Student Hub Live Bootcamp - Critical thinking

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome to the Student Hub Live. I'm Karen Foley, and this is the third out of four of our bootcamp sessions. So welcome to everybody who's come along before, and a big hello to everybody who is joining us for the first time. So what is this all about? Well, we thought it would be a great idea to get together every Monday and gen up on all those skills for module start. And today, we're going to be looking at critical thinking and reflection. It's going to be a really, really useful session. No matter what level you're at, what subject you're studying, I hope there's something in here for all of you.

We've got a really good lineup today. But you guys also are going to have lots of ideas about your own. And so I'd really like you to be able to share those with each other, share them to the social media desk. And I'll explain how that works in a second. And hopefully, we'll all learn something new today.

So most of you are in the Watch and Engage option, which is brilliant. And anybody is welcome to join that. You just need to put in your usual student details or your staff details if you're a member of staff. And if you aren't, then you can create a visitor account. That's really easy to do. And there's a Frequently Asked Questions section on the website that will explain how to do that.

Now, that is the best way to engage because you can follow all the chat. And you can put all your questions in there as well.

You can also tell us what you think using the interactive widgets. So those are going to pop up very, very soon, if they haven't already. And we're going to ask you where you are in the country, how you're feeling right now-- so three words for that.

Now, if you can't think of three words on any of these, by the way, just put a cross or something else, because you do need to complete all the fields to be able to enter and submit your answers.

We'll also ask you which subject you're studying, which level you're studying, how you feel about starting your next module, and whether or not you attended last week. And that's really useful for us to know so that we can get a hang of where to pitch this particular session.

Now, that's not the only way though, that you can get in touch with us. You can also email us. And our email box is being manned. And that is studenthub@open.ac.uk.

Now, we love seeing what you're doing, who your study buddies are, maybe what you're eating. There's been a lot of very good food coming through. So send us your pictures. Send us your selfies. And they will be coming live into the studio in real time so that we get a sense of our whole academic community.

You can also use Twitter for the same thing. And our hashtag is #studenthublive16 and our handle is @studenthub. So without further ado, I'd like to introduce the hot desk. We have Annie and Ben today on the hot desk.

Hello, Annie. Hello, Ben.

ANNIE: Hi. Yes, we're here. Everyone's introducing themselves and already starting hot topics for today. We've got loads of people in the chat room. Keep the chat coming.

If you're watching just from the live stream, it would be really good to switch over, so we can engage with you and you can ask us questions. We're here for your voice. So ask us questions that we can put forward. And that's going to be really interesting. I'm really excited for this session.

Thank you as well for your selfies last week. We really enjoyed going through them. And we'd love to have more. So keep them sending over. You can send it to the email at studenthublive@open.ac.uk. And we will try and get as many shown as possible.

And as last week and the week before, we have some prizes if you bring them in that we will post to you. So Ben, do you want to introduce your chosen one?

BEN: So I chose "The Met." It's a lovely law one and pulls in to the degree that I'm studying with the OU as well. So send us in some stuff so you can win this. I'll be competing for it as well.

ANNIE: Fantastic. We've also got a tourist guide to our secret streets, which I thought was really cool. And you open it up and there's a map there. And it goes through all the streets, from like the 1600s up until now. And big facts about them. And what they looked like then and what they look like now.

And lastly, we have "Wild Weather."

BEN: "Wild Weather." So as the UK and the weather has been quite mental the last week, thought we'd go with this thing as well.

ANNIE: Fabulous.

KAREN FOLEY: Very, very good choices. Annie and Ben, I like those. Thank you.

So if you send us in a selfie, and then send us your name and address, we'll send you your choice of one of those items back. Now, these are things that the Open University has done in conjunction with the BBC. We do a lot of stuff on programming. And a lot of the time, we'll create additional resources that you can get often through open learn, or at the end of a programme you can write in.

We thought it'd be a good idea that if you're sending things to us, it's only really fair that we send something back to you. So we look forward to that during the session. And we've had some lovely pictures as well last week from Caroline Dixon, David Weller, Ross, Andrea, Julia, Mark, Allie, Kelly, Robert, Marilyn, Lottie, Tanya, Shannon, Mason, Hazel, Harris, Nissa Sam. Thank you all for all of those.

And as I said, we'll be showing those throughout the programme in the back. So Ben, you're hear replacing HJ because he's gone off to university today. And you're studying law.

Now, not many people know that the OU is doing law. So how's all that going?

BEN: So got access to my module materials and now having lots of fun really trying to understand a bit more about what the modules are and trying to pick it all up from there. Yeah, it's interesting. It's mind-blowing. But the Student Hub Live sessions are really helping me already. So I'm really interested to see what the guys have got to say today.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And it's going to be a different experience for you because I know that you've been engaging in all of the chat remotely. And so now you're in the studio today. What are people talking about in the chat now? What's their big concern?

I know we've got 62% of students at level 1 and 69% are here from last week. So hopefully, there's a lot of familiarity going on and people saying hi to each other. What's really happening though?

BEN: So at the moment, they're all worrying where HJ is today. There's a lot of issues going around. Has HJ been fired? So don't worry, he's still with us. He's at university today. I believe that's what you said. So yeah, he's OK.

KAREN FOLEY: Good. He's all right. Good, good, good. Excellent. OK. Well, thank you for that. OK.

And of course, a big welcome. There's a lot of new people here as well. So welcome to you as well. You can watch the previous weeks if you'd like to on the catchup function. And that's on the website. So do check that out later if you're interested in learning about learning online and the VLE, the Virtual Learning Environment. And we've also done a session on essay writing and note taking, which is apparently very useful for students. We've had good feedback about that one. So thank you for that.

So you can check those out later. But welcome. Anything goes in the chat. You can ask any questions. And just talk to each other. So please, do give it a shot.

So what have you got lined up today? Well, we are doing critical thinking and reflection. And I have John Butcher coming to the studio to talk about critical thinking. And he's going to give us a really nice, broad overview about what that is.

Then, Jeanette Wallace, who is an associate lecturer or tutor, is going to talk about using critical thought in a TMA. This is a big challenge. In particular, for students going from level 1 to 2. But you could never start too early or learn too late.

I then have Terrell Golding and Steven Harrison. And they're going to talk about being a reflective learner. And then, we have Wendy Chalmers and Nicola Beer from the library, who will be giving you some really practical evaluation frameworks that you can use to be a critical thinker. So I'm hoping that by the end of it, we pick up some tools for critical thinking and reflection. That is my aim.

We can see today that we've got about 46%. So just under half of students doing FASS arts and social sciences. And 32% doing science, or STEM subjects, as well. So that's always good for us to know. Lovely.

Well, without further ado, I'm going to ask our first guest to come into the studio. And voila, here he is. Magic, isn't it?

JOHN BUTCHER: Hello, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, John. And how are you today?

JOHN BUTCHER: I'm very well. Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you. So John, thank you for joining me. Because you are the Deputy Director for Access and Curriculum in the Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships. And we asked for some autobiographical information.

You say that you used to like dancing to the Smiths.

JOHN BUTCHER: I did. It's my back now.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. All right, John. That's fine. We won't go into that because we've only got a short session. And I want to know about your background in critical thinking. So I think everyone's going to say, well, how come you're here talking to us today about this? Why is this so important?

JOHN BUTCHER: Well, it's really important because I think what you and the rest of the speakers are doing today is something terribly revolutionary in higher education.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant, isn't it? There's no food at the studio at all.

JOHN BUTCHER: No, I haven't been bribed. This is because I think for many years, academics have realised the importance of critical thinking. We use it when we assess students' work, particularly in the higher bandings. But I think we've been very poor about communicating the importance of critical thinking to our students. So I think this is kind of levelling the playing field, making things a bit more transparent.

I'm here because I recall critical thinking being really hard. This is a difficult challenge. I managed to enjoy and I did enjoy a degree in English and history and an MA in Victorian studies without really becoming a critical thinker at all. It wasn't until I did a master's in education and there was very clear information on the assessment criteria about how to get the higher grades that I realised the importance of critical thinking.

And then when I did my own doctorate, it just became part of my approach, really. Particularly when I was doing things like the literature review to put on a critical pair of spectacles, if I can put it that way. But it's not easy. And it wasn't taught to me. And it took me a long while to get it. So I hope students out there will really engage with this in a kind of very open way.

KAREN FOLEY: We've only got 20 minutes, John. It's going to have to be a brief helicopter view. But one thing I really liked about what you said is that there's this idea that it can be learned. And also, that sometimes it can be confusing to understand really what that is all about. So I'd like I ask you at home to complete our interactive tools, our widgets. And we've got three that are going to pop up for you.

And we'd like to know in three words, you can have two or one if you want to. Just put an x for the others. In three words, what does critical thinking mean to you? So just to get a snapshot view, I guess, of some of the things that spring to mind.

Also, yes or now. Do you understand, or do you think you understand what critical thinking is all about? And which aspects of the selected few that we have chosen is important in critical thinking? So have a go at those and we'll feed those into the session.

So John, what is this idea? What is critical thinking? How would you define it?

JOHN BUTCHER: Well, I think there are two areas to think about really. One is the skills bit of the phrase. And we're talking here about cognitive skills, not practical skills. So this is to do with how we think. And there's been a lot of work over the last few decades around notions of what's rather pretentiously called perhaps "metacognition," but is really thinking about thinking. And I think this is where the reflective element of this comes in. And students being aware of their own thinking processes and becoming kind of active agents in that thinking. This is the opposite to just passively receiving information. So the engagement with it through those cognitive skills is very important.

The second thing is, I guess, a kind of disposition. So it's really helpful if you are open-minded, inquisitive, happy to take on other people's points of view, and just generally curious about things, curious about your studies. That will get you there.

And then what you're probably going to be doing is-- and in a sense, this is what's not critical thinking. So what's not critical thinking is when you do your set tasks. You do your thinking for your OU studies, and you're really just reproducing what people already know. You're describing things. So assessors would always talk about-- try to analyse rather than describe.

So the analysis bit is hard, but it's about trying to evaluate, trying to judge different evidence sources. And bringing evidence to bear on your own argument. That's the quick definition, I think.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, this is very interesting, John. Because you've mentioned a lot of things here. And what's very interesting about that is that when we started, before you said your first sentence, we had about 47% of our audience saying that they thought they understood what critical thinking was.

And that's rapidly declined as we've been talking. Because you have mentioned quite a few points. And I guess there's this idea about critical thinking. We think, yes, that's a good thing. We also think, yes, it's about thinking a lot. But what you're saying really is it's about the way in which you think. And the way in which you engage with things.

And also, the sense that it's not just, I guess, dismissing things. It's about how you actually use various frameworks to identify where the gaps are, where things are adding to other things, and how things are pieced together.

JOHN BUTCHER: People can misunderstand the word "critical," which is important. The reason it's I think such a complex area is it really comes from three different academic traditions. So long history of critical thinking in philosophy, which is a kind of rational way of arguing and thinking about marshalling evidence. A pretty long history in psychology,

particularly behaviourist psychology. Looking at the skills that people use when they do think critically.

And also, which is the area I'm more interested in, really, from education. Particularly, going back to Bloom's Taxonomy, which gives a kind of hierarchy of academic skills. And those skills around evaluation and critical judgement are right at the top of the pyramid. So this is the highest-order thinking you can do. And that's why we do it in universities.

KAREN FOLEY: That sounds a bit scary, doesn't it? Because like you say, OK. So this is part of something in higher education. It's complicated. It's difficult. It's progressive. So that complexity then, that might unnerve people. Do you think?

JOHN BUTCHER: Well, I think crucially-- I was a victim of this as well. I think it needs to be taught. I think critical skills can be taught. There's a debate about whether they are taught discretely.

In American universities, there are lots of courses you can do on developing critical thinking. But they're kind of discrete from the main subject students are studying. So there are debates about whether that transfers across.

I think probably the more effective way of doing it is embedding critical thinking skills in the curriculum you're studying. For example in things like medical education, there's a lot of now problem-based learning, which means people engage with this in a much more active way.

And I think for teaching purposes-- and I think this is helpful for students as well-- it's the idea of, can you learn collaboratively? So can you build on what a colleague has argued and take that a bit further and challenge them, and then reach a kind of consensus amongst the two or three of you?

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Interesting. So some of it can be subject-specific. Some of it is, as you say, taught or integrated within the way that we teach things at the Open University. But equally, there is, I guess, issues around when it's appropriate and what to do.

And one of the things we wanted to do today was to have a SWOT analysis. Because frameworks are a really good thing to use for critical thinking. And we're going come on to a lot of those later with the library session, for example.

So we have a SWOT analysis on the hot desk replacing all of the pictures, but only for today. Annie and Ben, I would like to challenge you to get some thoughts and comments from people for the SWOT analysis.

And what we're going to do with the SWOT analysis-- this is a traditional SWOT analysis. We're going to look at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of critical thinking.

Now, critical thinking we often think is a good thing. I mean, it must be a good thing if it's something in higher education and it allows us to get better marks. But is it always a good thing? Is it always appropriate? So I'd like to know your thoughts on when you think critical thinking is a good idea. What might some of the weaknesses be around critical thinking?

I know for one, sometimes I'll try and critically think. And then all of a sudden, I'm down a very dark alley way, down in the library on the literature of searches and on a completely different tangent to where I should be.

Some of the threats might be that you can go a bit off-track and maybe not answer the essay question. And some of the opportunities are there to really, I guess, enrich things for not only you, but also your colleagues. So your thoughts on what the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, and threats are for critical thinking. Chuck those in the chat box and Annie and Ben will feed those into the conversation. Have you got any yet?

ANNIE: Yes, we have. We've got quite a lot of people-- Amy Smith and Marilyn, in particular, are saying that they go off on the tangent quite a lot. And they find it quite hard to focus. Their brain grows on overdrive and they're thinking too much about it instead of kind of thinking on one main point.

And Sylvia Logan asks if you could help us with this. Does critical thinking mean you need to criticise the author and his primary sources?

KAREN FOLEY: That's a brilliant question. Absolutely brilliant. It's something, actually, that we thought was worth talking about, wasn't it, John?

JOHN BUTCHER: Yeah. I can address the first one, then you'll have to remind me what the second one was. But the first one, I think part of critical thinking is about being kind of self-reflective. And so if you find yourself thinking about something and then going off on a tangent, I think you plan to building certain, as it were, stop points to test your own understanding. So rather than just kind of wandering, you have lots of kind of pit stops on the way. And during those stops, you can think. Look again at the question if it's necessary.

Am I getting there? Is this helping me, et cetera, et cetera. Remind me what the second one was.

KAREN FOLEY: So Sylvia's question was, how does critical think-- oh, I guess, how does critical thinking differ from criticising something?

JOHN BUTCHER: So it's the notion of the proper meaning of the word "critical," really. And I think the trouble is nowadays, people tend to think of criticism as being an entirely negative thing. This is about a slightly more disinterested notion of criticism. So you're evaluating. The evaluation is very important. You're judging the extent to which something is believable. And often, you do that by synthesising-- there's another one I'll throw in. So you're drawing on the kind of persuasive elements of different authors to reach your own judgement. But certainly in terms of a higher-level skill, your informed evidence-based judgement is really important.

KAREN FOLEY: So I guess it's setting those parameters. And I guess deciding what you're actually being critical about?

JOHN BUTCHER: Yeah. Don't assert. Because again, some of my students will do this. They'll misunderstand it and think they have to assert a personal opinion. And that's not critical thinking at all.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Let's see. We asked you what critical thinking means to you. And let's see what words came up within that Wordle that you thought were important.

So we can see here, there are lots of things. Analysing evaluation, comparing, asking questions. Lots of evaluating philosophy, making connections, interrogating. Examining evidence, opinions, cognitive bias. Lots and lots of things coming up here. Thank you so much for all those thoughts.

John, how do you feel seeing that where there's so many sort of-- I guess a lot of it is about evaluating?

JOHN BUTCHER: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: But there's also some subject-specific things and some different, I guess, action points being thrown in there. What were your thoughts?

JOHN BUTCHER: I think critical thinking also takes different forms in different discipline areas. So in maths and largely the science areas for example, that notion of deductive reasoning, and showing your work, and demonstrating something, is very important. In many of the social sciences, the kind of statistical validity will become much more an agent of the extent to which you are persuaded by something.

And then I think there's a challenge in the arts, which we all recognise, of subjectivity. Because so much of stuff in the arts is around a subjective judgement, which you have to back up.

What I would is I'll give one example of if you were doing critical-- asked to form a critical judgement about a piece of architecture in a legal argument, you would obviously bring different criteria to bear. So it's still critical thinking, but some of it is discipline-specific.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. I'd like to ask you a little bit more about this point about not having your own voice. Because it's a really interesting idea. You're using a lot of your insight as an individual to think, where are some of the gaps? Where are some of the aspects that aren't being covered here? So you're using your own opinion to critically analyse things or critically evaluate them. But you say you shouldn't really include that in your writing. It's that tone of voice about actually having, I guess, some sense of balance by saying, well, you think this, you think that.

How do students get around that idea? It's a very complex one.

JOHN BUTCHER: I think the challenge is the further you go in your studies, you become more of an expert in the field you're studying. And I think that gives you the confidence and positions you to take a view that some writers that write more persuasively than others. The challenge is when you're doing your undergraduate degree-- and I've seen this even with Access students. Some students are starting to critically evaluate, but many aren't. And it's going on that journey, which is why I think it has to be taught to reach the level of confidence, which is being critical, but isn't simply asserting an opinion.

One of the things about being critical, I think, is knowing when you're leaping to an intuitive judgement about something. And just stopping yourself and thinking, well, hold on a minute.

Are there other sources of evidence I might look at before I cling to that? And that's an error a lot of us make. We intuitively think something is so, and then we seek out the evidence to support that. Which is rather the wrong way around, really.

KAREN FOLEY: And someone had put bias and subjectivity into that Wordle, which is very accurate. It's very difficult, I guess. Because you know, the thing with knowledge is that you're coming at it from a perspective. And you're bringing your own-- either it's discipline-specific ideas to that table when you're looking at things as well as your own individual thoughts. So this idea then about what evidence to use, but also you're saying about how to use it, how to write, tone of voice and things like that. How important are those aspects when you're actually looking at things objectively?

JOHN BUTCHER: I think being cool and tentative is not a bad starting point, actually. Because I think in a lot of academic writing, it is developing an argument. And I think you don't develop an argument by shouting and being assertive and finger pointing. You develop an argument by referring to literature and evaluating that perhaps some evidence is rather more powerful and persuasive than others.

I think if you're feeling a bit hot under the collar about something, have a walk around the garden or something before you continue with your writing.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent advice. OK. We asked our audience which aspects they thought were important in critical thinking. And this is a bit of a trick question, isn't it? Because I guess to some extent, they all are. But I don't know, what do you think about their answers?

OK. Highest we had, 58% of students who said that testing out the soundness of an argument was most important. 33% said actively seeking out and testing out the sounding was important. And then, we had the lowest amount with testing out the evidence to support the claims, which was around 9%. So all of these aspects are important in critical thinking. Is there a hierarchy? Are there things that you should be doing more than other things?

JOHN BUTCHER: I think you build your skills as you go through your undergraduate and then into your post-graduate journey. And I think you can't get away from the fact that you need to know the discipline area. So you obviously engage with your OU materials. You engage with the content. You do your activities. But I think what you're seeking to do is build the confidence to have a confident academic voice yourself that is based on evidence and isn't based upon assertion, really.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. All right. So what would your advice be then for students who are starting to think critically? You've already said at level 1, you may not be doing it quite so much. You may be writing more descriptive things. And last week as well, we were focusing on content words, and process words, and things like the importance of describe and compare and contrast, et cetera. But I want to ask your thoughts on that.

But before I do, John, I'd just like to go over to the hot desk and see what Annie and Ben have to say.

BEN: So we've got a really good question coming from Lee Christie, who asked, how does critical thinking differ in assessment requirements between levels 1, 2, and 3?

KAREN FOLEY: Very good question. Very good question.

JOHN BUTCHER: OK. Well, that is a humdinger of a question.

KAREN FOLEY: How long have we got?

JOHN BUTCHER: I think essentially, it is a hierarchy in that by the time you get to your kind of third level, evidence of critical thinking is really important. I think probably at level 1, it's less important. But what assessors are looking for is some evidence that you're starting to think critically. But certainly, in a very pragmatic sense. If you were going to ask me, how do you get a good grade, a good, honest classification in your degree? The more you can feel confident about your critical thinking and expressing that in your writing, I think the more likely you are to fall into those top bands. So it is hierarchical, I'm afraid.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely. We spoke last week about the difference in terms of grades of essays. And in particular, that the B's to the A's. There was often an aspect of critical thinking or independent judgements being involved in the difference between those two grades.

JOHN BUTCHER: Yeah. And sometimes, that is about learner confidence. Many, particularly I think Open University students, but not only, they come to their studies. They're provided with all the fantastic materials. And they think that they have to kind of bow down before these great thinkers. You know, that is the final word. And they're very important words. We wouldn't put them in our materials otherwise. But what we're really interested in is the extent to which students engage with those and use them to develop their own thinking.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So how can people then start thinking critically and going through this process?

JOHN BUTCHER: Well, I think the later session you're going to have on reflection is important. Because I think if students start to reflect and understand exactly what that means, if they're then being kind of metacognitive. So they're starting to think about their own thinking, that will set up systems, really, in how they approach things.

And then I think they really just need to develop the confidence to try things out. And I have to say, I think learning with a study buddy or something like that can be incredibly helpful, because then you can bounce ideas off one another.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So you've mentioned that this was something that I guess you started to get in your later academic career.

JOHN BUTCHER: Much later.

KAREN FOLEY: And aside from getting good grades, which is obviously a key reason to start thinking critically, what would be the other benefits of it? I mean, why is it something that is featured so prominently in higher education? And why is it such an important part of good academic practise?

JOHN BUTCHER: Well, I have to say pragmatically the gaining of good grades is a really good reason for doing it. I think secondly there's a notion of what it means to be a lifelong

learner. And I think if we are committed to being lifelong learners, we do want to increase the criticality of our judgments as we go through.

And the third thing-- there's a lot of fuss about this in America at the moment-- is the idea that if enable people coming out of schools and universities to be proper critical thinkers, they are going to make much better decisions in their lives. I think this is quite controversial. I'm sympathetic to the idea that if you're a good critical thinker, you may be going to be more democratic, for example. One thinks of what's happening with Trump at the moment in America.

But also, the Americans will claim you make better life decisions. And I've seen evidence of things like you will have fewer clothes in your wardrobe that you never wear because you've made a critical decision that actually, I'm not going to wear that, so I'm not going to buy it. And even more extreme is the claim that people will have less unprotected sex because of their critical thinking. I'll leave that one dangling.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, I think we will. Excellent. John, that's been a really interesting introduction to this idea of critical thinking. What hope is there then for students to pick this up? What would you say to people who were thinking, I'm not really sure I get this?

JOHN BUTCHER: It is hard, but-- and I think the "but" is have a look at yourself. Have a look at what you've chosen to wear today. Did you look in the mirror in the morning? Did you form a critical judgement about that?

No, I'm doing that one at me because I did look at the footage of my last appearance on Student Hub Live and have dressed slightly differently today. So that's me exercising my critical judgement .

KAREN FOLEY: The rocker look was great though, John. Don't listen to everybody. You're your own person. Excellent.

No, you're right, though. We do often use a lot of these skills. And I think sometimes it's just bearing in mind that thinking about things and being critical of-- there is a difference as you pointed out between being critical and critical thinking. But those concepts and ideas are something that apply to everyday life. And I guess it's about transferring some of those and deciding when they're appropriate for study.

JOHN BUTCHER: And a lot of the literature-- and believe me, there's a huge amount of literature on critical thinking. A lot of the literature is about the challenge of transferring critical thinking from one discipline to another.

I personally think you can, but I think you have to be kind of taught how to transfer that approach to thinking. But often, I think it's taught far better by different assessment approaches. So for example, things like problem-based learning, for example. Or authentic assessment whereby day-to-day problems are shared amongst groups of students. It seems to be a much more effective way of doing it than kind of telling people how to do it.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. John, that has been absolutely fantastic. Thank you so much for coming in. And I hope that that's been very useful for you at home.

And I'm going to go to the hot desk and see how everything's going there. Ben, have people got a little bit more clarity now about critical thinking, or is there more confusion?

BEN: I think so. I mean, it's quite a confusing subject for a lot of people. But there's been a whole lot of questions on referencing and backing up critical thinking through referencing. So hopefully this has helped out and pointed people in the right direction.

There's been a few questions on critical thinking and if it's important when choosing a particular type of cake. I mean, it's a big term and a big issue that we need to cover here. Unfortunately, there have been a few issues as we've seen in the past few episodes with food. And we have received some health and safety notices from the food police effectively at the OU telling us we can't have cakes or--

KAREN FOLEY: What does it say? no excessive cake.

BEN: No excessive cake consumption. So if we're going by the letter of the law, that says no excessive cake consumption.

KAREN FOLEY: It does, doesn't it? Mind you, last week was fairly excessive. Does that mean no cakes at all?

BEN: I think we could probably get away with some

KAREN FOLEY: It came in the mail, didn't it? So there's probably no immediate impact today.

BEN: Exactly. So then we've got no popcorn as well. It took ages to clear up.

KAREN FOLEY: It did, to be fair. There was a lot. That was all your fault, Annie.

BEN: Whoops. No microwaves in the studio. We've applied that one, so that's fine. And then finally, no saucepans. So all cooking utensils are banned from the studio. Thank you. And food as well. Maybe we could flex the rules somehow.

[FLIES BUZZING]

Sorry, guys.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, are you having food at home? I bet everyone at home is still having food. Are they?

BEN: We have a few. So on Twitter, Andrea Robinson sent us through a picture of her plain bio yoghurt and banana today. So that's looking good.

KAREN FOLEY: Sylvia is having Black Forest gateau. I'm having a green smoothie, actually. Because last week, I got this really fabulous recipe from Adele who said that green smoothies are much better to study with. So I've gone really healthy this week. Excellent.

All right, guys. Well, thank you. Keep those thoughts coming through. Any developments on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for our critical thinking SWOT analysis?

BEN: So we've got some great ones here in terms of bullet points and listing out the pros and cons, obviously.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, good.

BEN: So I think bullet points seem to be quite a running theme throughout the chat room. So that's definitely extreme.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. OK. Alexandra, enjoy your carrot cake. It sounds delicious.

[MUSIC PLAYING]