

# Standing out from the crowd: What perspectives do students have about their identity when enrolled in a distinctive postgraduate multidisciplinary program?

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# MA/MSc Open

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Code	Course type ?	Level ?	Credits ?	Length	Start dates ?	Study method
F81	Masters Degree	Postgraduate	180	Part-time – 2–3 years	May 2027 September 2026 October 2026 November 2026 April 2027	Distance learning



# MA/MSc Open

## Qualification structure

Route 1
Study <b>180 credits</b> specialising within one of the following broad study areas
Arts, Humanities, Music and Language
Education, Psychology, Health Science and Healthcare
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Business, Finance, Human Resources and Law

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Route 2	
Study a <b>minimum of 120 credits</b> within one study area	<b>60 credits</b> from any other study area
Arts, Humanities, Music and Language	Arts, Humanities, Music and Language
Education, Psychology, Health Science and Healthcare	Education, Psychology, Health Science and Healthcare
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Business, Finance, Human Resources and Law	Business, Finance, Human Resources and Law
	Further professional development

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YXM830  
Online prospectus



### Advance your independent learning (YXM830)

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Find out more at [openuniversity.co.uk/advance](https://openuniversity.co.uk/advance).

# Standing out from the crowd

Looking back to look ahead

- The MA/MSc Open is a **unique and innovative** qualification not only at the OU but also in the sector.
- The qualification has been presented for eight years and we are now undertaking a **review** of the offering.
- A key question as part of the review: Are we helping our students to '**stand out from the crowd**'?
- As part of our qualification enhancement activities, we have engaged in some **Student Voice** work.
- To help us respond to questions we have, but also to **explore the students' perspectives** on the qualification.



# Student Voice activities

## Understanding the student perspective

We provided a **VLE forum** with themed discussions, a **questionnaire**, and student **focus meetings** for students to participate in.

Using varied formats to encourage students to participate and share feedback with us.

Sample questions we are exploring:

- How did you **discover** the MA/MSc Open?
- How do you **describe** your study to others?
- Why did you **choose** the MA/MSc Open?
- How did you go about **selecting modules** for your MA/MSc Open qualification?
- Can you see the **benefits** of bringing your learning together to make **connections** between what you have studied/are studying?
- Where do you feel the strongest sense of **academic community**: at the module level, subject area, or qualification level or not at all?

# Making assumptions

## Alternative perspectives

### **Question we wanted to explore as part of the Student Voice activity:**

- What perspectives do students have about their identity when enrolled in a distinctive postgraduate multidisciplinary program?

### **The outcome is not what we expected:**

- Students like and value the multidisciplinary nature of our offering, choosing modules and subject areas that make sense to them, either for professional context or, most often, for personal desire to study.
- It is not clear students see the benefits of making connections between subjects and disciplines.
- Should we do more to increase awareness of the type of study that they are engaging in, e.g., a multidisciplinary qualification?

# A bold idea

## Offering up an interdisciplinary option

While our Student Voice activities are currently in-flight, we are exploring ideas from an early student focus group meeting.

- Students commented that they feel the most sense of community and belonging in the interdisciplinary module **YXMX830 'Advance your independent learning'**. They valued bringing their learning experiences together on this module and seeing how other students do the same.
- We are reviewing our **qualification structure** to explore adding this module to all Study Groups, so all students have the option to study an interdisciplinary module.
- The qualification team will also hold **Student Drop-in sessions**, to help students with their study options and raise the profile of studying through the multidisciplinary and or interdisciplinary lens.

# Questions

## Crowdsourcing answers

- How could we **raise the profile and benefits** of interdisciplinary study for students?
- What do we need to **offer** our students to help them navigate through this type of qualification?
- How important is it for students to **identify** if they are studying in a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary manner?
- Do we, as the qualification team, have a different perspective on the **benefits/relevancy of interdisciplinary study** compared to our students? Is that okay?

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