

**HOST:**

Good morning, and welcome to *The Student Hub Live*. Well, today is Boot Camp number two. We've been doing a lot of these events lately, and I hope that some of you have been to some of them before. Let us know if you have. There are loads of widgets that you can see on your screen, and we'd like to know where you are, how you're feeling, which level you're studying, whether you've been to an event before, and loads and loads of things about you as students because this is a live, interactive session. And we want to know your thoughts and ideas as we gear up for the autumn semester of OU study.

So click on the widget that applies to you, and then you can press Return and that result will send. When you have done that, you get the added advantage of seeing what everyone else has said as well. So it's a good thing to do, and I will fill you in on all the rest of the things that we'd like to do during the session.

So we have our chat box, and you can type anything in that. You can ask us a question for later on. You can tell us which module you're studying. You can tell us whether you came to our event yesterday which we had for the Open University business and law schools. So let us know where you are, what you are doing, maybe what you had for breakfast as well.

We also have Twitter, and our hashtag is #StudentHubLive17. And we've had some fantastic photos that HJ and Zach are going to show you in a minute. So you might want to send us a selfie of your study space, maybe of your study buddy. And we do talk a lot about food, so it might be your favourite food. We've been talking about hobnobs yesterday actually, and we're very interested to see what biscuits you like studying with. So send us those as well, or you can email us.

Now, our email address is [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk), and we have some lovely emails. I'm just going to read a few out actually because it makes us really happy when we get emails. So if you want to send us an email to tell us what you think, then please do and we'll read that out during the show today.

Peter says, I want to say how happy I am to start studying with the university. It's such an exciting and challenging opportunity, and I look forward to chatting and meeting my fellow students and our tutors. So welcome, Peter.

Oh, this is a lovely email also. Hello, OU team. This from Juliana. My name is Juliana, and I've

been thinking about starting one of the courses at the Open University. I watched the first *Student Hub Live* session, and I'm just amazed. You are doing such a great job informing people and giving all kinds of support and explanations. That certainly makes them feel more comfortable and safe about their studies.

The way you seem so organised and lovely to deal with all the students' issues makes me more confident to take up my decision starting at the OU. Thank you for the compromise and the brilliant job you are doing. So thank you very much. That's a lovely email. And welcome, Juliana. We are a lovely, friendly bunch here, so I'm sure you'll fit right to them.

We've also had email from OU staff because a lot of staff and tutors also watch the event. And Karim D'souza has emailed us to let us know that we're piloting Office 365 for students. So we'll put some links in the chat as well about that. But as well as being a student and learning lots of things, you do get access to some great software, so that's a good thing as well.

And some tutors have emailed us to say we still don't have our students, and we're missing them. And I know you guys are really eager to get your tutors also. So just to let you know, there's been lots of love going on in the email. So send us an email if you'd like to, and we'll read it out.

Today, we've got lots to cover, though. We're talking about being a reflective learner. We're doing reading, note-taking, and time management, all key, key skills. And to feed your comments into the chat, I'm joined by Zach and HJ on the hot desk. Hello, you two.

**ZACH:** Hello.

**HJ:** Hiya. Sorry. We're just really excited today. There' so many new people in the chat, and we're all getting ready. And Helen's saying she's got cake for everyone, which, given our conversation yesterday about eating healthy, it's not really encouraging because I'm trying to stay off these cakes and biscuits.

I think Justin had a run this morning just before he came to join us, so that's quite good.

**ZACH:** Yeah.

**HJ:** But I'll just praise him for that because that's something I can never do. But yeah, we're really excited. And as you've said, we've had some stuff sent to our email inbox. Mara had some fantastic notes that she sent us. So she's planned out how she does all her TMAs, and it's very

decorative. And I think that's really encouraging.

**ZACH:** Really creative, really creative way of planning your studies there. I love it. Absolutely.

**HJ:** If I had that on my wall, I'd be very determined to go through all those assignments and tick them off. As well, we got another one as well from Sharon.

**ZACH:** Sharon there.

**HJ:** So she was watching yesterday and she hurt her foot, so she had some time to do her B100 forums and watch us as well, which is really fantastic. And Jonathan sent in his study buddy as well. Apparently, he's taking up too much space on the sofa. They always pick the worst time. It's when we're studying. They're on the keyboard or something really odd like that.

But yeah, do send more in. We've put them up on our board. I was sad because our board was looking a bit boring this morning. But now, everyone's sent in, so me and Zach have our selfies up there, and we've got Mara's notes up there as well. We want to make it all nice and colourful by the time we get up to fresher's. So send them in, [studenthub@open.ac.uk](mailto:studenthub@open.ac.uk) and to our Twitter @StudentHubLive. But yeah, just chat to us. Anything goes, and I'm sure our guests would love to hear from you and your questions.

**HOST:** And those of you have been before may recognise HJ who we've pretty much locked in the studio ever since he came along and met us a few years ago. You may have seen Zach before. He works in our student support team, and he knows an awful lot of things. And Zach, you're studying, too, aren't you?

**ZACH:** Yes. Yeah, I'm actually doing the investigating the social world. So if anybody has any tips for me--

[LAUGHTER]

**HOST:** No, Zach. That isn't the idea.

**ZACH:** But yeah, I'm going to be experiencing that. So I'm going to be taking on that journey with a lot of our new students as well. And hopefully, if I can give kind of any advice really, it's great to see so many people getting involved in the chat. There's loads and loads of new faces and people who've obviously been here before, which is great to see.

**HOST:** Wonderful. Well, thank you for coming along, Zach. OK. Let's see where everyone is. You've

all been filling in our map widget, so let's take a look at where you all are today.

It's looking good, lots from all over. And some from other EU. So let us know where you are at if you aren't in the UK at the moment. And since we're obsessed with the weather, and we're in Milton Keynes and it's a bit overcast today, let us know if you've got a better weather forecast than we have because we all get very, very jealous of people in Europe with much more interesting climates than us.

OK. So also let us know which level you're studying, which subject you're studying, and how you feel about starting your next module. OK. I'm going to start with today's first session because, as I said, we've got a lot to get through. And we're talking about being a reflective learner.

Now, those of you who are just starting your studies are going to get familiar with this idea of reflection. So often, at the end of an assignment, we'll sort of say, what did you think you did well? And you'll feel something, and your tutor will comments on it. And being a reflective learner is a really key part of developing your learning journey, and it's even more important at the Open University because, of course, in a distance learning setting, you're going to be getting the sort of feedback from your tutor in the form of tutor-marked assignments. And when you do, it's a really good idea to reflect on it, put it down, come back to it, et cetera, because it is a really, really good opportunity for individual personalised learning that is just suited to your particular needs.

So reflective learning is a key skill, and joining me is Lisa Bowers. Hi, Lisa. Thank you for coming along today. Now, you are a really interesting person to talk about reflective learning because this is something that you're doing yourself.

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah, it is-- something I've taken from my creative practise, something that's embedded in practise, with practise that I work out. And it's iterative. It's development and trial and then development and trial. And through that are pitted these little pockets of reflection. So I'm kind of big ally of using the reflection as you go rather than at the end. And working it that way allows you to really gain a grasp of what you're doing in modular parts rather than a whole at the end, which is quite a lot of reflection to take on.

**HOST:** Excellent. So this is really interesting. You also are a staff tutor, and you're overseeing students. So you've got a lot of experience about the associate lecturers and the students. So

you know a lot from that perspective as well. And I'm very interested to hear about this iterative process because it's all development. You never sort of sit down and go, oh, I'm now reflective. I've got it all, and I can sort of see where I was going so wrong by not reading the question.

But it is all about those sort of small things. But that's quite a hard thing to do, because I think most of us like to be reflective to some extent. And most of us will think about something. But there's a difference, isn't there, between just thinking, oh, I really good or bad job-- bad job most likely when we get our feedback. So how do you encourage people to go through this iterative process?

**LISA BOWERS:** Well, from the start, they should be open to new ideas coming in and an organic process. So they're taking on, they're being a flexible learner and a reflexive learner as well as a reflective learner. To understand that they can accept new ideas and new concepts, and that they're not rigid to this is what I'm going to learn, and this is what it's going to be about, and I'm going to go from A to B with just this.

All the time, there are new ideas and new thinking and new structures that they should be open to within their modules, and that understanding allows them to widen and then focus their ideas-- widen and focus. And that kind of iteration follows that pattern. So it is a pattern of learning. So the student understands what they're getting from each section of that pattern.

**HOST:** Now, those of you who are new will see that we've changed the widgets. So on your screen now, we're going to ask about whether reflection is something that comes naturally to you. You focus on things you didn't do well or things you did do well. So let us know what you think applies to you in terms of those widgets, and we'll feed those into the conversation.

So, Lisa, this whole idea about learning, you're a real advocate of this idea that learning isn't rigid. People have different learning styles. We learn in different ways. And there's no sort of one right or wrong way of doing things.

**LISA BOWERS:** No. No. There's no global sense of, I can do this and I can do that. And I think what I like most about reflection is it allows failure, and failure is not a dirty word. Because, quite often, the most inherent, better approach to learning through reflection is that you fail, you understand, and then you recoup. And that failure teaches you more possibly than actually you just getting everything right all the time.

The understanding and the capacity for learning really widens and follows the learner, and that will then lead to a much better retention of learning at the end.

**HOST:** OK. I think it's quite common for students to think about the bad things because, often, you get feedback from your tutor-marked assignments, and you'll think, yeah, I didn't do that, I didn't do that. How do you sort of take a step back from feeling like I put my heart and soul into this piece of work, and yes, I am reflecting on things that maybe weren't so good? Maybe I did fail at this, that, or the other. But to actually build on it takes something, I guess, sort of more than just I did that badly. There's some process that enables you to learn from it.

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah. You should do a really good balance. So when you're reflecting, you're reflecting as a whole. So you should reflect on what's good, what you have failed about. And again, it's not a dirty word. I will bandy that around. But focus on where that leaves you now. What platform are you on now going forward? So you've done this really, really well. You weren't expecting to do well on this. And this has come in as a little bit less informative, and you've failed on that. So you bring the two up to another platform, and you go forward from there. And that really, really helps learners to understand that everything is a balance, and that's not to be afraid of.

**HOST:** Yeah. So we were asking people at home who are watching what they focus on, and the areas tended to spread on things that they didn't do so well. So I think that that's fairly common, as you say. And we also asked whether reflection is something that comes naturally to them, so let's see what they have to say about that. You can see that 37% said yes, 28% no, 35% not sure, but that not sure has been decreasing-- it was quite high-- I think maybe as you've explained things, Lisa, as we were going through.

I think the idea of not being sure about whether reflection comes naturally to you probably indicates that there is some reflection going on.

[LAUGHTER]

**LISA BOWERS:** They're reflecting now.

**HOST:** Yes, exactly. But it is hard, isn't it? Because, it's this whole idea of what is it. So we're picking up, then, things that we didn't do so well, thinking about sort of taking a step back. And then how do students then operationalise those? How do we sort of get some of those ideas and maybe embed them in our learning, think about what we can do differently next time?

**LISA BOWERS:** Well, I usually start with something that's very abstract indeed. And from a week's learning or a

month's learning, I will open a mirror and look into the mirror and talk to myself reflectively.

**HOST:** Right.

**LISA BOWERS:** So it sounds bizarre and it sounds very abstract, but actually it gives you confidence. It allows you to build on the failures that you believe you've had. It allows you to really smile at the good and frown at the bad. And it's a really good tool. You are literally being reflective.

**HOST:** So what do you do?

**LISA BOWERS:** So I put the mirror up, and I talk from a written sheet about the notes from the day or notes from the practise or notes from the studio. And I ask myself what I could have done better. People are going to think I'm completely crazy.

**HOST:** No, I think it's a brilliant idea. I always talk to myself as well. And I always listen.

**LISA BOWERS:** I think what I'm doing is externalising the internal conversation.

**HOST:** Yeah.

**LISA BOWERS:** So you have an internal conversation, which is reflection. It's going on all the time. And reflective learning is being able to tap into that internal conversation and understand it, and this helps you to externalise. And that's what this is about.

**HOST:** Because there's that whole argument of then, what if, isn't there? Because once you are able to say, I didn't write a good introduction, I didn't do this well, so what? And I guess you're sort of developing that line of thinking, well, what do I need to do differently because if you don't understand what you didn't do in terms of not writing as a good introduction, how are you going to improve it to be fair?

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah. You don't know what you don't know, do you? So the tools I use in my general trade for the iterative practise and to allow reflection is a learning journal. So I'll have a learning journal on hand, usually in the studio or wherever I am. And then, at the end of the week or month as I say, I'll get out the mirror and I'll reflect into the mirror the learning journal ideas, or I'll draw sketches or do a rich picture. And a rich picture is a kind of very cartoony sketch using collage if you want to, and you can use symbols because it's only for your own reference.

But it allows you to get something on paper that is going beyond that white paper syndrome. You know when you get a piece of white paper and it startles you, and you just think, what

next? What if? You've got to start making marks on that paper. And that is the real big leap from the cliff down onto reflection. You understand it. You put it down on paper. You externalise it. And you can learn from it and roll on.

**HOST:** Now, we love stationery the Student Hub, and students have been getting lots of highlighters and books, et cetera. A reflective journal sounds lovely, and I imagine that might look really beautiful. Again, I'm a bit like this with clean white pieces of paper. I don't really like writing on them.

**LISA BOWERS:** Getting them dirty.

**HOST:** And I don't really like sort of reflectives, so how do you encourage students to go about this whole thing, especially if what you're writing is maybe stuff that's not so good that you've been doing?

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah. I'm a big fan of writing in patches of time or drawing in patches of time. So I start reflection, write for five minutes, and then stop. Recoup, write for 10, write for 20, and in kind of patches of time. And I'll draw in patches of time. So I'll write one-, two-, and three-minute drawings or captions or diagrams in a little capsules of time. And that stops you from just going, well, is it here? Shall I do it here? I don't want to get them messed up. You have to just load it onto the paper. And then you reflect on that and intertwine it and move it on that way.

**HOST:** OK. So talk us through these timescales because most of this, for our students, would apply to TMAs. So they're going to write the TMA mainly the week before it's due. Well, I think they should.

[LAUGHTER]

That's when they're supposed to anyway. They might do it earlier. But there is a time period for sort of really focusing on consolidating your learning in the tutor-marked assignment. You send it in. Around 10 days later or so, it comes back to you. And then, by that point, you've had a little bit of a break from it, which is often quite handy.

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah.

**HOST:** And then you get it back, and what tends to happen in my experience is that you look at it and go, oh, they did not understand, or you sort of have some emotive response towards what you're given. Some students will pick it up again. Some students might put it down and pick it



up again a few days later. How could it work in terms of timings with this sort of idea of this sort of bursts of writing? And how would you encourage students to actually start taking from the TMA and then, again, compartmentalising this into various sections?

**LISA BOWERS:** Well, you can do it. As I said before, I'm a real big fan of using reflective learning from the start, middle, and end. So it's kind of like a fish really-- the kind of start, the chunky middle, and then the tailing off at the end. So before they even really get to writing their TMA, they should really start reflecting on the learning and bonding the learning to the module sections so that they are understanding where they're going when they do the TMA. So all they're going to get back in the feedback is wonderment.

It will be balanced. But then, if they have their feedback at the end, they can reflect on that. So it's a real kind of thread all the way through rather than just using it for the TMA. Using it for assessment needs is very important, but I'm a big advocate for taking it all the way through the module of learning, retaining that learning, and sticking it down, and understanding it in a deeper way. That analysis comes very, very quickly and easily when you start to use it more often.

**HOST:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. OK. So it's about taking time.

Now, I want to ask you about how we sort of incorporate this individually. I mean, Linda says that she wouldn't talk out loud. Vicki says that she's not so sure about the idea of a mirror because she says it might crack. I think it's really negative, Vicki.

**LISA BOWERS:** Aww.

**HOST:** Don't say that. Lorna says that she prefers to talk to the dog because the dog seems to know everything, as they do. But you've mentioned before that people have these different learning styles and different ways of doing things, so could you tell us about those differences and about how we might sort of be able to think about what type of learner we are and then what type of reflective practise may be best for us?

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah. Well, Cole talks about this. Understanding what kind of learner you are, you might want to do some study around that. It's controversial at the moment really because understanding if you're a kinesthetic learner, which is where you like to get hands-on and action in-- and design is one of those forms of learner-- or a global learner, a transmission learner, where you can take on a lot of information. Some of them have been kind of sidelined as, well, they're not

exactly true, because we go through different stages of learning and different stages of life.

Don't think that you are one learner all the way through your life because you're not going to be. Things happen. We think in different ways. We get more mature about our thought process. And that understanding helps us change our learning style maybe unconsciously. So I wouldn't get too tied up in what kind of learner we are, but just to understand your own needs. Understand when you like to learn. That's a big important thing for me. Through working on my own study, I realised that I'm really, really good in the morning and bright and bushy tailed, and then I tail off in the afternoon, but then I peaked kind of 6 o'clock at night, and I'm ready for the evening to start studying again.

So it's understanding the pockets of time where you have your most fluid ideas and concepts and you're more open to thinking about study and retaining it. What kind of snack do you like that encourages your retention? The reflective learning is there to pinpoint a retention, but it's all about your environment, being comfortable, and being a confident learner from these tools.

**HOST:** Excellent I'm going to go to HJ and Zach and see what people are talking about back at home and whether or not we've sort of addressed this whole idea of the differences that people have. And also, I'm sure you guys have been sharing the ways that you like to learn in the chat as well.

**HJ:** I think we've been reflecting a lot of different ways in the chat. Most people have been reflecting on the weather as well where they are.

**ZACH:** Yeah. So Steve in Durham is saying that the sun is shining. We've got Catherina in Germany, which is a pretty nice weather, which is nice to hear. And we've also got a lot of students kind of discussing how they reflect and thinking about how they kind of go about it. A lot of people are saying that it's good to use their tutors for comment and feedback and take that time. A lot of people are wondering if they can factor in more time in their module to spend specific amounts of time to reflect, which is good to know about. And the modules do have these activities in them as well. So it's good.

**HJ:** We're talking about learning logs and journals and reflecting as well. So Kirsty's thinking about starting a learning journal. And Vicki says-- which is really good, I like this-- putting positives in as well, just successes, so you can reflect back. And maybe if you're in a bit of a rut with a TMA, you can look back and go actually, I've done really well. I can push through this and do really well again.

And Sue's got a good tip about the tutor feedback as well-- not to take it personally. I think we've said it a lot. It's all there to help you and build you up and help you progress through the module. And Helen Lee has joined us, a tutor, and she says a key feature of reflection is that you use what methods work for you.

**ZACH:** Yep.

**HJ:** So give all the different methods a try. This why I like coming to these because people suggest different things that I have a try out and see what works for me. And I think I really like that, so I think we should be doing that.

**HOST:** Oh, that's brilliant. Well, thank you, and loads of great ideas. Do keep sharing those. Lisa, tell us, then, about this idea of sort of focusing on good things and bad things and prioritising because we know that OU students are very, very busy and are often fitting time. And reflection is really important. But how much should they be doing? And what advice would you give about prioritising some areas to maybe focus on? What would you say in terms of how much time one should ideally reflect on, and then what should one prioritise in terms of doing something about that reflection?

**LISA BOWERS:** I think that comes down to a kind of recipe for reflection. And as HJ and Zach just said, students are really understanding that it's down to personal choice. Sometimes if I'm on the train, I might reflect into my mobile phone and make a recording. I'm very flexible throughout the day of when the ideas come. One of my colleagues only reflects when he's in the bath. He does his best reflection when he's in the bath. Sometimes when I'm cooking-- the idea is to have something in your mind and then be able to write it down, or get it down. Get it out of your mind and onto something-- onto a phone, onto a piece of paper. I go around with notebooks in my bag and a pen.

If you decide that you're going to only reflect on an evening and only once a week, then that's grand because you're doing so. If you're a kind of ad hoc reflective practitioner like myself, then you can keep your tools around you to be able to reflect into it as and when you need to. And understand what you're doing and how you are connecting it. Sometimes if you just want to get an idea out there, it's better just to get out your head really.

**HOST:** Yeah. No, absolutely. Because a lot of this really is about thinking, isn't it?

**LISA BOWERS:** It is about thought.

**HOST:** Because whilst we've been spending a lot of time focusing on the feedback, as indeed we would because assessment is a key part of learning, what you're sort of saying is, maybe when you're reading something in a module book or online and you're thinking, actually, does that really support that idea? Yes, it all looks very good. It's a solid theory. But can I explain what some of that theory is about? And externalising it, I guess, allows you to see where the holes are in your understanding. Because if you can't remember, whilst it may have looked very sensible and you think yeah, that's fine, I understand that, once you start sort of rehashing it, you can sort of pick up where you may not have understood something. Or indeed, you might identify something that you would then use when you're writing as a key point.

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah, exactly. And I think that reflection, for me, also the R in reflection goes for Remember. It allows you to remember, and it allows you to retain. I think that's the most important thing. How many of us have gone through a couple of sections of a module and then got to the third section and thought, what is that again? So reflection keeps everything live and in the moment. It keeps it active and moving. Our brains are very like a monkey, and they're all over the place all of the time. So to kind of get that activity out of your brain and move it down onto paper is a really good idea to remember. And then you've got a point to reflect on and understand, and it keeps everything rolling.

**HOST:** So it's almost like having a bird's eye view, I guess, of maybe a chapter or an area that you're looking at. And once you're able to sort of say, OK, I can see how that fits together-- we get so obsessed, I think, with the minutiae and the notes and the definitions and all the sort of complicated things that sound really good-- but sometimes it's important to be able to take a step back and say, OK, I can see how these three things fit together in terms of what you're saying. So it's really about being able to take that step back.

How might students use some of the module materials-- things like the study planner, the content guides-- to be able to sort of get that sense of, OK, I'm going to see how I can piece this together maybe with a view of reflecting on something other than just do I understand it?

**LISA BOWERS:** Yeah. Well, the study planner is fantastic because you can build in there not only when things are available to you, your resources. But also, where you're going to reflect, you can actually use that and say, right, so the TMAs due then and I'm going to plan my thinking in here. And

take that and try and stick to it. That's the thing. Try and be really quite rigid with yourself because it might be like bad medicine at the start. But once you get into the flow of things, it will become part of your learning tool bag, and you can carry your tool bag wherever you go.

You can pinpoint what you've learned with how you're learning and understand. So you can reflect on yourself as a learner as well as how you're thinking at that time and reflecting on material. I often say reflection is a tool for life not just for Christmas. And it is. You can use reflection about your daily activities. And once you build it into your daily activities, you become a better learner from it.

**HOST:** Excellent. Well, Lisa, thank you so much. I shall let you get back to the faculty of STEM where you're doing your other work. But it's been brilliant to come along and share some of these ideas from your own work that relate to students also. So thank you for that.

**LISA BOWERS:** Thank you.

**HOST:** OK. We're going to have a quick video break where we're going to do one of our campus tour videos, so outside. This was filmed a few weeks ago when we had some sunshine. And Dan Weinbren, who wrote about the history of the OU is giving us a tour of some of the buildings.

So we'll see you back in a minute where we're going to take a look at reading with Azumah. So join us in a couple of minutes after this short break.

[MUSIC PLAYING]