

Student Hub Live Bootcamp - day 2

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome to the Student Hub Live. Well, today is the 12th of September, 2016. I'm Karen Foley, and we have a fantastic two hours lined up for you about learning online and the writing process. So I'm hoping that some of you have been here before, and I'm hoping that we have a lot of new students also.

Today is all about getting skilled before a module starts. And I'm hoping that this appeals to students, irrespective of what level or what qualification you're studying. I hope that there's something in here that will inspire you to feel a little bit more ready for your start at the end of the month, for October.

So these sessions are for everybody, students and academics. Everybody is welcome. You can drop in and out as you wish. You can watch it on Catch Up also, if you aren't able to attend the whole session. So I do hope that you enjoy it.

And there are two ways to engage with this. There's the watch and engage option, which is the best, because you can see all of the chat and participate in that chat. And you can also tell us what you think, using our interactive widgets, which I'm going to show you in a second. So if you aren't in that option, and you're in the live stream only, then you need to go back to the website-- studenthublive@open.ac.uk-- and click on the Watch and Engage option, sign in using your normal student details. And if you don't have those, you can request a visitor account. It is a lot better. So please do do that, if you haven't already.

But that's not the only way you can engage with us. You can also send us messages on Twitter, our hashtag is [#studenthublive16](https://twitter.com/studenthublive16), and our handle is [@studenthub](https://twitter.com/studenthub). And you can e-mail us as well, which is studenthub@open.ac.uk.

Now, for those of you in the Watch and Engage, I'd like to point out just a couple of things. You should be able to see a video of the live stream here in the studio, in Milton Keynes. And you should also be able to see a Chat option. Now this chat-- if lots of people are chatting, and I know that you all are, it can go very, very fast. There is a little pen at the top. And you can hold that to scroll down and see the chat, if there's something you've missed or something you want to pick up on.

You can also change the layout. So you can click on the bottom, right-hand corner, and you'll get different screen views where the chat will be larger or smaller. So see which option suits you best. And hopefully, that will make your experience a little bit more enjoyable.

So I'd like to know where you are, how you're feeling, which level you're studying, what subject you're studying, how you feel about starting your next module, and whether or not you attended last week. So we're going to have some widgets that should be appearing, if they haven't already. And if you could click on those-- so the map, you just click on where you are. Some of the things, like how you're feeling right now, that has a list of three options. If you can only think of one or two and you can't think of the others, just put an X or something else in that, because you can't submit it unless you fill all the fields in for those particular options.

So let us see where you are and how you're feeling, and we'll feed back into that in a minute. But I'd like to introduce our Hotdesk. We have today, HJ, Hello?

HJ: Oh, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: How are you? And hello, Annie.

ANNIE: Hi.

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back.

ANNIE: I'm good.

KAREN FOLEY: How are you both?

HJ: Really excited.

ANNIE: Really good. We're really excited for today. I think it's going to be a really good session. Everyone seems to be gossiping already about food, and popcorn, and everything like that. So really excited.

HJ: Yeah. We haven't even hardly started, and already there's the food talk.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah.

HJ: But I think George has a sticky ginger cake at the ready. And Marilyn has a quiche in the kitchen. So that sounds quite good.

ANNIE: That sounds lovely. Nice.

HJ: Yeah.

ANNIE: Yeah. We've got Sylvia Logan from Canada, and she's starting her MA in classical studies. So good luck to that. And Luke [? Wood, ?] from the emergency services in London - so hopefully, we won't be able to call you today, Luke.

[LAUGHTER]

Keep on standby, just in case.

HJ: You never know here, right?

ANNIE: Yeah. Yeah. James May asked if anyone will be taking notes for the Taking Notes session, which has grown. Cheeky chap there. And then Lee Christie replied he would, but he needs to learn how to take notes first. So I'll leave them with that dilemma, while we get on with this.

HJ: But like anything you guys want us to put across to the studio, just ask it in the chat box. We're also on Twitter, @studenthublive, because there's so much chat going on already, if we

miss anything, just email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk. And we'll make sure we get our experts to answer your questions.

But if you look behind us, last week, we had loads of people send in all these cool selfies of where they were, and their study materials arriving, and their study buddies, which I thought was really cool.

ANNIE: I love it. Yeah.

HJ: And we had some prizes as well to send out to those people, which are on their way. But there's so many good ones, like all these hats.

ANNIE: I'm loving the puppies and the dogs. Fantastic. Any cool hats that you have, bring them in as well.

HJ: So if you want to send us a selfie-- because you can see us, and we want to see you too and see how you're doing-- you can send us via the email address, studenthub@open.ac.uk, or [#studenthublive16](#).

And we've got some great prizes to give out today. I picked out these ones, which is like Mass puzzles. I'm thinking of maybe doing a Mass module, so these might help me on that too. But I don't understand what half these puzzles are about. But maybe after I finish the Mass module, I will.

ANNIE: Maybe you will then. I've picked out women changing the world. Also should say, world-changing women. And this is very good. I really like it. So you go through all of the times when women have changed things in history. And it has a postcard for each one that you can send away. So that's a really nice one, I think, that you'll really like.

HJ: And we've got a poster as well of the Great British year, which I thought was really cool, because on the back-- where is it? If I could get it the right way-- [LAUGHS]

ANNIE: You've got it.

HJ: There you go.

ANNIE: Nice.

HJ: So it shows all the seasons in the Great British year and all the plants and animals that come out.

ANNIE: And cute little animal on that one.

HJ: And I think that's really cool, actually. That's really neat.

ANNIE: Nice. Yeah.

HJ: So yes, send in your selfies for that. And if you want to pick one of those that we can send to you-- because it's only fair, if you're sending us stuff, we send you stuff back too.

ANNIE: And we've also got some selfies in the mail, so let's check it out and see what we've got on there. OK. Oh, yeah. We've got the puppies coming in. Fantastic. Just what I wanted. So let's see. So we've got Michelle-- study buddy here. Very cute. We'll put that on the board. What have you got HJ?

ANNIE: And we've got Vicky sent us in last week of the view from where she was, which I think is very cool. And she's got a very lovely smile there, which we always like to see. Everyone smiles when they watch this, I hope.

ANNIE: [LAUGHS] Yeah. And-- oh, look at this, Allie's hat, which looks like a kind of dinosaur-type, munchie munchers, which is actually very similar to my lunchbox. So I reckon the hat. Very nice. Love that.

HJ: And Terry sent us a picture of him with his lunch, ready to watch the boot camp, which I was-- so it's very cool. Everyone should have their lunch ready. So tell us what you're eating right now and kind of make-- that will make me jealous, but I can cope with that for now.

KAREN FOLEY: Hopefully, you've brought your lunchbox in, Annie, as well. I thought we'd got over that from last week.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: And it's great to see so many of you from last week. I have an attendance register, because I'm keeping tabs. And I'm keeping tabs on the email box as well. Caroline, Heather, Allie, Julia, Hazel, Mike, Dawn, Sarah, Robert, Holly, Lottie, Andrew, Carey, Lawrence, Deborah, Anna, David-- I'm just doing these quickly, because I assume you can't answer-- Rachel, Joann, Michelle, David, Vicki, Katherine, Ross, Anna, Amelia, Charlotte, another Chantelle, Debbie, Ilona, James, Carrie, Lee, Lorella, Ruth, Sylvia, and Thomas. 60% of you were here last week, so I hope you enjoyed it. And welcome to the other 40% who weren't.

And we've also had some pictures here that I wanted to show of some hats. This was Julia's hat, which I thought was very nice indeed. And this is Ali's hat, which I think we've seen. So some fabulous study hats there. I had no idea that people studied with these hats so regularly.

It's also great to see there's a spread of you from all over the country. And 65% of you are at level 1, 18% at level 2. And we have the majority of students here from Arts and Social Sciences at 43%, and about 34% of you from STEM as well, and a few others from the various other faculties. That's really interesting to know.

So if there are questions there that you do want to answer, that you feel are specific to either your qualification or your level, do let us know. But we're really starting to look at level 1 to 2 in this particular session. And in the next session on critical thinking next week, we're going to start at some of the skills that will be really important for level 2 also.

So our programme for today-- we're going to look with Georgina Blakeley at how to study online. This will be particularly relevant for those of you at level 1 and those of you who are new to the Open University. But also, there will be some tips in there for those of you who are at level 2.

Mark Nichols is then coming along. And we're going to take a look at making the most of an online environment. That'll be a really interesting session. He's got some great ideas about how to actually study online effectively.

We then have our sessions on note-taking with Nikki Harlow, and SA planning and writing with her also. And then, we're going to look at the very popular subject of referencing, with Fiona Doloughan from the library. So it's going to be, hopefully, a very interesting session for you, but do keep those questions coming.

I'd like to just take a look at the How Are You Feeling widget right now, so we can get a sense check about how everybody is doing at home. So let's see if we can get that up for you. There's lots been filled in-- excited, happy, nervous, intrigued, can't wait, raring to go, popcorn, procrastinating, confused, itching to start, coffee-- yes, coffee is good-- chilly feet, OK I'm sure. OK, so there's lots of stuff here. Really nice buzz around things, though. Thanks, guys, for filling that out. And for those of you who aren't in the Watch and Engage that's the kind of thing you can get up to if you join in with that format.

OK. Without further ado, I'm going to welcome Georgina Blakeley to the studio. Welcome Georgina, and thank you for coming back, like so many of our students.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I know.

KAREN FOLEY: You clearly had a good time last week.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: So last week, we looked at a variety of things. We looked at Student Home and we looked at the study planner. We took a brief look at module websites. And we looked at key services, like the library. And we briefly discussed the voucher learning environment. But the modules hadn't opened then, had they?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I know. [LAUGHS] But now they have. Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: So this is very exciting for students, isn't it?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. Yep. The module websites opened on Saturday.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: So students are in there and all excited. And the welcome forum on DD102 and the other new modules is absolutely buzzing with questions, which is great.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Brilliant. So we've got a picture here, and we're going to look at a couple of things today. I mean, in today's session, we're going to have a look at the study planner, in particular. We're going to take a look at using forums and dealing with some collaborative activities. And we're also going to look at OU Live, which is the Open University's online tutorial system.

So here, we've got one of the study planners. And this is an example in the past from a DD102 planner, but it will just give you an idea-- I mean, some modules will be ever so slightly different, but vaguely, they have a similar format. And that's important to recognise.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. Absolutely. This central column is the really, really important bit. It's the study planner. And this is your friend throughout the whole module, because this tells you, week by week, what it is you're doing. So you can literally just go through it step by step.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Shall we have a look, then, at one of the weeks and how this sort of thing can work and how to make the most of it.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. Well, I suspect most students at the moment are kind of looking at the module introduction. And most modules will have this kind of introductory material. And it's what you do in this sort of first three weeks before your module actually begins. Because although you have access to the module website, you won't have your tutors yet. You won't know the dates of your tutorials, because that won't happen for a couple of weeks, until the modules actually start.

So there's materials there in that introductory section to look at. But perhaps, if we look today, at Week 1, because that is going to be what students will do after they've done the introduction.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And this is typically around the first week of October, isn't it?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Don't worry. It's sometimes a bit slow. OK. So by clicking on any of those weeks, as you've seen I've done that, I've clicked on Week 1, and straightaway, you'll see that, on this side, there's a contents list. And that's one way of navigating your way through the weeks.

But if you also scroll down, it's really useful to see this box here. And again, most modules will be pretty similar. And that tells you, kind of in brief, what it is you're going to be doing each week. Yes, it's the main things that you'll be doing there, a sort of summary, if you like, of the activities. And then, the other way of navigating is to click on the Next button.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. So you can either use this to navigate, or simply the Next button that you'll find at the bottom of each screen. So I click on it, and fingers crossed it works. It usually does. OK. And as you can see at the top there, if you want to go back, just press Previous.

KAREN FOLEY: And then the navigation on the side also shows you where you are within that sort of process.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. Yeah. So you can see I've moved from that first screen, which was the introduction telling me, in brief, what I'm going to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: And I'm now on screen two.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, a lot of people last week were saying, I've got my books. And that was great, obviously, because the books are a key part of it. How do the books fit into this? Because you're saying this is the friend throughout the whole journey.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. Yeah. Most modules will have a mixture of books, and they'll also have a mixture of materials that you get on the VLE. Yeah. So that would be audio-video activities, that kind of thing. But this tells you what to do. So at some point you'll see, as you kind of scroll down, it will tell you to work with the chapter, OK? And there you see it working with Chapter 1. Yeah. So it does actually tell you when to read the books.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Obviously, you don't have to go online to do that. More or less, you'll be reading a chapter every week.

KAREN FOLEY: But can you?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. Yeah, you can go online to do that. Some people do prefer to read on screens these days. I'm not one of them. I like my traditional book.

But yeah, you can click on that, and it will take you to a PDF of the Chapter 1. So you can read when you're on the train, when you're on the go. And you don't have to lug those really heavy books that we give you for the level 1 modules.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: No. Although they make exceptional mouse mats, I've heard. [LAUGHS]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yes. Yes. I'm glad it's finally useful. [LAUGHS] I'm trying not to get frustrated about that. Yeah, it's a very good mouse mat.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Oh, by the way, we've put a widget up as well about whether or not you're interested in a face-to-face or online tutorials. It'd be really interesting to get your steer on that, because that's something we're going to be going through a little bit later. So if you could let us know your thoughts on a face-to-face or online, and again, any comments that you've got about those, or questions, indeed, please do let us know on the chat.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. So this is one of the activities here. It's simply watching a film. What's really useful to look out for as you're going through is the timings.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah? Because each of the activities, whether it's watching a video, listening to an audio, or doing a skills activity, will tell you approximately how much time you need to do it. And that's really good for planning your time. Because to be honest, if I was a new student and I opened this up, and I think, oh, my goodness me, I've got to do all that in one week? And it's quite daunting. You this kind of really, really long list of all these different things to do, and you know what they mean, because you haven't looked at them yet.

But it's worth bearing in mind that, yes, some of them will take a while. So some of them will take an hour to do. This one says you need about 25 minutes to do it. But other ones will just take 10 minutes, yeah? So although it looks daunting, each week is generally about 14, 15 hours of study a week. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Well it's quite interesting. And then, bearing in mind that a lot of our students here are level 1, just looking at this, I can see that there's some stuff that's relevant to the subject area.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: But there's also skills. There's skimming, and scan-reading, and tips. And those are built-in to the structure of the modules, in particular at level 1. So we're not expecting students to all of a sudden be geniuses at note taking, for example, although you might be at the end of the session. [LAUGHS]

But in all seriousness, they are skilled throughout that journey, in terms of how the module is produced, to develop those skills, as well as the content. How important is it then, would you say, to do those activities, bearing in mind, sometimes you think, oh, I don't have time this week to do note-taking? I know how to take notes. I've watched the Student Hub Live. How important is it to engage with the skills, as well as the content?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I think it's absolutely super important. And I know I would say that. But it is, because even if you think, actually, I can write really well, just by doing these activities-- and sometimes, I look at them myself, and other modules-- there's still something you can learn. So even if you feel quite confident, it's worth having a look and seeing what tips you can pick up and improve the note-taking skills that you think you already have.

But for new students, particularly, I think it builds your confidence. You now, if you've never done it before, there's no reason why you would know how to write an introduction, how you would know how to write paragraphs, how you would know how to write conclusions. We don't expect you to know anything, which is why you're starting with a level 1 module. So I think it's really important to do these skills activities.

And we tend to use the materials that you study, so kind of topics that you're interested in, to teach the skills through them. So you're not doing a standalone skills activity, you're using the kinds of materials, the films, the audios, on topics that you're interested in studying. So that helps you to do them as well, I think.

KAREN FOLEY: I wanted to ask you something, because sometimes, you have these activities, and they have this box. And then they'll say, write something in this box.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Who can see that box?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Nobody. Shall we have a look at one?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I'm going to just click on this one. It's part of a wider skills activity, looking at how you read actively, as opposed to just skimming it and not really taking a lot in, as often we do. So this is about hard words and tricky sentences, yeah? Because often, the language we use as social scientists, or whatever discipline it is you're studying, might seem a bit odd, if it's not the sort of everyday language you're used to.

So this tells you to read the first paragraph, and then jot down in the work box any words or phrases that are unfamiliar to you. Now, if I was being a bit naughty, I could just write XXX, or blah, blah, blah, because I'm really interested in the discussion. I don't have time to do this, I'm just going to do it very quickly. So let's see if you can do that. Don't tell your tutors I told you to do this, OK? And it gave you the discussion.

So that helps you to see if you're on the right track with the kind of answers that you put in. So OK, although I've been a bit naughty there, I wouldn't recommend you do that every time. Sometimes, you can do that, because you don't have the time. And you just actually want to quickly get to what are the main points you should be getting out of an activity. But if you do have the time, and most times you will, hopefully, you write your own answers in. And then you compare it to what's there. Yeah? It'll be similar, but not exactly the same.

KAREN FOLEY: It's funny, because these things, I do think there is often a temptation to think, I don't have time for this, you know? I'm going to go through it. But actually, I've seen in a lot of tutorials, these are the sorts of things that we might do. We might say, here's an activity. Have a look at this and write this down. And actually, hand on heart, you do get a lot of learning from doing it yourself.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: You know, you do pick things up. And also, it's important to realise, I guess, when you're not maybe on track, because that's just as important as knowing when you are.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. I mean Karen said-- you're right, you know? Your tutor doesn't see your answer, so you can do this. But it's really useful, if you think you're struggling with something, to tell your tutor, I had a go at this activity, and I couldn't do it. Can you help me?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: So it's a good gauge of where you are and how you're doing. And you will find, when you go to tutorials as well, that sometimes, tutors use activities, you know? So let's have a look at this one. Everyone was struggling with this, so let's see what the answers are and how we can get to them.

KAREN FOLEY: I might use those, because all my students are probably going to do this now. [LAUGHS] Brilliant. OK.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: No no no they wouldn't do that

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. OK. So this is good. So we've got a lot of activities, we've got a lot of ways of getting to things. There's also staggered assessments throughout the study planner as well.

And the thing that I like about the study planner and, I think, why it's such a good source of central information is that everything is there. So whilst you can navigate, as you say, in other ways, this central column of the study planner contains all of the links that you need progressively to get through.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Mm-hm. Absolutely. You could get all the assessments, again, by just clicking on the different week. So week 2 on DD102 is an assessment week. It also shows you the details of your tutorials, the different day schools, online tutorials. Don't be alarmed, everyone, there isn't one on Monday, the 10th of October, because this is last year, yeah? So please don't write these down.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. No, exactly. [LAUGHS]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: These are not tutorials. But it will have that information for you. So this central column, as I said, is your friend. It's your guide.

KAREN FOLEY: And last, you can see a certain view, and be within that view, and tick things off. It's also a good idea to look ahead, in particular, at some of the assessments.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely, yeah. So although you can get to the assessments through the study planners, we've just said, if you scroll down here, you can see on the right-hand side, Assessment Resources. And if you click on that, it will show you all the assessments for this particular module.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, why is it a good idea to have some sense of what you're going to be assessed on?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: You really need to plan your time. A lot of our students work. A lot of our students will have childcare commitments or other caring commitments. You might have holidays booked, things like that. So you need to get the key dates down in your diary. So in these three weeks before the module really begins, look at the key dates for all the assessments, write them down. And if you think there's a problem-- you maybe have something coming up at work that you know is going to be really important-- once you get your tutor, you can alert them to that and start to work out ways around it. And there are ways around it, but you need to give your tutor plenty of time and tell them that's an issue coming up.

The other thing to get down in your diary, of course, are all the different learning events. Again, students won't have details of those yet. But once they do, have a look at them and try to go to as many different tutorials, day schools, and online events as you can. We know you

can't go to all of them. They're not compulsory, because we know that students have very complicated lives, often. But we do recommend that you try and attend some, if you can.

KAREN FOLEY: Can we talk about those learning events? I also want to talk about forums a little later. But you mentioned those and the times. Could we see how people access them? And could we take a look, maybe, at the online system?

We've been asking students how many of them would prefer face-to-face or online. And it's interesting, because it's pretty much split between the two. So we've been fluctuating slightly more at one point, face-to-face or online. So people do like both of them. Georgina, are they quite different in terms of what is delivered? Should people go to both? What's the deal with these?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: They're not different in terms of the content. And I think that's important to stress. So if you have an online, you're not getting something that's different, worse, any better than if you're going face-to-face in that the content that's being delivered will be the same. And often, the same tutors will be doing the face-to-face one day, and then they'll deliver the very similar session online the next day. So they're similar in content, but obviously, the delivery mechanism is different.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: And having taught at both myself, I know that the things that you cover and how you cover them is different when you're online, because you don't have that kind of interaction face-to-face, which sometimes smooths things over. But I don't think online should be seen as the poor relation of face-to-face, it's simply different.

KAREN FOLEY: It's like a cat or a dog person, isn't it?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: It is. Yeah. [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: They're both good, but different. So where is it then, in terms of this study planner, how do you get to the online tutorials? The face-to-face ones, I guess, have it you click on your link, and it will show you where it is, at what time. And often, there's parking information and all sorts of other useful advice. But online, on the right-hand column then, this is where you access all of these forums and tutorials?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. Yeah. The right-hand side, as we had said earlier, that's where you get your assessment. But it's also where you get access to lots of other things as well. And here is the link to the online tutorials. It's a little kind of icon with two heads, so two people speaking to each other. So try and remember it like that.

KAREN FOLEY: And it's called something like an online tutorial, an OU Live, or something that we call it sometimes. And those might be different. But broadly speaking, it's the two little heads in the box that's important.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. Don't worry about the different labels. We're terrible at the OU, for different labels, and it doesn't always help students. But the icons are the things to look out to. And you can click on that and get it through there.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So shall we have a go?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK.

KAREN FOLEY: Let's see if this works with our technology, in terms of accessing OU Live. Now, one thing that's important to note is, the first time you use OU Live-- and it's a good idea, by the way, shortly after the module starts, you'll have an idea about where your room is. And it's a really, really good idea to log-on to that, so that you can access the room.

The rooms are open any time, so you can go in. But the first time you access the room, you need to download a launcher, which sounds very space-like, doesn't it? But it isn't, it's just a little application. And once you've done that, it's very, very easy. Next time, you don't need to do it.

But it's a good idea to go into the room to see what it's like. And you can also hook up with other students in your tutor group, so it's a really nice space to have. So Georgina, show us then how it works here.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. Well, pretend that we've clicked on that link there. We're doing it slightly different, obviously, because we're using a different website. Just click on it. And the key thing here is the Join Session, which again, sounds rather strange, but it simply means that you're going to click on that, and that will allow you to enter what we call a virtual room.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: But it's important to know that, when you do that, nobody's going to know you're there yet, other than your name coming up.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: So let's have a go at that.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So you click on Join Session. From there, your Live Room link.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. And then, it'll have this screen here, Downloading Session. And it will ask if you want to open the meeting. So I shall click Open there.

KAREN FOLEY: And you can't break any of this, can you?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Oh, no.

KAREN FOLEY: Click the wrong button, it just won't do it. And you just go back and redo it again.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Doesn't matter. Start again. Yeah, you're not going to ruin it for anyone else. No one can see you making a mess of it. So just keep clicking on everything.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, all these clicking problems over the last two days have nothing to do us. [LAUGHS]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. I mean, students do have technical problems with it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Tutors do.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: But you have to persevere. And if in doubt, ring the OU Help desk, because they're really good helping solve this out.

KAREN FOLEY: They are brilliant, aren't they? HJ and Annie, how are you doing over there? And has anyone got any questions for us? I can your lights flashing.

ANNIE: Yes. [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: And I'm just wondering what that's all about. [LAUGHS]

HJ: Well, we've got lots of stuff for you, But I think we've had some stuff sent in as well..

ANNIE: Yeah. We've got some great selfies coming in. So we've got Alex Gibbs and his study buddies, which is adorable.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw.

ANNIE: My heart melts for these two. They're so cute. I want some of my own. And then we've got Allie's desk here, which is very nice. Keep your desk pictures coming in. I can see that there's some emails here, so we'll get them printed off and showing shortly.

And we also have Marie and her dog selfie, reading her book on her bed with her dog, which is absolutely lovely. She's gorgeous. She's very similar to my dog, actually. So that's nice.

I just want to point out as well, before anyone hasn't realised, that we have a little someone watching over our desk today. Yeah, it's Sophie here. She couldn't bear to be away for too long, so she's decided to come in cardboard form. Oh, she's great. So we're going to be showing some

HJ: This Sophie hasn't brought her microwave today.

ANNIE: Hasn't brought her microwave.

HJ: Which is a good thing, because--

ANNIE: I know.

HJ: It was making me more hungry, and it was just too noisy.

ANNIE: Very true.

HJ: We don't want microwaves.

ANNIE: 100%. But the popcorn has definitely rubbed off on us. So thank you for that, Sophie.

HJ: But we have got some questions. So if I give you a couple-- Luigi's wondering if you could show him the first page you went to from Student Home. If we could have a look at that again. I'm not sure what was on that page, but maybe you know what that is.

But Thomas is asking-- which is a really good question-- are you OK doing some of the week's work before you're meant to? So going ahead a bit?

And Edward's wondering about downloading the Daisy Reader, whether that's how. Or is there any other sort of reader software that the OU recommends. So yeah, it's just a few questions for you there.

KAREN FOLEY: Those are very good questions indeed. Thank you, for those.

In terms of the Daisy and things, the Disabled Students Group have some really good advice. And I know they have a Facebook group. They'll be able to fill you in on what's up with that. But you can also speak to your student support team about all of those aspects. And if you do have additional requirements, the OU are brilliant at providing formats and ways of accessing things that can suit you.

I'm not an expert at that, but if you email, us, studenthub@open.ac.uk, we can get back to you with a bit more of a specific answer, if you tell us exactly what you had in mind. And we'll try and show you that Student Home Page again towards the end of the session. But again, you can watch this on Catch Up also, so we'll do that if we have time.

We've just logged-in to an OU Live room now. And this is the view of what it looks like. So when you log-in, all that will happen, like Georgina said, is that you will be listed on the participant panel. There won't be anything else. No one will be able to hear you or see into your bedroom, or wherever it is you might be accessing it.

And what's interesting here is that you've got the various functions. So you've got video. You've got also a chat function, much like here. And you can drag those and expand them out, so you can get a really big chat box if you want to. You can see who else is in the session, and you can talk and turn your microphone on and off, using the Talk button at the top, right-hand side. And you'll also see the screen. So that's the PowerPoint where your tutor will put things on.

Georgina, tell us then, how do students feel going to their first OU Live tutorial, because it is a little bit of a different format. But we can see here it's not so scary. And I imagine it's quite good fun. Well, I know it is good fun. [LAUGHS]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yes. No, absolutely. It can be great fun. But yeah, most students, I think, probably feel very anxious. If they've managed to overcome the technical difficulties-- which, by the way, we've just had. We've taken us a while to get in there. So you'll be glad to know that we have difficulties too.

So once they've got over that, they're often feeling quite nervous. And as you say, they're thinking, oh, what do I say? Do I put my hand up or all this kind of thing? But actually, it is

very similar to face-to-face. And people often feel just as nervous speaking in a face-to-face seminar situation as they do online. So don't worry. Until you actually press the Microphone button, nobody can hear you. So you can sit there muttering under your breath about technology and how you never want to work with it again, all people will see is that you're there. Yes, your name will appear, but that's all.

If you're nervous about using the microphone-- and students often are, particularly the first time, till they've kind of got to know their tutor a bit and, perhaps, some of the other students in their group-- you can use the Chat function there. But tutors really love you to speak. We love you to speak in face-to-face and online. So even if you just say hello, that's brilliant. You know, it doesn't have to be more than that at the start.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, it's a fantastic system. You can certainly do more there than you can here. You can draw on the white board. You can engage in various activities. I mean, it really is a great place. And it's a great place, as I said before, to hook up with students in your tutor group, or your cluster group, or however you're structured, so that, if you do want support from each other, you can together and do that in that room at any time. So it's a good option.

Thank you. Georgina, I'd also like to talk a little bit about forums. And I wonder if we can go back to that page and look a little bit at that, because you'll be seeing now that your Welcome forums will be set up. And they're a great thing to look at.

Often, people are talking about where they are. They're talking about who wants to study together, et cetera. There's a wealth of activity there. But equally, they can fill up-- I mean, when I go on there-- hours gone, just gone. And so there can be a way of procrastinating, but they're a lovely way to get that sense of community.

When you're allocated your tutor, you'll also be set up with a tutor group forum. And that will be just specific to your tutor group, or your cluster group, or however that is structured. So you'll see, pretty much, who's contained in that. And it's a smaller space. And sometimes, those spaces are used for collaborative activities, or your tutor will put notes from to tutorials there, et cetera. So they're a really good space to be able to access. So let's take a look then. How do we get to them?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. Well, again, this all-important right-hand side of the module website. Underneath the assessment, underneath how we got into the online tutorials is a list of forums. And as you just said, there's three main types.

So there's a Welcome forum. Those will be open now. And I've kind of looked at the DD102 one, and it's very busy. Students are asking all kinds of questions. And that's absolutely great. And hopefully, those questions are being answered.

Tutor group forums, that tends to be kind of just your very small group, your tutor and perhaps another 15 to 20 students. It tends to be used less for discussion and more for kind of information-giving. So your tutor will put things up-- perhaps tutorial notes, or things to be thinking about. So it's a bit like a notice board.

And then the cluster tutorial forums, that's kind of much bigger. It's usually three or four tutors and their groups, so perhaps 60, 80 students. And that's kind of where the discussion takes place.

Now that kind of bigger space can be very daunting to students, because you know that there's a possible 80 students who's going to look at what you've put up there. And I think students, at the beginning in particular, think, I don't want to say anything, because it's there. And then it's stuck there in black and white. And I'm not sure how I delete it.

But no one's judging you. You know, it really is, particularly in these early stages, just getting to know people, saying hello, perhaps saying why you're doing the module you're doing, how are you feeling. As we've said today, are you predominantly terrified? Or is excitement winning over at this point in time? And once you kind of reach out, I think people reach back to you. And then you start to feel that you're part of a community.

KAREN FOLEY: But it is not a place to talk about food, is it? [LAUGHS]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's OK. [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Like here. [LAUGHS]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. No, no, no. Again, don't think that you always have to be serious. It's not about putting on your academic gown and suddenly starting to use really long words in a way that you don't do in normal conversation. Sometimes, the discussions are academic, and they're about concepts like class, or disorderly behaviour, or something like that. But you can also go on there and say, oh, gosh, I hate this chapter. Is anyone else struggling with this chapter?

And it's really good to know that you're not going to enjoy every aspect of every module that you do. There's going to be chapters that you really feel that you're wading through treacle in. And it's sometimes nice to know that you're not the only one. It's not you who's struggling with it, a lot of other students are thinking, oh, gosh, I'll be glad when this chapter's finished, or this part of the module is finished. So it can be used to share those kind of feelings as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Georgina Blakely, thank you so much. It's been a really useful session, going through the virtual learning environment and having a look at OU Live. And I think you've, hopefully, reassured everybody at home that this is a really useful space and a very accessible space also.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I hope so.

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you, very much, for joining us today. Well, that was good. I hope that you enjoyed that as a roundup. And if there are any questions that come from that session, do let us know.

We're now going to prepare our next guest to come into the studio, who is Mark Nichols. And he'll be with us in a couple of minutes. But I just wanted to go and see what do you guys talk, Annie and H.J, and if there are any questions I haven't answered.

HJ: I think one of the things that Davin has said, which I think is a really great tip, is when you've got the online tutorials, is to head into the room a little bit beforehand to make sure you're all set up. Because sometimes, something goes wrong, or it takes a little longer than you think. I found that on my first tutorial. I went in on the time, because it was going to start at midday. And then I found out it took about 15 minutes for me to set up. So I like about tip from Davin, reminding us to get in there a bit early to make sure you're all set up. And then you can say hi to everyone, as well, just before it starts and have a little chat with your fellow students.

ANNIE: A few people have said Dragon Dictation is really app where you talk, and it types for you, which is really good if you want to take notes really quickly, or anyone that I know-- I'm dyslexic, so I sometimes use that, which really helps me to kind of focus on what I want to write down, because my thought process can kind of go off if I'm writing notes at the same time. So if anyone wants to use that, that's a really good one to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, that's brilliant,

HJ: But we also, in that session, we had a little talk about online tutorials, face-to-face tutorials. And it was really cutting it close, when we were looking at that widget.

ANNIE: Yeah. Mm-hm.

HJ: It was kind of evenly split. But people liked both for different reasons. I think that both of them have pros and cons for people. So people like the convenience of online tutorials. You can just be there at home. A lot of people like face-to-face, because it's meeting other students. I really enjoy face-to-face tutorials for that.

ANNIE: Yeah. And bouncing off other students, and seeing what they have to say, and that sort of thing. It's very helpful, isn't it?

HJ: And then I think someone-- ah, there we go. Samantha says she was a bit nervous about going to a face-to-face tutorial. I was for my first one too, but I found that everyone's not there to say how brilliant they're doing at their assignments. Everyone's like nervous about the same things. And they have similar questions to you. So it's really good just to go along. And you'll find you'll fit in quite well, actually.

ANNIE: Yeah, definitely.

HJ: Yeah. We've also had some more stuff come in. You're sending us loads of great stuff. So we've had-- what is it? Andrea sent in that workspace, which is putting me to shame, because this desk is--

[LAUGHTER]

I really do try and keep this desk organised.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ANNIE: Yeah. All right.

KAREN FOLEY: I can see it coming over the top.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

HJ: It doesn't happen, does it?

ANNIE: It's coming towards me, and I'm getting a little bit claustrophobic right now, actually.

KAREN FOLEY: Placed a complaint about that, bitterly, last week.

ANNIE: Hey. [LAUGHS]

HJ: But we've got-- oh yeah, Marilyn sent in the picture of the cupcake that she's eating at the moment, which looks so lovely. But I am quite jealous, because it's about that lunchtime.

ANNIE: That looks so nice.

HJ: I may have forgotten my lunch today. I'm not too sure.

KAREN FOLEY: I brought my lunch.

HJ: Have you?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. After last week's shenanigans, I've come prepared.

HJ: Oh, nice.

ANNIE: Fantastic.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm-hm.

HJ: I may find something under this.

KAREN FOLEY: Would you like to see what I've brought?

HJ: Oh, yes. Go on. Let's have a look.

ANNIE: Yes, please.

KAREN FOLEY: Put the register down. [HUMMING]

ANNIE: I like the basket as well. It's very nice. [GASPS] Hello.

HJ: Oh, dear. Oh, it's all the way over there.

ANNIE: That is brilliant.

KAREN FOLEY: What do you think of that then?

[LAUGHTER]

ANNIE: Beautiful selection.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

ANNIE: Very colourful.

KAREN FOLEY: And it's all for me and my guests, I'm afraid, this week. So unfortunately, you will have to have your own lunch. [LAUGHS]

ANNIE: [GROANS]

HJ: OK.

ANNIE: Brilliant.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw.

[LAUGHTER]

Well, luckily, I have a guest here, Mark Nichols. Thank you, for coming along, Mark.

MARK NICHOLS: Great to be with you, Karen. And I'm very hungry too, so nice to have a selection there.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, good. Would you like some cake?

MARK NICHOLS: Perhaps after.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, OK. [LAUGHS] Now, you are very interesting, because you graduated in a virtual graduation ceremony.

MARK NICHOLS: That's right.

KAREN FOLEY: 15 years ago.

MARK NICHOLS: 15 years ago, yep.

KAREN FOLEY: And we think like learning online is all virtual and different. But graduating online, how did that go?

MARK NICHOLS: Really well. I was graduating at 3 o'clock in the morning in New Zealand with my in-laws, my wife. We were all in our pyjamas.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

MARK NICHOLS: There's no photos. So we're certain won't be sharing photos of them. But it was a wonderful event. And in those days, too, the internet was mainly dial-up.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

MARK NICHOLS: So unfortunately, I missed my synchronous moment. The computer crashed, just as my name came up. But the Open University provided me with the proceedings on a disc, so I was able to watch it later.

KAREN FOLEY: Really? So you did that with the Open University?

MARK NICHOLS: I did. Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: How amazing. It's interesting, actually, because New Zealand and Australia, often, when you're looking at sorts of online and distance learning, they're really at the forefront aren't they? But that you did it with the Open University and that, now, you've just joined recently and are working here. And you're the director of Technology Enhanced Learning here.

MARK NICHOLS: Yes, that's right.

KAREN FOLEY: And you're going to fill us in on making the most of online learning environments. And Georgina's been talking about the VLE, the Virtual Learning Environment. And we've been looking at the study planners you may have seen. And we've been looked at OU Live and various ways that students can interface and interact with us. But you wanted to focus on something a little bit different.

MARK NICHOLS: Yes, I did. I wanted to look beyond just online and look at digital technologies, because I feel like online's just an extension of what digital technologies can do with us. So I thought that would be a good focus for this morning.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. So what do you want to start with?

MARK NICHOLS: Well, I think that there are three main ways in which technologies now actually help us in teaching and learning. Firstly, we've got unprecedented access to information. So we can find almost anything with a quick Google search.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

MARK NICHOLS: And of course, we've got wonderful services here at the OU too. We can find articles in the library. We can search for anything from YouTube, anything. So we've got unprecedented access, very, very easy to find stuff, and also to download it and potentially use it later on.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent.

MARK NICHOLS: Secondly, we can quickly process and present information. So we can actually put together our thoughts, combine the thoughts of others into new ways, using the likes of Word, PowerPoint. For those who are more advanced, possibly videocasting or podcasting. So there's a whole lot of ways we can actually bring together our ideas and see them in new ways.

And we can also discuss information now in ways that were just completely unknown about 20 years ago. So the art effects and ideas we put together in our own documents are things we can now share through the likes of social media. And informal education too-- there's now a lot of use of online discussion forums.

KAREN FOLEY: So your point is, really, it's not just a different or poorer alternative to things, it actually opens a range of new and exciting options that people can take to enhance their study.

Now, we've got a whole lot of widgets here, so these interactive tools. And we'd like to know what you think and how you're behaving online. So those should be appearing on your screen. We would like to know how often you use the internet when you're studying, and how often do you use the computer as a student.

So those are some of the ones that we're going to be bringing up. But we've also got other questions that we'd like to know. We'd like to know which three success factors do you think you need to work on. So you might want to have a little think about which of those options you can look at. And which of the three main applications of the website do you use as a student? That could be very interesting for us to know. And in terms of technology for education, where you see yourself in terms of a scale, so whether you think you're a beginner, or whether you think you're a little bit more confident. So we'd like to know the answer to the questions. And we will be bringing those into our discussion with Mark.

So firstly, then, this difference between online and digital, what is the difference then between those two aspects? You've spoken a little bit about accessing information and how those are different, but what would you say the main difference is?

MARK NICHOLS: Well, I think online actually requires you to be connected to the internet to make the most of it. Digital, there's a whole lot you can do with a computer that doesn't require you to have internet access whatsoever-- so the likes of using a word processor, of reading things offline. There's a whole host of things that you don't need to actually be physically connected to the internet to do. So it's really important to hold both of those things together, because online doesn't necessarily mean, when we talk about online education, doesn't necessarily mean you have to be online at all times.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, our students who are watching this, unsurprisingly perhaps, are feeling quite confident with their use of technology.

MARK NICHOLS: Good.

KAREN FOLEY: They're using their computers most of the time. So that could just be a bias in terms of the people who've come along today. How accurate would you say that is as a representation of the OU population of students?

MARK NICHOLS: Ooh, I couldn't say for sure, but my understanding is that most students are very confident users of technology here.

KAREN FOLEY: The overwhelming thing they need to focus on is focus, though, So unsurprisingly, we've been talking a little bit about that during the sessions. So that is all very interesting.

OK. So there are various types of technologies, but you've said that there are three main ways in which digital tools can help us in our learning. And you've spoken a little bit about accessing some information.

We spoke last week about some of the sessions with the library, and about procrastination, and about not accessing too much information. So when is being digital helpful for accessing information? And how do you know when to start and when to stop?

MARK NICHOLS: Oh, it's a good question. I think digital-- if you did a Google search for a subject straight off, you'd tend to get the most popular hits first. And they'll usually be the most helpful.

But when I do my own online study, I tend to do a fairly general search first, just to get a view as to the breadth of ideas that are out there. And then, gradually, I get a sense of how to focus. But it does require a bit of discipline to eventually get to that stage where, OK, I now need to start putting some ideas aside and focusing in on those that are really of interest to me.

KAREN FOLEY: Why would you say focus is such an issue then? Because people are saying they struggle with that. And we've been speaking before with Georgina about how to identify when you need to do something, when to stop procrastinating. But if you don't know what to focus on, how do you know how to rein that focus in?

MARK NICHOLS: Yeah. I think, from a use of technology perspective, focus is a little bit different. From a use of technology perspective, I'd be inclined to close down everything except what I'm working.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

MARK NICHOLS: It's all too easy to be distracted and to even distract yourself, by having your email client open, by having a Twitter feed open. Every now and then, you'll get a ding or an alert from Skype when someone else logs in. It pays in a study session to close all of that sort of thing down.

KAREN FOLEY: That is such good advice. And I occasionally do that. [LAUGHS] But it's very, very difficult, I find, anyway, to turn, especially, my email off and my social media. Because I'll often think, oh, I'll just have those on. At least I'll know when something happens. And yet, it's so easy to become distracted, because you've got all of this feed into things. And also there's, I guess, pressure to be connected a lot of the time. So how would you advise people, if they are focusing on one thing, manage that digital range of networks to stop doing something?

MARK NICHOLS: Well, I think you've always got control, as a user, yourself. Another important aspect of studying online or studying digitally is to actually organise your study time. What I tend to do is decide that I'm actually offline for two hours. I'm just out of this world. I'm just focusing on what I need to focus on for study purposes. And I'll actually turn off email. And some things can wait a little while, while you focus on the study at hand.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. OK. Excellent. Yeah, focus was chosen by 49% of the students voting today, so a key issue. That's a really good thing. And I think it's such a simple piece of

advice, but it makes them massive, massive difference, because yeah, you would just be able to focus. But as you say, you can also use digital tools for collating, and presenting, and gathering information as well. What would some of your advice be there, in terms of how people could use that as an organisational tool?

MARK NICHOLS: Yeah. I think organizationally, what I tend to do when I study an online module is I put a folder together, and I include everything in that folder that I need for that particular module. So I'll tend to go into the online version of the module through the VLE. I'll download all of the assets that I can, all of the PDF files, all of the video files, anything I can lay my hands on. And I'll put it into this one folder. That way, if I'm not online, if I actually have to go via train somewhere, or in my car as a passenger, of course, or I won't have internet access, I do have access to all of my study materials. So that's just a very simple thing which I tend to do.

I also make sure, too, that I've got my own way of working with those materials. So with the documents I've got within that folder, I'll know, for example, that if I'm going to read part of my module notes, I'll open up the PDF document. And I have all of the tools I need to actually work on in that PDF reader. So it's really just making sure that I know how I'm going to approach the materials, not just downloading them, but also knowing I'm going to engage with them.

KAREN FOLEY: When you say the tools, do you use PDFs-- because I've recently discovered some of these. They're brilliant-- the ways you can annotate things and actually make it work for you. Because the times I read a PDF, and I'll think, oh, I'll write that down. And then, where was that piece of paper, et cetera? Briefly, how could people engage with some of those tools? What sort of things? Are you talking about annotations or Post-it notes and things on PDFs?

MARK NICHOLS: Well, PDFs are usually read through the Adobe Acrobat application. And Adobe Acrobat has quite a few features built-in to it. So you can, for example, highlight text. In fact, you've got multiple colour options. And you can also add comments.

It's got, also, a whole range of different ways in which you can actually read a document. You can read it as a single page at a time. You can scroll it. It's actually a very, very powerful application, once you get used to it. It sort of leads on to a tip that I want to give later on as well, which relates to the developing confidence with online tools.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Brilliant. Excellent. Well, organisation was important for 20% of people. And as these things always happen, we're so short on time, so I want to move now and to look at skills for effective learning and some of the technical skills that people could look at.

We've been looking at study skills, obviously, with Georgina and thinking about how to focus things, how to make the most of that study planner and sectioning things. And as we can see, focus and organisation seem to be two of the key things that our audience is struggling with. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about passing strategies and how people can use that onscreen environment, so about how they can actually make that work for them. We've been talking about various readers beforehand and various assistive technologies that can be helpful. But generally, how could people make that work for them?

MARK NICHOLS: I think two key ideas here would be orientation and confidence. Orientation, I think, what we just looked at in the first session-- get to know the VLE. Get to know how it fits together. Get to know where everything is. Once you've got that orientation, you tend to be able to develop a fairly good map as to what it is you need to do and which parts are more important.

But the confidence part is another key one. I think many people have a little bit of confidence when it comes to using online technologies. We mentioned earlier, though, that most of the students watching now will have a great deal of confidence.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

MARK NICHOLS: But confidence is, I think, the number one asset for anyone wanting to use digital technology in education.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Well, as you've said, being confident is something our students are right now. But also, it's something that you can build on. Let's see, then, what are the main three applications or websites that people most use as students, because we've had a lot of people fill these in, perhaps, because they're fairly tech-savvy.

So we can see here module websites, Open University, Google, YouTube, OU Anywhere, Student Home, museum websites, Wikipedia, Grammarly, regional forums, word processing, Mind Maps, Dropbox so a whole range here of both OU-specific things, I guess, as well as various tools that they're using. And we'll talk a little bit later-- we've had some questions about referencing tools. We'll talk about that with the library later. But if you are confident, how important is it to keep building on those skills and honing your applications?

MARK NICHOLS: Vitally important. I think, if you're a confident user of computer technologies, you should take the opportunity to explore, try new things. There's a whole lot of features in Microsoft Word, for example, which are just ready to be discovered. But we tend to use only the very surface things that Word enables us to do.

Open University students also have access to Office 365, which is an online version of the Office Suite. And the OneNote tool is absolutely fabulous. It's quite a powerful tool, which I think has a great deal of potential for students. When I first found it, I just loved playing with it. It uses a notebook metaphor. So you can set up new pages, new notebooks and it's very, very easy to add ideas and search for ideas within it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. HJ's been telling me all about that, actually. And he's trying-- I need to sort it out myself, because you can apparently attach all of your various Word aspects. So if you've got to read a document, you can then attach that Word file to it. And as you get everything together it sounds absolutely brilliant. And that's on my to-do list.

OK. We're running really short of time. And I wanted to talk about some of the devices that you use, because your desk is a really interesting setup. And I thought, oh, I could never have a desk like that. But when I came and saw you, I thought, actually, I could. And I've got a picture just under there of your desk--

MARK NICHOLS: This one?

KAREN FOLEY: --which we can show. Just the first one. Yeah.

MARK NICHOLS: Correct.

KAREN FOLEY: Because you've got an interesting setup. And you were saying to me, when we looked at this, the devices were really important. Now, tell us about how you work.

MARK NICHOLS: Great. How I work-- this device you see there on my desktop-- I'm not sure if this is coming through.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. It's perfect.

MARK NICHOLS: Yep. This is actually a tablet computer. And I've got it here with me as well. It's actually a full computer and a full portable tablet device. So what I've done here is I've got it connected to an external monitor, which I've arranged in a portrait view-- I'm sorry-- yeah, portrait view, to make it easy to read documents. I've got an external keyboard and mouse. So it's actually a full desktop replacement.

Now, if I plug those things-- I take those plugs out, I've actually got a full mobile device as well. And you'll see here, this is actually a full mobile computer, as powerful as a typical laptop or desktop PC.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

MARK NICHOLS: So this runs Windows 10. The beauty of it is this device costs 120 pounds, so it's reasonably cost-effective. And it comes with a keyboard as well. So very, very powerful device for working online and offline, because, if I need to go to a meeting, I just unplug all of those peripherals, and I've got a full tablet device computer with me with a touch screen.

KAREN FOLEY: And it's got all your work saved on it. Everything.

MARK NICHOLS: It has, yeah. And the wonderful thing, too, is it sits on top of my work-issued laptop. It's one third the size, but it's just as powerful.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, I asked you where I could get one of these, and you said, no, no, we can't advertise or advocate anything. It's all up to the individual. I still want to know-- and I'm going to find out, Mark. [LAUGHS] But you did say it's important that people get the right devices. And what you were saying was that having different layouts of your screen and having split screens is something that's very, very easy to do. I wonder how many people actually at home are doing it? Davin, you probably are. So how would people go about getting some of the setup? What do they do?

MARK NICHOLS: Well, I think, if you went to amazon.co.uk-- I'm not sure if I'm allowed to advertise them at all.

KAREN FOLEY: We'll soon know. [LAUGHS]

MARK NICHOLS: But if you do a search for tablet PCs, you'll find quite a range of them, actually. They're very, very good devices.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. But I guess the take home point here is knowing that you can actually have various things, like a keyboard, that will allow you that whole functionality, having a mouse, having something that you can pick up and take off, and having the dual screen, that can really help you and help you be portable also.

MARK NICHOLS: Absolutely. Yeah, it makes online study or digital tool study very, very easy, because you've got the two screens. You can actually look at your module materials and have a document open on your other screen, which you can quickly enter type.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Brilliant. Mark Nichols, that has been a short session-- well, it hasn't been short, actually. It's been full-length, but it's been packed with information. In particular, I love your ideas about having these. And this is one thing, in addition to learning and notes, that I'm definitely going to take away from this myself.

I hope you've enjoyed this session. And Mark, if you'd like to take some cake, you're very welcome. You'll see that I've made some lolly cake here, which is a popular New Zealand treat.

MARK NICHOLS: That's fantastic.

KAREN FOLEY: So if you'd like to have some, you're very, very welcome. But thank you, Mark Nichols, for joining us today.

MARK NICHOLS: Thanks, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. So Annie and HJ, before we start looking at note taking, and essay writing, and all things sensible, how are you two doing?

ANNIE: We are good. The chat is going really well. At the moment, everyone's kind of been discussing references and how it's so tricky and hard to kind of follow. And Patricia Grey has said that Harvard reference the OU library is really, really useful. And Michael Clark has said there's also OU library sessions with references if you want to go and try them out.

And I know, personally, as well as other people on the chat have said, the RefME app is absolutely brilliant. And it really sorts all your reference and that for you. All you have to do is scan the bar code of the book, and it's sorts all of that out for you. So that's really, really quick way to do it. And we've got some cool selfies in.

HJ: Yes. People send us loads of stuff. We're loving it, so keep them coming in. What have you got, Annie?

ANNIE: So we got G.Johnston has brought his selfie in. Loving that. I'm liking the selfies. Bring more selfies in.

We've also got Al Bond, who's sent her selfies in. And I love your glasses. They are amazing. And Jen Hemmings little Anna. Beautiful little cat there, just having a relax. And a doze, just as cats do best.

HJ: But I've got two to show right now that I really like. So Tony's sent in a picture of a study buddy, which is very fluffy. I have to say, that is one fluffy dog.

ANNIE: Aw.

HJ: But she must be great to cuddle. I have to do that after my TMAs. I look at the scores, and I have to hug someone. But [LAUGHS] so Marilyn's also sent a picture of her desk with her cupcakes and what looks like a very yummy pie there. But it's a very clean and organised desk, so putting me to shame again, which I'm quite sad about.

But we had loads of great things. People were talking about all the apps they're using. So we've got RefME, Jonathan recommends-- that's so true-- for referencing. And Julie is another OneNote user. So I agree with that one. Great application.

But what we'll do is we'll put all the links that you've suggested together. And we'll put it in the Forum section of our website, before the one next week. But Marilyn also-- everyone loving the cakes. Ben's very intrigued by these cakes. But Marilyn wants to see some of the stationery that you've got on the table. She's very curious to--

ANNIE: She's very interested to see what it all is.

ANNIE: --have a little look at what you've got, if you're not too busy eating all the cake.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh.

[LAUGHTER]

Oh. Mm. Sorry. Delicious. I see what you mean about Battenberg cake, actually. Stationery is really important. And this is one I like, in particular. Although, to be honest with you, it's so pretty I haven't written on it yet. But I really like having these planners out, so that I can sort of schedule and block out stuff I'm doing in the week, have little bits that I can put post-it notes on elsewhere.

So this is a really nice, compact, take home, little planner thing. These things are all over the place, as well. You can get them everywhere in Paperchase and this, that, and the other. But those sorts of things are useful.

Another top favourite of mine is highlighters. And I quite like these, because they're handbag-sized. And they've got two ends. They've got like a thick tip and a thin tip, which I thought was quite nice for cycling and drawing through things. So those are my favourites. And also, we've got some other Live, Love, Dream things, which are unopened. So you can see how far I get with my stationery. HJ, though, you're a massive stationery fan.

HJ: Yeah. I love all my stationery. I think we're talking about colour pens and highlighters earlier. But yeah, I just like my coloured pens. That's my main thing. But I think, if anyone's got some cool stationery--

ANNIE: Send them in. Definitely.

HJ: Send them in. I want to see them.

ANNIE: And people were talking about Paperchase, actually, earlier on. I worked in Paperchase as my first job. And I used to collect all of the crazy pens. And go in, and

everyone would be like, oh, here's Annie again with her weird pens. And I'd always leave them lying around. So yeah, any Paperchase kind of stationery--

KAREN FOLEY: Other stationers are available, I've been told. [LAUGHS]

ANNIE: Yeah. So we're good.

HJ: Yeah. But because I'm starting some new study stuff in this month, as well. So I'm quite nervous, as well. So I find these helpful, all the tips and stuff we get and that you send in.

But I had a really great tip, actually, that I'd love to bring up. Amy Smith, I love this tip. She says she pretends she's explaining her notes to someone else, and it helps it click, which I thought--

ANNIE: Oh, that's a really good tip.

HJ: --that's a really good, nice tip. So I think that's something that I'd try. But we'll put that up on the board. And I think I liked that tip so much. If you send your information to studenthub@open.ac.uk, then we've got something to send back as well, because I really like that you sent us that tip.

ANNIE: Yeah. It's really good.

KAREN FOLEY: Well some people have been worried about getting addicted to stationery. And I know you've been talking to people on Twitter, as well, who've been getting in touch with us. And then somebody said to you, we're taking it a bit too far with the stationery.

[LAUGHTER]

So yeah, just be mindful of your limits, guys. And then don't spend too much, even though you can.

OK. Some great tips and ideas coming up there. That's absolutely brilliant. Do keep being in touch with us. studenthub@open.ac.uk is our email. And our hashtag is #studenthublive16, and @studenthub. So at any questions, any pictures-- loving the pictures coming through. It's so nice to get a sense of community here, so please do keep those coming. And also what you're having for lunch as well. And you might like to tell me which cake you think is best. I'm not sure about the Battenberg cake. It's a little bit sweet. But I'm going to get through the rest during this session.

Anyway, we've got a lot to cover. WE have to look at note taking and essay writing. And joining me today is Nikki Harlow. Nikki, welcome. Now, you're not only a writer, but you're also an Open University tutor.

NIKKI HARLOW: That's right.

KAREN FOLEY: And you are going to tell us all about note taking and essay writing, which are two very, very popular topics. Now, Nikki has developed a quiz for you guys, OK? So on your widget screen, you should be seeing a little quiz, which is about taking notes.

Now, we don't know the answers to this. We just know the general answers, so have a go at it and see how many you get right. And we'll be feeding those in to the session. You can just click through and let us know what you think about each aspect.

So Nikki, note taking then. Why is this so important? And somebody said earlier, am I going to be taking notes through this session? And they said, no, because they don't know how to take notes. So how can people take notes through this? And what about what we say is actually important?

[LAUGHTER]

NIKKI HARLOW: Yeah. So a lot of questions. And it's bigger-- as you go through your studies, it becomes bigger and bigger. The main thing about taking notes is that you have a resource there that you can go back to to write essays, or to revise for examinations. That's the main thing. It's an aid memoir, and it's to help the information go in.

So you may want to take notes from your module books. And I have both-- if that's all right.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

NIKKI HARLOW: I have both the module books. This is one of the modules I teach on, which is the Voices, Texts, and Material Culture book. And this is Ideas of Authority, which is the very first book in the module. And I was thinking, if I was reading the first chapter for the first time and thinking of going into an exam or writing my first essay, how would I get the information in that first chapter into my head?

Now, this is very low-tech, compared to your last session, I must warn you.

KAREN FOLEY: That's OK. We can deal with it, especially if it's got stationery involved.

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, it's got very messy stationery, which has been folded up on the tray.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant.

NIKKI HARLOW: So the very first chapter in that book happens to be the idea of authority. And all I did was go through the chapter--

KAREN FOLEY: Let me hold that for you.

NIKKI HARLOW: I go through, and look at the different subject areas in the chapter and write a few notes, a few keywords, on each of those. And that is a very easy way. It's just got to get in my head. And then, when I go back, I will look at the various things, like what is a religious text in translation? How does that refer to the theme of authority? Do I understand it?

And really, it's about active reading and asking yourself, do I understand this? Because I-- and I was guilty of this when I was a level 1 student-- I would sit and diligently pour through books.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, I used to do that. And I used to write loads and loads. And then I'd end up with a 40-page chapter with 20 pages of notes.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: Very nicely written. [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: [INAUDIBLE] had a very lovely student last year who actually just copied out the book. And that was her notes.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: But that's not going to help it go in your head at all.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: What you need to do is ask yourself questions all the time. And one way to do this is to skim read your chapter first, so a quick sort of rushing through it. And pay special attention to headings and anything in bold. And you might want to underline some bits. Although, I'm very old-fashioned. I don't like marking books still. But you might want to do that.

You might also want to look at some visuals that are explaining different theories. And diagrams, have a look at those. And then read it again. And then that's when I would do this sort of thing-- scribble. Scribble notes. It doesn't have to be Post-it notes. It can be in any way.

And try and summarise, in your own words, a bit like your caller mentioned earlier about explaining it to a friend. Summarise in your own words what that chapter's about, and could you explain it to somebody else. And then try and create a list of keywords. And then, you might want to self-check all the time, trying to work out, if I just saw that keyword written in isolation, would I understand what it meant? So that would be a good way to take notes from a module book.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Excellent. Now, we know then that the books are part of the OU range of materials. And we also know that a lot of our students here are at level 1 today.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And I also wanted to talk about the differences between levels. So note taking isn't just relevant to people who haven't taken notes. And notes change a lot, don't they?

NIKKI HARLOW: They do. They do.

KAREN FOLEY: As we move on. But firstly, when are people taking notes? And you've mentioned on a chapter, and that's obviously a sensible place to take notes.

But say you're watching a video, or say you're engaging with an activity, or a forum, or whatever. When should you be taking those notes? And I guess, how do you then make sense

of where they all are in context of this module chapter. How do you store and manage all of that?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, there's different ways. And as you say, as you go through different levels, at level 1, you're going to be talking a lot about initial concepts, glossaries, understanding what the different words mean that you're going to come across. At level 2, you'll be going into a different area. You might want to store your work in tables or diagrams.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

NIKKI HARLOW: So you can actually link through at, for instance, something that's in a DVD. You could link through to something that's in a book, or something that you've heard in a lecture. So you might want to produce a nice neat table, which I haven't done today, I'm afraid. But you can produce a table linking different concepts.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Now, what would the point, then, of making it into a table, as opposed to a format like that be?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, if I've got a question on An Idea of Authority, and I happened to watch a film about, say, Ann Bronte, I happened to watch, and think, well, how does she link to authority? I could then look back to the definition of authority, what I've learnt before about the canon and literature of authority, and link her back, and then link aspects of her text.

So you might have different headings, such as, what is your concept, which is authority. And what is the author, and what the piece of work is, and how it demonstrates that concept. And you could have it under different headings that are easy to reference back.

KAREN FOLEY: What if things aren't, though? What if you get something and you think, right, I'm looking at three different examples of various things. I can fill these in. But actually, this is really lightweight on certain bits. What use would that table be then, in terms of highlighting, I guess, what isn't there?

NIKKI HARLOW: What isn't there, you can always go back to your original text, your original concept, and look. And what isn't there is often as important as what is anyway. And that can often be a very good point to put in an essay, why this particular piece of work does not demonstrate that concept.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Absolutely. We'll be talking a bit about that sort of technique and how identifying those gaps is important for critical thinking. And we're doing that next week.

OK. So note taking-- different strategies, things that work. Post-it notes isn't going to work well for everybody. A lot of our students out there might use Mind Maps. They might use a whole range of ways of doing things on the computer, with OneNote, et cetera. So people are using different tools for note taking. How important would you say it is to find your own way? And if you've found it, is that it?

NIKKI HARLOW: It will develop, and it will progress as you go along. This is mine. These are the sort of notes I write. And this is a real piece-- I was looking-- this is a real-- I was at a panel during the summer with Sophie Hannah, the author, Sophie Hannah and S.J. Watson.

And those are my notes. My way of doing it was to go through when they were speaking and just put what I thought was the most important bit of each bit of speech.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, you're very organised.

NIKKI HARLOW: [LAUGHS] And I've got little bits of quotations I managed to scribble down, as well, that I thought might be useful for an essay later on.

KAREN FOLEY: Gosh. See, my notes are all scribbles. And I write all over the page. Like, I think in shapes and bits, so I can't have a linear thing. That would just freak me out. I have to have bits everywhere. And then I'll draw bits between them. Isn't that interesting how different people's notes can say different things? I guess it's how you think as well, isn't it?

NIKKI HARLOW: It is. It is. And it's different-- but this isn't the end product anyway. These are notes which I took on that particular panel. But I went back to them. And unfortunately, I can't find the document, but I actually slotted those in with some other ideas that I had that I thought they'd be interesting as examples of.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Brilliant. I'd like to talk a little bit about proportional note taking as well, because I think this is something that is something that we need to acknowledge. These chapters are often of a similar length. Often, they have maybe five sections or so. So the actual chapters from OU materials have some sort of format that people will get used to within their discipline area.

NIKKI HARLOW: Mm-hm.

KAREN FOLEY: Now sometimes, the author is explaining something, and they can do that in quite a wordy way, because they're explaining quite an important concept. Sometimes, there will be something really, really important that is very, very small. It's only a paragraph or so, but actually, that can be quite a pivotal point. And it can really impact on something that you're trying to do within their wider context.

So you could have a few hundred notes here, and something really important here. How do you then address that in terms of note taking? How do you recognise what's important and what may be wordy and explanatory, and once you get it, that's a take home point in just one-sentence notes. And how do you then, I guess, weight things yourself, in light of what you're reading?

NIKKI HARLOW: I think the weighting has got to be-- you have to work out what is an example of a concept. What are you being asked to learn here? What's the point of this particular chapter? And once you have the concept, then a lot of the other wordy pieces in the chapter may well just be examples. And you don't need to remember all those examples. One or two will probably do. And as you progress through your studies, you will also get to a point where you'll be able to find your own examples.

A recent lovely one is I was teaching English Language on this module. And there was a whole section on dialect and accent. And there's lots of things in the books about it. But this one student was able to go back and look at how his accent has impacted on his career and how he feels he was actively discriminated against. And it was great to see a student coming

away from a module book and looking to find examples in his own life. And that's when you're starting to think out. That's showing your real development as a learner.

KAREN FOLEY: Hm. Excellent. I mean, 59% of our audience is saying that they type their notes up, which is quite interesting. How often do you think people are actually using digital tools or word processing packages to type things up? And do you think that they're then planning on cutting and pasting those into an essay?

NIKKI HARLOW: [LAUGHS].

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: I think that it's highly likely.

KAREN FOLEY: I do. [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: Highly likely. Yeah. And I think, again, it's increasingly, as our students, our people, are more and more used to using technology. They're bringing iPads and laptops into lectures and into seminars and typing as you're there. And yes, I'm sure they do just cut and paste it. [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: No, no, no. But, you know, sometimes, it's that important thing, I guess, of being able to write and reconstruct things in your own words that matters here, because when you start taking notes it's very, very easy to be looking at something, because that's what you're taking notes from, isn't it?

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And then to be, I guess, paraphrasing. And it can be very easy to inadvertently plagiarise, which has dire consequences, as we know. [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes, it does.

KAREN FOLEY: So what would your tips be in terms of how to deconstruct some of that, and in particular, if people are using word processing tools that make it a little bit easier, I guess, to copy chunks of things?

NIKKI HARLOW: Yeah. Well, always try and use your own words. And again, the person who wrote in had it absolutely spot on. He was saying could he explain-- or she-- could actually explain something to somebody else? Could they explain it? And that's what you need to be able to do. Could you explain a concept to someone else, without going into the book or pasting anything? And once you can do that, then you're on the line to being a real independent learner.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. OK. So some of these concepts, though, that we are taking notes on, they're infinitely sensible.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And they often have definitions and terms that we can't, maybe, write in our own words. So it might be a glossary definition that we may be needing to use. And there might be some very big ideas that we don't really feel we can put in our words, because it's a theory or something.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: So how can we deal with those sorts of things and take notes? And how would you recommend people sort of try and include referencing and sourcing and acknowledgements of the author's domain, as opposed to their interpretation of that? What would your advice be?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, that's absolutely fine. You can quote directly, as long as it is a quotation, and it's obviously a quotation which is correctly referenced. You might use an intact citation, or you might reference it, and it's included in the bibliography at the bottom.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. OK. Most people write their essays a couple of days after, which is a good sign, I think, because then, you have that natural space, don't you? When you've written something. And then you can do that. But there is also, I guess, a bottleneck in terms of where you've been reading, and then you have to submit your TMA. So that would be very natural, wouldn't it?

NIKKI HARLOW: It would. It would. Yes, you'd be reading a lot. And really, most of it is going to be reading. Most of note taking is reading, and understanding, and using the grey matter. You shouldn't be scribbling, and scribbling, and scribbling, for hours and hours, because you're wasting your energy. Use this to understand, rather than to write.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Annie and HJ on the Hotdesk. How's it all going? Have we answered people's questions about note taking? And are they now able to take notes on what we're saying? [LAUGHS]

ANNIE: Yeah. So Luigi actually said that she struggles remembering dates and names when she's doing her note taking? So is there any advice on that? On how she can kind of remember? Or any tips?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, my daughter's got this fantastic tutor who makes songs up about everything. So if you're any good at making songs up, and you could get as-- you know, so it was World War II-- and you could get the basic dates into a song, it's a brilliant way of remembering. [LAUGHS]

ANNIE: Fantastic.

HJ: I think we've had some great tips on note writing as well. And I always love these tips that people give in. But some people are like me, and they have terrible handwriting. So George, just typing up your handwritten notes as soon as possible, to get over the reading your illegible writing problem. So I'll have to try that one.

And Debbie writes her notes quick and scruffy, and then rewrites them neat into a notebook. I like that, because that's sort of like reviewing what you're doing and making sure you're going through stuff. And Davin finds very helpful, flashcards. And he writes questions on one side,

and the answer, the other. And he goes through, which is really good, because like some modules-- like I found my economics module had a lot of new words and definitions I had to remember. So writing them on flash cards or using different programmes-- and people are suggesting some flash cards are really helpful for that sort of thing.

HJ: I like these ones.

ANNIE: Yeah. Definitely.

HJ: Really useful.

ANNIE: I'm definitely going to take these on board.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. And I've had some level 1 students starting off with a glossary, as well. That could be a really nice idea, so you get those terms. And I guess, like Davin, like you say, those would be really useful as you're going through, especially if you're using them on the train or to study for exams. Especially with subject-specific areas, you would have a lot of concepts and terms that could be very useful as you're going through. So brilliant ideas there. Excellent.

Nikki, we're nearly out of time. Is there anything else that we can include about note taking before we start looking in a little while at essay writing?

NIKKI HARLOW: I think one last thing I'd like to say is you need to be able to distinguish between what is a fact, what is an opinion, and what is an example.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

NIKKI HARLOW: So in your notes, the facts are important. The opinions may be important, if you're writing a think about, I don't know, Louis Pasteur, and you need to quote his opinion on something. Then fine. But just be aware that you don't mix a fact with somebody's opinion. And then the examples, as I said before, are something which you're just illustrating this fact. And sometimes, you can find your own examples.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Now, would you advise students do that? If they get an example in the module material, and they can think of another example, would that be useful when you're taking out some time to process things?

NIKKI HARLOW: I think it would, because it would help you understand the concept. It's making it all go in. But obviously, you may well be asked an essay question on the example in the module material. So don't disregard it, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: No, no. They're important. I often find it interesting, in particular, I think, for level 2 students, and when you've started to do a little bit more critical thought and things, if you can start thinking, well, how much of that example-- when I step away from it, how much does that example really tell me about this concept? You know, what does it and doesn't tell me. Because often, we can think, yes, those two match very nicely, thank you, very much. But sometimes, it's about saying, actually, that does and doesn't explain certain things about this example. And one example can't necessarily cover everything to do with a concept or theory, can it?

NIKKI HARLOW: No. No. And that's a good thing, segueing into the essay writing session. That's a very good distinction to make and something that you can use in an essay.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, exactly.

NIKKI HARLOW: Is someone drying their hair?

KAREN FOLEY: It does sound like a hair dryer, doesn't it?

ANNIE: I absolutely love the popcorn maker. I had to bring it in because I just thought it's going to be better than a microwave. And-- I'm really sorry about--

HJ: Isn't it a little loud? Isn't it?

ANNIE: It was very necessary. Sorry guys, but we had to have the popcorn in the studio today. And making it fresh is just the way to go. Here, have some.

HJ: But-- that's very kind.

ANNIE: Yeah. All the talk of popcorn on the chat is just making me hungry.

KAREN FOLEY: I don't believe you guys. Honestly. I mean, I thought you'd be-- I thought, OK, Sophie, math student, and a bit unpredictable. You know, fair enough. We had complaints about the popcorn.

ANNIE: Oh. Sophie brought the microwave in, and I brought the real machine in. So I think I can be let off this week. It's the right way to do it.

KAREN FOLEY: It does smell really nice.

NIKKI HARLOW: It does.

KAREN FOLEY: I wish I could think We've got some tea with cake.

KAREN FOLEY: Would you like some tea?

ANNIE: No, I'm getting you back for not letting us have the cake. So we get the popcorn.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I suppose fair is fair, isn't it? I wonder if everyone's eating at home. [LAUGHS] I wonder if they're outdoing us. I wonder how those lunch boxes are doing that we've seen on Twitter. Right. Well, enjoy your popcorn, guys. We're going to talk about essay writing now.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS] This is not just entertainment, this is all about building a community and learning some skills. Actually, we do have-- there are these brilliant books which are available online. This is a hard copy of one. But you can't get hard copies anymore, because they're are a lot better online where you can get them as PDFs.

This one is on reading and taking notes. And it's got loads and loads of helpful advice on here that you can work through. There's a range of these booklets on OU study skills. And we've got the links to those on the resources section of the website. So do take a look, because it does cover everything. And it gives you some really lovely examples about how to do note taking and different options that you can use. So make sure you get a copy of that, if you want to find out more. And there is, as I say, a range of other ones there, such as thinking critically, and planning your assignments, et cetera, that would come in really, really handy.

OK. Let's talk essay writing. So we've done our notes. And we wanted to think now about, from taking notes and things, to formatting those in an essay. We've seen from our students in the quiz that they have been doing those a few days afterwards. And also, at home, we have another little quiz for you about essay writing. So It'd be very interested to know your thoughts on those questions that you can do as you go through.

How daunting would you say it is, Nikki, for students doing their first essay? And often, the first essay isn't the first assignment, is it?

NIKKI HARLOW: No.

KAREN FOLEY: We gear people up, particularly at level 1, towards that. But essay writing is a skill, nonetheless, that people need to get to grips with. It's an important academic skill. It is what it is, and we need to be able to figure a way of navigating that and navigating it well, as a skill that is learned. So what would you say some of the main things, the main anxieties, I guess, that people have about coming back to university and going, oh, no, I've got to write an essay now? [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: I think it's structuring the essay from the beginning. I think they worry about inadvertent plagiarism. I think they worry about looking stupid and not being clever enough for university. And I think that's probably the most frightening thing about it.

Once you're putting your thoughts on paper in an essay, you're giving yourself away, showing that you have or haven't distilled something. So it's very important to allay everybody's fears. And essay writing, like everything else, is a skill that can be learned. And once you've learned it, you'll do it almost in your sleep. Almost.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: Good old English Literature Department reassuring us on that. It is a skill, as you say. And I know a lot of students who come to first tutorial have said, I'm really worried about writing an essay. I haven't been to school in years. And now, I'm going to have to write an essay. And often they don't, as I said before.

One thing Georgina and I talked about earlier is that, a lot of the time, skills will be structured within the study planner. So depending on which level people are at-- and we know that a lot of students here are doing arts and social sciences, for example-- So they may have to write essays, perhaps, a little bit more than maybe students studying STEM subjects.

But there are a range of different types of assessment. So essay writing, in particular, students will be skilled up to learn some of those processes. But as you say, it's something that

everybody can still continue to develop. How do you know, then, when you're writing a good essay? How do people know should they be watching this part of the programme or not?

NIKKI HARLOW: [LAUGHS] Well, first of all, a good essay will answer a question. A good essay is an argument. And one of the main things that I tell every student is, read your question before starting, because so many students don't. And often, you'll get a choice of three subjects, for instance. And a student will answer a question on one subject, on-- they'll answer the wrong question about the right subject, or they'll answer just something completely different. But they might even produce a good essay about a different topic altogether.

So read your question, and make sure you understand your question. And if you don't, ask your tutor. That's what we're here for. So make sure you understand exactly what's being asked of you.

And look at the process and the content words. So if you're asked to discuss something, make sure it's a discussion. And look at the content, what content you're being asked-- if it's about the content, the idea of authority we were discussing before, make sure you mention that word in your essay and use that idea of authority. And then, do your research. Make sure you do your research.

Now, I don't know about you, about going about essays, how you start an essay, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, don't ask me. No, because I probably have a really bad way of doing it.

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, I've done a funny thing here. I have pretended-- because this is a topic on everyone's lips these days-- that we have been asked to write an essay about Brexit.

KAREN FOLEY: I do it like that. I will definitely Cellotape things together. And I definitely do it circled.

NIKKI HARLOW: So our question here is, Brexit will create greater economic prosperity for the UK. Discuss. OK. So I was thinking, because I'm not a historian, and I'm not a politics student, or anything like that, how would I go about this? All the different subjects are involved. Now, I would do something like this to start off with. And this is a splurge. What do I know, immediately, about this idea of Brexit?

And so, I've got all sorts of ideas here. Looking at our place in Britain, in Europe, and the world. And looking at immigration. Looking at economic policy. Looking at the politics of an island nation. And then, I've started to go back.

So if you go into economic policy, we could look at the austerity that we've all been living under recently. And then that brings me to, like, Adam Smith, and Keynes, and people like that, the economists. And then you might want to look at Marx and Engels. You might want to look at the North/South divide in this country.

Or you could go in a really different way and look at the-- what's that one-- the history of our involvement with Europe. And then you might end up looking at how did we manage coming out of Rome. How did we manage coming out of the Church of Rome? How did Henry VIII

do that? Piece of PR done by the UK, or done by England in those days, coming out of Europe.

So those were just some ideas. And that's what one of my initial essays would look like, a big splurge with everything in my head. But you would have to focus down.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: And I'm being asked about greater economic prosperity there. So obviously, the bit on the economy is going to be the interesting bit. So probably, the only really relevant bit of that now is that bit.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: And then, we could start focusing down further.

KAREN FOLEY: I love this. This is what I do, because I like having things on a tangent. And they're important, aren't they? Because even if you're not writing about them, sometimes, you'll have read about them in a chapter. And you think, even though some of this isn't relevant, it might be worth a sentence. Or it might be worth some broader mention in the introduction that we're sort of saying, OK, these are some of the things here, but what really matters is this. So it's important, I guess, to go through this process, so that you're identifying what matters in terms of the essay question, without having to necessarily limit some of those things that could, perhaps, bump you up into the B or A with a little bit more critical thinking around the subject area and how things might apply.

But as you say, focus is really important and understanding the question. Did you want to use this any more?

NIKKI HARLOW: No, that's fine.

KAREN FOLEY: No. So understanding the question is absolutely vital. Now, tell me then, we give students a lot of information with assessment, in particular at level 1. So they'll get some assignment guidance. And they'll say, right, this is your question. This is how you should approach it, et cetera.

Now, I know some student's approaches to the letter. And other students go, that's all very interesting. Man, this is an interesting subject. I'm off. And they'll go and research something and, as you say, perhaps write a really good essay on a slightly different subject, which makes it challenging to mark. How do students then work with that guidance to create an essay that addresses the question?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, again, look at the question and look at where, the information you've been given, where it leads you. I mean, the OU, I cannot praise-- I know, I work for here-- but I cannot praise the module materials enough. And know the answer will always be in the module materials. And this is at level 1, particularly.

At level 2, you will be starting to do your own research. You will be given books. And you'll be given reading lists where you can start to look out. And level 3, far more, you'll be

becoming independent and looking at your own research. But look at the question, and look, what can I do to answer that question?

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Well, 71% of our students are at level 1, so this is obviously going to appeal a lot more to them. And we do have 51% of our students doing arts and social sciences, so again, this is the sort of subject that may be very, very relevant to them.

So they get this assignment guidance, and they're starting to unpack some of those things to do with the essay question. One left on that, the writing process then. Can you tell us a little bit about that? It seems like a lot of work goes into the preparation, I guess.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: But often, I think-- or I know a lot of students think-- I'm writing an essay, I'm writing the introduction, time starts now. And then, that's it. I'm writing the essay. What do I put? And then, I spent an hour writing 200 words, and I've got nothing, no plan, no nothing. So tell us then about this essay writing process and about how much of that is preparatory and how much is actually writing?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, I would say that a large percent of it is preparatory. A large percent of it's going to be reading. It's going to be thinking. And you might not do that even at a desk. I'll be sitting on the train. I think it's amazing for thinking. Often, I'll be thinking of a question, and then it will pop into my head, oh gosh, and I read that about this. I could use that example.

And good idea-- always, always have notebooks with you. Always, I mean. And talking about stationery fetishes, I have a terrible stationery fetish. But I carry these notebooks around with me all the time. And thoughts that pop in, I'll write down. So personally, I would say I probably spend 20% of the time writing, if that. The rest is the reading and thinking stage.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So when you're writing, then, do you need to be in a mood to write? I mean, you might say this, as a writer yourself. But sometimes, people think, I'm not in the flow of it, or it's just not happening for me right now. Bear in mind, we give our students a week or so in the study planner to do the assessments.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: How important is it to be in a writing mood?

NIKKI HARLOW: It isn't. You have to hit the wall, and you have to go through it. I'm sorry, that's it.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, that's right. Get on with it.

NIKKI HARLOW: Spoken by a true writer.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So you start writing. What do you do? What bits do you do first?

NIKKI HARLOW: Right. Well, I've got a very good friend who's a lecturer, and he explains an essay-- the beginning, middle, and end, or introduction, the bulk of the essay, and the conclusion. At the beginning, you tell them what you're going to tell them. In the middle, you tell them. And at the end, you tell them what you told them, which is a very simple way of breaking down your essay.

Generally, it's a good idea to write something in your introduction. So what are you intending to do with this essay? What are you writing? What's it for? What do you want to show the person who's reading it? So in your beginning, that's all you do. So this essay is to do this.

And then, you do it in the middle bit. You show what you want. What do you want to demonstrate here? And at the end, you gave a summary of your main arguments. And you must remember that an essay is an argument. And it should have a flow going through it. It should be a natural, seamless from one paragraph to the next. They lead to each other.

KAREN FOLEY: 37% of our students say that they do the introduction first.

NIKKI HARLOW: OK.

KAREN FOLEY: I often, when I'm writing essays, I will often do the body of the essay first, because until I know what I want to say, I find it very difficult to tell the reader what I am going to say. So often, what I'll do is I'll plan it, and then I'll start writing the body of the essay and the paragraphs. And then, I'll think about that and write the introduction. So is there a right or a wrong way of approaching this?

NIKKI HARLOW: There isn't. There generally isn't. But probably, even if you're writing the body of the essay, you must have an idea what you're going to be writing about.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, but I never feel I can say it that well right at that moment. I find it really stressful starting to write the introduction, because I feel it should be really profound, sometimes.

NIKKI HARLOW: [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: You know? And until I've got the profound bits later on, I sort of feel a bit daunted by it myself. So I find it a lot easier, right? But maybe that's just me. [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, I think one of the very helpful things about the introduction is, in some way, you need to rephrase the question of the essay. In the introduction, if you could do that in some way, if you just put it in your own words, that will help you focus on what you're trying to do with the rest of the essay. And that, really, is all I will do to start off with. I'll write the body, and then I'll go back to write my profound introduction.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: She said. [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: So how much should you tell them, the reader of the essay, about what you're going to say? What sort of things have to go in this intro?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, it's your main argument. I'm going to prove this argument. I'm going to prove that Brexit is not right for this country. That's what I'm going to prove. And I'm going to use, perhaps, two main resources. I'm going to use a Guardian newspaper article, and I'm going to use something in a module chapter. And that is going to prove-- and that's when I rewrite the essay title. And that's basically the introduction.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. What about setting your parameters, in terms of what you're going to discuss? How important is that? I mean, this whole issue that you've come up for this essay question, I mean, that could be a million-word essay, or it could be a thousand-word essay. And obviously, you know, the length that you've got will dictate, to some extent, how much detail you can go into. So how important is it within the introduction to set those parameters?

NIKKI HARLOW: It's very important. And again, it's all about focus. What particular aspects of this topic are you going to focus on? And that needs to be in your introduction. You can't have Henry VIII in there, and Keynes, and everybody else in there. You have to just focus on one aspect, because often, at level 1, essays are 1,000, 1,500 words.

That, on that big sheet that I did before, that's probably a book, if you went into all those topics. So you've got 1,000 words. What can you achieve in 1,000 words that's going to make sense?

KAREN FOLEY: This is an interesting point. Because often, you've got guidance, and often, students will think, ah, well, there's not much room to go here. But when you're marking them, there is room, you know?

NIKKI HARLOW: There is.

KAREN FOLEY: People will interpret things in very different ways. And one student will say, actually, I really want to focus on this theory, because it is so much more important, and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. And if they add that weight in that introduction, you think, fair enough. I can see where you're coming from, because you're sort of saying, well, this is all very interesting. But really, here is where I'm going to discuss this. And as long as you're addressing the essay question, that's absolutely fine.

NIKKI HARLOW: It is, except often module teams are particularly drawing you in a direction. Because you're on the module, you're on this learning process, so perhaps, you really do need to focus on a particular topic, because you're going to need to know about it for the next topic.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: So it is important. And it is-- it's all focused. It's all about drawing your eye where it should go.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. And definitions, then, how important are they to include? Are they something that should be in the introduction? You know, how important is it to define the terms that we're actually referring to?

NIKKI HARLOW: It's extremely important. I mean, just that term, Brexit, does anybody know what it really means? [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: So you need to have a go at defining that in your introduction, because this is what I'm going to be talking in this essay.

KAREN FOLEY: And of course, we do forget that, colloquially, we might know what something means, but actually, academically, it could mean something very different. I mean, in social sciences-- Georgina was here when we were talking about DD102-- this idea of inequality or difference means something in a very specific context to that, even though we can talk about that every day meaning something ever so slightly different. So it's important sometimes to say, this is how we're referring to it in this discipline.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes, it is very important. And it is subject-specific, the way you write your essays.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: And a lot of it is where your writing style matters. So one of the ways to write a good essay is practise writing. Practise how you say things. Use language. Fall in love with the dictionary.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I often think about essay writing, in particular, paragraphs, which I'd like to move on now, in terms of almost like on a horse, you know? And I like to think of that da-dum, da-dum, da-dum, on getting some pace to it and getting a flow to it. And there are various techniques that we can use to construct paragraphs, but they need to be something contained and defined. What would you say is the most important defining thing about a paragraph?

NIKKI HARLOW: A paragraph is on one particular subject. When you're going to change subject, you go to another paragraph. To make a paragraph interesting, try and vary the length of your sentences to give it some pace.

Hilary Mantel, the winterfall author of Wolf Hall-- I think I'm stuck on Henry VIII today-- she, when she's editing her books-- and even though this is novels, it's the same with essay writing-- she talks about editing on a paragraph level. So she edits sentence to sentence and makes sure there's a rhythm in what she writes. The best essays will have a rhythm like that.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Lovely. But maybe is that something you pick up on later in the editing process as part of the writing?

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes. This is later. Yeah. I got ahead a bit there.

KAREN FOLEY: You galloped ahead.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Right. [LAUGHS] OK. So in each paragraph, what do we need? We need, I guess, some piece of evidence, or some point, or something to do with the module material, don't we?

NIKKI HARLOW: We do-- module material, or some other evidence. And it is a piece of evidence. So if your quoting or paraphrasing from something, for instance, in one of the module books, you need to make sure it's correctly referenced at the end, or use an in-text citation.

KAREN FOLEY: So really, you're looking for at least one piece of evidence, accompanied by one reference, I guess, per paragraph.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And then you'd need something there, I guess, explaining how that's relevant to the essay question.

NIKKI HARLOW: You do. And it's like having an argument. If I said to you, I don't like those cakes--

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. I don't like those.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: They're so sweet.

[LAUGHTER]

They're horrendous.

NIKKI HARLOW: There you are. You just--

KAREN FOLEY: I don't know how they sell them.

NIKKI HARLOW: You've given some supporting reason why you don't like the sweets. Just saying you don't like them--

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, no. I do like the chocolate cake.

NIKKI HARLOW: [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS] That's lovely.

NIKKI HARLOW: Oh, good. But it is-- it's about you've come up with an argument, and you support your argument. So I don't like-- what's in those cakes-- but French Fancies.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, these are French Fancies.

NIKKI HARLOW: That's what reminds me of my childhood.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: But, I don't like French Fancies, or French Fancies are very bad for you, because--

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, they are. I think they're just sort of sugar and lards, horrendous things.

NIKKI HARLOW: Although, sugar and lard sometimes.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: In the middle of writing an essay.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So paragraphs-- we've got a lot of paragraphs, and there's various ways that people can link those paragraphs.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, students can get a little bit hung up about that, because there's a lot of focus on here. We're saying, well, you need to do this. You need to do that, and dah, dah, dah, dah. And while sometimes you can step back from it and say, OK, well, if we've got a piece of evidence, if we've got to relate that to the essay question, there's a limit to, I guess, what we can include in each paragraph, isn't there?

NIKKI HARLOW: There is. Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And then making some sense and a link to it, is it a case, then, I guess, of slotting all this together in your plan, so that you're writing then as a joining up of that process?

NIKKI HARLOW: In a way, yes. I mean, I've written essays which have started off in one way, and I've completely jiggled around all the paragraphs at the end. Because I think, oh, that doesn't flow very well. That's not an obvious thing to move onto after I've said that.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: So then, I'll jiggle it all around afterwards in the editing process, which is very important.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, one of the things that we encourage students to do is write essay plans.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And we ask them, sometimes, to submit those essay plans. And sometimes, they do, and sometimes they don't. And sometimes, you think, you've used this, or maybe you haven't used it. So it's not really evident that people have. And for some people, they can be really, really useful.

Now, I finally recently discovered the benefit of writing essay plans after many, many years of writing essays without doing so. And I think they can be incredibly useful to focus on. But sometimes, they're not everyone's cup of tea. What would you say about that whole planning

process and how you can actually start writing? Can you write an essay without a plan that is good?

NIKKI HARLOW: I think it very much depends what you like. Some people do plan things to the nth detail and use Post-it notes and things. Other people, like me, a bit more scatty. They get loads of Post-it notes all over the room, make a big mess, and then just start writing. Because ultimately, writing's a process.

And sometimes, in your writing process of the essay, you discover what you want to say as you're writing, which sounds very cockeyed, I know, compared to the essay planning way of doing things. But sometimes, that will help you. So really, there's no right or wrong. An essay plan can be extremely helpful, if you think like that.

KAREN FOLEY: It can be helpful if you're short on time, although, I used to find that, sometimes, I'd explain concepts twice in an essay. And then, I'd think, oh, that's a really nice sentence there. I'm not getting rid of that. [LAUGHS]

And then, there's this whole thing where you think, I'm repeating myself. And maybe I'm sort of merging things, so that I'm talking about two sides of one thing. But I thought they were so nice, I sort of thought I'd rather-- and I realise, with hindsight, the stupidity of this whole logic.

But at the time, it can be difficult when you think, I've written that really well, and it seems like a really nice paragraph. How do you recognise then when you're doing that sort of thing, if maybe you aren't using plans? How do you recognise when you're touching on some other areas, or when you should be combining things into something that is a little bit more structured?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, you need to read your essay. And you need to ask yourself honestly, have I repeated myself? Have I said this? Have I explained that properly?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

NIKKI HARLOW: You only need to explain something once. There's a lovely concept, to use the radical, "murder your darlings." And this is it, you murder the bits. Those repeated bits, which you think are beautiful language, often they're the things that just have to go. And often, it's the bits you think are very utilitarian that will stay in, because they're doing the job that they need to do.

KAREN FOLEY: So I used to call them "over matter." And then I used to cut and paste them, because I wasn't prepared to kill them immediately. And then right at the end, I'd have to just delete them. And I felt better about it.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: One thing I used to do, actually, was I used to try and identify what the point of each paragraph was.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Because sometimes, even though I would plan it and then write it, sometimes, when you're writing, as you say, you're discovering. And then that point can sometimes be less pertinent than you'd initially intended.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: So how would you recommend people can sense check back? So they're planning forward. They're writing. How can you sense check back that what you're saying in each paragraph is both contained and relevant?

NIKKI HARLOW: Well, for a start, keep the essay question always visible on your screen. So when you're sense checking back, look at this. First of all, is it pertinent, is it relevant to the essay question? And then, look at the paragraph. Are you repeating yourself? Have you supported your argument? You've said something, have you proved it? And then, read it with the paragraph before and the paragraph afterwards. Do they link together? Is that a coherent argument?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Brilliant. HJ and Annie, is any of this making sense?

ANNIE: Definitely. It's very clear.

HJ: We've got this really good question, because everyone's about to start. And we've got people at different levels, so they're all getting all their tips in. But I think one great question was Debbie's. She's talking about any tips for level 2. And it might be interesting to know what does the OU expect. And what differences can we see in what they expect and want in assignments between the different levels, perhaps?

KAREN FOLEY: That is such a good question. I'm glad you've asked that. And in fact, it's going to be one of the topics that we're going to talk about next week with the critical thinking, because there is a difference.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes, there is.

KAREN FOLEY: So often-- you spoke about process and content words.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And often, at level 1, I guess, we're asking students to describe, or sometimes later compare and contrast.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: And then, at level 2, they're doing things like evaluating and being a little bit more critical, or discussing.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: So there is a sort of hierarchy of process and content words, isn't there?

NIKKI HARLOW: There definitely is. Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: How do students then deal with this very descriptive level 1 stuff, moving into level 2 where they're no longer outlining theories and explaining those, but they're actually starting to pick them apart? How could students deal with that in terms of the essay writing? Because you're saying that it's all an argument. You're saying any essay is an argument. Are some more of an argument than others?

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes. And as you go into level 2, you will be finding more subtle arguments. It would just be one, you might have several arguments in your level 2 essay. You might be pulling your research from various different places, not just from a module book. So you might be looking at websites. You might be looking at the books. And you will start to be looking at your question in a lot more-- analysing it a lot further.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. And again, there's often some skill stuff that's built-in to the module. I mean, sometimes, we'll talk about different approaches, like we'll have block approaches, or we'll have zigzag approaches, where you can look at things differently. So tell us then, in terms of planning-- say, you're looking at two different theories, and you're comparing and contrasting them at level 2.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And you've got these various structures to play around with. Sometimes, students can feel a bit overwhelmed thinking, well, I've got all this interesting stuff to say. All of a sudden, I now get to really get to grips with evaluating it. But you're telling me I've got to do this block or the zigzag thing now, in terms of an essay writing structure. So they've got all of this freedom on one hand, and then some constraint in terms of how they conduct that process. What advice would you give those students who are starting at level 2 where they're just getting into that side of different writing?

NIKKI HARLOW: I would advise them to get their pen on the page as soon as they can, get the concepts in their head, practise writing, practise, look at other people's essays as well. There's always lots of essays around online and things. You can research other people's essays. Look at how they've employed those techniques and see what you can do. And play around with it. And it isn't restricted, actually. It's very freeing. Often, formal restraints can free you to think more clearly.

KAREN FOLEY: Would you say there's a right or a wrong way of doing those things? Like those different approaches, could you say, well, I don't know whether to do a block approach or a zigzag approach. I'm going to sit and think on that for three days and procrastinate.

NIKKI HARLOW: No.

KAREN FOLEY: How good a result could you get? Does it matter?

NIKKI HARLOW: I don't think it does. I think it's up to you how you write. I really do. I don't think you should harness yourself to any particular technique. And you may find different essays require different techniques anyway.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. So I guess the take home thing there is, at level 2, you are being asked to use slightly different process words than you may have been at level 1.

And it's important that you understand what those mean and the extent to which you're doing them.

Another thing that I've often found teaching at level 2 is that, sometimes, students can forget that they need a little bit of description. So as we said before, it's always important to define the key terms, set the parameters. Even though you can now get into the nitty-gritty, it's the proportion that changes, isn't it?

NIKKI HARLOW: It is. It is. And you will be citing your research a lot more at level 2.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So we're nearly out of time. And conclusions are one thing that I want to conclude with. [LAUGHS]

NIKKI HARLOW: OK.

KAREN FOLEY: And what I want to talk about is how to make a good conclusion, because you said, initially, well, we tell people what we're going to say, and then we say it, then we tell them what we said. Now, when I'm marking those sorts of things, and I think, oh, you're repeating yourself here, that's no good. And then some students will all of a sudden say, well, I've said this and this, and then they go into this profound thing that I think, oh, that's brilliant, but it's just not related enough to what you're talking about right now.

So how do students sum up? How do they conclude in an appropriate way? And are they just paraphrasing then what they've said before? What would your advice be about a good conclusion?

NIKKI HARLOW: Not really paraphrasing. They're looking at what they've written and all the different examples they've given and everything, and they will sum up. By looking at X, Y and Z, I have shown whatever it is you're trying to prove. And the worst conclusions are always where-- and this often happens where a student decides to introduce a whole new topic at the end that could have gone miles back at the beginning. And they introduce whole-- make sure you don't do that. Make sure you're actually underlining-- this is what I have now demonstrated.

KAREN FOLEY: So I guess the conclusion really is, this is why all of the evidence that I've shown you addresses your question.

NIKKI HARLOW: Yes

KAREN FOLEY: And I'll thank you very much. OK. Brilliant. Nikki Harlow, that has been absolutely fantastic. Thank you, so much, for coming along today.

NIKKI HARLOW: I hope it was helpful.

KAREN FOLEY: We've had some brilliant-- HJ!

NIKKI HARLOW: There's cake theft going on here.

ANNIE: Yeah, HJ [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I want some popcorn now.

ANNIE: I don't know about that.

HJ: Well, you were going to share the cake, so, you know.

KAREN FOLEY: I had no intention of sharing the cakes. [LAUGHS]

HJ: This is like a people's revolution here. And to be fair, I was dared

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, right. So has everyone been egging you on then?

HJ: Maybe.

ANNIE: Um.

HJ: I do think-- are they happy with-- oh. [LAUGHS] I'm not sure if they're happy with my selection of cakes.

ANNIE: I think they're saying you're a legend.

HJ: The problem is, now, I know you're on guard. [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Nikki Harlow, I am so sorry about the carry-on here. Honestly. This is the thing when you get students involved, it's just ridiculous. We think everyone's grown up now, but clearly there's a bit of a child in ourself. Thank you, so much, for coming along.

NIKKI HARLOW: It's been a pleasure.

KAREN FOLEY: It's been a really, really useful session. And I hope that, at home, that's sort of helped with essay writing. There are some really, really good resources that we've got on the website, if you'd like to brush up on those essay writing skills. But don't worry, because a lot of this is embedded in your module. You'll be picking up those study skills.

And next week, we're looking at critical thinking, so we'll looking at how you can actually start organising your thoughts and thinking about what is there, what isn't there, and how you could introduce those ideas in an essay. So in particular, the students at level 2, and even those at level 1, this will come in handy for-- well, at any time. But we are taking a specific look at that next week, so do come along for that. Right. HJ, do you have anything sensible to say?

HJ: Perhaps. We'll see. I think we're still talking a bit about cakes.

ANNIE: Yeah.

HJ: But I think one thing I picked up on the chat, though, that I really liked is that Davin said about having someone reading through your assignment before submitting, which is like reading-- we talked about a tip about reading your notes to someone else. But having someone read through your assignments is really good because I find, when I'm going

through an assignment, it's hard to pick up your own mistakes, sometimes, just because you've been through it so much.

ANNIE: Very true

HJ: So I really like that, actually. And I'm going to try that. And I'm going to put it up here on our board.

ANNIE: Fantastic.

HJ: So if you email us, Davin, we'll have something nice to send you back, because, well, you sent us that great tip.

ANNIE: Yeah. Definitely. And we've got some really great selfies coming in of stationary and your pet buddies, which I'm loving. So we've got, by Shannon Mason, her notes, which says, in highlighted ink, buy cakes for next help session, which is very relevant, because that is literally what everyone's been talking about today.

We've got Hazel Harris, who has brought in a picture of her stationery-- and she said that it's an absolute lifesaver-- which looks really cool, actually. It's pots with pens in at the side.

HJ: I like that.

ANNIE: So I'm loving that stationery.

HJ: Vivian sent in-- she's called it a deskie. I really like it. I think we need to adopt that. We're sending in deskies.

ANNIE: Oh, I like that.

HJ: All this lovely stationery. But she has it so it's portable, so she can study anywhere, which is really good, actually. She's very organised, unlike me, because mine always ends up just as a pit at the bottom of my bag.

ANNIE: Go like this, then.

HJ: Oh, it's not that bad, really, is it?

ANNIE: Mm. Quite bad.

HJ: Do you think?

KAREN FOLEY: It is bad. It is bad.

HJ: I thought-- well, I think, if we look in relative to how it's been, I'm getting better. I'm making an effort here, guys.

ANNIE: Fair enough.

KAREN FOLEY: If Sophie were here, which she sort of is, she wouldn't be putting up with it.

HJ: Sophie would have a disappointed face here. Actually, compared to last week, I think Sophie would be rather happy with this desk.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

HJ: I think it's all right.

KAREN FOLEY: And isn't it lovely that she's there looking over your shoulder?

HJ: Yeah. [LAUGHS] She can't argue with me now.

KAREN FOLEY: No. And you won't be here next week as well, because you're off to university, aren't you?

HJ: Off to big school. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Going to your sensible things. OK. Well, you two, we have some sensible stuff in the studio now. I'm joined by Fiona Dolougham. Thank you, for coming along and rescuing me from this madness. I have a question for you, Fiona, because you're here from the library. And we're going to talk a little bit about referencing.

And we will have a widget up that says, which of these following describes your feelings about referencing. We're very psychology-related, aren't we? But it's easy-- you're fairly confident, you're often unsure, or it's a struggle? Referencing was the second most popular thing that came up from last week's activities where we asked students what skills they'd like to brush up on. So Fiona Doloughan, thank you, for joining me.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: It's good to be here. Thank you, for inviting me.

KAREN FOLEY: That's all right. We have a session. I have a question for you from Wendy Marfleet, who's doing Applied Linguistics. And she says, a few of us in our forms have exchanged chats about OU Annotate. Apparently it's being discontinued. And she'd like to know if there are any other electronic or online ways that you could recommend people use referencing tools.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Referencing tools-- not quite the same as OU Annotate, actually. It's where you can collect a number of references together in a tool, and you can output them in a particular bibliographic style.

We actually run a library online training session, called Introduction to Reference Management Tools. And we run it on a regular basis, or there's a recording you can go to as well. And that will give you lots of information about what the different tools are and what the pros and cons are of each one. So I recommend the online training.

KAREN FOLEY: So you recommend online training. You're not going to give Mandalay a plug.

[LAUGHTER]

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: No.

KAREN FOLEY: Fair enough. That's fine.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: No, but we cover several tools.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: Right. Now, you've got some things with us today. And what we really wanted to focus on here is how to reference and why to reference.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Right. So I'd like to start off by talking about why we reference. And obviously, the major thing--

KAREN FOLEY: Because it's fun.

[LAUGHTER]

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: No. Judging by the inquiries to the library help desk, students really hate referencing. But the main reason, of course, is that you have to acknowledge your sources. You have to acknowledge other people's ideas. And the way you do that is by referencing.

And if you don't do it, then it's called plagiarism. And you can lose marks or even not get your essay marked at all. And then, of course, there are other reasons as well, like, for example, so that you can support an academic argument. It keeps your tutor happy. And your tutor can actually see that you've read around the subject. So what I want to do at the moment is I'm going to give you a very short example of how to reference.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. I'm glad you are, because 53% of our audience are unsure about that, whereas, 29% are fairly confident about referencing. So I hope, for the ones who are a little bit unsure, you can tell us how to get better at it.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Right. OK. And as you may know, I'm a serial OU student. I love studying OU modules. And my most recent one was The Frozen Planet, which was written by Mark Brandon and David Robinson in 2011 and published by the Open University. So it's all the information you need to know.

And in my end-of-module assessment, I was actually asked to write 800 words on the adaptations that fish need to make in polar waters in order to live in freezing conditions. So I'll start with my first prop, which is Champsocephalus gunnari, known to its many friends as the mackerel ice fish.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: And it lives in the freezing waters of the Antarctic. And in my essay, I wrote, "Haemoglobin can become very thick and viscous at not 0 degrees centigrade. Ice fish living in freezing polar water have an almost complete lack of haemoglobin, which

makes their blood flow more easily and gives them characteristically very pale flesh. Now, I didn't--

KAREN FOLEY: You wrote all that in your own words.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's all my own words, yes. I didn't know that before I studied the module, and I don't suppose you knew that either, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: I didn't. No. [LAUGHS]

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: So I have to acknowledge this.

KAREN FOLEY: You do. You certainly do.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's right. Yes. So in order to acknowledge this, I have an in-text citation.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: And as we said, the module book is by Brandon and Robinson. And I found this information on page 75, published in 2011.

KAREN FOLEY: Is the page number important?

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: It is or it isn't, depending. It's one of those things with referencing. So if it's a direct quote, you should have the page number. And the page number is helpful, if you've got a very specific piece of information. You don't have to have it, if your quoting some information from several different pages. But I've helpfully put this in for my tutor, so that-- [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Because you wouldn't want to get marks off, would you?

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: No, you wouldn't get marks off for putting the page number.

KAREN FOLEY: But it can be helpful, in particular, I g guess, because there's a lot of information in this chapter. And this says, I know, for sure, where I got this from and where it's relevant.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's right. Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Brilliant. And then you need something in addition to this in-text reference.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's right. Once you've got your in-text citation, which goes after- - and even though I wrote it in my own words, I still need to have the in-text citation, because it's not common knowledge. It's something I found elsewhere. And at the end of the assignment, you have your full reference.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: And this is so that you can actually find the information that you've actually put into the in-text citation. So this means that your tutor can now go off and find this particular piece of information. As you can see, Brandon and Robinson are the authors. It was published in 2011. And *The Frozen Planet*, which is the name of the book, is in italics, which is the way it works in this particular style.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: And then, we've got Milton Keynes, the Open University. So this is an in-text citation for a module book.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Brilliant.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Well, it's not an in-text. Sorry. It's the final reference for the module book. And that was the in-text citation.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh. Excellent. So why do students struggle with this then? It all looks very self-explanatory.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Well, now, I suppose it is and it isn't, really. One of the things I would like to mention is that students really need to look at their assessment on the module site, because that's where, usually, you'll find the information about how they want you to reference in the module. And the assessment guidance may actually contain a link to something called the OU Harvard Guide, which is the standard referencing style for most OU modules. There are a few that don't use it, but the vast majority do. So I would say, go to your module, look at the assessment guidance, and see what kind of referencing you're being asked to use. And if you're going to be using the OU Harvard Guide--

KAREN FOLEY: That's a pretty thick guide.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: This is what it looks like when it's printed out.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: It's normally accessed online. You can find a link to it either on the Resources page of the Student Hub Live, or there is actually a link to it on the library home page as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I can see why you put people off, Fiona, brandishing heavy, 50-page guides like that. Tell us what they really need to reference. I mean, often, they're having to reference a module book, like this. And maybe they have a multimedia activity, again, on the module. They have to refer to the module texts and assets.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Section 7.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. So they have to reference a multimedia thing and a module book often, so they might just have a couple of references. So I can see why they're put off with all of this. But to be completely fair, there are these complexities, aren't there, with the Harvard

Guide. And there are lots of things that people might need to research, like where they've accessed something online, for example. But most of our students don't need to worry about that, bearing in mind that who we're talking to today are mainly level 1 students.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's right. Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: So if they could get the hang of just a couple of things with referencing, what would you say the most important things are? It's obviously the module chapters.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's right. Well, I would say the most important thing is Section 7 of the guide, which is OU module material. And it covers things like videos, and the text, and whether it's an online or a print module material.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: So that's sort of the main bit in this. The online guide is actually searchable. So you can just stick whatever you're looking for into it, and it should, hopefully, come up.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: And very often, on a level 1 module, the assessment will actually give you some examples of how the module team want you to reference the particular bits of module material.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, they often do. You can cut and paste, though, so you couldn't

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Just fill in the different bits.

KAREN FOLEY: No excuses.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's right.

KAREN FOLEY: But one student's got the hang, because what you're saying, I guess, is that there is a structure. So you're talking about first name, comma, last name, full stop, parenthesis. Yeah. You know, there is a structure there that people could use to then just insert whatever they were doing. Do students ever do that?

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: That's right. Yes. Well, I hope they do. I think most students actually get the hang of referencing, certainly by level 2 or 3.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Although, by the time they get to level 3, they're starting to find lots of things which aren't in the OU Harvard guide.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, of course. So then they might

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: So despite how comprehensive it might look, you know, there's always something that students will find that's not in here.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So how to reference, then, is important. When to reference is also important, so that we're not plagiarising. So we spoke earlier about having at least one piece of evidence in each paragraph of an essay, for example. So you would need at least one accompanying reference. So people are needing to reference quite a lot. Can you over-reference?

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: I think it probably depends on your tutor, actually. Because, as a librarian, you know, I would say that you probably didn't want to have a reference after every sentence. That would look horrendous.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: So I think one of the things I would say, apart from checking your module materials, also check with your tutor about the way they want you to reference the assignments.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Yes, I always like it when students talk to me about how they reference. I think it's always a very, very good, positive sign. But you also have some resources available. And the library have a fantastic tool. Ruth, in fact, says it's so nice to see you on-screen, because you've been so helpful to her on the website. So that's nice. You've got a fan there. But you do have live chat, and you do have various, as you say, training sessions and things on referencing, as well as other library sources. Where could students go to find out more about that?

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: Well, we have actually got some links on resources as well, for something called Being Digital. And there is referencing pathway in Being Digital. And it covers the most common things that students need to reference. And they're about five-minute activities. And they run through what's available in the OU Harvard Guide and what you'd actually need to put into a reference.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, thank you, very, very much, Fiona Doloughan, for coming along today. We've got many sessions with the library. And you've been absolutely fantastic.

We've got some resources available on the website. And we'll be showing you a little video, one of our Bob characters as well, and talking about plagiarism after we finish the end of this session.

[NOISY MOTOR]

ANNIE: I thought that was a really good idea.

KAREN FOLEY: I could have put money on something bad happening.

ANNIE: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: You've taken it too far now, Annie.

ANNIE: Over the top. It was HJ's idea.

HJ: What?

ANNIE: So sorry.

HJ: Don't put this on me.

ANNIE: Yeah. I thought it was a really bad idea, but--

KAREN FOLEY: We're all going to be in so much trouble.

ANNIE: That's what I said.

HJ: Annie keeps going on about my mess-- we've got popcorn everywhere.

ANNIE: Yeah, I told you. [LAUGHS]

HJ: Popcorn everywhere. I think--

ANNIE: It's fine. We'll be able to clean this up. No problem.

HJ: Yeah. [SIGHS]

ANNIE: It'll be under control.

HJ: Will it, though?

ANNIE: Yeah.

HJ: Will it? [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: It would be so wrong of me to say I'm very disappointed, wouldn't it? I'm going to say that. I'm not going to say that.

OK. Well, we're coming towards the end of this session. I hope you've enjoyed it, I certainly have. I've learned a lot. And I hope that the students at level 1, in particular, have learned an awful lot. And those of you at level 2, I hope you've picked up some bits. As I say, next week, we're doing critical thinking. And that will be a real interesting discussion for those of you at level 2, as well as level 1.

I'm going to pop up some widgets, because, like everything with the OU, I just want to check our learning outcomes. And two I had today were, do you feel that you know more about the online learning environment now? Yes or no. 94% of you say yes. Good. That's a tick.

OK. Have you picked up something new you can apply to the writing process? 97%. Excellent. Oh, Nikki will be delighted with that. OK. And I'd like to know which three words spring to mind about anything, so about how you're feeling right now, about the cake that we've got going on here, about the popcorn that is certainly going on over there, or just anything that springs to mind. And we'll wrap up with that in just a couple of minutes.

But please do tell us in the chat what you think about these sessions and if they've been useful. If you've got any ideas about things you'd like included, if you got any feedback, please let us know, because we're going to be keeping the chat open for another half an hour at the end of this session.

HJ and Annie, in particular, HJ I'd like to thank you for being here. Annie, I thought you'd be a lot more sensible than Sophie was, but--

ANNIE: Girl power.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: But in all seriousness, thank you, you two. You been absolutely brilliant. Is there anything else you'd like to say before we end?

HJ: I think-- well, I think one thing I would say is I think Julia gets me, though. This is organised chaos, it's not mess.

ANNIE: Thank you.

HJ: So I would pull that with her. But I think we've just had so much fun chatting to everyone and seeing everyone's selfies. We've had loads come in. So if we haven't got to yours, check our Twitter page, @studenthublive. And we'll make a lot of posts about all the wonderful selfies that we've had.

ANNIE: Yes. Also, Ruth.C said that it's really nice to see you here, Fiona. And your website is really, really helpful. So she's very thankful for that.

And we have-- I mean, I think this selfie is the best on the show, I've got to say. So yeah, let's just show this beauty.

HJ: I wonder who sent that one in.

ANNIE: This is really live coverage right now.

HJ: Oh, yes.

ANNIE: So that is definitely going up on the board.

HJ: But we've loved those, everything you sent us. And we'll make sure we get back to you and send something back to you too, because it's only fair.

ANNIE: Yes. Definitely.

HJ: But remember, because there's so much great chat going on today, if there was anything we missed and anything you want to know, email us-- studenthub@open.ac.uk. And we'd love to get back to you.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw.

HJ: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, thank you. We do, because we do monitor our mailbox. And we do love all your messages and things, so please do let us know what you think.

Well, we've got the results of the poll on the cake. I did promise you a cake widget, and we have one. At the moment, I think it's 41% of you liking carrot cake, 42% chocolate, so a fairly close tie. Only 4% like lolly cake. Clearly, there's no one else from New Zealand around here. [LAUGHS] Or no one who likes my fabulous lolly cake concoction, made of butter, condensed milk, biscuits, and sweets. [LAUGHS]

FIONA DOLOUGHAN: I'm not suprised

KAREN FOLEY: Delicious.

I'd like to thank my guests who've been on here, Georgina Blakeley, who's looked at learning how to study online, Mark Nichols, who's been looking at making the most of the online learning environment, Nikki Harlow, who's taken us through note taking and essay planning and writing, and of course, Fiona Doloughan, who's been talking to us about referencing.

There are resources, as I've been mentioning, available on the website. So please do take a look at those, in particular, those guides to essay writing and note taking. We've also got some forums on the website. And again, we monitor those. So if there's anything you'd like to discuss, any of the activities you'd like to take part in and let us know how you're getting on with, then please do that. It is your space to share things with each other.

There's a short feedback form on the website as well. So if you have a spare 5 or 10 minutes, please do let-- in fact, it probably won't even take that long, unless you've got loads of ideas. But you can just tell us what you thought of this session, or you can email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk, with any thoughts that you have.

There's a Count Me In button, so you can go on our mailing list. Because we've got a lot of these events lined up, so we'll make sure to let you know when those are on. And again, that's available on the website. And as HJ's been saying, our Twitter feed is #studenthublive16, and the handle is @studenthub. So if you've got any thoughts or questions, or you'd like to let us know what you'll be eating next week when we do critical thinking, then please do send us your ideas and suggestions.

OK. The chat room's going to be open for another half an hour, so you can all say goodbye. And then we're going to close it down. After this session ends, we're going to play a couple of short videos, just to amuse you and to teach you about plagiarism. Our next event, on Monday, the 19th of September, is on critical thinking.

If you've enjoyed this, go to Welcome forum. Tell other students about it. And try and get other people to come along as well. So please do that, if you find it useful. And I hope that you can come again next week.

Well, that's all from us at Student Hub Live. Thanks, for being here. And we hope to see you very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]