

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live induction for the Open University Law School and the Open University Business School. Well, haven't we been having a fun morning? How was that online room session? I heard that Rob was up there in some purple and lime Paisley pyjamas, but I'm not sure if that's true.

And where's HJ gone, Mychelle?

MYCHELLE: Well, he got so excited about this morning he had to go and take a break. But he is still online. And he is going to be checking in on our Twitter. We had 19 people on that chat room- plus- Rob. How great is that?

KAREN FOLEY: That's fantastic. Excellent. Tell us what you thought of that in the chat. It'd be great to get some feedback. Now you've been to the online room. You should find it no trouble at all to get to all your tutorials. And we've shown you how to book those as soon as they start appearing on your study calendar on your student homepage. So do make sure that you prioritise that. And I hope you found it a good, useful experience.

Well, you'll have noticed that HJ has been replaced by Kristen on the hot desk. Kristen, thanks for coming along.

KRISTEN: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, you love talking to OU students. And you've worked at the Open University for some time. And you're currently in a director a teaching role.

KRISTEN: That's correct.

KAREN FOLEY: But tell us, what's everyone talking about right now? And have they been talking about what they had for lunch yet?

KRISTEN: I'm not sure. Michelle, you've been following it a little bit more.

MYCHELLE: Actually, people are talking about the experience online. And it was a little bit of trial and error. But Ann has pointed out that, absolutely, get in there, keep practicing, keep using those practise rooms so that, when you actually start, you'll have that advantage of knowing what to

expect and what to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant, that's some great advice. And you'll find plenty of relevant resources on the Resources page of the Student Hub Live website. So you can go into those rooms. And there's a great familiarisation video, as well, that you can watch.

OK, we've got a lot to get through this afternoon. This next session is called "I've got a question." And I'm joined by Lee Knight and Catherine McCulty from our student support team.

Now, you guys are really, really friendly bunch. I love going up to the student support team, because you really reassure and calm students down. You've got so many ideas about who to access and who can help support. I don't understand why you're not, like, inundated all the time with calls. Because I think a lot of students don't- I mean, I know you are inundated a lot of the time.

But you know, if I knew half as much as I knew now when I was a student, I'd have been on the phone to you guys all the time. Because you offer so much in terms of firefighting, and time management, and study intentions, and dealing with additional requirements, et cetera. So there's loads of ways that help support students.

LEE KNIGHT: Absolutely. I think sometimes, you know, we're a bit like a first aid box, really. When students have got any sort of problem, you can open that box, or you can call us, or you can send us a message through Student Home. And you'll get someone that knows at least something about what you're going through and some sort of- has an idea about what needs to be done or which specialist team you need to access.

And we're they're kind of to advocate for the students as well. So a lot of students' questions we can answer there and then very quickly, very easily. Where something's a little bit more tricky, then we know the expert teams to go to for help.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, I teach. And so many of my students, I'll say, look, call the student support team. And then maybe a few weeks later, they'll go, I did. I don't know why I didn't do it sooner. So what's the common questions that people will phone you guys up about?

KATHRYN MCANULTY: Well, time management, really. I think, actually, when life kind of bounces and kind of actually gets on top of you- and sometimes we find that the students don't necessarily call us at that time, the time when they could have called us. And sometimes when it's too late, they come to

speak to, specifically, myself, as an educational advisor. So we just- that's the type of queries, you know, that time management, making sure study school's directing them to the right places within their Student Home, and sometimes even just somebody to talk to.

And sometimes we do get that kind of pastoral care that we actually, sometimes, are the first person to have let us know about their issues. And they feel empowered from that as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, no, exactly. Well, we're going to go through some of your top questions. But also, you can ask questions as well. So if there's something you'd like to know, do put that in the chat. And Kristen and Mychelle will tell us, and we'll raise that with Lee and Catherine.

But in the meantime, we have our lovely widgets, our interactive tools. And I'd like to know where you are, how you're feeling, what level you're studying, whether or not you're new to the Open University, if you're studying business or law, and how you feel about starting your new module. Now, sometimes, you'll have a multi-choice question option. So you can choose one or another.

But sometimes you'll get these word clouds. And that's when there are three things that we need you to fill in. But if you only one or two things to fill in, then that's fine. But you need to put a full stop of something in the other box. Otherwise your results won't submit. And then they'll come together and make a really lovely word cloud, which is really helpful for us to get a sort of snapshot view of where our remote audience are.

Also, if you've been to a Student Hub Live event before, if you're studying full- or part-time- and are you having fun yet? Because it's that time of day. And we are about to embark on a wonderful new journey with the Open University for those of you who are just starting and a new semester for those of you who have already joined. So we'd like to know if you're having fun. And if not, we will try and sort that out.

OK, so we've got lots of questions, then, in terms of things that we wanted to cover. But firstly, I wanted to know, what do you specifically do to support students in terms of the student support team? You've mentioned the pastoral care. You've mentioned the study intentions. But broadly speaking, when do students talk to their tutor? When do they talk to the student support team?

LEE KNIGHT: Broadly speaking, we encourage students to speak to their tutors when there is an obvious academic issue. So you know, they might be wondering about how to approach a specific

question that they've been set as part of a tutor-marked assignment. They might have some concerns about an exam in the future. Or life might have defeated them for a week or two, and they might be really behind. And they might need an extension to an assignment.

And that's the sort of things where we would expect students to have a conversation with their tutor. Anything else- absolutely anything else- student support team are there. Because sometimes students don't always know which resource to access. And that's not a problem, because the student support team can certainly guide students to the right areas anyway.

So you know, never, ever feel afraid to call student support team. Because we are always there to give that advice and guidance whenever we can.

KAREN FOLEY: And we're going to show you, in the next video break, the student support team. So I went up there, actually, the other week. And so I'm going to show you where they sit and introduce you to some of the team in the next video break.

Do students worry about whether or not they've called the "right person," Catherine? Like, do they ever phone, I'm not sure if I should speak to my tutor about this or not? And sometimes I've known students who just haven't spoken to anyone for fear of not making that right decision.

KATHRYN MCANULTY: And I think that's what we come into play, really. That's why we then would welcome that phone call. Because it's there to empower the student. So if they feel, actually, I don't know where to go, I don't know where to begin, then hopefully we can actually set them on that journey, to actually direct them, and to signpost them to the right place.

Sometimes also advocating to tutors and to their line managers, specifically if it's past a certain point for the extension- so at the end of the day, we advocate on behalf of the student as well. So in the first instance, please contact us if you feel that's the way [INAUDIBLE].

KAREN FOLEY: And if it's something academic- because as we know, the tutor really sort of deals with the academic and module side of things. But if it is, I guess you'd just say, oh, well hey, let's get in touch with a tutor or this, that, and the other. So you're triaging a lot of the way in which the student should progress.

KATHRYN MCANULTY: And more importantly, it's empowering the student to do it themselves. So we will only- we'll guide them as much as we can. But then, it's how they would feel- oh, I've done that. Oh, OK, I've sorted this out myself. I've actually worked this out myself. Just a few pointers is

sometimes what students need. And sometimes that's the hardest thing to start with.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, one of the things I know that you do very well is create a space for students to actually sit down, and stop, and think about what the issue is, and help prioritise the issue- as you say, the pastoral care side of things. And I think, sometimes, especially if you are stuck and you don't see where the options are, it's very hard to make an informed decision about what is best for you. And you guys don't try and push people into a decision of what's right or wrong, or say, well, you should continue to study, because it suits us, the Open University. You really do care for the student and what is best for them.

But there are some things- I mean, we've been doing time management earlier. And there are some things that can be very, very complex and very unnegotiable, things like studying for law part-time and time management. How do you address those issues with students? What can you do to alleviate some anxiety from something that may be very real and unmovable.

LEE KNIGHT: Absolutely, and this is a major source of anxiety for students, both students who are continuing with us and students, primarily, who are new to the Open University as well. One of the things we do is we take time to discuss options with students. There's never really just one option with the Open University. You know, students can look at a range of options. And we can help advise and signpost students to the options that suit their lives best as well.

So sometimes, when students call us, they'll be quite surprised, because we'll be having discussions, actually, about how many hours a week that they might work or what they do in their employment. Because we'll be building up a picture, slowly but surely, of not only how the student performs as an Open University student, but actually, the skills and experience they bring to that as well, and the time that they've got. So we'll be having quite in-depth conversations. And probably, sometimes, what is quite a surprise to new students is how in-depth those conversations can be so that we can provide the most important advice and support to students.

KAREN FOLEY: I'd like to take a quick trip to the hot desk as well, and also to get some of the feedback from our widget. So if you haven't had a chance to let us know what you think at the minute, then please do. Where are you, how are you feeling, whether you are studying level 1, 2 or 3, et cetera? So do fill us in.

Kristen and Mychelle, do we have any burning questions right now?

MYCHELLE: Well, we do have a very important question. They are wondering what the student support advice is on which biscuits are best for study.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh yeah, this is a long, ongoing debate. I think, at last check-in, Hobnobs were in the lead, and Jaffa Cakes also had a very high presence.

KATHRYN MCANULTY: Jaffa Cakes- I think Jaffa Cakes.

KAREN FOLEY: It doesn't have to- there might be other opt- I mean, other biscuits are available, I should mention. [LAUGHING]

KATHRYN MCANULTY: Well, [INAUDIBLE] lately?

LEE KNIGHT: Well, I think I'm unequivocal in this. I think dark chocolate Hobnobs are the way to go, absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: A bold statement, Lee.

LEE KNIGHT: Absolutely. Absolutely.

KATHRYN MCANULTY: Yeah. [INAUDIBLE] suppose no caramel ones out of Sainsbury's.

LEE KNIGHT: No.

KATHRYN MCANULTY: No? OK.

KAREN FOLEY: All right. OK, if you know of other biscuits that are available, call the student support team and have a word with them about that and other issues. Let's talk about when to hit from your tutor. I mean, at the moment, as I said earlier, we're going through this process of assigning tutors to students. And that's all sort of happening. And that will have certainly happened by module start. But students don't need to be anxious about that right now.

When do they hear from their tutor? And how does the whole thing work, for students who've never had a tutor before?

KATHRYN Well, I think, in the first instance, we're kind of expecting tutor to at least introduce themselves

MCANULTY: when it's the students on the module group. Specifically with disabled students as well, we do actually expect some of the tutors to contact the students so they feel welcomed to the university. With regards to ongoing support, that's the conversation you're going to build up with the tutor. That tutor will be there for your whole module sets and for your whole module.

So make sure that you actually- you know, you're going to have a telephone number you can contact the tutor on- within reason, obviously. You're going to have an email address to contact that tutor on. And you're going to have a very good relationship with their tutor. Because they're going to be the ones that are going to be teaching you and also supporting you through your work, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, 92% of our students here are level 1s. So it's likely that they're either on their second module, or perhaps, their first, in which case they might not know that the way that the tutor-student relationship works is a tutor will typically have around 15 or 20 or so students. So it's a nice, manageable chunk. I can't wait to get my students this year. I'm really excited about it.

Sometimes they get my details before I get theirs. And then I'm really annoyed, because I want to welcome them first. But how do you go about introducing yourself? And in particular, you sort of mentioned disabilities. What's the best way to sort of position those in terms of ensuring that you have the best chance to succeed in your studies irrespective of your own personal needs?

LEE KNIGHT: I mean, I think one of the best ways to do that is to contact the student support team. And you know, you can do that by telephone or by going through Student Home. Importantly, as well, with students who feel that they may have a disability, or they may otherwise be at a disadvantage maybe, in studying, or may need some extra support in doing that, or some additional resources, there's a great, great resource on student home called the Help Centre. And it's on the left-hand side of the top menu. And any student can access that Help Centre.

Almost anything you can ever think of will be in there. And there's great resources for students with disabilities, students with learning disabilities as well. And it's a great resource tool in there as well. There's also a profiling form in there as well.

So you know, if you think, well, actually, I'm not sure what resources are available, or if I need to declare something to the Open University, then there's an online form on there as well. So you know, if people don't feel confident or are unable to give us a call, then they can do it

online as well. And we can look at that information that the student provides to us and see what additional resources or support there might be for them.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Now, when they speak to their student support team, they can set up a profile, for example, if they want an explicit outline of their needs. But I also want to get back to, Catherine, what you were saying about talking to a tutor. Sometimes I'll have students who say, I have anxiety about certain things. I have depression. I have various unseen or same disabilities that are going to impact on my studies.

And I always work with them to sort of see how I can best enable them to engage with what they want to engage with. And bearing in mind, some people do, and some people don't. So it's all very much an individual thing.

But sometimes students can think, oh, you know, I don't want to worry the tutor with all of this, or there's nothing they can do to help alleviate my condition. Is there anything- I mean, I'm not asking for a categorical answer. But I guess what I'm trying to get at is, how might students tactfully go about saying to somebody, hey, this is what's going on for me, and these are some nice things you could do to help me?

KATHRYN MCANULTY: Well, in the first instance, this is the conversation that I'd like to have with a student, as an educational advisor, to actually signpost them through their own- their answers to their own questions as it were. The way I put it to students- what would you like the tutor to know about? And how can we support you through what you're going through? And it's a lot of questions. We ask a lot of questions in order for them to get the right answers.

Now, if they're thinking, actually, I don't want to burden anybody with my issues, well, we'll be as honest as possible. And we can signpost you to the right way. If you want to talk to the tutor, we'd actually say, OK, well, how would you want to address the tutor about this. We would suggest you give them a ring. Because they know about your situation. And we just- it's just- that's genuinely the type of conversation that we'd try and signpost that student through, certainly.

KAREN FOLEY: And some things can be very static, some circumstances very fixed. Sometimes, for example, a family member is sick or ill. Sometimes one has a condition that is temporary. Is that worth mentioning?

KATHRYN Most definitely.

MCANULTY:

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah?

KATHRYN

MCANULTY: Most definitely. I think it's very hard, especially when you're going to be the first person that that student speaks to, to be as honest as they possibly can. Because we're not strangers. We are as welcoming as possible. But we understand, we are strangers to you. Are we going to be- you're going to be baring your soul as it were.

But the more you say is the more we can help you. And the more we can help you is the more we can empower you to actually get to your own solution. So be as open as you possibly can. And we can actually then, you know, help you with the strategies of contacting people, learning- everything- time management- the lot, really.

But that's what we're here to do. More you say, the more you're honest, the more we can help. But the other side of it, you can choose not to as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, we asked everyone how they were feeling right now, when they're not talking about biscuits. There were lots of words here, and some of them are provoking a bit of anxiety. So let's see how everyone was feeling at home. Nervous, excited, ready, apprehensive, eager, stressed, relaxed, anxious, daunted, cuddly- oh, that's nice- chin up- OK, so a lot of mixed emotions there about things.

I guess, you know, if we sort of think about it, we know a lot of these systems and processes. But a lot of our students don't. And what they don't know is how supportive and friendly everyone is here and how we really just want students to succeed. So what would you say in terms of allaying some of those fears?

I mean, some nerves are good. And some excitement is good as well. Because you know, they're about to embark on an amazing journey. What would you say to students who may be feeling overwhelmingly anxious where their anxiety is not helpful?

LEE KNIGHT: I think, like you've highlighted, some nerves are actually a good thing and are perfectly normal. I'm starting a new module with the Open University myself in October. So I feel many of those things as well. It's quite an exciting time. It's also a bit nervous, because I haven't studied for a long time.

But if you're feeling that it's overwhelming, then that's not, probably, a good thing. And it might

be that you need some reassurance or some advice. What I would say is, you know, studying is a big, big thing, but it doesn't have to be as big as you're probably thinking it is. And by that, I mean students often overthink and overcomplicate issues. And you know, the more you let it build in your head without speaking to someone, the more it can build up, the more it becomes a concern, and the cycle continues.

So there's an easy way to break that cycle, and that is to give us a call. Because we can actually tell you, over the phone- you know, whatever it is that you're worrying about, we can give you the facts. Because a lot of students, if they're new to study, think, you know, will there be exams, how long will exams be, will there be assignments, how much effort do I have to put into these assignments, am I- most of the time, students' anxieties and concerns revolve around the question, "Am I good enough?"

Most people are good enough to study at higher education. It just takes time and practise. And we can help students with that.

KAREN FOLEY: So a lot of it is familiarising yourself with the systems. And I guess once you know where your assignments are, you've got your tutor, you sort of get that you're in a small group, you know when your tutorials are, once you sort of understood some of those things, it should be a lot clearer.

LEE KNIGHT: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: So what about the assessment? I mean, it's the one thing that everyone is most interested in and something that we've covered in previous boot camps as well. So if you're interested in checking out the catch-up, there's all sorts of lovely material there showing you about the virtual learning environment and how to get your assignments. And in fact, we have an assessment boot camp coming up very soon.

But how are students broadly assessed? Like, what's the general idea in terms of this distance learning provision?

KATHRYN MCANULTY: Well, there's tutor-marked assessments, which will be through your Student Home and through the resources. You'll have your virtual learning environment so that they will have your entire resources for the- what you're going to be doing for the whole module. You will know, in advance, when your deadlines are. We'll be asking you to submit them- submit in your tutor-marked assessments online.

And then normally, that's about 50 per cent of your module. And then you've got either the end-of-module assessment, which is like an essay- like a very huge essay, but it's an essay- or exams to actually then be the other 50 per cent, and then together, then will end up being your grade for your module.

The tutor-marked assessments is planning your time. Make sure you're planning your time. Make sure you do it in good time. Even if the deadline is that deadline, you don't have to actually submit on the deadline day. There's plenty of time leading up to that deadline day.

And also, when you're planning for the end-of-module assessment, it's the same thing. You've got plenty of time to actually utilise your tutor and get as much out of them while you've still got them. With exams, that's where we sometimes have some of our- most of our queries. Because most of our students seem to not taken the exam in an awful long while. And that's what we can actually say, well, your tutor will have a revision class, revision tutors- tutorials- so making sure that you're completely prepared for everything that you do.

And it's there and available to you. It's signposted for you. It's all on your Student Home account. But make sure that if you are finding anyways trouble navigating anything like that, please contact us as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And a lot of you are putting some really helpful links in the chat. So even if you aren't in the chat, you don't need to talk about things. But there's loads and loads of brilliant links that you can go and take and save for later. We'll be collating some of those and putting them on the Resources page of the website though if you do miss out.

So meanwhile, I mean, HJ has been let out of the studio. And he has gone and has raided the kitchen, apparently, looking for biscuits. Stop it, HJ. Because I know he's also still online, because he can't- he won't have his lunch break.

And people are talking about the differences between academic support, and support with other students, and being able to sometimes go off and vent, which can be really useful if you're on a tight deadline and you need to do a little bit of venting before you can start doing your work. So Anna-Marie has some homemade Hobnobs, which she says are the best, which I think is- Anna-Marie, is it possible for you to send some of those to sample? That would be brilliant if you could.

Or a picture would do on email. And that's studenthub@open.ac.uk. If you've got some

biscuits you like, send us a picture. And we'll put them on the board a bit later.

OK, so this whole idea, then, of what sort of call, in terms of venting, for support, and things- should students call you if they're just generally feeling a bit anxious and want to have a chat? And how late are you open?

[LAUGHTER]

LEE KNIGHT: Well, we're open every weekday from 8 AM till 8 PM. So you know, we've taken account of the fact that students work. So you know, whether you need to call us before you start work at, say, 9 o'clock or something, or if you need to call us after you finish, then we're there 8:00 till 8:00 every weekday. Saturdays, we're also open as well, from 9:00 AM till 5:00 PM.

So we're largely broadly available by phone quite a lot of the time. I, myself, am here until 8:00 PM this evening as well. And you know, if, still, that isn't necessarily easy for students, then we're always available by email as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent.

KATHRYN And we'll definitely contact them back as well.

MCANULTY:

LEE KNIGHT: Oh, absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. I mean, typically, if they put in an email, how soon do you get back to them?

KATHRYN Two working days.

MCANULTY:

KAREN FOLEY: OK, brilliant. Excellent. Now, we mentioned some of these other things. And I wanted to touch on things like more complex issues- so you know, other sort of services that the student support team can offer in addition to helping students manage time and anxiety and looking at study intensity and options. You know, we know that a lot of people choose to study with the Open University because they have disabilities or there are circumstances that mean that this is their best option.

And indeed, you do cater for those and make reasonable adjustments for students who have a variety of issues. Can you tell us, broadly, the sorts of things that you do, and again, when it might be helpful for students to get in touch?

LEE KNIGHT: Yeah, I think one of the major things that we do is, students who study with us because it is the best option for them- we deal with a wide range of students- probably some of the widest range of students in the UK studying at university- because of the fact that you don't have to attend a campus. And that makes studying, for students with disabilities, easier. And it puts everybody on as level a playing field that we can.

But that also means that sometimes, you know, students still need to do examinations. So one of the things we do, there are special arrangements for examinations. And that's not to give anyone, necessarily, an easier examination at all. But there are, you know, circumstances and arrangements that can be put in place to meet and to match people with their circumstances. So you know, if attending an exam venue is beyond a student's reasonable capabilities, then we can arrange an exam at home for somebody with an invigilator to come and visit.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. And I know that, whilst it's useful to have these sorts of levels of support, equally, students are amazing at supporting each other.

Mychelle, I hear you're talking about exam revision forums. And indeed, we have Student Hub Live events that will also focus on exams. What sort of support's out there for students supporting each other?

MYCHELLE: Well, there are a lot of different ways that students can support each other. We have a business site, and we have a law school site. And both of those have forums where students can join and have comments on there. Each module will have its own site that students can have discussions on there as well.

As we said, there is the exam revision forum site for some modules. It's always worth checking with your tutor whether or not those exist. And we're very lucky, because we've got one of our student experience managers chatting online- Esther- and she's raised that point and is pointing a few things out to students as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Now, you mentioned exams. And it is something, I think, it would be remiss not to include very briefly. You sort of mentioned the assessment. And as we know, we have these tutor-marked assessments. And it's very important that students understand the weighting of those in terms of how much they count towards things, both in that module and, I guess, in terms of the overall qualification more broadly.

And some students will have an exam. And some students will have an EMA, an End-of-Module Assessment, as well. Do all those provoke the same amount of nerves?

**KATHRYN
MCANULTY:**

It's amazing with examinations, because the queries we're getting from students are from people who have not done an exam in an awful long while. And when they- and sometimes, you know- and this is the open access of the Open University- they didn't do as well as they wanted to in previous examinations. It is quite a large form of anxiety.

So it's trying to actually alleviate that type of anxiety for the examination for that student and to actually say, the EMA is still- you know, it's going to be a very long essay. It's going to be a very wordy essay. But that examination, it's the same type of essay, just in a different structure and a different style. And I think if you say it like that, and you say that to a student, it kind of actually- you think, oh, it's a different structure. It's the same thing. It's the same bits of information that needs to be stated to them.

So it's trying to actually say, don't be scared of exams. That's what we're here for. We're here to support you through that exam. And please don't be scared. Because it kind of will backfire, and we don't want that to happen.

KAREN FOLEY:

I always used to do much better at exams than I did in my other work. And I liked the fact that you could just- because you can only write so much in an exam. Do you know what I mean? You can antagonise for hours over a word- agonise even- or antagonise- probably a bit of both. But you know, with an exam, there's a limit to what you can actually put in that exam. And so, you know, being succinct and brief I always found much to my strength.

But then, these end of module assessments, as you say, are also sort of examinable in terms of how they're marked and things like that. What can you tell students about the way the learning is designed so that, by the time they get there, they should hopefully have skilled up enough to be in a good position to be able to do that well?

LEE KNIGHT:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I mean, all of the assessments are based on the module material that you're studying. So you know, by the time you've come to the end of the module, you should be in a place to be able to be prepared for the final assessment.

Now, one way you can do that- at the very beginning of the module, every module has learning outcomes. And you can guess, by looking at those learning outcomes, the sorts of things that the Open University needs you to know by the end of the module. And it's those

learning outcomes, largely, that will be assessed throughout TMAs, or Tutor-Marked Assignments, and in a final EMA or an examination as well. And it's also worth noting, as well, that if you have an examination, there is some support on Student Home regarding that as well, an examination arrangements booklet.

Every student can download that if they have an exam. And it contains lots of the answers to questions that students have about exams- you know, can I take a calculator, or is it open-book, or whatever. And those questions are covered in the exam arrangements booklet as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Is there anything that they can't ask the student support team then- students? Perhaps the Hobnob biscuits might be a step too far.

LEE KNIGHT: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: But anything that you think, no, we wouldn't sort of expect to hear from you about that? No?

**KATHRYN
MCANULTY:** Everything.

LEE KNIGHT: Yeah.

**KATHRYN
MCANULTY:** I mean, the thing is, we would signpost you to the right department if it wasn't us. So you come to us anyway. Because you know, if we're the first people that you think of in saying, I don't know where to go after this, like, you know, we are not careers advisors. But we would signpost you, then, to a careers advisor if you actually wanted to see what you wanted to do for your future, if you wanted to actually focus on your career goals, study goals, to actually help you through that. So we'd signpost you to careers.

So what we- you know, if you had issues with your fees, we'd signpost you to student fees and to student recruitment. So what we do is that we would expect any kind of query for us to signpost you to the right place. But more importantly, if we're here to help, we're here to help completely.

LEE KNIGHT: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, thank you very much. Graham's asked if he can take biscuits into the exam.

KATHRYN No.

MCANULTY:

KAREN FOLEY: Really?

KATHRYN No.

MCANULTY:

KAREN FOLEY: I used to. Roland says it's essential to have water and biscuits to keep him motivated.

KATHRYN I think, look at your examination booklet and see what you're allowed to take in.

MCANULTY:

KAREN FOLEY: Download your examination booklet, everybody.

LEE KNIGHT: It depends if you've got enough for the invigilator, or not, as well.

KATHRYN Yeah, just check to see what you can bring in with you.

MCANULTY:

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, I always used to take quiet sweeties. But it was a long time ago, to be fair. Things might have- anyway, so lots and lots of useful advice there from our student support team. And thank you both, Catherine and Lee, for coming in and showing us.

I hope that we've shown you that they're a really, really nice, friendly bunch, and you can ask pretty much anything to them. You don't have to phone the student support team. But they are a great source of support and advice. And my personal recommendation is that, if you are struggling, give them a quick phone call or drop them the line. Because often, if you get in there early, they can really help you sort things out and offer you a range of things that will make your life a lot easier.

So let's go and meet them. I'm going to show you, in this next video, where they all sit and introduce you to some of the team. I'm going to go and confiscate the biscuits that HJ has been stealing. And then I'll be back for some information about the Careers Advisory Service. So I'll see you in about five minutes with the biscuits. Bye for now.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Today I'm going to make some of the student support team for the Open University law school and business school to find out more about what they do.

Hi, Susie.

SUSIE HANCOCK: Hello.

KAREN FOLEY: So, Susie Hancock, you are the senior manager for the student support team. So Susie, what do the student support team do?

SUSIE HANCOCK: So the students are here to support enquirers and students through the whole of their study journey. So that could be right at the beginning at the exploratory stage- so when enquirers are thinking about which qualification is best for them- and then, right up to the other end of their study journey, where they're completing their qualification and going to a degree ceremony.

KAREN FOLEY: And in addition to that, they also do other things, don't they, like advocating for students?

SUSIE HANCOCK: Yeah, so within the Open University, we've got lots of other specialist teams as well. But the first point of call for students should be their student support team. And if we need to get support from a specialist team, then the senior advisor or educational advisor can go out to colleagues to get specialist knowledge and advice and support the student in that way.

KAREN FOLEY: And when look at this office, it's a lovely, friendly, vibrant place. Do people have different roles here?

SUSIE HANCOCK: So we've got advisors, senior advisors, and education advisors. And they work across the information, advice, and guidance continuum. So students will be contacting the student support team and will speak to an advisor initially.

And there, they can get lots of information about the courses or the qualifications that we offer. But they can also speak to senior advisors who can help them with study planning and course choice and educational advisors who can really help to guide them through specific challenges they might be facing in their studies.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, I'm right in thinking students don't necessarily need to know that. They'd get put through to the right person.

SUSIE HANCOCK: Yep, we'll do all of that bit. And they just need to know they need to call the student support team. And we'll all be on hand to help.

KAREN FOLEY: Great. Well, thank you, Susie. I'm going to go and talk to some of the team now.

SUSIE HANCOCK: Great, thank you.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

ZACH EATON: Hello.

KAREN FOLEY: Hiya, Zach. How are you?

ZACH EATON: I'm very well. How are you?

KAREN FOLEY: I'm good, thank you. So you're a senior advisor.

ZACH EATON: Yep.

KAREN FOLEY: Tell them, what does a senior advisor do for students?

ZACH EATON: So a senior advisor basically focuses on giving advice to students that are either new or on their studies. And we can kind of help them work out if OU study is right for them at the right time, looking at module choices, what qualifications are right for them, and kind of explore their options and how they want to continue their studies.

KAREN FOLEY: So you give them advice about the courses, and qualifications, and things. But what about support with other areas that might affect their studies- for example, if they have a disability?

ZACH EATON: Yeah, of course. So any kind of support that we have available, we'll have those initial discussions with students to either have long-term disabilities or short-term disabilities- anything that could impede their studies at the time. And we'd look at speaking to our colleagues at disability support team and kind of exploring what support we have available for them, what their tutor can do to be made aware of it, and what we can do as a student support team and university to help them.

KAREN FOLEY: And so you must have a lot of contact with all of these other areas across the university collating information for students and feeding it back to them. Is that how it works?

ZACH EATON: Yes. Yeah, so we talk to countless other departments about countless nitty-gritty bits of

pieces- exam arrangements, for example, if people- if students need specific needs for exams, down to individual support sessions with tutors. And even outside of the university, when they've finished their studies, we have a great careers team who look at the kind of opportunities with what they can get with their qualification as well.

KAREN FOLEY: So you're out there collating all this information and then feeding it back to students- how wonderful. And do you also give them information about things outside of the Open University, other organisations that might be useful in their studies?

ZACH EATON: We can do, definitely. I mean, if they need- if a student needs information, maybe, on professional bodies such as the law, which is why I specialised in, maybe going to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, maybe some information on how they can improve their career and what do with their degree afterwards, then we can direct them to places outside of the university that can help them get to where they need to be and achieve their goals.

KAREN FOLEY: Zach Eaton, thank you very much.

ZACH EATON: No problem.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Hi, Lisa.

LISA: Oh, hi, Karen. How are you?

KAREN FOLEY: I'm good.

LISA: How nice to see you.

KAREN FOLEY: How are you?

LISA: Lovely, thank you. Good to see you.

KAREN FOLEY: We're making this video telling students all about the student support team. And I wondered if you could fill us in on what an educational advisor does.

LISA: An educational advisor's role is to support students who are presented with issues that are impacting on their ability to achieve successful study. My role is to help the student identify what the issues are, and how we can help them, and what the goals are and what the options

are for them to move forward so they can achieve successful study.

KAREN FOLEY: So what are some of the common issues that you get presented with?

LISA: There are a lot of issues, really. One of the main things that students come across with this sort of situation that's impacting is if they're very busy, if they've got behind with their TMAs, if they need an extension, if they feel that now is not the right time to study because there's some serious situation that's impacting them on their ability to study. And we try and do that as- we try and listen to the student and what they're presenting to us.

Often, when students call us, it's not necessarily the issue they're presented with, it's what's causing the problem. So by using the guidance skills, we use lots of exploratory communication skills, some counselling skills. We have to have very effective listening skills. Because often, a student might say a keyword. And we like to go back to that to make sure that we work with the student. Because we want them to help make the decision about their studies going forward.

KAREN FOLEY: So you're really, I guess, talking to the students and creating a space for them to be able to consider some of these issues and really think about what's right for them in their studies moving forward.

LISA: Yeah, absolutely. The student can phone up, and they think that they're certainly dealing with a situation that's presented to them. That think, ah, I can't do something. What do I do now? And we encourage them to talk to us. We're hear from Monday to Friday, 8:00 till 8:00, and on Saturdays, 9:00 till 5:00. And we're happy to talk to anybody.

And it's really good if the student calls in and speaks to us so we can actually talk to them and offer the options for them to help them. And it's not a problem. We have so many students that are with us at the Open University. And there's nothing that we haven't heard before. All our students are individuals. And there's lots of different circumstances.

But the most important thing is that they call us and let us know if they need any help with anything. We can liaise with the tutors. It doesn't matter if they speak to their tutor or to us. There's lots and lots of options. There's always a solution.

You know, we may have to think about what is best for them going forward. And often, sometimes they do have to stop studying. But we look at ways to how they can come back and

what's best for them.

KAREN FOLEY: Sounds like a really valuable and rewarding job.

LISA: It is very interesting. It's really good to speak to students. And we get lots of thank yous from students. I've got a card on my desk from a student in Scotland, which was really kind.

But the most important thing is that we're empowering students to complete their studies in a time that's relevant to them and their qualification, and that they're able to achieve the goal for their degree, which is really important. And it's good to be able to be part of somebody when they're having a difficult time and help them move forward. So it's good.

KAREN FOLEY: Lisa [INAUDIBLE], thank you very much.

LISA: Oh, you're very welcome. Nice to see you.

KAREN FOLEY: See you soon.

LISA: Bye bye.

[MUSICAL SOUND EFFECT]

[MUSIC PLAYING]