

INTERVIEWER: Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live. In this session, we're going to take a look at assessment banking. Now, this is when, if life doesn't go according to plan, you bank your assessment. And here to explain what that means and the implications of it are Peter Taylor, Liesl Finlay-Clifford, and Darren Grey. Thank you for joining me.

OK. So, fill us in on assessment banking.

LIESL: Assessment banking is an option for students who may be having some issues with their studies currently and feeling that maybe that studying now is not the right time. So one of the options we can offer, as well as others to students, is that they can actually save their assessments and they can carry them over to a future presentation. So they can-- all the work that they've done to date can be stored for them on that module, and they can then come back to the module in the next presentation and carry those assessments over.

INTERVIEWER: OK. So this is something-- it doesn't apply to all modules, though, does it?

PETER: No, it's about 50% of the modules have assessment banking and 50% don't. And that's because of things like assessment strategies changing halfway through. A module might be finishing. So you need to check up on the module site as to whether you've got assessment banking or not.

INTERVIEWER: OK. So we've been talking today about the importance of speaking to your student support team and them being able to advise you on your individual thing. But say students decide, actually, I need to take a break from my studies and assessment bank. What might the process be?

DARREN: I think the first step really should be, have a discussion with your tutor. See whether it's the right thing for you. Whether there are other options. Then obviously getting involved and supported by the SST as well.

INTERVIEWER: Say you bank this assessment, which sounds absolutely wonderful, is there a danger that then, all of a sudden, the next presentation, you arrive halfway through, a little bit fuzzy with not having sort of looked at things for a long period of time, and wanting to pick up on those? I mean, can you say, actually, I wasn't very happy with that one, but I really like that assignment? Or, is it sort of, you have to assessment bank and pick up the scores or not?

PETER: The scores that you've kind of got in the bank, as it were, are fixed. So that carries on to the next. You can't resubmit TMAs to try and improve them. But they do kind of-- you do start getting the scores once you've kind of reengaged and start submitting the TMAs. But it is an issue if you kind of-- you've been studying for a while, so you're kind of up to date with all of the material. And then something happens and then you have a whole year out. It's natural to kind of relax and say, oh, I'll come back to that later on. And eventually, you kind of come back a little bit too late and it's hard to reengage with the material. So make sure you're planning your reengagement well in advance.

INTERVIEWER: Often, at a later point in the assessment, you can look back and think, oh yes, that's what they were on about here, there, and everywhere. And you've still got access to the material, don't you, even if you have assessment bank? So is there a benefit in refreshing very lightly throughout and keeping on touch with the module when you're picking it up again? So say you've banked three assignments, you could maybe just have a flick through and see what you missed?

PETER: I think that's crucial. I think planning your re-entry, starting discussions with the associate lecturer, looking at what tutorials are going on, what trends you can join in, so that when you're ready to kind of start properly, you've got that remembering of what was done before.

INTERVIEWER: Now, there are certain rules and procedures that you need to have done for this, which is why it's obviously best to do things on an individual level and phone up somebody from the student support team. So you've got to submit at least one piece of assessed work. And then you must obviously tell people that you've cancelled and have all agreed. So that there are some sort of procedures that you have to do. You can't just take it as a given, can you?

LIESL: No, you can't. What you have to do is if you think that you're struggling with your studies, it's like we've all mentioned, is to please contact us in student support so that we can advise you. Because there may be another option that may be better for the student if they've had a conversation with their associate lecturer. But we can talk them through the process. And what we want to do is to make sure that we give them the right information. And we can talk to them about the issues around the module. The module-- if they're going to assessment bank, they can come off the module and they can defer that. There's a cancellation procedure which is available in the essential documents for all our students on what they can do.

And we can talk them through the process. And we do that over the phone. Then we can

advise them of their fee implications. And if they do defer with assessment banking, we have something called the assessment banking calculator that we can use. So they can actually pay for the module if they come back and study that module again in the next presentation. Because if you do use assessment banking, you must come back and complete the module within the 13 months. You've got to have done that. Within 13 months to make use of the assessment banking. Otherwise, you'll lose the scores that you've carried over.

INTERVIEWER: So the main reason people might do this is if life gets in the way and they can't continue studying but they've put in quite a bit of work beforehand. And then, obviously, there's a financial incentive, because you're not paying to redo the module twice. Is that right?

LIESL: Yeah, what you have to do is, you need to phone to speak to us, so we can actually work out accurately the student's individual fee implications for that module if they come back. So it is beneficial for the student to ring in and speak to us. But they can also-- they can use the student home page to ask to defer from the module. They can actually complete this web form that they can send in to us. But we would also bring in the student and say, you've sent this request in to defer from the module. We would then want to discuss that with the student to make sure that that was the best option for them. And then advise them on an individual basis in regards to the fee implications for that student.

DARREN: I think it's important to say that students need to consider this carefully. If they're carrying forward fairly weak scores, the chances of returning and finding a pass is going to be difficult. So it may be the right option. But it may also not be the right option. So very much talk to the student support teams. Talk to your tutor to make sure it's the right option for you.

PETER: There's one little thing you need to be aware of, and that is that if you do assessment bank, you need to do it before the cutoff date of the next TMA. Because if you do it after the cutoff date of the next TMA, and you haven't submitted the TMA, then you're just going to get a zero for that. So quite a number of students fall into that trap, thinking they can assessment bank at some point in the future and go back to the last TMA they submitted. But it doesn't, it goes back to the last cutoff date.

INTERVIEWER: So you can't say, oh, I needed an extension, can you retrospectively apply that? OK, so it's really if you are having difficulty, it's about making contact sooner rather than later and then seeing what your options are, whether they're there or not. Now, one other thing I've heard is that it's important to be able to download your assignments that you've already done before

you bank them. Because whilst your information goes through, it might be useful to have your assignments and your feedback from your tutor so that you can look at it in the meantime.

LIESL: Yeah, if you want to look at the assignments you've banked already, you must download them or print them off before we do the assessment banking process with you. Because once you've assessment banked and carried over your scores, you won't be able to access the assignments that you've saved. So I would heartily recommend if students have decided to assessment bank, and before they ring us, to actually download the assignments. Or if they have kept copies of them. But they must download them from our website before we do the assessment banking because they won't be able to access them after once it's carried either.

PETER: And importantly, they won't be able to access the feedback from the tutor. They might already have a copy of the assignment they've submitted, but it's the feedback which is the crucial thing they need to download.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Excellent. OK, so download all your assignments, call the SST as well. And then keep those assignments so that you can mull over that feedback that you can then use when you pick up the presentation. There are various other sorts of procedures. And they're all clearly documented as well on the website. There's a Frequently Asked Questions section which tells you the sorts of things that you can look at and what sort of things are taken with you in terms of the feedback. Or how to get that. And then also any sort of things that may relate to plagiarism, et cetera, that would transfer across modules.

But I don't want to talk too much about the nitty gritty, because, of course, this is something that students sort of happen if they're in trouble. And that can sort of be a problematic thing anyway. So Darren, you're involved with some interventions in the university about looking at how to best support students who have been through assessment banking. What would you advice be, then, to students about things that they can do to make the most of their experience and give themselves the best chance to succeed?

DARREN: Try to stay engaged as much as you possibly can. After the point you've assessment banked, you will still have some opportunity to engage with course material. Yes, other aspects in life may be troubling and making that more difficult, but try and stay as warm as possible. And then be in contact with your tutor as soon as you start the new presentation and try and get up to speed as quickly as possible. They are there to help you. So make the most of that.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. And of course, The Open University are often looking at ways of improving the

student experience for students. And you're working on some projects there as well, aren't you?

DARREN: We are. We're looking at ways both to support Liesl and colleagues to make sure that the advice provided is as good as possible. There are other opportunities, maybe bootcamps for re-entry points to really make students more welcome as they return.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you for coming along, Darren, as well, because it's lovely for students to know that a lot of this work is going on behind the scenes. And we are conscientious about trying to make the student experiences as good as possible for students. Well, Darren and Liesl and Peter, thank you very much. We're going to take a quick trip to the Hot Desk. And then we'll return to look at resits and resubmissions. So, HJ, what's the chat been?

HJ: I think it's been very good. We've had [? Jubola, ?] an educational advisor in the chat, which has been really helpful. And we must thank Anna Clark from the last session for some great information, as well. And I think some of the new starters have really appreciated understanding and knowing about this stuff early on. Because it's one of those things you might not have a lot of questions about now, but just being aware of it and knowing who to contact and having an idea has been helpful for us just in case anything happens later on.

I failed a module myself, so I know what it's like and I know it can be stressful. But things happen in life. And the OU's very supportive and there's lots of things in place to help us if anything does happen. So yes, I think we're all happy. And lots of useful information that we're noting down. And I think-- Sharon said, as well, the catch up's really useful because sometimes you think, I remember there was a session about this, so I'll go and have a find and we'll watch it to find out the information. So yes, all good and happy, I think.