[MUSIC PLAYING]

INTERVIEWER: But Nicky, welcome to the studio.

NICKY HARLOW: Hello.

INTERVIEWER: And you've put a lovely array of things here.

NICKY HARLOW: I hope you like.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much. Yes, we do like food, at *The Student Hub Live.* Now, why are we going to be looking at essay writing and hamburgers?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, because an essay is very like a hamburger, in case you haven't noticed. There are layers to every essay. And the simple layers are an introduction and the middle section and the conclusion. But within all those, there's further layers. So we're hoping to show students how you can build your burger essay with--

INTERVIEWER: Ah, lovely.

NICKY HARLOW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Now, we know, from previous experience, that our students at *The Student Hub Live* love highlighting. And they love color-coding, highlighting. And they'll often highlight their essays. So they seem to like the visual stuff. And I guess this is quite a visual thing too. Students probably won't want to actually draw hamburgers around their essays. But how can these visual ideas help people get the right balance between the things going on?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, I think, if you can picture something, you're almost there. So it works the same as a diagram. And we have little flags and things, which we'll be using for the layers. So again, they work in a literal sense. And it might be helpful to draw something like a burger. Sometimes, it helps you to plan out, when you have something visual to link onto.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Because as Georgina and Matt were saying before, with an End-of-Module Assessment, because it's more holistic-- and we're talking about essay writing very generally here. But also, when you are doing one of these example components and you've got to be a bit more holistic, you can't just lift things that you've done before. You can't just get all of the

evidence and compile it all together and say, look at how much I can fit into here really clearly and succinctly. Because there has to be some structuring going on.

And some students were saying before that they were having trouble planning. And I was saying to Matt and Georgina, well, I'm not sure whether it's because sometimes we think the plan should look really beautiful and be a certain way or sometimes, maybe, it's because they're planning based on evidence. And they aren't maybe thinking about these aspects, the evaluation or defining the terms or all the other things that you need to effectively put into a plan for an essay.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes. And I think what you need to think about is your End-of-Module Assessment, your assignment, or whether you're doing an exam. It's your shop window. So you're really showing what you've learned on that module and your deep understanding. And to do that, you need to evaluate. You need to contextualise. You need all the things that come into a good essay.

INTERVIEWER: Brilliant. Now, we've got a whole list of questions. So if you're in the Watch and Engage, you should see some lovely, bright, colourful widgets. A lot of things are multi-choice questions. So you can tell us the answer that most applies to you. So have a go at those. And what we're going to do is feed your answers in. But of course, if there are questions, put those in the chat.

And for those of you who are watching in the live-stream only, if you'd like to come in, then please do come into the Watch and Engage. And if you don't have an Open University Computer user name, you can get one. They're free and easy to get hold of. So see the Frequently Asked Questions section on the website for how to do that.

You can also, of course, email us-- studenthub@open.ac.uk. And we're also keeping an eye on Twitter. And the hashtag for that is #StudentHubLive16. So do let us know if you've got any questions and, also, how you do things. Because as we've seen from this earlier session, you've got some great advice as well about how to do things. Because, of course, you are the experts at doing all of this.

So Nicky, we've got an hour.

NICKY HARLOW: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: We've got a nice amount of time here to talk about essay writing. So we were arguing about how to proportion this time and how we would best communicate this with our students. So tell

us why we've decided to structure this with the very beginning, which you and I disagree with.

NICKY HARLOW: We do. Well, I think we should structure it by starting with the introduction to the essay to this session. But you disagree with me, I know.

INTERVIEWER: I do, yes.

NICKY HARLOW: And when I write an essay, I do always write an introduction first. And the reason for this-- and I know you're going to argue with me. The reason is I like to know what I'm going to do. I like to have a thought and be aiming somewhere. And I do it all the time.

But I was thinking very carefully, because I'm actually working on a PhD at the moment. And I was writing the introduction to it a few weeks ago. And I was thinking about this. And I was thinking, I write the introduction knowing I'm going to come back and rewrite it.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NICKY HARLOW: So perhaps there's something in your argument there.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's call it a starting-point. Do you write your introduction first or last or somewhere in the middle? So let us know how you go about this essay-writing process and if you've got a strong opinion about it. I guess, what we do agree on is that it is important to know, vaguely, what you're going to write about before you start writing it.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And so this whole idea of planning an essay is important. If we were to think about planning and these flags that we've got going on here, what might go into this plan? And then, irrespective of whether you were writing or rewriting the introduction first or last, how could you then start to structure your argument so that you were thinking about what bits you might include?

NICKY HARLOW: OK, so here we have our introduction.

INTERVIEWER: OK, good.

NICKY HARLOW: Now, what should we have as an introduction, [INAUDIBLE]?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that should be the top of the burger?

NICKY HARLOW: Do you think that should be the top?

INTERVIEWER: I think so.

NICKY HARLOW: OK. So what do you want on the top? A tomato. Should we have a tomato on the top?

INTERVIEWER: OK.

NICKY HARLOW: OK, so mind you, this is going to be upside-down burger. OK, so there's our introduction. So we'll start with a tomato introduction. OK, and next off, we have a choice. We have evaluation. We have linking sentences. We have evidence, wherever it is-- evidence. Oh, it's dropped a bit. And we have context. We have-- what else?-- independent learning.

And I think, somewhere in here, we need to have a point--

INTERVIEWER: We do.

NICKY HARLOW: --if I can find it.

INTERVIEWER: Nicky, what is a point?

NICKY HARLOW: A point is an argument. So basically, an essay is an argument or a series of arguments. So you introduce it by saying, my argument for writing this essay is that I would like to impart my knowledge on writing essays to students. So that will be my opening statement for [INAUDIBLE]. And then I have to make a point. What's the first point I'll make in this essay? What's the first thing?

So you already did a session on good planning. Good planning is essential. And then I would have to contextualise this, which would be to give some evidence. Why is good planning essential?

INTERVIEWER: Hm, OK.

NICKY HARLOW: Then, I would have to provide some context for it. And I would have to evaluate each point that I make. So each argument I make has to be proved, in other words. And there's several ways of proving it with these flags.

INTERVIEWER: Good, OK. Well, let's see what everyone thinks is a point. It's one of these things that is very easy, when you're having an argument with a 7-year-old, to say, my point is this. But it's a very, very difficult thing to think about in the context of essay writing. So we've given you some

choices.

Part of an argument to be supported or refuted by correctly referenced examples or quotations or evaluations, or what you're talking about and if other people agree, or a subtopic that you need to be proved with quotes from a module book. So let's have a look and see what you all said. 100% have gone for option A, part of an argument to be supported or refuted by correctly referenced examples.

It does sound more sensible, Nicky. Is it right?

NICKY HARLOW: It is, I think, that exactly. So if we have our point-- what shall we have our point?

INTERVIEWER: Well, I've got I've got a diagram here. So if we wanted to, we could remember some of our bits. Otherwise, it can get very confusing doing things back to front.

NICKY HARLOW: It could.

INTERVIEWER: But I think that meat-- and I'm sorry. This is--

NICKY HARLOW: It's non-vegetarian.

INTERVIEWER: We have vegetarian options as well. But that is definitely the evidence.

NICKY HARLOW: So there's the evidence.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

NICKY HARLOW: If I can find the evidence flag, there's some evidence. And we have to evaluate our evidence. Is this evidence that you're giving actually relevant to the point that you've made?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, now this is a very good point. Oh dear. Because sometimes, depending on which level, you will be doing more or less evaluation-- won't you?-- as you're going--

NICKY HARLOW: You will.

INTERVIEWER: --through an essay. But is evaluation always part of it? And is it part of every paragraph?

NICKY HARLOW: It is really. And it's definitely part of every point that you make. And it will be different at different levels. So at Level one, you may, as your evidence, use a quotation from the module book or a paraphrasing something from the module. And you will evaluate it and say, and

basically this is why. This proves my point. At a higher level, you'll probably have been doing your own independent research. And you may--

INTERVIEWER: Wikipedia.

NICKY HARLOW: With what?

INTERVIEWER: Wikipedia.

NICKY HARLOW: No! No, no, no. We're not having Wikipedia at all. No.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, while I'm on telling off-- Stuart Getty, stop telling Sophie to nip in and get a bit of our burgers. That's not going to happen. Sorry.

NICKY HARLOW: So no Wikipedia. You will have done you our own independent research. We have a marvellous library here at the Open University. There's lots and lots of information on all subjects in there. But you will have researched your subject. But you've got to say why, why it's relevant. And whether you're Level 1 or at PhD level, there's got to be a reason for you choosing that piece of evidence.

And once you've chose it, you will evaluate it. So what did we have for our evaluation? Let's have a look. Cheese-- a cheesy evaluation we have.

INTERVIEWER: Cheese is a very complex and varied thing, isn't it? So I suppose it's only fitting.

NICKY HARLOW: It is! Because at Level 1, you probably have a piece of this kind of cheese, the flaccid--

INTERVIEWER: Or even the Emmental with holes in it.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes. Whereas, you might go for your-- ooh. It won't stand up.

INTERVIEWER: Chuck a few on.

NICKY HARLOW: Hang on.

INTERVIEWER: We could have a very--

NICKY HARLOW: I'll stick it.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, yes.

NICKY HARLOW: We could use the burger as it should be. Because--

INTERVIEWER: As the-- yes--

NICKY HARLOW: As the staunch--

INTERVIEWER: --centrepiece.

NICKY HARLOW: --in the middle. But yes, you might have your Roquefort or something like that at PhD level. Or you might have several different cheeses to show that you can evaluate on different levels.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

NICKY HARLOW: So our next thing we had was a bit of sauce. So a bit of sauce-- which side? Shall I splodge some?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, go on then. I think we'd all like to see some sauce.

NICKY HARLOW: That's our splodge of sauce. It's splodged on there. So there's a splodge of sauce. And that will be your linking sentences. Because to write a good essay, which we'll talk about in a minute, it has to read well. And it has to flow nicely.

So you can't just write one paragraph about one thing and then go to something completely different on the next paragraph. You will link them together and segue them. So we'll have a linking sentence, which is also a bit of sauce there. And I'm covered in it now.

And we've got evaluation. And we need a bit of independent learning.

INTERVIEWER: Got our lettuce--

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: --or tomato.

NICKY HARLOW: I think that's the independent learning.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NICKY HARLOW: And this is a bit a level-specific thing. What we want all students to be is independent learners. And we want to show that you can research yourselves and do your own thing. The more of this that you can show that's relevant, the higher your marks are going to be.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

NICKY HARLOW: But at Level 1, you probably won't be doing an awful lot of independent learning. You will probably be looking at your module materials, looking at what your tutors told you, at online activities, and be using those.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, OK. Excellent. And of course, our buns, which hold this all together.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, and this is a bit like the beginning and the end.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NICKY HARLOW: So it'll hold it all together in a nicely-written paragraph.

INTERVIEWER: OK. So that's all well and good. So I can see now how, when you're thinking about planning, a lot of students will really go for the evidence. So they'll be like, I'm going to use this example. I really like that bit there. And they get all of the meat together.

And then they sort of say, right. There's my plan. And I have now got these examples that are around that I'm going to talk about. And that's how I'm going to address the question. And then that's as far as the plan goes.

NICKY HARLOW: Well, only this morning, I have been marking an essay that looked like this.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes, yes.

NICKY HARLOW: Which is edible.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, it is.

NICKY HARLOW: And it is an essay. But that's not really what we're looking for for an essay. So it was lacking these other elements to it.

INTERVIEWER: Stefan is worried that, if he doesn't like cheese, he's not going to be able to get a PhD.

NICKY HARLOW: No, I'm afraid that-- well, you know, there's lots of types of cheese, Stefan, even if you're a vegan. There's even vegan cheese now.

INTERVIEWER: It's metaphorical, I guess, is what we're saying. OK, but you are right, Nicky. Because a lot of the time and, in particular, where there is a broad overarching question, students will want to

showcase a lot of evidence.

NICKY HARLOW: They will.

INTERVIEWER: They might even-- Georgina and Matt told us before that they should not do this. They might even go back to where they've written an essay and say, I've talked about that. So I'm going to use that example. And they might then try and bring it into this. And so what then happens is that there's a lot of evidence that you can see how it might relate. But again, it's how it relates.

So how might they start thinking about using some of these things to evaluate this evidence and think about what it means for the essay question? Because that really is the independent learning. That is what you're being asked to do. It's not, can you find some stuff? It's can you explain how, with some stuff you find, you can answer this question?

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, it's how you can show. Well, the question is always very important of course. And keep referring back to the question. One of the problems that you get is lots of evidence that, in the end, doesn't even go back to the question at all. But once you have your evidence-- and sometimes-- and this is where my argument about doing the start first, the introduction first-- comes, what do you want to say? How are you going to answer the question?

Before you look at compiling tonnes of evidence, have a look. Because you might have your context in your head already. So how are you going to prove? How do you make a good burger? There's a good essay.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

NICKY HARLOW: There's a good essay title. So how do you make a good burger? What do you need first?

INTERVIEWER: [DEEP SIGH] Well, I don't know. How would I answer this? I would probably put the burger, then the lettuce, then the-- oh, I don't know. Burger, cheese, lettuce, tomato.

NICKY HARLOW: So burger, a piece of cheese, a piece of lettuce, and a piece of tomato.

INTERVIEWER: So would I then be saying, as an introduction, how to construct the perfect burger is a matter of opinion. And this is just my interpretation.

NICKY HARLOW: Well, it could be. Because there are different ways of doing it. So you could start off with-- as you've done there-- your evidence.

INTERVIEWER: Evidence, yeah.

NICKY HARLOW: And then you can-- oh, I forgot what the cheese is. What was cheese? That was the evalu-- then you can evaluate it. And then your lettuce is your-- then you can contextualise it. And your tomato was--

INTERVIEWER: Is that independent learning.

NICKY HARLOW: --independent learning.

INTERVIEWER: I think we've moved a few of those around. But that's fine. The point is, I guess, is that how you're combining these things means that they're not all being mixed up. So each thing is doing and contributing a different part of the whole process, isn't it?

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, and the evidence is in the middle of that part. So the evidence is important. But in order to show that you understand why that evidence is important, you have to have the other parts all in with it.

INTERVIEWER: So when we're looking at our range then of essays-- because this is a paragraph, isn't it?--

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: --in this whole thing. So each of our paragraphs is making a certain argument. And would you say that each one needs to be the same? Or could it be, for example, that in some paragraphs you might have two or three pieces of evidence? In one, you're doing more of an evaluation. Do they all need to be the same, as you're moving through the essay?

NICKY HARLOW: Not at all. And sometimes, your evidence might prove and disprove a point. So you might have two arguments for the same point. And then you come down on one or the other by the end of the essay.

So you could easily have-- I could say that I think a good burger must have meat in it. And you say, well, I don't, because I'm a vegetarian. Now, both those arguments really need to come into it before you make your decision in the essay and make your overall argument in the essay.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Now, how might students then identify-- we've talked about meat being evidence. And we've talked about, obviously, using a lot of examples, at times, in an essay, not being such a good thing. Because it needs to be framed. But sometimes, when maybe you are saying, well,

I've outlined this argument. And I've outlined this argument. And now, I'm going to tell you what I think in this bit here.

So you might have a very evaluative paragraph of an essay--

NICKY HARLOW: Indeed.

INTERVIEWER: --that maybe doesn't have as much evidence. But equally, it still needs to be progressing that argument. And it still needs to be drawing on something--

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: --other than just someone's opinion. So how might one use evidence then as something that's more, I guess, lateral? Other than just, so-and-so did this study?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, you come into your own argument. You link your paragraph together. So you will link down into an argument that can go into your opinion. So you've got an argument. You've got your piece of evidence. And then you will start to contextualise it. And you will contextualise it in different ways.

And that's how your essay will start to flow into different types of paragraphs. And some of them will have the completely different layer in. And some of them might miss out the sauce, for instance.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, no, absolutely. So what we're trying to do, I guess, is give students an analogy to think about the scope and the flavour and the mixture of things that they're putting into an essay. Irrespective of whatever level, there always needs to be some evidence that is held in within the essay. But when planning, they need to consider the evaluation and the various aspects around all of that.

So let's think practically, Nicky, about how students might start thinking about that. Because the evidence seems so very concrete at times. They've got the question. They've thought about how the question relates to what they're trying to do. But how do they then start?

You said, how good is this piece of meat? Or how good is this evidence, in terms of evaluating something? Why is context important? It's not always important. Evaluation isn't always important. So how do students identify when they need to consider some of these other aspects to support the evidence?

NICKY HARLOW: Well for instance, I've been marking essays recently using various sources. And they're about the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, which I think most people probably know something or other about. And we have various pieces of evidence about how poor people were treated, how the working classes were treated. And the evidence range from newspaper reports to things like Engel's book on the condition of the working classes in the 19th century. Charles Dickens' and Mary Gaskell's novels.

And all of these are pieces of evidence that are all similarly important, but in a different way. And you could look at something like a Charles Dickens story, set in the 19th century, and look at the way the characters are treated. And he's put an awful lot of information in there, in a different way to a newspaper report. But in the end, they're both telling us something about the 19th century. And they're both very relevant.

What's not relevant is how factual Dickens is. If you wanted just hard facts, his isn't hard facts. His is fiction. But how fictional is a newspaper report? So you would be arguing on both courts really.

INTERVIEWER: And how might students then use that to structure their paragraph? Because well, we've asked actually a question. We might see what students said. We've asked, what is a paragraph? And how long is a paragraph? I've seen some paragraphs that are very long and a one-sentence, which can be quite confusing to read.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I've seen some that are literally half an A4 piece of paper as well. So tell us what you think a paragraph is. We've got a range of questions-- it's about six sentences long. It's based on a single idea, contains at least one piece of evidence. And it's a combination of pieces of evidence. So tell us which one you think most applies to the idea about, what is a paragraph?

NICKY HARLOW: One thing I will say is, having taught for the OU for very many years, I can look at an essay without reading a word, and I can usually tell if it's going to be any good or not. And if I see, on page one, a chunk of dense text and no paragraphs, I know it's not going to be a great essay.

And similarly, if I see a paragraph without a single quotation in it, I know it's probably not going to be great. Or it's all just paraphrased. You can tell, can't you?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, well, I wouldn't recommend putting quotations in all paragraphs. But you would if--

NICKY HARLOW: No, but it's something.

INTERVIEWER: --you were an art student. Absolutely, then you'd need it. All right, let's see what people at home have said, in terms of what they think a good paragraph is. 85% of them have said it's based on a single idea. Nobody says it's around six sentences. 9%-- it contains at least one piece of evidence. And 6%, it's a combination of pieces of evidence.

Now, I'm not sure which one I would have selected there, Nicky. Which is the right answer? Is there a right answer?

NICKY HARLOW: I don't think there is. I think there could be an element of truth.

INTERVIEWER: There could be. But ultimately, I think the idea of things being around a single idea is really, really strong, isn't it?

NICKY HARLOW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But that can be quite hard to achieve, especially when you've got a lot going on. And this links us back to the idea of these points. So what is the point that one is making? And how can that point be a single idea? Even if maybe you're doing a couple of things in there-- you're saying so-and-so found this and so-and-so found this and they're both supporting that single point-- would you say it's a good defining thing to really focus on one idea per paragraph?

NICKY HARLOW: I think it is, yes. And you'll know when you're coming off the point and when you're going on to another one. And that point should lead to the next. So a single point-- a good beef burger should involve some bread and a patty of some description.

I'm not going to go for meat or vegetarian. I think it will be a fair enough point. But then you could also argue, yes, but it's always preferable to have some lettuce and a tomato as well. And that would just be an essay on writing burgers really.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, writing burg-- no, indeed. Do some students get confused between the distinction between a point and a piece of evidence?

NICKY HARLOW: I think they do, yeah. I think they do. And they'll put down a piece of evidence as though it's making the point for them. And it isn't. It isn't. You still have to show that you understand what you're doing. And a piece of evidence can almost look like a point at times.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, but sometimes you might get a theory or an idea that you think, oh that's so-- he's really

famous. He's written loads of books. That has to be really sensible. And so I'm going to describe it all in detail and put it in there, because it's a very good big theory.

How do students then think about the point in terms of something that can seem very uncontested? Something they might not want to argue with if it's one of the big theorist's ideas, et cetera? How do they then say, well, this is the point that this is making to my particular essay?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, I think they need to have a look. When they are choosing their evidence, it's looking at the different arguments. There won't just be one answer to any essay. And I think, one of the things that you have to realise, even at Level 1, is there's more than one answer. You're not just expected to go in one direction all the time.

And have a look at a variety of evidence and a variety of points. And try and include those in your essay, without overloading everything. But you will come down on one side or another.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, what if it's not a sided question though? Like, sometimes, there's not a clear argument to have. It's like, discuss this or compare and contrast but ultimately, normally you will be having some sort of view overall, in terms of where you want to go with that. So how strongly can students assert that perspective?

NICKY HARLOW: They can assert it as strongly as they like, as long as they have the evidence and they contextualise it and they evaluate it. A student can argue me out of what I always thought about that topic, if it's a strong essay. And that's all the things that we're talking about in these burgers. And if it flows from one from one paragraph to the next, you can change anybody's mind. That's what an argument is.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so it's using the evidence to make the points that you want to be making, in light of that question.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: H.J. and Sophie, how's everything going on the Hot Desk?

SOPHIE: There's a lot of food talk, as always. This hasn't really helped. So--

H.J.: Mm, yes. No--

SOPHIE: In amongst there, we do have some serious bits, though.

H.J.: Yes, no. I think Ben's got a good point. He says he kind of likes the burger analogy. But it poses a problem with assessing the burgeriness of any given burger. So how did you just get, from the burger menu, whether it tastes good or not?

SOPHIE: I think that's where we need to step in and proof-eat the burger.

INTERVIEWER: You're not allowed to come and steal the burger, Sophie.

SOPHIE: I've been so good.

INTERVIEWER: After the incident before with H.J, you know what happened and how upset I got.

NICKY HARLOW: [INAUDIBLE]

SOPHIE: You didn't play well. We did have a really good question, actually, from Richard. It was a little while ago-- apologies. But can you use sentences from your previous TMAs in your final EMA? Is that allowed?

INTERVIEWER: Well, I asked Matt and Georgina this before, because my students have been asking me. And I said, no. And I'm so glad Matt and Georgina said, no.

NICKY HARLOW: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But tell us why. I mean, what I've told my students, in terms of that, is that, often, beforehand, you'll have been doing something completely different. You'll have been writing an essay-- even though you might use that same example, you've been doing something different.

NICKY HARLOW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You've been, maybe, describing something or comparing and contrasting. So as soon as you lift something, you aren't addressing the question. Because often, like in an EMA, you're having to be a lot more holistic. You won't describe how they did it and what they did. You'll say, these guys found this. And the point then is blah.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, and it feels shoehorned in. It won't feel natural. Because that's one of the things. With a good essay, it needs to be well-written and flow. And if you suddenly have this completely odd example in there with a chunk of text that doesn't directly reference to the question or your previous argument, then it's going to stick out like a sore thumb. So yeah, I would say, no.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah. And also, effectively, you are plagiarising your own work, which isn't a good idea at all. So it's lazy. And it's not going to answer the question. And it will look clumpy.

NICKY HARLOW: And it can come up. It can come up on the plagiarism software, that kind of thing. So yes, avoid that at all costs, I think.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Sophie and H.J., any other sensible questions? Not that we don't like fun. But we do have a limited time to cover a lot.

H.J.: Yes, I think one point that a few of us have been discussing is about the use of language. And you brought it up. And some of us are struggling with getting used to writing in academic language and trying to get rid of those colloquialisms we might use. What advice to you have for us about that, do you reckon?

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's such a good question.

NICKY HARLOW: It is. Because there is a voice of an essay. And it's a kind of passive voice. It's not "you." You don't use "I" at all in an essay. And some students will start off beautifully. And certainly, it's, I think. And those are two words that nobody wants to read in an essay, is "I think." But they do creep in an awful lot.

And I totally understand it. Totally. Because you get involved in your writing. You feel passionate about the subject. And yes, you do have your opinion.

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's see what people said. We asked, what is the correct language to use in an essay? And there were three options this time-- formal and concise, colloquial, or using long words and complicated sentences. Let's see what you thought.

OK, well, everyone's got here the right answer, formal and concise. But is it better, Nicky, if you don't really know, say, what are you talking about-- so say you want to shoehorn something in-- would it be better to use colloquial language and effectively write in your own words? Or would it be better to maybe just chuck in the massive quotes? Or add in a few big words to confuse your marker and impress them?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, I think your marker will not ever be impressed by massive words or loads of quotations. They just won't. Because you can see through it. You're better off, even if you don't properly understand, to try and explain in your own words.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, shoehorning-- a skill I should put aside.

NICKY HARLOW: And I have had sentences that have been about half a page long that are so multi-clausal, have got so many commas and semi-colons and colons and dashes in them, that I have no idea what the point of the sentence was in the end.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and often there will be a really good point in there somewhere, waiting to get out.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes. That's

INTERVIEWER: And it's almost clouded and drowning by the other things around it. I do that as well. And sometimes, when I'm reading my own work and I've been editing things or I've changed my view on something and I'm going through something quite long-winded, you actually sit back and think, that's not making any sense, because I've been changing it.

And it's really normal to see how students deliver these sentences. Because often, they're are some really good ideas in there. We've spoken about the, I guess, editing process and that it's important to identify what the function of each paragraph is and where you're driving your argument and where you're including your evidence, et cetera. But with your language, if you're not quite sure on things, how might you dissect those ideas so that you can not do that?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, I think, first of all, when you are planning your essay, when you're writing down your ideas, what are the ideas around this subject? So what are your points? And just write a sentence. It shouldn't be any more than a sentence. And it shouldn't be a 10-line sentence either. You should be able to express your ideas very simply and concisely.

And this is with everything. This goes with creative writing as well. It comes straight from it. If you can't explain your short story in one sentence, you've had it really. And there's something that creative writers called the 25-word challenge, so even novels should be able to be summed up in 25 words. So an essay idea definitely should be.

INTERVIEWER: So even if students have a plan, they then write, they then edit-- they think, oh, I'll just add that bit in there, and this is when things can get a little convoluted at times-- are there any tips you've got about distilling these ideas? Do you write, this is the point of this paragraph? Do you highlight things? How do you identify what you're doing and when you're doing it, when you've been going through that process, in the right sort of way?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, for myself, I will have my idea. And every single paragraph will have an idea. And that's

the bit that I highlight. And if anything in that sentence isn't either evidence of that idea or contextualising that idea or evaluating that idea or leading on to the next sentence to move on that argument, I bin it.

And that includes repetition. Because, often, students will come up with an idea-- a burger needs to have meat in it-- and then they'll say, two sentences away, and in addition, meat is always the best food in a burger. They'll say exactly the same thing in two different ways or three or four different ways sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: And of course, no one likes Fluff in a burger.

NICKY HARLOW: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: So it's important to identify what you're doing, but equally understandable to see how and why those things can happen. Sophie and H.J., how are people getting on with this idea of the essay writing? And are you still talking about food? Or are there any other questions we can answer in terms of paragraphing, instruction, and-- most importantly-- planning at this point.

H.J.: Mm, I think planning has been a bit of a thing, I think. Sylvia was saying she finds it a bit difficult, planning, in terms of organising ideas. Because I think, like me, I'll write down a lot of things I want to write about. But then knowing how to put it together and structure it can be a bit of a problem.

SOPHIE: I used to write mine on Post-It notes, because then you can reorder them how you need them to be. So that was always my one good essay tip.

H.J.: I like that.

SOPHIE: Not that I write essays any more. But you can then restructure them in that way. We have also got some questions on word counts and how to monitor that as well. I don't know if that's something you could help with.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, go on. Chuck us some quick questions in on that.

SOPHIE: It was just a conversation, really, on word count. People do struggle with it. How do they stick to the word count? What's the guidelines on the word count? Because it might say 3,000 words. But how far over that? How far under? That sort of thing-- just general, really, queries on word count, I think, they're struggling with.

NICKY HARLOW: Well, I think in art subjects-- I don't know if it's in other subjects-- it's always 10%. You've got a 10% leeway. So you can go 10% over your word count. But really, try and stick in the word count, because it's a really good skill.

And if you find that's a struggle, when you come up with your argument for your essay and you come up with your points, actually say, I'm going to write 300 words about that. And that includes the point, the evidence, and the contextualisation and everything. You can break it down that simply.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, Devon, thank you for your tip on Grammerly, which helps with sentence structure, which is a plug. And I'm sure that would be really useful for people. This is a good question about word count. Because you're sort of, I guess, going towards this idea about breaking things up when you're planning it and starting to think about them. But word counts give students a very good indication of the level of depth that they're expected to go into.

So you can't write a 1,500 word essay that is a comprehensive account of everything that's gone on in your module, for example. You could if you had 15,000 words, but not 1,500. So these word counts give a good indication. And they are roomy. So while some modules might have a 10% leeway-- and you should always check whether or not your module does, because there are penalties for exceeding those word counts-- they are there to give an idea.

And I often find, when I'm marking them, that the ones that go up to that 10% are often a little bit verbose. They'll often be covering things they don't necessarily need to. There are very few essays that get those extra marks. Because ultimately, there's about a nice five or six points, maybe, that you're wanting to make in an essay about that word count.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, indeed, yes. And often, even people who go up to the 10% often haven't answered the question, I find. The reason they've carried on writing is they sort of know they haven't answered the question. So they're carrying on and on and on and getting more and more pieces of evidence.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. So tell us, those of you who've said things about word count, is it something that you-- which is very common. Students will start doing that. And they'll go, I've got 1,500 words. And I'm going to write. And then they write. And then they do a word count, and they go, right, I've written 300. This is without a plan, which is very, very common. And I think this is why, sometimes, there is this issue with planning.

Is it that issue with word count? Or is it about identifying how much you can physically fit in that essay? So let us know in the chat. And we'll come back to that. So are you just writing and filling words and then thinking, I've got to cut down on all of these? Or is it more an issue of level of depth? And we can try and address that as well.

Now, Nicky, we had some other things to cover. Well, we have some other widgets about how you write a good essay and defining the main parts of an essay. And one of the things that we wanted to really cover was mostly what was in the middle. And then, because we disagreed about the introduction being at the middle and the end, we can cover the conclusion, et cetera.

But ultimately, one needs to have a sense of what one's doing. And however one chooses to segment their ideas about what goes in a paragraph, it's important at least to be able to recognise when you have got the evidence and when you have the evaluation, et cetera.

There was one thing I wanted to ask you about context. Because I think this is a very important point that isn't always explained. Tell us what you mean by context? And is this the same thing as giving background information? How do you use context to actually drive an argument? As opposed to giving people an idea about, maybe, the historical elements or something that's what I might call peripheral material. Because this is a very common thing.

Students will have read about this in the module and think, oh, that's really important. I shall put that in, in terms of my context. But I'm sensing that what you're referring to, in terms of context, is a bit more evaluative. So this matters because of such-and-such. So the context of this is, in this sense-- how might students differentiate from that very descriptive to that more evaluative aspect of something that is ultimately putting something in context?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, the context is the bed on which your argument lies really. So it can go in all sorts of directions. But it is the most-- it's probably almost that really, the context. So I can't write about *Student Hub Live* without talking about the Open University, without talking about students needing to know about essays, without the structure of university degrees. That's the context. And it's extremely important. So with that--

INTERVIEWER: But we don't have to describe the whole Open University.

NICKY HARLOW: No, we don't. But we have to refer to it. Otherwise, we won't know what you're talking about.

INTERVIEWER: So it's about having the confidence, I guess, to know when you need to describe things and know when you need to mention them, to put them in that context, isn't it?

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, yes. And again, as you were talking about word count before, your word count will tell you how much context you need. So in a thing-- what is the point of *Student Hub Live* on essay writing? If that was your question, you don't need to write about the history of the University from Harold Wilson to 2017.

INTERVIEWER: No, we would need cake.

NICKY HARLOW: Well, I'd need wine. Never mind cake. But what you do need-- there's been a lot of questions from students about essay writing in the Open University. And then--

INTERVIEWER: OK, so there's lots of different formats that people can work with. Georgina and Matt mentioned the PEE, Point, Evidence, Evaluation. We've got PESEL structures. There's all these various things that people can use to think about structuring a paragraph, in the same way as they might do with a burger. And all of those will have some sort of evidence within them. And some might be longer or shorter than others.

Now, it can be quite a useful technique to start thinking about those and actually trying to write them. Because when you do start trying to write them, you realise that the bit you really want to write about, the evidence, is often a very small part of that paragraph. How do you advise students to, maybe, work with some of those tools to actually develop their writing? Even if they don't want to have a formulaic sort of table-type approach to writing an essay, they can be a useful exercise to develop writing skills.

NICKY HARLOW: They can. And I think point, evidence, evaluation-- it's taught in school. And I always that's one of the most useful things, because it's easy to remember. And you can actually use it without even opening a book sometimes. You've done your course. And especially at this time of the year, when you're looking at your End-of-Module Assessment, you've done your course. And you've got your question.

And you think, what is the point here? What do I know? What do I know? What was that evidence? You can open the book later in a way and find it. But start writing what you know already. And I often think that's an easier way to start to write an essay than to go to the books and get all your quotations and all your paraphrasing. Because that's when you get swamped.

INTERVIEWER: It is, isn't it? And you lose sense of that clarity, which is ultimately what these EMAs are about.

NICKY HARLOW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Let's talk about introductions and conclusions as well.

NICKY HARLOW: OK.

INTERVIEWER: And the other point I wanted to pick up on was this idea of language, which is often coming through in an introduction, where people will start fluctuating between the third and first person. I'm going to tell you this, blah, blah, and blah. Now, depending on what sort of format, there might be conventions around that. But traditionally, it's normally in the third person. We like objective academic language.

NICKY HARLOW: We do.

INTERVIEWER: And we like to be more assertive, not only to cut down on words. So we've asked people what the introduction will do. Here are some examples. Again, I'm not sure what I'd choose here. I don't know whether this is a trick question. We've got-- tells the reader what you will say, puts issues in context, define the key terms, and provides background information.

Now, this is a multi-choice question. So which do you think is the most important one when you're planning your essays? Let's see what people have to say about that. OK, most of them-- about telling the reader what you will say. So 84% there. Background information as well is important and, also, putting the issue in context.

Defines key times-- oh, I would disagree with this one. Because I think defining key terms is really important.

NICKY HARLOW: Yeah, [INAUDIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: But sometimes, it can feel really simplistic, especially when you're doing something more holistic. You think, I don't want to tell you what inequality is about. I don't want to talk about making and remaking-- to go back to Matt's DD-102 essay question. So what should you be putting in this introduction? And how might it all hang together?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, again, defining key terms is about context. Because lettuce, in the context of our discussion this morning, isn't lettuce, is it? It's an analogy for something.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NICKY HARLOW: And in your essay, the words that you use, the main question words, you have to contextualise

them in that first paragraph. Because otherwise, anybody reading it doesn't know what you're going to be talking about. Because things mean different things in different circumstances.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, but everyone is right in terms of that the introduction must tell the reader what you're going to say. They need a clear idea about what you're going to be delivering and how you're going to address that question, don't they?

But some students will say, you've asked me to talk about making and remaking and inequality. And in this essay, I will be telling you about making and remaking inequality, using two out of three strands. And they might repeat the question, because they think that's telling the reader what they're doing. What's your advice on that as a strategy?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, don't repeat the question. But often, you will rephrase the question. So often, you will kind of mix-- especially at Level 1, you will kind of turn it on its head a bit. But basically, you are saying that this is what I'm going to be talking about. This is what I'm going to prove. But you will introduce, in your introduction, your central argument.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so that is ultimately where you're going with the essay. And we spoke before about how, irrespective of what the question was, you would normally have some sort of approach that had some sort of argument, even if it was a descriptive essay or one that wasn't necessarily asking for that.

You might be arguing that there's more of this than that, and it matters because of this. So however you choose to carve it up, you will have some sort of main idea that you're wanting to progress, some sort of theme, I guess, that hangs it all together, isn't it?

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, you will. And you just introduce it in that introduction that you're going to be talking about this. And you might even refer to some of your sources and why you're going to be looking at X, Y, and Z in order to show this.

INTERVIEWER: We've talked about these PESEL and PEE structures for paragraphs. Is there a structure for introductions? Or is there a way of doing it? I've seen these various triangular diagrams and things. Are those helpful tools for students to start thinking about, in terms of--

NICKY HARLOW: I think they are.

INTERVIEWER: --what they could include?

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, like the funnel idea. Is that what you're talking about?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, you're feeding a lot of things in. And what's coming out is going to be a smaller amount. So you're a bit like a food processor. You're chucking it all in and then coming through. So I think it is. I think it is, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And when you talk about context, how important is context? Some students will start an essay with something mind-blowing, that's really broad. And you think, wow, that's incredible. But it's not really the question that we're answering at the moment. How high up can you go with this sort of various funnel idea in terms of broad?

You mentioned context, in terms of the lettuce here. We're not talking about sweet food. We're only told about savoury food for today. So how important is that context? And where do you start?

NICKY HARLOW: I think it's very important indeed. And really, you want to start with your context. You want to start with that. And so it is, in the context of the essay, lettuce will be shown-- is being discussed in this way. I can't remember. What did we say lettuce was?

INTERVIEWER: So in our introduction, if this was our essay, what might we say? We're saying, essay writing is really important to students. And what's really important is combining a variety of things within an essay and within paragraphs.

NICKY HARLOW: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So what might we then say? Because that's a broad part of the introduction.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes. So we're going to combine. And in order to show how to write a good essay, one that will achieve some good marks-- and in doing this, we're going to show how burgers or whatever can provide a good evidence. And we might actually even list all these ingredients. And then we will go on, paragraph by paragraph, to look at the different ingredients.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. And then we'll say, finally, we will discuss the importance of introductions and conclusions to framing this essay and argue that one should really have a planned approach to writing a good essay.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, our structured approach.

INTERVIEWER: So that's our argument, really, is you need to plan it. And you need to get the right mix in. That's really what we're trying to say. So that might make a good introduction then to our essay, which we knew at the start. So I can see why you think we should be writing these introductions at the start. So we knew all of that. But equally, maybe we weren't quite sure on how important some of those points were.

So irrespective of whether students write the introduction at the start or at the end, there needs to be this sense, checking, I guess, of whether what they're saying is delivering on what is in there. Because sometimes, best will in the world, you think, I am answering this question. And you can see it. You can see it in utmost clarity. And then they seem to go play tennis or something and come back and then write something entirely different. So it's important that they mirror each other, isn't it?

NICKY HARLOW: It is.

INTERVIEWER: In terms of delivering on the promises.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, it is. And that's exactly what it is. An introduction is your promise of what you're going to give. So you would start this particular essay that you need to make a point in each paragraph. And then you would start by defining what a point is. And you would start-- how will you do talk about each point?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah. OK, so that's good. So the introduction-- can see how that would work. Let's think about conclusions, because these are often very, very challenging, and I actually think are very difficult to write well.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You can obviously write a conclusion by telling people what you've done. Let's see what everyone says in terms of the multi-choice question, where we asked you about conclusions. Do they tell the reader what you said? Explain how you've answered the question? Indicate new lines of inquiry? Or include new evidence?

So what do you think is most important in a conclusion? Let's see. OK, so-- explains how you've answer the question with 69%. That is excellent. I'm very glad to see no new evidence there. Because that's a big no-no, isn't it, Nicky?

NICKY HARLOW: It is. But it is often brought in and often that you'll come and there'll be a brand-new argument, like, two lines from the end. And you think, if you'd put that higher up, that would've been great, but not here-- not here. It's a summary of all your points and how you've answered the question, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: OK, so if we were writing a conclusion then to this, we could, on one hand, say, we've decided to talk about essay writing. We've used some burger analogies to show you how you might do this and this and this and this. We could tell them what we did.

But another way-- and I guess a more sophisticated way of doing it-- is to say why what we've done is answering the question. So I guess, really, our argument was that sometimes you can get muddled with the words. And it's nice to have a visual picture.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: So if we've given you a visual picture about how you might want to do this, you could apply this using highlighters or however you might want to deconstruct your essay and your paragraphs.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And we've used this because visualisation and being able to recognise a mixture of things is really important in getting that right balance.

NICKY HARLOW: Mm-hm.

INTERVIEWER: So whereas a lot of people might say, we've done X, Y, and Z, and those things are important, this is more about why we've done this, why we've included this, and how we think that this has met the brief, in terms of what we were trying to do in the first place.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes, and it is ultimately answering the question. So you have a question. You have your introduction suggesting how this is going to be answered . Then you answer it, using a variety of points and context and evidence and evaluation. And then you conclude it by saying why this was all relevant to--

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Now, Georgina and Matt were talking about using feedback. Because, of course, one thing students have been doing often is writing a lot of essays and getting feedback on those as well. But what we did say was that, sometimes, we can feel very close to them and particularly when we get our feedback. And we may feel very misunderstood. And we might

think that the sheer points of genius were just missed-- which they can be.

But sometimes, it's a good idea to go back and think about what you're doing well and being a bit more objective about it. So what would your advice be in terms of going back to the things that you have already been doing and maybe thinking about this approach? How can people then start going, what was I doing in this essay? And did that make sense in terms of that question? Could they use any of these tools?

NICKY HARLOW: I think they could. And I think that just those labels of context of evidence, of evaluation-- have a look at your essays. And have a look, where are you using these? Have a look, where are you using evidence? Have you contextualised it? Are you evaluating it? Are you linking paragraphs together? Are you doing this? What is your tutor saying to you all the way through?

And again, if your tutor says things that you don't understand, ask them. Or even if you don't agree with them, sometimes tutors can miss things. But generally, a tutor is happy to explain why they've said something.

INTERVIEWER: Now, Sylvia needs a cure for disjointed paragraphs, which are a very, very challenging thing. We talk about linking words. And we haven't done that so much today. And we're nearly out of time. But sometimes, when you are planning these things and they are hanging together very well, we need to link things together. We can do that through either restructuring or perhaps adding some context or framing things.

But when paragraphs are disjointed, it can read jar an argument. So what would your advice be, in terms of techniques that Sylvia might be able to use to link things up and marry them?

NICKY HARLOW: Well, going back to our burgers again, we were talking about layers earlier. And perhaps, in this particular essay, I would use the word layer in each paragraph. So in the second layer-- and you could use something that would just link it back to something that you've said previously. Try and use a word that will come back to the previous paragraph.

INTERVIEWER: That's good advice. Well, I hope we've answer that question. And Jordan, I like your do-re-mi idea. I think that's a very good place to start, as long as you have a plan of course. Let's take a quick trip to the Hot Desk and Sophie and H.J., see if there are any other last-minute questions before we wrap up this morning's live session.

H.J.: Well, one of the things Sylvia was saying, as Jordan said, about whether we start at the

introduction or not. I'm struggling with this, because I'm not tending to at the moment. But we did have some different views as to this word current issue that we talked about.

So Jordan always has to cut down. Clara has problems of going on and trying to actually put down what she says concisely-- may be a bit of an issue. So she makes long points. Colin has some great advice about breaking the essay down into chunks and being really detailed about what you're going to write, in order to help the word count. And--

SOPHIE: So does Stephanie on that point actually. She assigns word counts to paragraphs. So as a mathematician, I like that. I like the break down of numbers. So she then has a-- even if it's just a rough idea for each paragraph. And that helps her overall word count then.

H.J.: Mm. And Chantal's talking about level of detail again. I think that's always a bit of a tricky one and try and get.

NICKY HARLOW: I think on that-- the question about concision there and having big, long, verbose points. One of the things that I think is a really good tip is, try to explain your point to somebody else, just verbally. Just try and explain it. And if you don't really understand it, you will be wittering on for hours. But you should be able to explain it in a sentence.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. So a good idea, then, is to maybe go to a friend who doesn't know anything-- ideally-- about what you're trying to do and say, well, I'm writing about this. And the answer would not be, well, I'm talking about [? Veblen ?] then. Because if you don't know what it is you're talking about, then it's very unlikely that you have a point that there to back it up with.

But I guess, really, one of the take-home tips I would have with a lot of this is that the planning and the balance is so much more important than the writing process, that you get so messed up when you over-edit and when you're writing too many things and adding points in.

If you've got a clarity about what you're trying to do at the start, it can give you a lot of an easier ride. Of course, everyone is so different with the way they prefer to work. Some people love editing and over-editing. Whereas, I often find that, for me, I'll lose the points, because I try and cram so much in that I then end up with a very diluted paragraph.

NICKY HARLOW: Yes. And, really, you're better with fewer pieces of evidence that are well-explained, contextualised, that are supported. You're better off with fewer than too many. Because too many-- you're not going to be explaining your arguments very well at all. And the read is just

going to feel overwhelmed with stuff, aren't they? With burger.

INTERVIEWER: Not a good thing. Well, thank you so much Nicky Harlow for coming along today and giving us your guide. I hope that that's given you some tips and ideas about how you might look at things, in terms of planning things and also in terms of identifying, when you've written your essay, what bits are doing what and whether they're working for you.

And Davin, thank you so much. Always so helpful. You've got some lovely links to some of the MOOCs on FutureLearn and OpenLearn for study skills that people can go and find out more. So that's a good way of doing things also, as long as you're not procrastinating too much. Isn't it, H.J?

H.J.: What?

[LAUGHTER]

INTERVIEWER: Typical. Right. Sophie and H.J., just some final words from you-- and how helpful have people found this space to start thinking about essay writing? It is a very difficult thing. You are learning it. We hope never to be masters at it. We hope to always improve at it. So I hope it's been useful for you. But any last words from you two?

SOPHIE: Yeah, everyone seems to be really helpful. And it's nice to see that everyone's now chatting on to each other, which is great. As Davin said, there is FutureLearn and OpenLearn. We have Catch Up and our YouTube channel. So there are lots of sessions on this.

If you've got any other questions, do go and have a look at that. Again, you can email us-- studenthub@open.ac.uk-- if you have any specific questions. But it's really nice to see everyone getting along in the chat. So yeah--

H.J.: Mm, yeah.

SOPHIE: --it's been a lovely session.

H.J.: We've had some good conversations about word counts and different tips, which are always fantastic. Libby has a great one. She wrote PEEE, which is Point, Evidence, Explain, and Evaluation, which I think is a nice little thing to keep in mind. So I'm going to be sticking that on my board. And I really do like Sophie's point about using Post-It notes for outlines. I think that's very helpful.

But yeah, I think we're all very happy. And we've got some great advice. So that's--

SOPHIE: Considering all the burger talk, we've done well to stay on point today. We've done really well.

H.J.: We have stayed focused.

SOPHIE: There's less procrastination in the chat and everything.

H.J.: Mm, so we don't need to get that video out.

INTERVIEWER: I knew that savoury food was going to be a real winner. I really did think that would make the tone a little bit more sensible, so well done. Although, a peeing essay-- I'm not so sure about that. Anyway, it's a good tool to use. So thank you for that. Libby. Excellent.

Well, been a really, really great morning. We're going to go and have some food now for an hour. But we're going to keep the chat room open. And while we're having some food, we're going to play you some of our favourite sessions. We're going to look at referencing from the library, because nothing would be complete without a little touch on referencing after a bit of talk about essay writing.

And then we're going to play a career session, which is about mindfulness in careers. Because this afternoon, we've got a jam-packed two hours of further activity to start thinking about your OU journey. So we're going to do a little bit of problem solving and get some nice head space to start thinking about what you want and how you can get it. We're also going to look at some great apps that you can use to think about your qualifications and whether they're right for you and, again, linking those through to employability.

And then, at 2:30, we have a sneak preview. Because next week, on the 3rd of May, we have a Brexit discussion from the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. And we're going to have a discussion for half an hour about identity and citizenship. I'm really looking forward to that.

So we will see you live at 1:00. But the chat room will be open. Enjoy the videos. Keep talking to each other. And email us any questions that you've got. And if you'd like to send us a selfie, we can probably get something printed out in the lunch break as well. So that's studenthub@open.ac.uk or #StudentHubLive16. Show us where you're at today and what you're having for your lunch. We'll see you very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]