

# From Non-Formal Learning to Interdisciplinary Practice

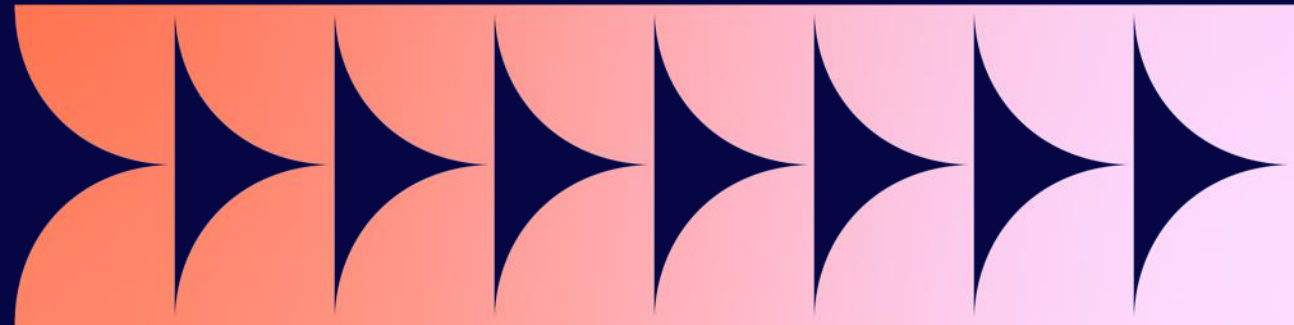


Designing pathways into Higher Education

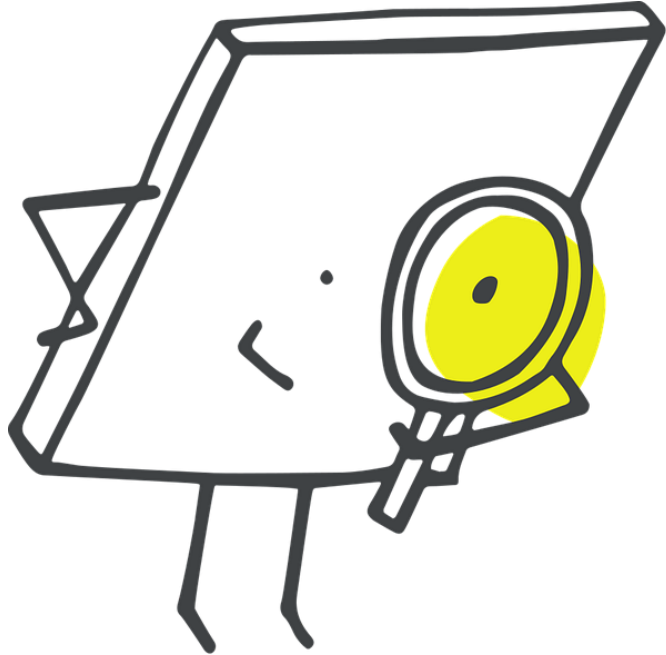
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16<sup>th</sup> April 2026



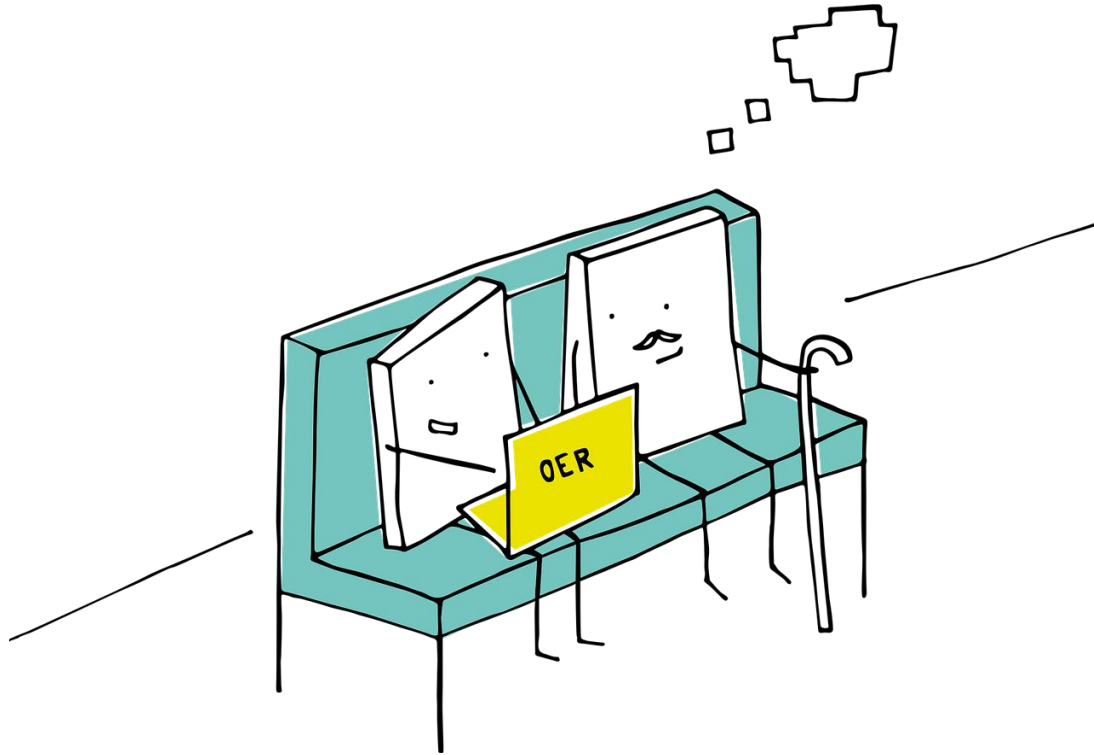
# Focus



YXM130 *Making your learning count* - bridging from non-formal learning to interdisciplinary practice

- ▶ Context and tuition model
- ▶ Curriculum – chief focus

# Context in distance learning



Learning is entirely online through a mixture of:

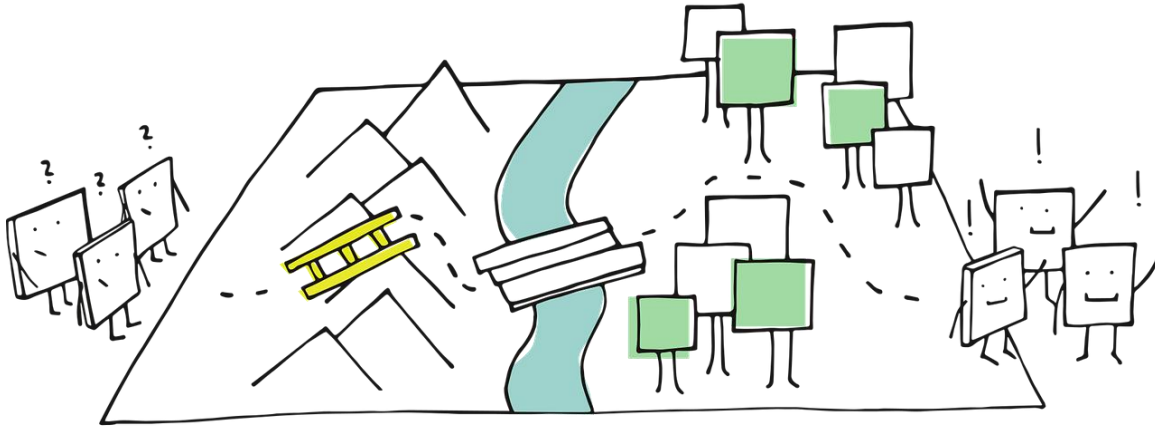
- VLE content with inhouse produced high quality videos and graphics.
- Live and recorded learning events e.g. tutorials and welcome sessions.
- Asynchronous support through online discussion forums.
- Assessments submitted via an electronic submission system:
  - Tutor Marked Assessments = TMAs. These are marked by each student's designated tutor with an emphasis on formative use.
  - End of Module Assessment = EMA
- 40 – 60% each YXM130 cohort are within the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS).

# YXM130 tuition structure



- Based on 1-2-1 support from a designated tutor.  
Tutors are permanent staff on a non-standard academic contract. Some work PT for us and are academics elsewhere.
- Tutors mark three TMAs and an EMA for their tutor group (15 students).
- Tutor group and module wide forums for peer-peer learning and support from tutors who moderate discussions and can facilitate engagement specific to each student's identified needs.
- Module wide learning events on topics such as data presentation. Optional attendance.

# Overview of YXM130



This module consists of 300 hours of learning which is divided between two strands:



## Guided learning

The materials on this website, including assessments and learning events. In total this component will take an estimated 150 hours.



## Imported learning

Learning that you select and include as part of your course, totalling 150 hours.

- ▶ Level 1 module positioned as a structured induction into higher-education learning.
- ▶ Acts as a **bridge** between non-formal learning (self-directed, interest-driven study) and formal academic practices.
- ▶ Students design and complete 150 hours of imported learning, drawing on high-quality OER (open educational resources).
- ▶ Emphasis on choice, reflection and interdisciplinary development.

# Your learning log dashboard


Dashboard

## Welcome (Irs235)

The Learning Log is designed to help you keep track of your Imported Learning as you work your way through YXM130. You should use the Learning Log to record the key details of each Open Educational Resource (OER) that you choose to study, and capture your learning from each resource by completing the reflective summaries as you finish each short course. These resources will mainly be drawn from OpenLearn but you may agree with your tutor that you will bring in learning from other similar platforms.

You will need to download a summary report from the Learning Log to submit as part of the assessment points on the module, which you will find out about as you work through the module materials and attend the module learning events. If you have questions about the Learning Log, that you cannot find an answer to on the module website, please contact your tutor.

### Study Hours



● Completed ● Planned ● Identified ● Unallocated

### Filters

Select which study entries you would like to view

Completed  Planned  Identified  Paused

[Download your learning log](#)

#### Add new entry

Add a new study entry to your learning log

[Add entry](#)

#### Why riot? Community, choices, aspirations

Imported Study Hours: 12

Dates:  
2025-12-01 planned  
2026-01-01 completed

[completed](#)

[View details](#)

#### From sound to meaning: hearing, speech and language

Imported Study Hours: 12

Dates:  
2025-10-01 planned  
2025-11-07 completed

[completed](#)

[View details](#)

#### Introduction to adolescent mental health

Imported Study Hours: 24

Dates:  
2026-02-19 planned

[planned](#)

[View details](#)

#### Sound for music technology: An introduction

Imported Study Hours: 20

Dates:  
Not scheduled

[Identified](#)

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# Guided choice: designing a personal learning pathway

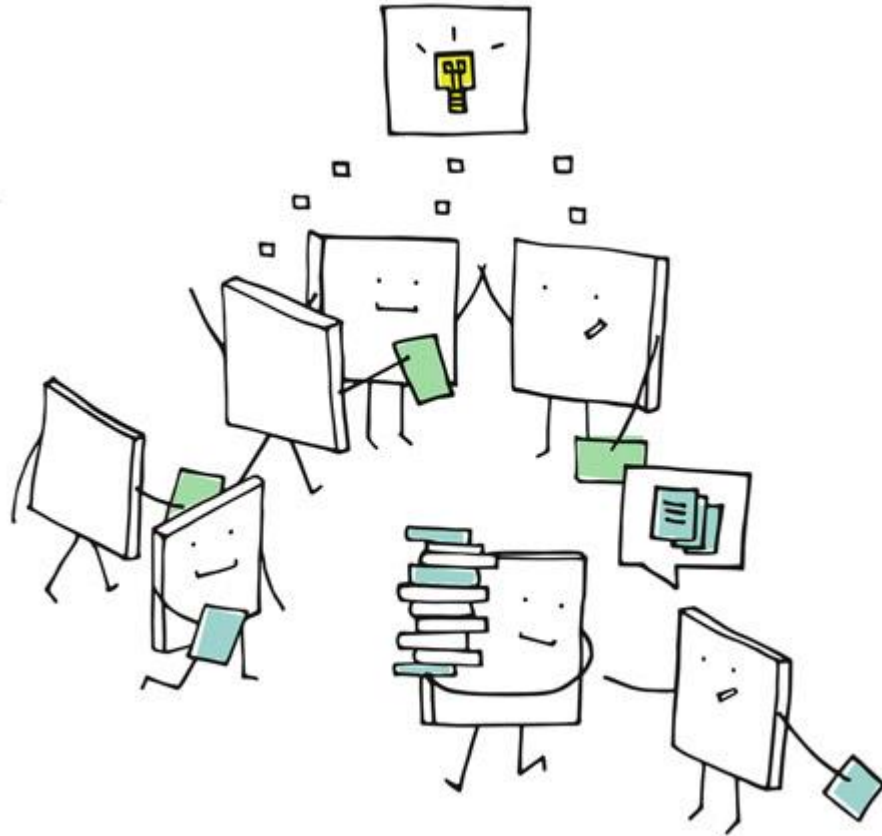
- ▶ Students construct a personalised plan for 150 hours of self-selected 'imported learning'.
- ▶ Must select OER learning across **at least two disciplinary areas**.
- ▶ **Guided learning** scaffolds student decision-making (Weeks 4–6).
- ▶ Encourages autonomy and early academic agency, while providing the guidance and support needed.

Students are supported to identify 150 hours of OER learning as their imported learning.

# Overview of YXM130

	Content	Guided/h rs	Imported /hrs
<b>Designing and planning your interdisciplinary learning</b>	Across 5 weeks students explore the module structure, reflect on their motivations, discover multidisciplinary learning, and set clear goals. They choose OER study, practise active learning skills and create a personalised learning plan to submit with TMA01.	37	13
Imported Learning	2 weeks of student independent learning		20
<b>Interdisciplinary practice: explore a parkrun project</b>	2 weeks exploring interdisciplinary practice within a simulated research project. Introductions of Borton's and Gibbs reflective frameworks. Within TMA02 resubmit learning log, 5 slides on two of their courses, and their application for a student internship – authentic skills identification and mapping using their newly learned reflective framework.	15	15
Imported learning	2 weeks of student independent learning		20
<b>Communicating with integrity</b>	4 weeks focused on effective communication and development of academic integrity. Purpose, audience and different communication tools are explored. Critical analysis of BandAid and comms on IgNobel Awards. Within TMA03 resubmit learning log, create an infographic and reflect on constructive feedback.	35	15
Imported learning	2 weeks of student independent learning		20
<b>Learning for change: connecting your study for real world impact</b>	4 weeks. Explore Open Societal Challenges (at the OU) as case studies – critical evaluation of impact at community / global levels. Apply reflective, analytical and evaluation skills to own study, mapping to at least one SDG to suggest potential for personal impact based upon learning and skills.	18	22
Imported learning	1 week of student independent learning		10
<b>Planning your degree and EMA</b>	6 weeks within which students will be supported in preparation of their EMA. EMA will require final submission of the downloaded learning log plus outline of a degree they will plan based upon OU options.	45	15

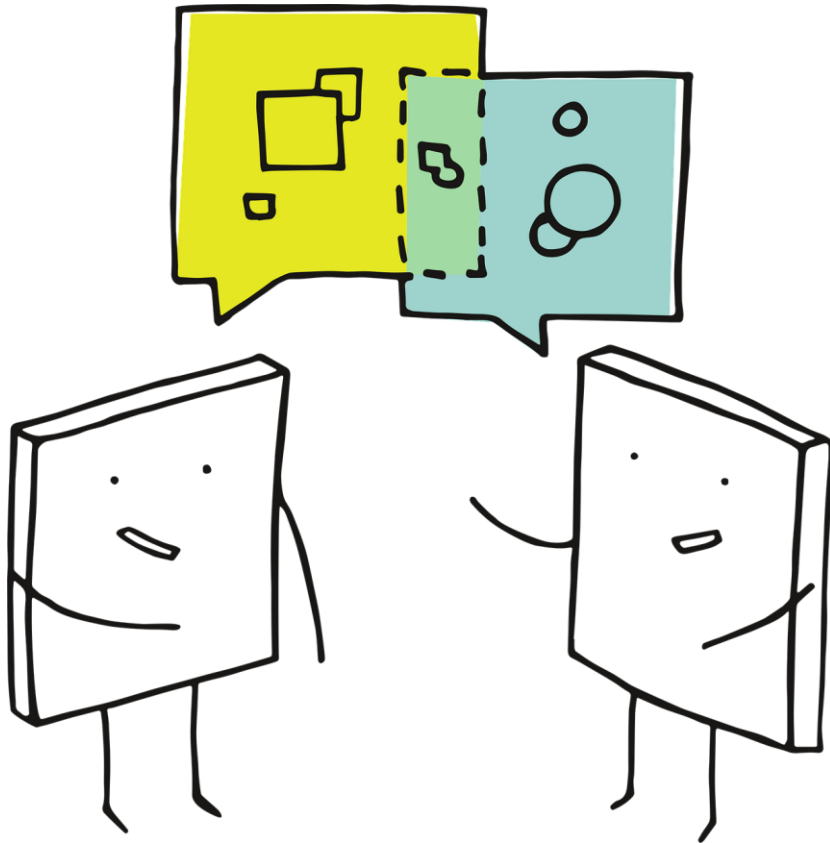
# Structured induction into HE study



Using feedback and seeking support can motivate

- ▶ Early weeks introduce **motivation** for learning, understanding personal goals (Week 2).
- ▶ Students learn to articulate why they want to study and how this aligns with future pathways.
- ▶ Guidance on planning, note-taking, evaluating resources, and reflective practice.
- ▶ Establishes core HE capabilities: planning, critical thinking, self-management.

# Developing interdisciplinary capacity



Finding common language across disciplines

- ▶ The module introduces multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary concepts early (Week 3).
- ▶ Students explore how different disciplines offer distinct lenses on the same real-world problem.
- ▶ Interdisciplinarity is reinforced through:
  - Student's blended imported learning
  - Application in the Parkrun case study (Week 8)
  - Mapping connections during reflective activities (Week 9).

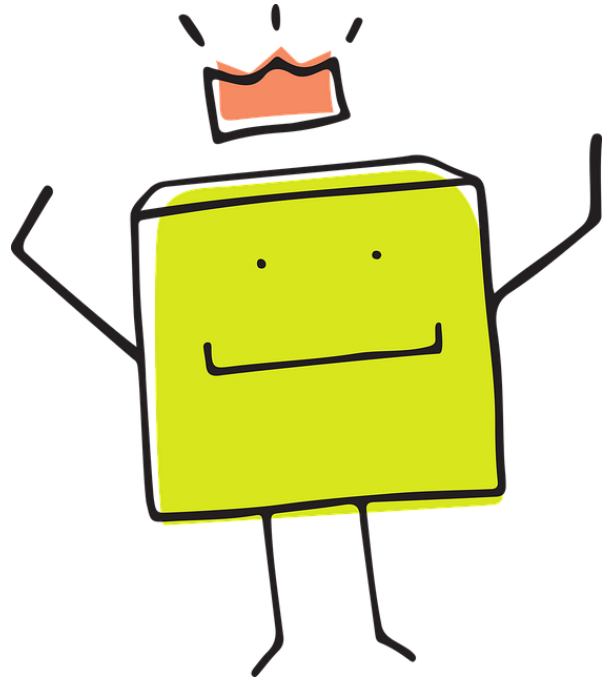
# The parkrun case study: interdisciplinary practice



Who is this parkrun marshal on a cold winter morning?

- ▶ A shared, accessible scenario used to make interdisciplinary practice explicit (Week 8).
- ▶ Students examine how multiple disciplines (e.g., health, psychology, data science, sociology) might contribute to an interdisciplinary research project on Parkrun.
- ▶ Encourages integrative thinking -combining methods, perspectives, and evidence types.

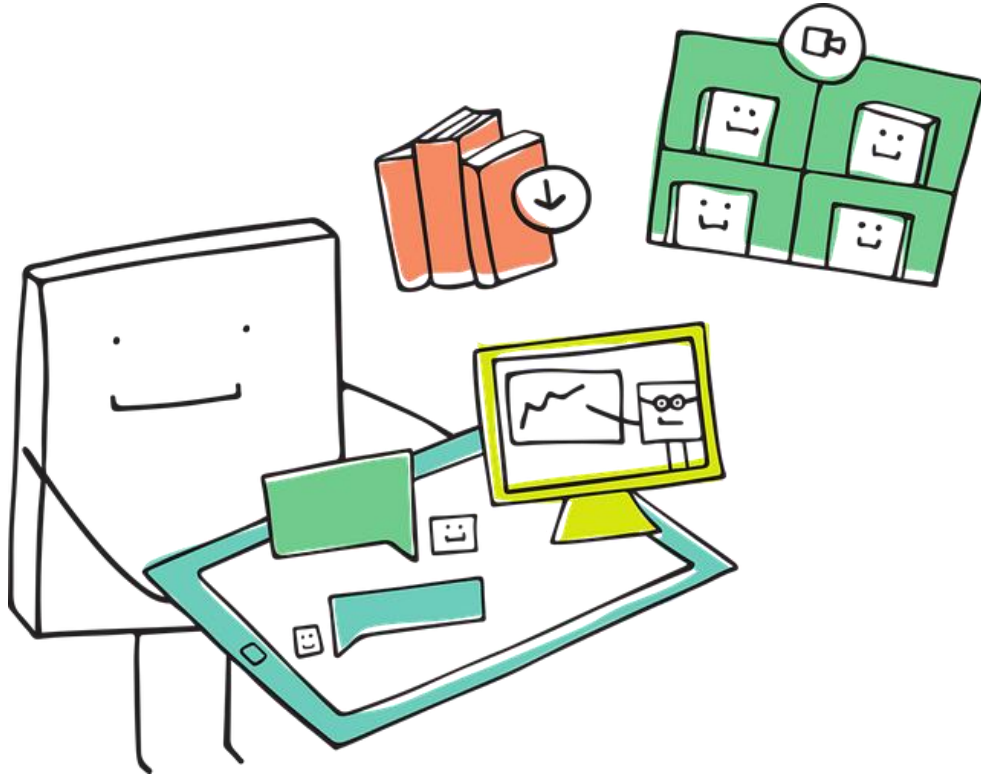
# YXM130 as a pathway to interdisciplinary participation



Explicitly building academic skills leads to academic confidence and success.

- Structured to be relevant for all students entering HE.
- Students develop the mindset and skills needed for interdisciplinary study:
  - Integrative thinking
  - Critical evaluation
  - Reflective capability
  - Academic communication
- Supports inclusive participation and opens pathways to the Open degree and all OU degrees.

# Developing academic skills through practice



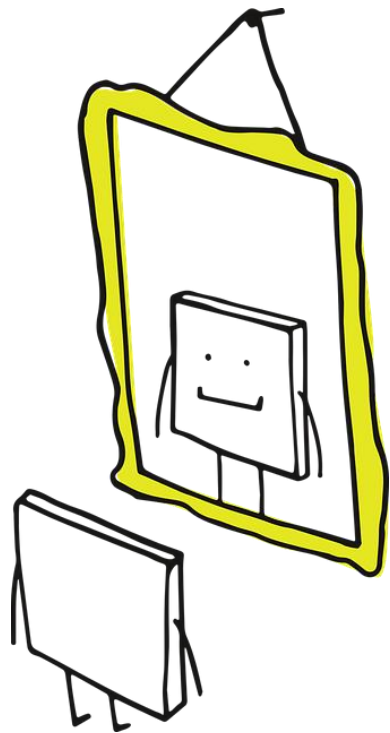
Academic and digital skills are developed through practice, structured reflection and more practice.

Students gain hands-on experience with:

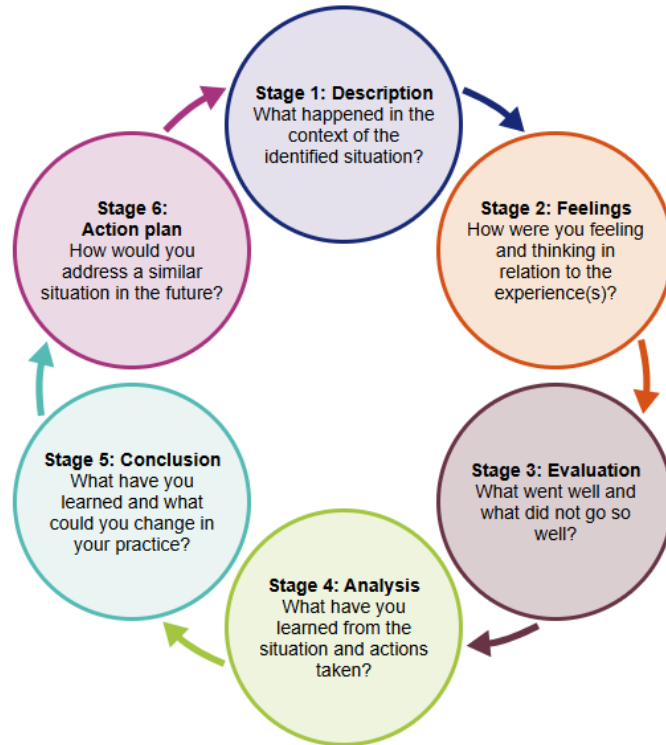
- Evaluating sources using structured frameworks such as PROMPT (Week 4).
- Communicating learning through varied media, visuals, and data presentations (Weeks 13–15).
- Reflective synthesis using Borton’s and Gibb’s frameworks (Weeks 9, 16, 20).
- Applying feedback to support progressive development (Weeks 16 & 25).
- Explicit development of academic integrity skills (Weeks 16 and EMA).

These skills scaffold students into higher-education expectations.

# Reflection as a bridge to academic identity



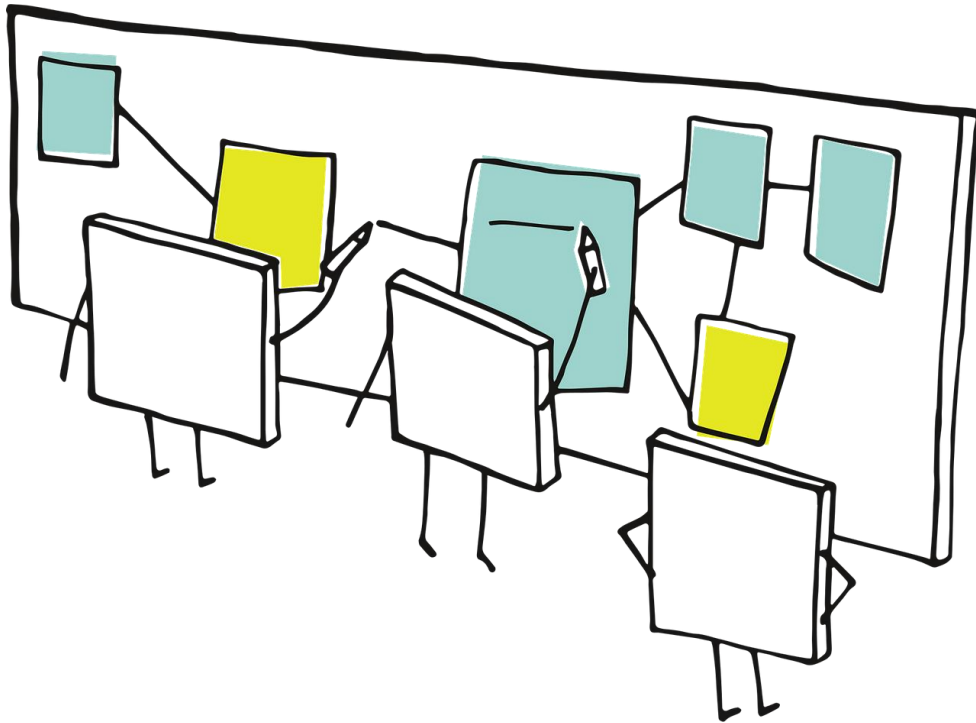
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- Structured reflection embedded throughout the module:
  - Motivation (Week 2)
  - Mapping learning (Week 9)
  - Reviewing feedback (Weeks 16 & 25)
  - Connecting experiences to future goals (Week 30).
- Helps students develop an academic identity rooted in self-awareness and intentionality.
- Encourages students to see themselves as legitimate participants in HE learning.

Reflection practice is explicitly developed with Gibbs reflective cycle used as the key framework.

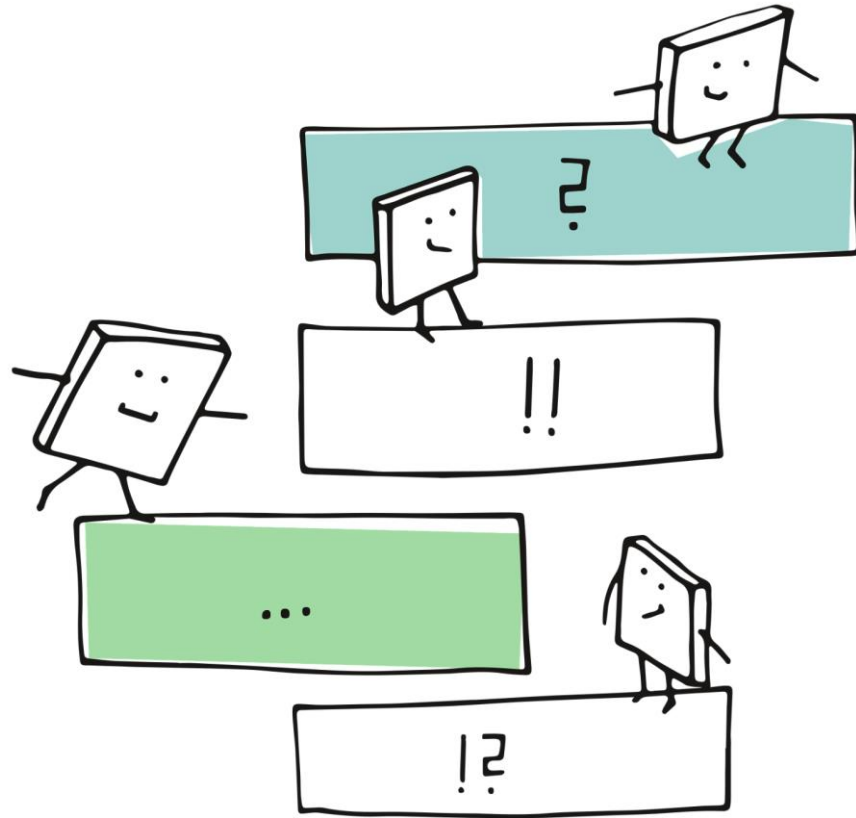
# Mapping to UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Mapping learning to SDGs situates learning as relevant and valuable.

- Students connect their chosen learning to relevant SDGs, situating personal interests within global challenges (Started in Week 1, common strand throughout and closer focus in Weeks 21–23).
- Builds awareness of individual, community and wider social impact.
- Encourages interdisciplinary framing of real-world issues.
- Reinforces purpose, authenticity, and connection to broader societal challenges.
- Leverages extrinsic motivation.

# Inclusive peer learning



Supported discussions build understanding and good practice in peer learning

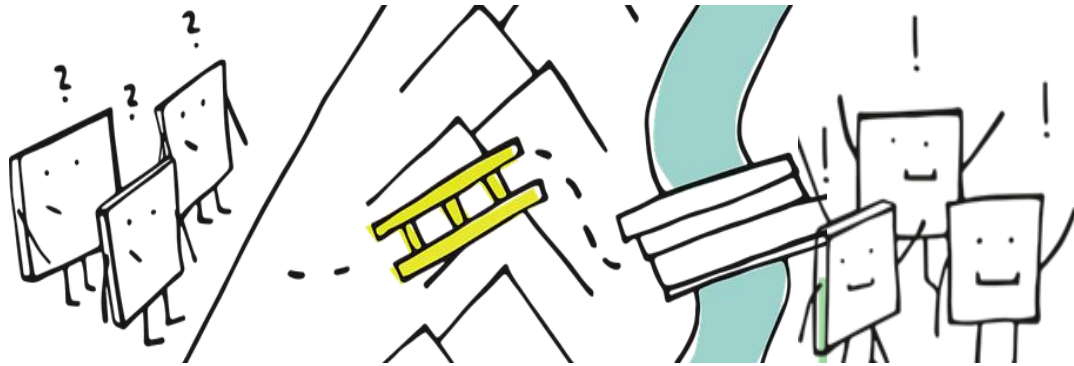
## Challenge of peer learning space in distance education

- Our distance learners study at different times and they formulate their own study pathways, but peer learning deepens understanding and sense of belonging.

## Solutions

- In the first weeks all students study the same 5 hr Open Learn course and discuss learning together.
- Asynchronous discussion forums for tutor groups where tutors can support accessibility and inclusion.
- Increased offer of live group tutorial events.
- Structured activities and peer reviews with explicit guidance on how to communicate in a peer review.
- Strong focus on communication skills for diverse audience and purpose.

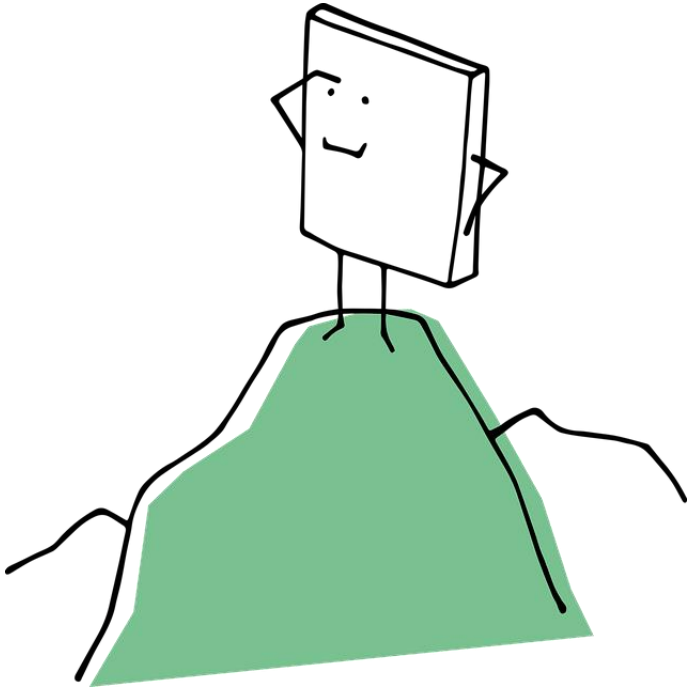
# Inclusive transitions and widened participation



Recognises the challenges faced by different students and supports them to overcome these.

- Structured to be relevant for all students entering HE.
- Provides a **safe space to practise new skills** without assumption of prior disciplinary knowledge.
- Flexible and respectful of student prior learning. Students bring their existing knowledge, interests and informal learning into the module structure.
- Particularly supportive for students entering HE from non-traditional or disrupted learning backgrounds.

# How YXM130 prepares students for future study



YXM130 helps students see how they can map out their future and provides the tools for them to get there.

The module prepares students for higher-level interdisciplinary study through:

- Strengthening critical evaluation and information literacy.
- Academic integrity – why and how? Embedded explicitly as an essential skill.
- Experience in integrating ideas from multiple disciplines.
- Explicit teaching on communication with authentic communication tasks (infographics, data visuals, reflective writing).
- A growing sense of academic confidence and learner agency.
- Final weeks (26–29) used to build on learning, reflect and design their future degree.

# Thank you. The production of YXM130 has involved a host of collaborators including:

Module chairs (past and present)

Staff tutor

Curriculum Manager

Tutor Support Manager

Critical readers – including academics based in OU faculties and Associate lecturers who tutor on the module

OU Learning and Discovery Services (LDS) – colleagues who help create videos, graphics and interactives and proofread content amongst other things

Student intern

Student presenters (videos)

OU Staff presenters (videos)

Library and Careers and Employability Services partners

YASS partners

External Assessor

## Image Sources

Cartoon images from [manfredsteger – Pixabay](#)

Parkrun photo from Bob ☺ of Fisherman's Walk Parkrun



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