engaged with – countdowns can also help mental preparation
 
- Disabled students outlined more anxiety with a longer contact, which might be overwhelming (particularly early in relationship)
- Example 1 felt like information overload to many – shorter communications would be preferred as a module / course progresses

Length of communications

However, for some Example 1 was preferred, particularly when considering it as an initial contact

- It might be useful to have all the information in one place, so you could refer back to it at your leisure
- More anxious students would have time to digest and study its content
- The headlines can help make the communication more readable
- For some, repeated contact might get a little 'pushy'
- There was some degree of repetition in Example 2's communication

[You can] refer back to schedule pre module work

Good to have it all in one place, can go back to it when needed

Bigger email is great to file for reference without filling an inbox with too many emails

Not too intimidating as a new student

Useful, works as a reminder

There is no clear indication of a preferred length – student feedback highlighted the need to potentially use both, depending on an individual style preference

Other general observations on communications

- A serious tone is felt to be commonplace in most communications from the OU ... and not necessarily valued
- The more informal communications are felt to be more likely to be opened and acted upon – they provide greater engagement and understanding of student needs
- There are felt to be too many non-essential, generic emails to students from the OU ... those related to specific study can be more valued
- Students are concerned about not subscribing to emails though, as they might miss something essential
- Communications between tutor and student needs to be more interactive from both sides
- Students recognise that between them they have very differing needs – and the OU should communicate accordingly – perhaps with an ‘opt in’ or selection of communication modes and timings they choose
- Forums are also not uniformly believed to build on appropriate communications principles – they can be difficult to access, engage with, learn from – and should provide the option for anonymity
- Generally speaking, students feel there is already too much communication coming their way

Other suggested specific improvements in OU communications

The following are a series of other (generally smaller) suggestions ...

- To introduce an SLA for responses from the OU and tutors
- Having the phone call as an NSS reminder has been known to prompt response
- Communication tends to be focused on each module, rather than the degree – it is viewed this could be wider
- Communications are viewed to be MK and Anglo-centric (Glasgow view) – no Scottish contact available outside of office hours
- Change of location for F2F tutorials should happen earlier than it does
- Introduction of “welcome back” emails after Christmas / Easter / Half term breaks to bring students back to a studying mindset
- Students expressed a desire to hear more about and from the Students Association
- Student support in the evenings should be maintained (where it exists) – removing this would be a backward step

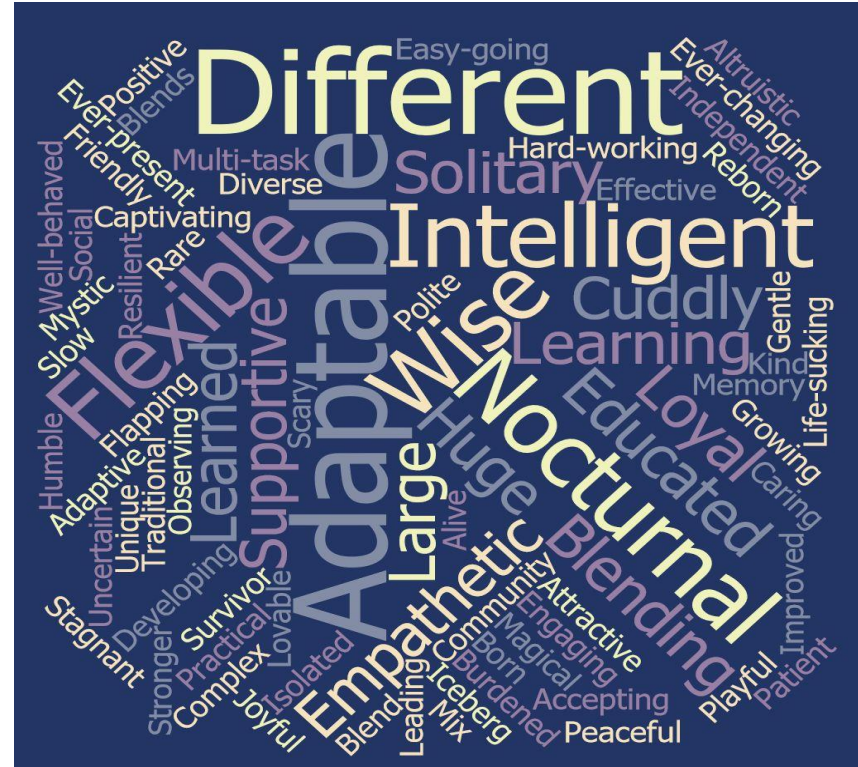
The comparison game – what if OU was an animal?

Students thought of a multitude of animals when they considered which the OU represents:



With Chameleon, Owl and Tiger the narrow leaders ...

The main descriptors used to explain their animal choices:



Most commonly used: Adaptable, Different, Flexible

THANK YOU