Pre session polls

What level of study are you?

- Access
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Postgraduate

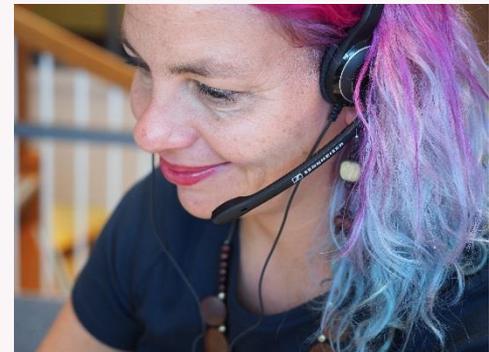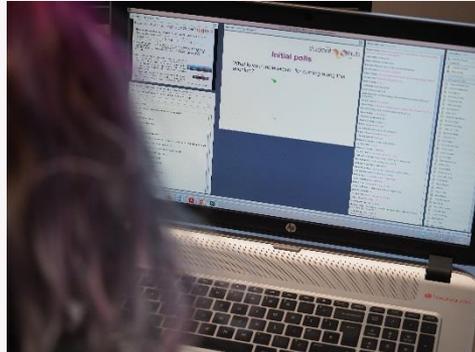What would you consider is your main area of study?

- Arts
- Languages (English & other)
- Social sciences
- Business and law
- Science
- Engineering or technology
- Maths
- Health sciences
- Education
- Sports
- OTHER

Have you been to any student hub live online events before?

- No (I'm brand new!)
- No (but have listened to one or more recording)
- No (didn't have time)
- No (wasn't aware of before now)
- Yes autumn 2020
- Yes re(freshers) 2021
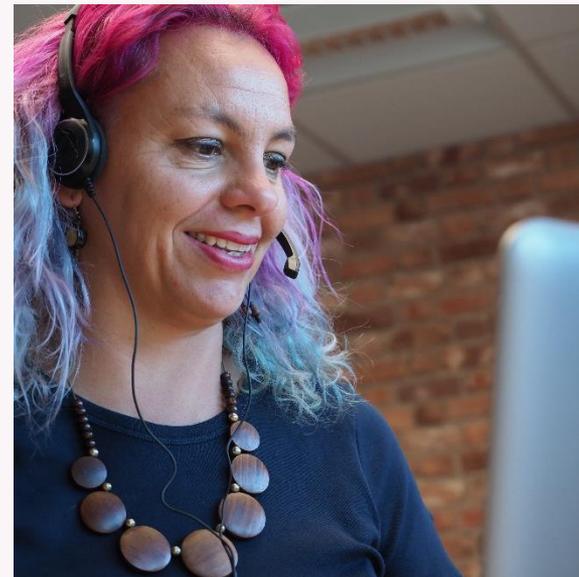
What are student hub live online sessions?

- All student hub live sessions are non modular and focus on skills relevant to study at university level

- Polls are anonymous to other participants but the chat box will have your logged in name associated with your comments during the live session.

- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website.

- Slides are available to download during the session(*not accessible on mobile devices*) and from http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/.

student hub live is the OU's live online interactive platform to support academic community

Karen Foley is a lecturer at the OU, head of student hub live and chairs Y032. She also tutors in social sciences, psychology and science.

Isabella Henman is a tutor in science and health sciences at Access to level 2.

She normally talks at the online workshops but is supporting today

This was our advert…

Communicating in an academic environment takes some getting used to. We identify the unique traits of academic communication and offer tips to help you avoid misunderstandings. There will be a focus on online and distance communication, designed to help maximise your effectiveness when interacting with peers, tutors and others within the University.

Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop covering information about communication for academic contexts (*not essay writing*)

- We'll give some tutor advice about aspects that are important

- There is a lot of interaction so please be ready to answer polls (questions) or add to chat pod during the session

- You'll get the chance to discuss with others in a small group / or alternative discussion activity (dependent on numbers)

Session purpose

<u>Is for:</u>

- Covering general study information

- Give some guidance about appropriate ways of communication including academic styles

- Provide a space to share ideas and connect with other students

<u>Is not for:</u>

- Telling you what you HAVE to do

- Providing any module specific advice

- *Not specifically covering essay writing*

Please be aware

- These sessions are large scale
- They are very busy
- There is lots of interaction
- They are not the same as other tutorials
- You can maximise slides on your own screen by clicking the icon

Effective academic communication

Initial polls

What is your main reason for coming along to this session?

(If you are on a mobile device remember you need to tap into the polling option)

To come back to these slides after completing a poll click on the share pod slides icon

First thoughts

If you could choose any method to communicate with someone you know well which method would you use (pandemic notwithstanding!)? Select your answer from the poll provided and have a look at what others have chosen

- Face to face
- Phone
- Text
- Social media
- Email
- Letter

First thoughts

Now, if you could choose any method to communicate with someone you don't know well, e.g. for employment, study, finance which method would you use? Select your answer from the poll provided

- Face to face
- Phone
- Text
- Social media
- Email
- Letter

Differences

- If there were differences in your chosen communication method from the previous 2 questions then please give any reasons you might have for that in the short answer poll provided. Then have a look at what others suggest (you may need to scroll to see other answers)

Communication…

- Is what marks humans out as intelligent beings and there are a variety of types

- Part of your skills development in Higher Education is to work out which types of communication are appropriate and develop these… ultimately to get what you want *(more on this shortly)*

- The end aim is to ensure the knowledge you have carefully understood during your studies can be communicated effectively and you can demonstrate that understanding

Poll time

- How are you feeling right now having been communicating in this studenthublive setting? Select any that apply
  - Really relaxed and chatty
  - I like this format of giving my views
  - I feel part of a big group / community
  - I feel what I am saying is helpful to others
  - I feel like what I have to say matters
  - People say the same things as me so I am not alone ☺
  - Others seem to find this easier than me!
  - I'm not always sure what to say
  - Overwhelmed by the choices!
  - Some people seem more popular than others
  - Feel a bit anxious than I am going to be tested
  - I'm not chatting because I'm worried people may think I look foolish

We are chatty ☺

- One of our main remits in these online workshops is to build community

- Interaction is important

- We are passionate about skills development

- Sessions can be very busy

- We are probably quite different from tutorials

- We do recognise this can be scary

➢ Do what **you** feel comfortable with

Why different?

- We (Isabella and Karen - SHL) are different from tutorials but we are the same people as we run tutorials too

- Different settings have different norms

- Communicating with someone you know really well at home / work / on social media may well be different than communicating with your GP

- Similarly communicating online depends on the setting and scenario

A note to begin with

- Academic communication within assessment and modules needs to use evidence effectively to support points.

- Academic communication is objective, which means it is not personalized or emotional.

- It is for a purpose and therefore needs to be considered.

Other writing sessions

- Essay planning on 24th Feb at 10am and noon for beginners / intermediate respectively

- Essay writing on 10th March at 10am and noon for beginners / intermediate respectively

- Critical thinking and writing at 10am and noon for beginners / intermediate respectively

➢ Booking for each session opens ~3 weeks in advance but feel free to add to your own diaries now

➢ Each of these pairs of workshops are new and are more tailored than previously

Academic communication

- Various forms (not including assessment such as essay writing)

- Please use the short answer poll pod provided to say who you may need to communicate with and the purpose of the communication

Types of academic communication

- Tutor – discussing study, feedback, tutorials – usually semi formal for clarity and courtesy

- Peers on module – discussing specific activities / assessment – smart casual

- Peers on module – discussing general points such as progress, tutorials, feedback etc – polite casual

- Support teams in the OU e.g. student support / disability team – usually semi formal for clarity and courtesy

Clarity and courtesy?

- You want something (usually)

- Unless you are clear about what and why then you may not get what you want

- *Example – I want help with my module.*

- Please use the short answer poll to suggest why this may not be as clear as might be needed to get the effective and appropriate response

Our ideas

- What part of the module?
- What have you already done?
- What are you looking for from your tutor?

Emails -tutor

- Some (hopefully obvious) basics for email communication with your tutor:
    - Be real – it i not an academic or assessed exercise, but being open and honest is the best strategy....

    - Be clear exactly what you are asking about as whilst you might realise which task /TMA / other you are referring to, it might not be obvious to your tutor

Examples such as

where do I find the task information from spaceywobbler@mymail.com

aren't really very easy to track or answer

Always Include your full name and ideally module code

Emails -tutor

- Some students benefit from a rolling list of questions that they may email after a few days – very often we find the answer to the question when we understand the exact question we are asking.

- Remember that you have given a registered email address to the OU and your tutor will use that one to send messages so check it is one you can see!

- It might be helpful to keep a folder of email communication so you can refer back and check answers and instructions rather than asking the same thing multiple times because you have deleted everything without reading it

Poll time

- What does the term peer feedback mean to you? (Please use the short answer poll to give your ideas – it's OK to say you don't know!)

Peer feedback

- Peer feedback involves you as a student looking at an answer or piece of work from another student and providing some comments and feedback that will help them to know what they have done well, and what could be improved.

- Some modules involve this, e.g. openstudio or forum threads.

- Learning from others and providing constructive feedback can be really helpful to help you work out understanding and communication

Peer feedback

- It is really nice to say something about your peers contributions. Even in assessment tasks, you may say that you have something in common with their post

- Remember how nervous you might be about the task? Others are too ☺

Constructive peer feedback

- At points you may be asked to give specific feedback to help someone improve. You need to be more specific here then

- Constructive peer feedback doesn't just say things like "That's great" or "I really like it" or "I didn't understand" but says *why* and if there is something to improve, specifically what it is and gives ideas on how it could be improved

- You don't need to pick up every single point but could mention if something wasn't clear or if you were left with questions

Academic communication

- Can be done ad hoc but some planning is a good idea to ensure you communicate what you need / want to and that it is appropriate to the situation

Tutor group forum communication

- In tutor group forums the style can be more 'playful' / casual as it is in a smaller group

- There may well be notices and assessment related information and tasks but chat threads can be there for support and to get writing overall

- One useful idea is to get away from thinking of all written communication as right and wrong, but communication to help you *communicate* and practice writing

- You could think about ways of exploring ideas and developing your thinking

Openlearn course

- If you are new to forum communication we recommend the openlearn course **Building confidence in using online learning forums**

https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/building-confidence-using-online-learning-forums/content-section-overview

- This gives some great advice about helping you build your confidence

Larger forum communication

- Be realistic about the timing of the message – e.g. if you post at midnight don't repost at 4am asking why no one has responded

- Be realistic about the remit of the communication – sometimes module wide forums are not the best place for long personalised posts

- Check netiquette guidelines and module specific messages – asking for answers is not appropriate and you miss out on learning if you just get the answer

- Check if a question has already been asked and answered

Academic communication overall

- Remember – you are studying in Higher Education so your communication needs to be appropriate for that

- If you have dashed off a quick message along the lines of I don't understand, but then read the instructions and are clear – do make sure that you follow up your initial message to avoid the person / people spending time trying to help when there is no longer the need

So…

- So far we've mostly looked at direct and obvious communication elements, e.g. actual messages but communication goes further than that and include assessment tasks (TMA / iCMA).

- Academic English is a whole subject in itself but we'll cover some key aspects now to fit in with the idea of effective academic communication.

Common issues (and some links):

- Knowing what is required
  https://help.open.ac.uk/understanding-the-question (and our Understanding Assessment session from 8/10/19)

- Writing appropriately
  http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/57/index.htm

- Spelling and grammar
  https://help.open.ac.uk/grammar-spelling-and-punctuation

- Academic specifics like referencing and word count
  https://help.open.ac.uk/referencing
  http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/131/index.htm

- The good study guide:
  https://help.open.ac.uk/students/_data/documents/helpcentre/good-study-guide.pdf

Discussion activity

- There will be 2 specific questions in chat pods for you to explore some of the elements we have discussed further.

- *Academic communication will work well for me when ...?*

- *I'd like to improve the way I communicate academically by...?*

- You are welcome to add your thoughts and we will then pick up some of the themes and talk through them.

- Chat does have names on but the recording will be anonymised so you will appears as 'user number'

Take home message

- Communication at university level does need to be appropriate for the purpose so is different from common methods such as social media

- Horses for courses – communication can vary depending on the platform and remit

- Be clear about what you mean (and who you are if email)and carefully read information and answers so you know what to do

Final poll

What do you feel is the main thing you will take away from this session?

Please use the short answer poll pod to say what that might be

Upcoming sessions

24th Feb 10am Essay planning for beginners
24th Feb noon Developing your essay planning
10th Mar 10am Essay writing for beginners
10th Mar noon Developing your essay writing
23rd Mar 10am Introduction to critical thinking & writing
23rd Mar noon Developing your critical thinking & writing
Details and booking information from
http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/

Past student hub live online study skills sessions here
Visit us at http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/ and subscribe for events as
they are announced. Send us feedback at studenthub@open.ac.uk

Study skills workshop

Live broadcast