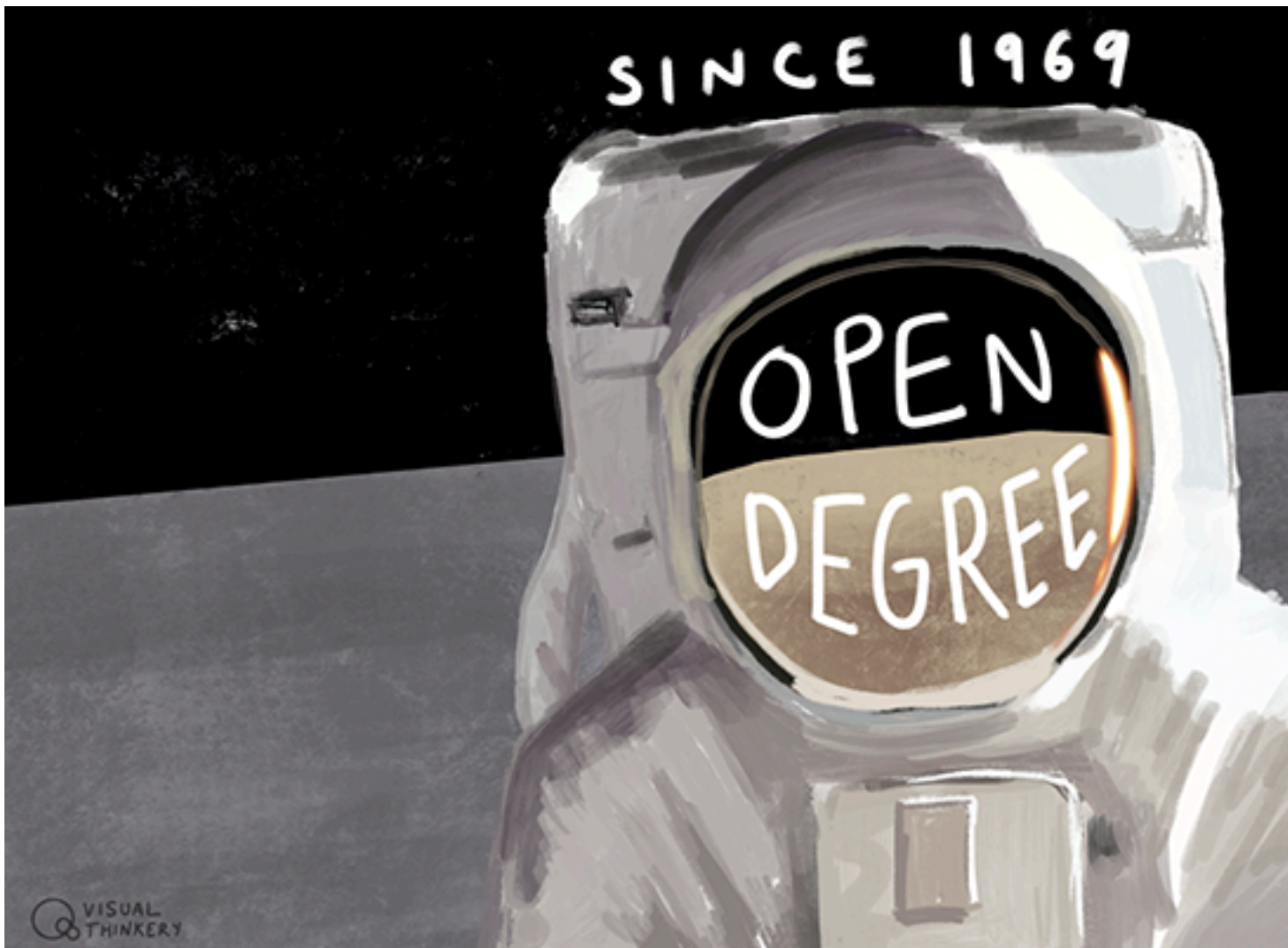




# Introducing multidisciplinary study at The Open University



This item contains selected online content. It is for use alongside, not as a replacement for the module website, which is the primary study format and contains activities and resources that cannot be replicated in the printed versions.

This publication forms part of the Open University module

[MOU\\_1 - Introducing multidisciplinary study at The Open University](#). Details of this and other Open University modules can be obtained from Student Recruitment, The Open University, PO Box 197, Milton Keynes MK7 6BJ, United Kingdom (tel. +44 (0)300 303 5303; email [general-enquiries@open.ac.uk](mailto:general-enquiries@open.ac.uk)).

Alternatively, you may visit the Open University website at [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk) where you can learn more about the wide range of modules and packs offered at all levels by The Open University.

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## Introduction

Our Open qualifications are one of the most popular pathways of study at The Open University (OU). These qualifications allow you to combine different subjects in your qualification, enabling you to see how they can relate, connect and even influence each other. This is also known as multidisciplinary study.

There are a number of modules and qualifications at the OU which support multidisciplinary study from the Social Sciences, Arts and Sciences curriculum areas. However, for this course, we're focusing on the Open qualifications which are the OU's most flexible qualifications. The Open qualifications include:

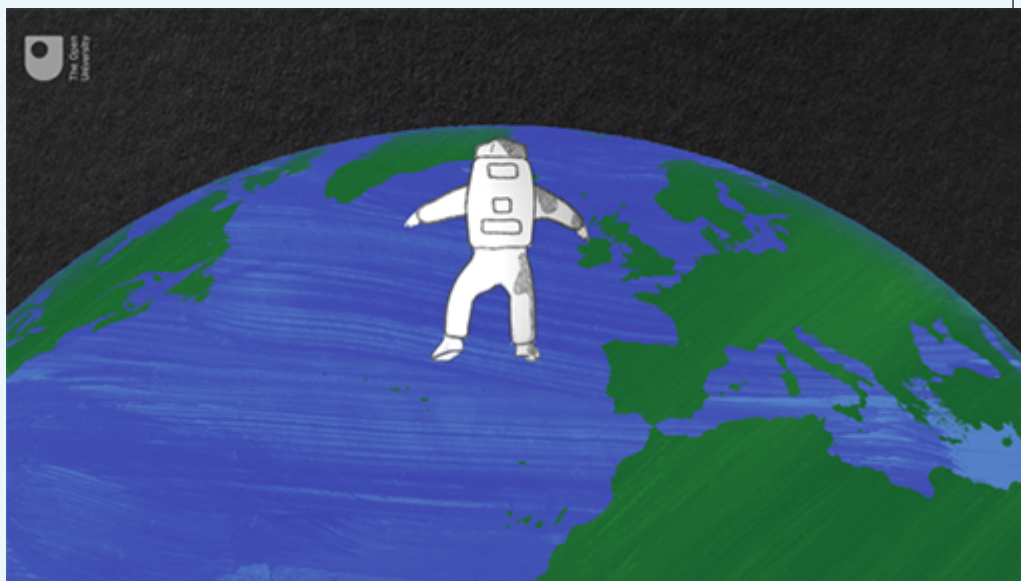
- BA/BSc (Hons) Open degree
- BSc (Hons) Combined STEM degree
- MA/MSc Open

### Activity 1

Watch our short animation introducing our qualifications. What are your first impressions? What do you think the value of qualifications like these are?

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1: The Open qualifications



*Provide your answer...*

### Discussion

This type of study enables students to draw on the skills, knowledge and expertise of different subjects and is said to be the future of learning. Being able to understand and analyse a project or problem from a number of viewpoints or through different

lenses can generate creative solutions to some of the world's most challenging problems, like climate change or poverty.

# 1 Welcome to your Open qualification

Did you know the Open degree was the OU's first degree and it was called a 'General BA'? It was the precursor to the BA/BSc (Hons) Open degree that we know today. The Open degree was the only degree programme awarded at the OU until the 2000s which is when named degrees were introduced. The BSc Combined STEM degree was introduced in 2017 due to student demand for an interdisciplinary Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics degree and the MA/MSc Open is our most recent addition at postgraduate level.

You can learn more about the history of the Open qualifications by visiting the [Open digital exhibition](#).

## Activity 2

Choose two sections of the digital archive to read. Which sections did you choose and why?

*Provide your answer...*

## Discussion

We hope you enjoyed finding out a little more about the Open qualifications, innovative curriculum design, the value of multidisciplinary study or being a brave learner.

Open qualifications provide the opportunity to choose from a range of different subjects, allowing you to learn in different ways and to develop a wide range of skills. At other universities, multidisciplinary qualifications may include combined honours, joint honours and interdisciplinary degrees. To refresh your knowledge about Open qualifications visit the online prospectus pages for each qualification:

- [BA/BSc Open](#)
- [Combined STEM BSc](#)
- [MA/MSc Open](#)

## Reflection

Why did you/would you choose an Open qualification?

*Provide your answer...*

## Discussion

You may have said it's because you wanted to tailor your modules to suit your career or personal interests or perhaps you decided to change to an Open qualification part-way through your studies because you found another subject which excited you. Whatever your reasons for combining different subjects from across the curriculum, we're delighted you're studying an Open qualification and are able to benefit from combining different subjects!





## 2 Finding your way around



Figure 1: Create your own path

You can find lots of information about your Open qualification through the Open qualification study websites. There are five different dropdown tabs for you to explore on these sites:

- Connect
- Discover
- Skills
- Plan
- Succeed

Here you can access resources to help connect with other students also studying Open qualifications, discover what subjects are available with links to faculty specific information and guidance relevant to your module selection, explore the skills you need, plan your qualification and find out what happens when you succeed.

The qualifications site has an online room where drop-in sessions and workshops are held on employability, choosing your next module and referencing and there are even opportunities to chat with the team who support the Open qualifications.

You can find the qualification study sites here:

- [BA/BSc Open degree website](#)
- [Combined STEM website](#)
- [MA/MSc Open website](#)

Registered students with the OU can also access the qualification sites via their StudentHome page by clicking on the Study tab.

**Activity 3**

Go to the qualification study site for your Open qualification and spend 15 minutes having a look around. Note down here what you spent the most time looking at and why.

*Provide your answer...*

**Discussion**

We hope you found the Open qualifications site useful. It's a really important resource to support students and we want to make sure all Open qualification students know where to find it.

The Open qualification study sites are in addition to your module specific website, TutorHome and remember there's the HelpCentre which also has useful information to support your studies.

## 3 Planning your studies



Figure 2: Choose the greatest path of interest

The Open qualifications provide you with the opportunity to study any subject(s) you like in many combinations; Figure 3 shows some of the subject areas offered.

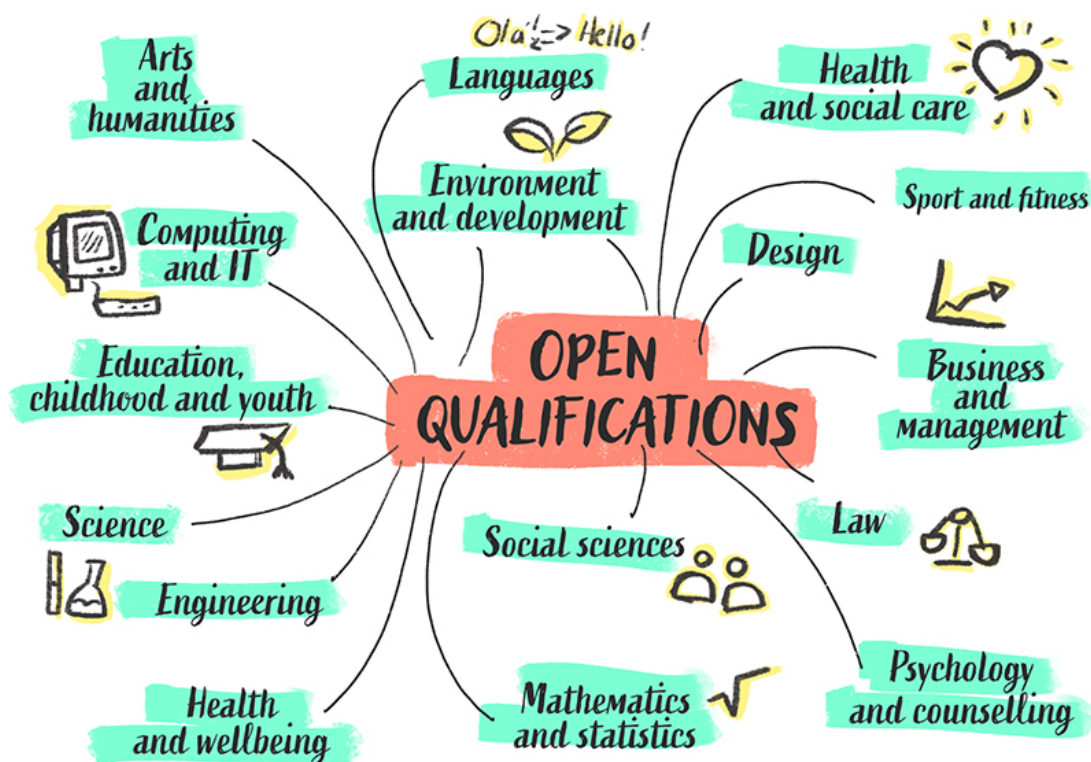


Figure 3: The Open qualifications subject areas

However, it is still important to choose your modules carefully because with so many modules to choose from, we appreciate it can be difficult to know where to start!

We recommend your first step is to explore the information on the Open qualifications study sites which have a section of resources to help you plan your study and choose your modules, at all stages of your qualification. You can find these resources on the Plan tab (Plan your qualification) here:

- [BA/BSc Open degree website](#)
- [Combined STEM website](#)
- [MA/MSc Open website](#)

These pages are designed to help and support you to plan ahead so you are in the best place to do well. Ensuring you have a good foundation in the earlier stages of your study will place you in a strong position to succeed.

#### Activity 4

Spend 10 minutes reading the section on Plan your qualification on the appropriate qualification site and see if you can map out the subjects you'd like to study or, if you're considering studying at Masters level, have a look at the different study routes and find the one that fits with your interests and aspirations.

Provide your answer...

### Discussion

What you've written will be individual to your needs and interests. Hopefully this activity got you thinking about what modules or study route you're interested in, but also when the modules start, what prerequisite knowledge you might need (what previous modules you need to have studied) and how your qualification fits together.

You can also seek individualised information, advice and guidance from your Student Support Team (SST). Our Student Support Teams are specialists made up of experienced academics, educational advisers and other staff with subject-specific expertise. They can provide advice and guidance both on module choice and on qualification planning.

If there is a specific subject area you would like to concentrate your study on, they can help ensure you include the necessary pre-requisite modules to help you succeed in the later stages of your qualification. If you decide to change direction in your subject areas, they can help with module choice and preparation.

We understand students' interests and aims can change over time and that's ok. We can work with you to adapt your study plans and ensure your focus is in line with new goals. The flexibility of the Open qualification means you have the ability to change your plans and our SSTs are always on hand to help guide you.

## 3.1 Open YXM modules

Did you know we also offer Open modules which you can count towards your Open qualification? These modules are unique and allow students to personalise their study. Currently there are two Open modules:

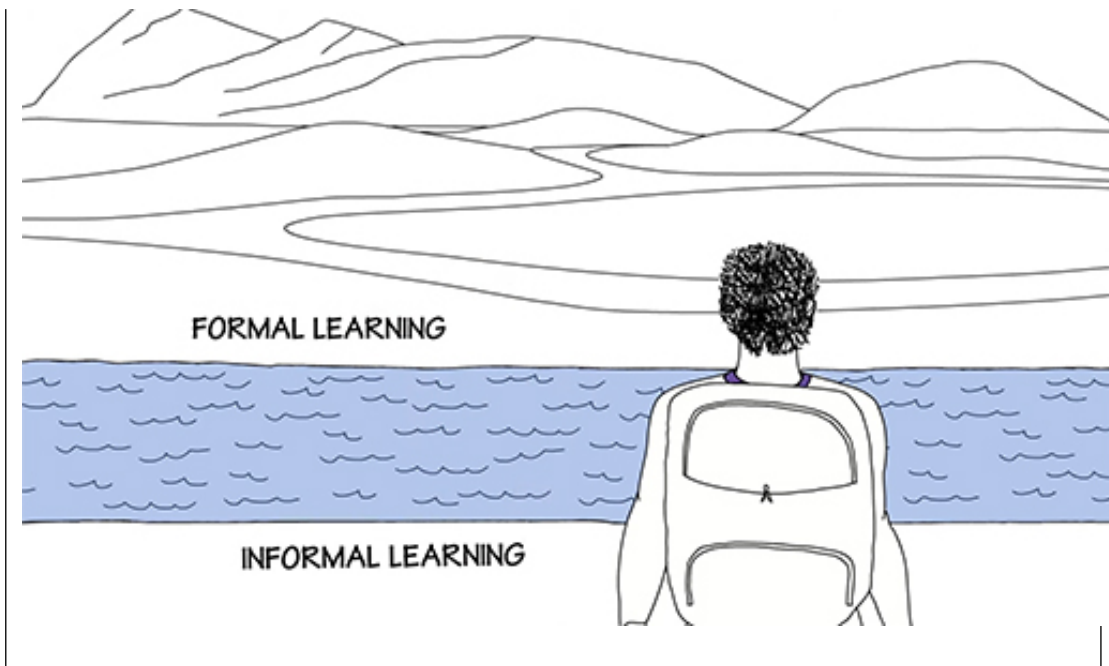
- Undergraduate module: Making your learning count (YXM130)
- Postgraduate module: Advance your independent learning (YXM830)

YXM130 is an OU Level 1 module that allows you to count different forms of study, like OpenLearn courses (including this one), professional qualifications, Coursera and other Open Educational Resources (OERs) towards a formal OU qualification, including the Open degree. You can find out a little more about YXM130 by visiting [here](#) and by watching the short animation below.

The range of options for building your YXM130 study is endless. To help with the choices, the module team have created some [example study pathways](#) to see how you can create your own module.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2: Making your learning count



YXM830 is a postgraduate module which is personalised and offers the flexibility of exploring in depth a topic of your choice at Masters level. You can include YXM830 as part of a MA/MSc Open. This module also allows you to draw on different types of learning as a way of advancing your research skills. There's more on the module [here](#) and in this video:

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 3: Advance your independent learning





## 4 Community and belonging

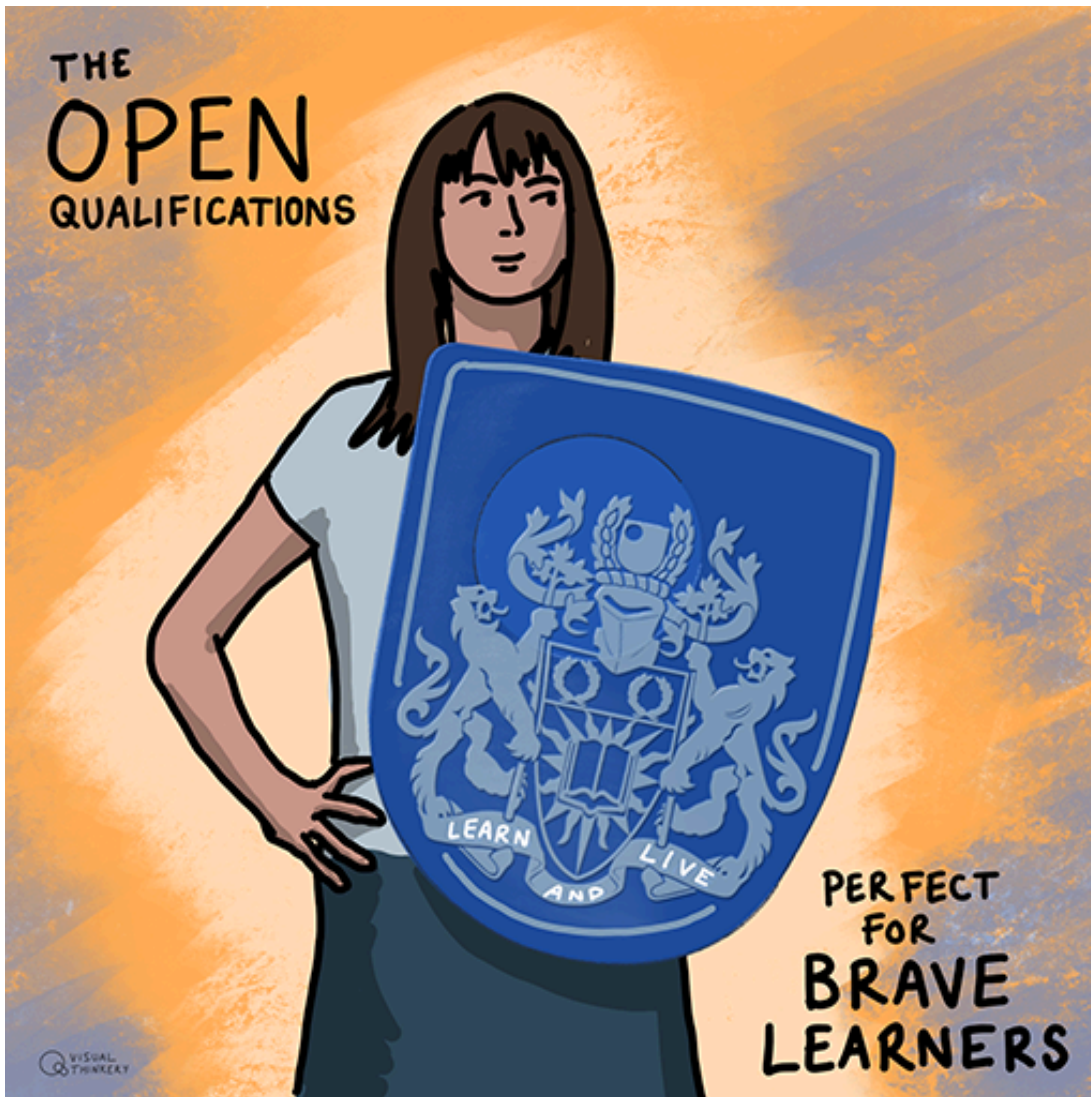


Figure 4: Brave learners

You can connect with other students studying an Open qualification in various ways including via the [student forums](#), hosted on the qualification subject site, where students can ask questions about module choices, pathways and module combinations, and also via student-led Facebook groups.

The Student Hub Live Archive is the Open University's repository of recorded interactive sessions hosted by OU tutors. The recordings include study skills workshops, community events, and plenty of ideas, best practices, tips, tools and resources that can be very helpful, and you'll get to hear both from guest experts and fellow students.

The archive also has the SHL Podcast offering, with episodes produced and presented by an OU PhD student and an OU alumnus. Heidi and Scott chat about their own experiences of studying, why they started, what they loved, the challenges they faced and how studying changed their lives.

All recordings and the podcasts are available via the [Student Hub Live website](#) and are accessible for all OU students.

Open qualifications students might be interested in these sessions:

- [Generative AI: who's the expert?](#)
- [What's in your \(Open\) box?](#)
- [Playfulness, practice and perspectives](#)

Don't forget the [OpenSU](#) has a thriving community with several opportunities to get involved in their different interest groups, such as clubs and societies. They have many different groups and are a good place for support and advice when studying. [The Hoot](#) is a great way to stay in touch with the wider OU student community, learning more about what OpenSU does and what it can offer you as an OU student.

### Activity 5

Select one of these opportunities to engage with the wider Open community and explore it further. Note down some of the benefits engaging with the wider study community might bring you.

*Provide your answer...*



## 5 Career development and planning for your future

### THE **OPEN** QUALIFICATIONS



Figure 5: Walk your own path

Part of your learning journey will include thinking about your future career choices and planning for your future. It is therefore important to consider and carry out research into career options. Studying across subjects helps you to bring together skills, knowledge and different perspectives which can help open up your career options. On the Qualification Sites there are specific resources under the Plan tab (Plan your career) here:

- [BA/BSc Open website](#)
- [BSc Combined STEM website](#)
- [MA/MSc Open website](#)

The Open qualifications site provides links to online career tools, such as FutureYOU, that can be used to identify careers based on your interests and skills. This tool is a personal space where you can reflect on your achievements and plan your future.

**Activity 6**

Watch the short video presenting FutureYOU and explore the resources and assets offered. Note down any skills that you might want to develop in your studies or areas for you to focus on.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 4: FutureYOU



*Provide your answer...*

On the Qualification Sites you will find information from the Careers and Employability Services (CES) who can also support you with ensuring you're studying the right modules for your career aspirations.

**Activity 7**

Take the time to explore materials from the Careers and Employability Service (CES) on these sites. Knowing how to articulate your studies and qualification to employers and the combinations of subjects you have chosen is something students have said is an important skill. You can also explore resources to help produce CVs, learn more about employers and engage in forums.

These sites also include interesting case studies of students who have completed their Open qualification so you can see how they used their knowledge and skills to develop their careers.

To further support your understanding of multidisciplinary study and what this means for your career development and future planning, the Open qualifications team have created a short, badged OpenLearn course: '[Multidisciplinary study: the value and benefits](#)'.



Figure 6: Multidisciplinary study: the value and benefits

The course is interactive and features videos to explore what multidisciplinary study is, what you can gain by studying a multidisciplinary qualification and how it can benefit your career prospects. If you're interested in learning more about the benefits of multidisciplinary study you can find some great articles on OpenLearn too, including this article, '[What are the benefits of interdisciplinary study?](#)', written by Professor Martin Weller, Director of the Open Qualification. Other resources related to studying across subjects which you might find helpful can be found in this [interdisciplinary study collection](#).

### Reflection

Where do you see yourself in five-years time? What steps do you need to put in place to help you to get where you want to be? What help or support do you need to help you along the way?

*Provide your answer...*

### Discussion

Wherever you want to end up, having a plan to get you there is more likely to guarantee success of you achieving your goals. There are a number of resources, people and support materials to help you to make your goals realisable and we hope we've managed to signpost to some of those here.

## 6 End-of-course quiz

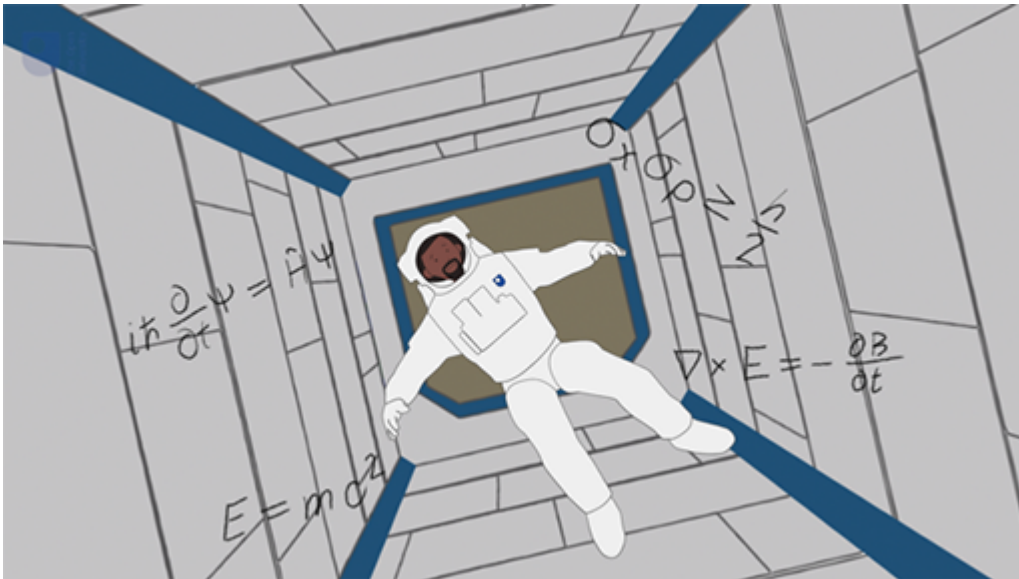
Now it's time to complete the compulsory badged quiz.

[End-of-course quiz](#)

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

Open the quiz in a new window or tab then come back here when you've finished.

## Conclusion



Bringing together knowledge from different subjects, understanding how and where they cross over or influence each other can be exciting and daunting at the same time. Coupled with learning how to find your way around the wealth of information on the OU's systems, this can be challenging.

We hope your journey in this short course has gone some way to helping you to navigate some of these challenges and set you up to succeed in your studies.

Remember, with the Open qualifications the sky's the limit!

What will your Open qualification look like?

# Acknowledgements

This free course was written by Rehana Awan with support from Jay Rixon and Mary Keys.

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