

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to the Student Hub Live (re)Freshers and orientation event. Well, we've been covering your hot topics. We've been looking at what to eat, how much to sleep when you are studying. And as always with Student Hub Live we want quick fixes that you can implement immediately. Now in this session, we're going to talk about stationery, which is one of HJ's favourite topics of conversation. And HJ, I know you've been talking about this on Twitter. People have been sending you ideas. And you've bought absolutely loads and loads of stationery. So tell us, what is your favourite piece of stationery in your studies?

HJ? HJ?

HJ: Oh, are we back on?

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

HJ: Sorry, me and Gavin are having power naps between everything.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, OK. Fair enough, I suppose that is a good idea.

HJ: We're working hard. We're tired students.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. And it's a good idea to implement these. Tell me, do you feel better?

HJ: After that power nap, yes. That was a big power nap, though. Sorry, what were we talking about?

KAREN FOLEY: It's the stationery session, now. So this is your favourite one. And I know you've been doing lots on Twitter.

HJ: Yes. Everyone's been sending us so much stuff on our Twitter. So @studenthublive. We've had lots of study tips and some ideas as well. So last week, which I really like, Moira sent her notes, which are very colourful and creative. And she's written out all her assignments and the main bits for it.

KAREN FOLEY: It's beautiful!

HJ: I know it. If my handwriting was that lovely, yes, I would love that. But I really liked seeing that. And Isabella, as well, sent us in her stationery collection which is--

KAREN FOLEY: Impressive.

HJ: Very impressive collection. And we also had an email from Natalie, as well. So she was inspired last week to do a learning journal, and she's written on the inside it things to improve on and things she's done. So this week she's had a look around her module web site, and she's contacted her tutor. One thing she wants to improve on is note-taking, so hopefully our cool stationery will help with that.

But if you want to send in you pictures or tips, we're at @studenthublive. We've been talking about Debra said on Twitter as well, use the opportunities where you can study. I really like that tip. And Jake said, plan your week ahead. So if you've got something busy coming up, you can find out.

But I'm really excited. I've got so much stationery on my desk under all my cushions, as well. So I've got lots of washi tape and pots and we've been talking about how you can never have too much stationery. And Louise used to be an art and design student, so she's got enough stationery for two lifetimes. I see you've got a lot on your desk, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: We do. And I'm going to introduce you to Liz Marr, who's the Director of Teaching and Learning and Teaching Innovation. Liz, you really wanted to talk about stationery. And you gave us this challenge with this amazing amount of stuff to do, which we've had so much fun with. Why is stationery such a big thing with students? And is it a case of all the gear, as in 84 highlighters, no idea. Is it important that we learn techniques for how to use this?

LIZ MARR: It is, but I actually think this love of stationery goes back to the first day of a new school term when you've always got a new pencil case. You've got a protractor and your circumference-- not circumference, but you know those things that you-- compass. And you get your new notebooks and your new files. And you think, oh, I'm going to start the year all pristine and organised. And then quite soon your desk ends up like this. I'm very envious of the student who sent that beautiful orderly photograph of her stationery. And this is a little bit untidy. i wouldn't normally work like this.

KAREN FOLEY: No?

[LAUGHTER]

LIZ MARR: Honestly, Karen. This is just an example of the kind of things that you could use to help

organise yourself when you're studying. And even though I'm-- well, I guess I'm always studying, really. But even though I'm not a student as such at the moment, I still really enjoy stationery. My favourite pieces are these. I like notebooks, really nice notebooks, and so I am always on the lookout for something that's a little bit different. And it just makes me feel good writing in them.

And the other thing that I always have is a propelling pencil with an eraser on the top, because then you can rub things out.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

LIZ MARR: And so that's how I work, and those are my main two props. But there are lots of other things that are here. I really love this one. This one is things I will forget to remember memo pad. And I like it because it's got the want to do, so you can make a distinction between what you want to do, the things that you have to do, the things that you don't want to do, and the things that you mustn't forget. And the reason I think this is useful is because actually sometimes we have things on our have to do list that really we don't want to do. But we think we have to do them. And actually one of the things that I learned quite some time ago-- I'm not very good at it myself, but sometimes you've got something on a have to do list that you know you're never going to do. And so you might as well put it on the don't want to do list and have done with it.

But that doesn't include your studying. So it might be you've got things on your have to do list that are distracting you from your time to study, and those are the ones you want to move on to the don't want to do.

KAREN FOLEY: It's funny when you start sectioning some of these off, because often I write a to do list as in the things I have to do. And I often-- I mean, I don't have a nice book. Actually I do. I've got loads of nice books, but I never use them because I much prefer to have a piece of paper that I've written on so that I can throw it away. Because I like having lots of to do lists. So I'll often write my to do lists. And something like this, I think, forces you into thinking, what do I actually have to do?

And then when you see what you have to do and you think, actually my day is full of things I either have to or don't want to do, and how do you sort of distinguish between those categories? You have to think about the rewards and what sort of things would I want to do? And you can't have a list that's so unbalanced. So you sort of then have to put things on there and it gets you to refocus your priorities.

LIZ MARR: Yes. So eating biscuits might be something that you put on the want to do bit to balance with the have to do list.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. Exactly. But there's loads of new things coming up. I mean, this is just a sort of selection. I know HJ has got a lot of other selections as well. But let's just sort of think about the sort of to do list and the time management. Because we've been talking to some students who are going to be doing two modules. Some students who are starting to study for the first time and are worried about fitting it all in.

Now, post-it notes and these sorts of things, you know, you can often get these markers.

LIZ MARR: These are really nice, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, yeah.

LIZ MARR: These little sticky notes.

KAREN FOLEY: Sticky notes.

LIZ MARR: All different sizes with different images on them. You can use those to annotate things in your books. They're really pretty, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: They are very pretty. One of the things that you'd asked me to do with this was to sort of write down things on there in terms of like half hour chunks on the little notes. And then sort of hour chunks on the big notes. And I started doing this and thinking, how am I going to then fit all this? Because we had like a sort of a weekly table timetable thing. So starting to think about having all this stuff to do and when it was going to be done? And then sort of realising, well, when was I going to sleep? And then why isn't stuff on here on my to do list?

So this whole idea of breaking down tasks and things can be quite useful when there's something like "write TMA", which can be a really, really big thing. So how would you recommend students sort of use some of these notes and sticky things to sort of think about breaking down tasks into time chunks?

LIZ MARR: OK. Well, if we take the example of doing your TMA, I think the thing that people forget about, actually, is the thinking time. So actually having time to think about what you're going to do with the TMA before you actually start. So actually blocking out some time. So if we were to use something like this, for example. So this is much bigger, but it actually gives us the ability

to pull out on a much bigger scale. So you might want to divide your time. This is seven days in the week, but it might be that you just have eight hours in a day or something like that. Or ten hours over two days or something like that.

But using this kind of chart to say-- right. Sorry about. The lights flashing on it, I know. Is to think about so when am I going to actually start writing, and work back from there. So the things that you've got to-- in order to be able to write, you've got to have plenty of thinking time and planning time. But you've also got to have a lot of reading time and note taking time and thinking around the question that you're answering. And so I'd be thinking about-- and you can't spend hours doing it. To imagine that you can sit down and take notes for five hours in a row is ridiculous. Because you know you're just not going to do it.

So actually thinking about put an hour here or half an hour there into I will focus reading on this particular chapter or this particular book, and divide it up that way. And slot that in. And then think about how much of that you need to do, and over how long a period you've got. This kind of ties into-- I think I'll put that down. So you're thinking about deadlines. And actually, I don't know that any stationery helps you with this, but a deadline to me is the final date by which something is to be done.

KAREN FOLEY: The definition is.

[LAUGHTER]

LIZ MARR: It's the final date by which something should be done, not the date it has to be done by. Because a lot of people think, right, I'll work towards that. So the deadline is the 30th of December, I'll do it on the 29th December because I don't have to give it in. In actual fact, you can do it any time up to the 30th of December, and spare yourself a lot of pain of leaving things to the last minute.

So actually having an idea of when you want to finish something, and then working back from that. Putting time slots in to enable you to meet that deadline, your self-imposed deadline. Not the one that the course has set for you. And you'll find it much easier, I think.

KAREN FOLEY: Because it's this thing with juggling balls, isn't it? That sometimes I think one of the things I found when doing some of this was I was thinking, actually I have some control over the ordering. While things are all tasks, if I do these on this day I can then wait for someone to get back to me. I can allow myself a bit of thinking time. So even though maybe it will be nicer for

me to do them all on a Wednesday morning, if I did two of those tasks on a Monday I would at least have some time to sort of refresh.

So being able to play around with those priorities gives you that space that you often wish you had given yourself when you get your TMA back later and go, oh, I can see why I did that.

LIZ MARR: Yeah. And actually that planning and giving yourself that space allows for the inevitable things that happen, like your daughter's school rings up and says, can you fetch her home please, because she's not well. And that's your study time out of the window. So actually building that into planning is a good idea as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Now one thing we haven't got here, purely due to lack of time, ironically, is a bullet journal. And I know lots of people have been talking about this. My dream is to have a bullet journal, with lovely writing like whoever did that writing on the boards. That was beautiful! I'd love a bullet journal.

HJ, have people found them useful?

HJ: I think some people do and don't. And we're having this whole thing about finding what works for you, because a lot of people like the learning journal that Natalie did. And we talked about it in the last bootcamp and that's what she said inspired her. So we'll have to watch that to get some ideas. But Laura said she had to stop doing it because she spent too much time organising it and procrastinating away from what she actually does. So I think us talking about what works for you is a really big thing. Because I've brought so much stationery, but I probably only end up using my pens, my planner, and a notebook when it comes down to it.

And we really do like some of the organising things. So we organising notebooks. And we are looking up online and buying more stationery, as well. But yeah. Laura says boring old post-its, that's what works for me. And we're just sharing ideas about where we can get some cheap stationery as well. But we've also been making some things as well, to like organise our desks. So we made like an origami pen holder, which I think is really cool because it was from Isabella's picture that she sent in. We got the instructions how to make that as well. So we'll have to put that in the chat. But I thought that was a cool little way to get your mind off studying when it's a bit stressful and just do something else. Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: It is one of those things, I think often-- a tidy desk is a tidy mind. And sometimes it's nice to have your pens in one area. And so it's almost like that sort of self hygiene, nurturing your sort

of area and your space. So you don't have piles of stuff everywhere. I mean, I'm one to talk. But I do feel a lot better when I've sort of sorted my desk out.

LIZ MARR: I think that does help, but I think we have to be very careful about what Harleyjack was just saying about using it as a displacement activity. So I used to know somebody that spent all her time writing her lists and her plans, and never actually delivering anything. So it's easy to get distracted around things like that.

KAREN FOLEY: But tell us about post-it notes, because they're anything but boring.

LIZ MARR: There's so many different kinds. And these have got days of the week on them. So that you could just have these on your fridge or whatever and say, don't forget to do this, don't forget to do that.

KAREN FOLEY: And they're nice as well that you can take them off. So you can jot and reallocate things. Leave those in your office and just take Mondays list. So it feels a bit more manageable if you're feeling overwhelmed.

LIZ MARR: But actually I really like these, which are-- I don't know if you can see those OK? These are the numbered ones. I like the fact that you've got an exclamation mark there as well. And a question mark. But actually the nice thing about these is that you can annotate them to a task or a bit of reading or something, and then you can reorder them. So you can decide that actually this is now a priority activity so I'm going to move it, increase its priority.

But they're just great little stuff to have. I could give a lecture on capitalism now, but I'm not going to. But there's some really great things, useful things. And just the different sizes and different colours you can use effectively. And these as well, again for highlighting pages in books. So you've got a reader here, so you might want to-- when you've been going through it, you might suddenly say-- you've already made some things there. But here is a section that I want to come back to later. So it could be when you're working on your assignment that you're going through your book and you're highlighting all the bits that you know are going to be relevant and mark those out in that way.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, talk us through colour coding, Liz, because this book in particular has lots of different colours in it. And I can see there are some highlighters here that have been marked with a dino tape type thing. Students like highlighting, and highlighting is synonymous with these textbooks that we get. It's something not quite so acceptable in library books. But here the

student has used these notes and annotated the text as well and highlighted different things. And these can give you a good idea of the scale about what's actually happening in here. So talk us through this whole idea of highlighting.

LIZ MARR: So what we've got here are these pens and marked up with different instances--

KAREN FOLEY: Oops! Too much stationery.

LIZ MARR: Too many books. Different things that you might want to focus on. So pink here is for theory. So if there's anything that you're reading that's kind of related to theoretical positions or whatever, you highlight it in pink. Examples, again, highlight those in orange. Definitions, highlight those in green. So it doesn't matter what colour scheme you use, as long as you're consistent in what you do marking up. Personally I find it really difficult to write in books, even textbooks and course books. I just can't do it. Which is why I prefer the stickies.

But each to their own, and they are your own. And of course, there is the possibility that you're going to want to come back much later on and look at it and remind yourself of your early reading. And so that colour coding is really useful. So tell me how you use it, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: The highlighting? Well, I do break them down into sort of ideas like that. And particularly when I'm teaching, because I like to sort of know to what extent things are definition based, theory based. So I go through all my books and I sort of can say actually there's a lot of evidence here, there's not much here. So I like to get a sense of scale with that.

But the other thing I've been thinking, I've been reading this book lately, which is a book book. And I've been highlighting some of the key points on it. And sometimes I even write on the book, as well, just the sort of make ideas.

LIZ MARR: I was going to lend Karen this book, but she bought it. And thank goodness I didn't lend it to her.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I thought, since I own it I will. And the thing is is that when-- I highlight when I'm sort of teaching or studying in these books for a very different purpose, because often what I'm trying to do is get a sense of scale or balance or flow. I'm trying to link things together. I'm trying to find out where the evidence is, where the big theories are. How many theories there are. So I'm sort of looking at scale and length.

Whereas for this, I want to look at this book in probably five or 10 years time, and I want to

actually get a sense of what is happening in the book. So I'm reading it and highlighting it for a really different purpose than this. And I was very conscious of this whole idea, because I thought actually all highlighters are not created equal. Here I've only got a pink highlighter. I don't have any sort of thing, because I'm not looking at different theories or examples. I'm trying to make sense of what's going on. And actually this is a very dense text, that's a bit boring at times. And so sometimes I find the highlighter really useful, because I think what is going on? What is important? And I use it to guide my reading so that I can sort of say, OK. I can see where that was. And I can go back and make a link. And then I might write something in the margins saying, this is what was happening here. So I think there's a difference.

LIZ MARR: I'm hiding the title, because Karen said that some of it was a bit boring. We wouldn't want the author to know that, would we?

KAREN FOLEY: No. So this whole idea about highlighting. I mean, one of the things that we were sort of talking about beforehand is that highlighting can be very good as a second step and not necessarily a first step. But often we do it as a first step, because we think what's important? We might use it as a sort of crutch to guide us through the reading. Or it might be that we're sort of saying, where are the important bits so that we can go back to them? But some people say that actually you should take notes first, and then sort of go back with the highlighters a little bit later.

LIZ MARR: I think that's a much better approach, because if you go in with your highlighter in hand and you open the book, you're reading it and you tend to highlight everything. Because it's the first pass and it's just going in. It's a much better approach to actually go through and-- so highlighting is not a substitute for note taking. So really it's a question of going through your text first, making your notes, and then going back into the text later with your notes. And then you are able to highlight what's important. But actually highlighting your notes is a really useful thing to do.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely.

LIZ MARR: Picking out from your own notes what are the salient things that you think need to go into the TMA, for example. Or might be asked in the exam.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. OK. Excellent. I'd like to take a trip to the Hub desk, because I know people have been talking a lot about the various different ways that they are colour coding.

HJ: Yes. I think was it Laura said that she could colour code a key and laminate it. And then she says, I may need some help.

[LAUGHTER]

So we're getting very excited about colour coding. Unfortunately, if you're like me and colorblind, highlighting and colour coding it does not work very well. You get mixed up really easily. We're also get very excited about washi tape as well. And Debra asks what we've been using our washi tape for? Well, I made a planner similar to Karen's out of washi tape, and I use it to move all my notes around. And the great thing about washi tape is I've actually put it on my wall, because it's not very sticky. It doesn't take paint off. And then it's above my desk and I can use or move all my notes around. But we've got lots of Student Hub today, and I've already studied and worked yesterday as well.

But we'd love to hear how you're using your washi tape and your stationery as well. And Ellen says, my materials are all online, so I'm having to use different programmes to maybe highlight and make notes as well. So we're talking about Chrome extensions and things like OneNote as well, which is really good. And just the benefits of having things like the OU Anywhere app where we can just do it everywhere and have our notes on our phone for when the time comes.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Some brilliant advice there. Natalie says she's getting very excited about the idea of a label maker. I love these label makers. They're so cool, and you can use them to code your highlighters and various things like that. And I often use them to put on my ring binders. It makes me feel very organised. Not sure where you get them from these days, but they are great fun.

OK so the whole idea then about this active and unactive, I guess, ways of taking notes and using stationery is really key now. We did a boot camp session on reading and note taking as well, and included the online aspects as well. Clearly this is sort of offline and things as well. Washi tape, Liz, do you ever use some of these things to highlight pages of your books?

LIZ MARR: No.

[LAUGHTER]

No, I don't. But you know, washi tape is not something that has crossed my desk. But how about you, Karen?

KAREN FOLEY: I don't. I want to make a book. My aim is to make one of these nice books and put this tape down the sides. And then I want to section things so that I've got like ideas. I don't know what it would be, but it would be sectioned anyway. So I think this would be great to sort of just make sections in books. I often have for various things I'm doing, I'll have a book on a project. So like I've got a book for one of the courses I'm doing and I might have a book for something else. And I take all my stuff with that. And then I section the book so that I've got different areas. So I might write minutes from meetings in the front bit, to do lists in the middle. And then I sort of section the book. So I think the washi tape would be nice for that.

Again, I just haven't had time to do it. And then I do think, well, how much-- it's this whole balance, isn't it? Between how much time does one invest in this sort of thing, and then how much payoff do you get? Because often when I sit down and do this, I end up just writing a to do list, putting all my times, prioritising them with numbers, and then crossing them all off.

[LAUGHTER]

LIZ MARR: Yeah, I think it's just displacement activity, actually.

KAREN FOLEY: But it is true about what works for you, I think. And in terms of being able to think about different things, the thing the stationery did was really shift my thinking around certain things. And I think if nothing else, that can be really useful because it gives you this idea of agency that you can control some of the stuff you are doing. You can control when you do it. And some of these ideas can help you guide yourself through that process.

LIZ MARR: But it's not just time management and planning that you can use the post-its for. So you can actually use them to structure your assignment. So if you've actually got some kind of key points that you want to include-- so you might know, I want to get all of this stuff into this assignment. So you put the kind of keywords onto individual post-its, stick them on the wall, and then you start moving them around so that you've got a logical structure. And that's much easier than doing-- I mean, I do it when I'm writing, kind of cut and paste. But actually having something that you can put a plan on the wall with is really useful.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, as the producer says, I'm talking far too fast and I'm far too over excited about all of this. And I need to go and have a power nap now.

LIZ MARR: Before you do, can I give you a top tip?

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

LIZ MARR: This is a top tip-- stationery is spelled with an e, which stands for envelope. That's how you remember.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah. Excellent. Not as in standing still or sitting down.

LIZ MARR: No. Not a standing still, sitting down. Stationary with an e for envelope. So you'll remember how to spell it. That's my top tip for the day.

KAREN FOLEY: So everyone's doing their Amazon searches now.

[LAUGHTER]

You can spell it correctly. Excellent. HJ, any more from you? Are you going to have a power nap?

HJ: I might have another one. I don't know if it's a power nap if it ends up being eight hours. That's the problem. But Louise had a great tip about having loads of flash cards stuck on her bedroom wall and spares in a ring binder and just switch them around for things like for vocabulary practise if you're doing languages. And Laura does the same, so she's using it for vocabulary to help improve academic writing. So the words that come up in the module more.

And I really like this tip, so I put my them on my note cards and I can pop them up on my board. Because I think I'm amassing a nice collection of tips here. So if you've got any more I'd love to hear them. I especially like the stationery in the envelope. That's one of my favourite one from the sessions, along with using an index card. That's the other thing

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. And I think STEM said that they would give people lanyards in exchange for stationery tips, didn't they, HJ? On Twitter?

HJ: Yes. So if you tweet us @studenthublive and tag the STEM account as well-- @ou_stem-- I'll pop it in the chat. They've been sending out lanyards to people for their top tips. So we talked about Michael sent in a top tip about spending 30 minutes on a bus journey for studying, which I really like because that's what I did. Most of my degree was done on a bus. Cath said, find out when you study best at different times during the day. So I found that I was better at listening to audio and video stuff in the morning, and then reading was something I got done a lot better at night. So I really like those tips, and I know STEM have sent out some lanyards for

those tips. So if you've got any more, we'd love to hear them.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Well, thank you very much, HJ. Thank you all at home for your wonderful ideas. I hope you found this session useful and interesting. I certainly have. And I can't wait to just again make one small change today, which will be spelling stationery with an e.

[LAUGHTER]

Liz Marr, thank you very much for coming along. We've only got time for a two minute break. So no power naps, HJ. Join us after this quick tour of Walton Hall and we will be back to take a look at assessment.

[MUSIC PLAYING]