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**KAREN FOLEY:** Welcome to this *Student Hub Live* event for early childhood studies. I'm Karen Foley and I'll be presenting the next two hours of content that we have lined up for students who are interested in early childhood studies. Now anyone is welcome to these events and I know that some of you are here from this morning's session, so welcome back. We hope that you enjoy the content-led sessions that are going to follow. And for those of you who are brand new and who are doing studies in early childhood, welcome to this event.

Now these are live online interactive events. You may be watching them live if you're here, or you may be watching them on catchup, in which case, it's important that I explain how this all works. So we've lined up a session of-- a programme even-- of topics for today's discussion. We're going to be talking about an introduction to the qualification. We'll be looking at reflective thinking in practise, why play and creativity is so important, mud play, and then we're going to take a look at case studies as a method. And then we're going to sum all of that up. So that's what we've got in store for you today.

But during that time, you have the opportunity to ask questions of our panellists, talk to each other about your studies, about tips, about how you're feeling, and share any advice and experience that you've got. Now to do that, HJ is going to be sitting here on the set, taking your feedback and comments on board, and letting us know when you've got points that you'd like us to raise. So it's really important that if you've got something you'd like to communicate to our panellists that you type it in the chat.

Now most of you will be in the chat function and some of you might be in the live stream only function. But there's a Chat tab and you can put things in there. You can say what you're doing. You can tell us which module you're studying, where you are in the country, what you've had for lunch. We've been talking about thermos cups and coffee and the size of coffee cups essential for Student Hub Live viewing. So there's all sorts of things going on. Anything goes in that chat.

You will also see some interactive widgets like voting tools, and these are in a box at the bottom of the screen. Now incidentally you can change your screen layout. So if it's not suiting you, you can press the bottom on the right hand side and you'll see three different options. So

the chat or video will be larger or smaller. And depending on what you're doing you might find the one that suits you best.

So we've asked where you are and what you're doing, what you're studying right now at what level, if you've studied E109, if you've attended a Student Hub Live event before. So to fill in those widgets, you just select the widget that you'd like to give us your answer on, select the item that applies to you, press it, and then close the widget and then your results will send.

Now sometimes we'll have a word cloud, and this is when there are three options. So you need to put three things in, otherwise it doesn't submit. But if you can only think of one or two, then just put those and put a full stop in the other box so that we can see what you've got to say.

So let me welcome HJ who's been talking about coffee cups and other important matters to do with OU study. HJ, how is everyone out there today?

**HJ:** I think we're all happy and ready. There are some people who are new. So Stacy says that it's her first time doing university studies. So welcome. it's a great community to be part of, the OU. And she finds it a bit overwhelming at first but she's looking forward to getting to grips with everything. So hopefully this event will help today and it sounds really positive that you're looking forward to it.

And yes, lots of chat about coffee. Zoe popped away to get some coffee while we were just setting up and said sorry about that. But there's no need to apologise because we know it's an essential ingredient for study. And we're talking about using pint mugs for coffee and tea tsunamis as well.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah, this is an important point HJ because we had some complaints last year from students who said that we didn't have any ad breaks. They were very tired after watching our two day freshers events. But you can drop in and out as you want to. You can go and get coffee. And we will play very short videos between some of the sessions so that you can go and refuel your beverage of choice. So there are those things happening, and also the catchup.

**HJ:** Yes, everything's on catchup. Everything's on our YouTube page or main website so always head over there. Sometimes we've got-- well all our sessions are really useful, so I'm sure you'll find something on there. And do remember if we miss anything as well that you're saying or you want to ask a question or you think of something after the event, do email us as well,

studenthub@open.ac.uk and we'll make sure to get back to you.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah, last year we made 74 hours of content, so if you're feeling overwhelmed and you want more, there's plenty out there about all sorts of things. But seriously, it's a great opportunity to start studying with the Open University. It can feel a bit overwhelming, but we hope that we can allay some of those fears and tell you about some of the most important things that you need to consider when you're starting to study.

So here I'm going to introduce my guests who are going to be with me for the next two hours in a variety of sessions. We have Natalie Canning and we have Menna Godfrey and Sue Callan. Now you're all part of the early childhood teams and you have a variety of roles, which is what's so exciting for this particular session. So Natalie, you work here at the Open University and you're a member of academic staff.

**NATALIE  
CANNING:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** And Sue, you're a tutor. So you're really an associate lecturer who's dealing a lot with students as well as other things. And Menna, you've got some input in terms of practise. So we're going to be talking with you about some of your mid play, which sounds very exciting indeed, later. But all of you have contributed to this module in a variety of ways.

Now if you haven't already voted, please start doing so now. Let us know where you are and how you're feeling, et cetera, because that sort of thing is really helpful for us to be able to feed into the discussion.

So we wanted to give students a brief overview in terms of the qualification path and how it all fits together. And the most important thing, of course, for students is that they probably registered on a module. And that's great. And we spoke this morning to Zach in student support about how they could assess their options and have a sort of MOT about where they were at. But it's also important to know where that module is in terms of the qualifications so that you can see your journey and start progressing.

So I wonder if we can sort of start talking about that in terms of the introduction to the qualification. And Natalie, maybe if I could ask you to tell us a little bit about E110.

**NATALIE** So E110 is one of the modules in stage one of the BA honours in early childhood. And it's

**CANNING:** starting this year. And I know that we'll have some students that perhaps did the other level one module last year, which was E109. And there's a slide that can show the actual structure of the whole qualification. And that will probably be a little bit more of a visual idea of how the modules fit into the whole qualification for early childhood.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Absolutely. HJ, I wonder if you can tell us what some of the people are studying? Have they put in any ideas about modules that they're on?

**HJ:** I think looking at one of the widgets, there's a few people that have done E109. But 95% of people haven't done it yet or haven't had a look at it. There's quite a few people who are on the childhood pathway, and there are some people who have just popped in just out of interest for some of the sessions as well, which is really good. But yes, we really want to know what you're studying. I'm sure our guests here will be interested to know and it would be helpful for the session.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Perfect. Thank you very much HJ. So we're going to show you a slide in just a second that shows the qualification outline so that people can see the stages. I didn't know this actually until I started my studies, but E stands for education and one is the sort of level one. So you might have E109, E209, et cetera. So that's sort of things that students can look out for.

So you'll see here that we've got the various stages of qualification. Natalie, would you like to talk us through these?

**NATALIE** Yeah sure. So for stage one then you've got the E109, which is Exploring Perspectives on

**CANNING:** Young Children's Lives and Learning. And you'll find that we do tend to talk in codes an awful lot at the Open University rather than give their full title-- and also E110, Young Children's Play and Creativity. So 109 gives you a broader overview of children's education and things that influence their lives and their learning. And Play and Creativity is just that. We focus particularly on what children are doing when they're playing and the things that really are important to them and influence them through their play and their creativity.

So once those two modules have been completed, you can move on to the second stage of study. And this is particularly within the BA honours for early childhood. So if you're studying an open degree, you might choose different modules, for example, and E110 might be one of those standalone modules because we're offering E110 as part of the qualification in early childhood, but also as a standalone for anyone who is interested in doing some continual professional development if they're very experienced with working with children and just

wanted to top up their knowledge and understanding about a particular subject.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Do you find then that a lot of people are selecting these modules when they're optional because maybe they have children or they're very interested?

**NATALIE CANNING:** Yeah, we've kept this module in particular very open. So it's open to anybody who perhaps just has a general interest in early childhood or perhaps is thinking about pursuing a career in early childhood or in a different career path such as social work but may want to know a little bit more about what play and creativity means for children. So it could be grandparents that are looking after their grandchildren perhaps two or three times a week, or it could be for anybody that's working within early childhood settings, a variety of those-- a child minder, somebody in a private day nursery, or perhaps a children's centre or perhaps working as a family worker. So there's a variety of roles that people are working in in employment or in a voluntary capacity but also then want to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. So that's the level one stage.

**NATALIE CANNING:** Yep. And then if you're on the early childhood degree, you would then move to stage two. And you've got an option at stage two. So there's five different modules within that. And if you go on to the Open University website site you'll see all these different options. But for example, if you're thinking perhaps you might want to become a teacher, there's a module around curriculum. If you think you might be more interested in children's psychology, there's a module there on psychology. So there's some options there.

But alongside that then there's E229 which is Listening to Young Children, Living and Learning-- Critical Reflections. So that builds on the stage one modules and is really looking at how, as adults, we really support children in terms of listening and what that means in terms of research, current research that's happening within the field of early childhood.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Brilliant, excellent. Now did you want to tell us a little bit about, in detail, any of these modules in terms of how they're structured or perhaps guide students to where they can find out about them if they'd like to know more?

**NATALIE CANNING:** Yeah, so an overview of the content of the module is just on the Open University website. But at level one they're sort of structured in a similar way so that they're very familiar when students, perhaps they're studying 110 at the moment, starting to study that module. And

they'll find that 109 is structured in more or less the same way.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Brilliant. HJ, any people saying which modules they've studied yet?

**HJ:** Yes, quite a few. We've got quite a few people on E102, so the Introduction to Child Studies and Psychology. So Laura's on that one. Gareth's on that one, Zoe as well. And someone said it's good to meet some other students on my module, so yes, that's one of the benefits of these events. We've got Learning and Teaching in Prime Years. Conor's doing that module. And Maroulis has joined us and is doing Introduction to Sport and Fitness. So that's really cool. And we've got a sports and fitness induction next week as well haven't we--

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yes, we have.

**HJ:** --which will be good for you to join. You'll enjoy that one. And Alice is doing E110 as part of the open degree, so Young Children's Play and Creativity.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Brilliant, excellent. So lots of information about the modules, but you're probably raring to go. So Sue, I'm going to ask you if you can tell us a little bit about some of the themes of the qualifications and indeed the modules.

**SUE CALLAN:** Generally there's a good focus throughout on children's different experiences and things that contribute to their development and learning. So obviously module E110 has got this focus on play and creativity in particular. But the alternative perspectives within E109 and perhaps some of the other modules that people are saying that they've been involved in as well-- 102-- it's about the experiences that children have that contribute to their development-- so looking at children as learners, looking at children as communicators, and the ways that adults support them.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And there's also an emphasis, isn't there, on reflective practise, which is why we've got a session on that later.

**SUE CALLAN:** Yes. I mean, you probably noticed that when Natalie was talking about the second level module that is called, whatever it's called, Critical Reflections, but I know it as 2209.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Those kind of codes are so much easier, isn't it?

**SUE CALLAN:** 2209. But yes, the ability of students to actually look at the different themes and perspectives that are introduced to them in all the modules and really be prepared to think quite deeply

about the materials and things that are being offered in terms of, do they agree with them, does it ring true with some of the experiences they've had, those kind of things, because actually studying can be quite challenging-- not just learning new stuff but actually learning things that might challenge some of the ideas that you've had before. So the reflective side of the modules and being prepared to join in with forums and events to share ideas with other people are quite an important part of learning altogether.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Absolutely. I wonder as a tutor if you could give Gareth some advice because he's been looking at the assessments on E102, because we very diligently covered all of this morning in our boot camp for skills, talking about finding your assignments early. I don't know if you watched that one Gareth or not, or you're just being very diligent. He's feeling a bit daunting. And of course it's important to go one step at a time. But is there any advice you could give him in terms of that sort of side of things?

**SUE CALLAN:** Well, I quite like the fact that students are finding their assignments early. But actually what you have to realise is that the assignment is a bit of a destination in terms of the blocks of study. The modules are structured in blocks of study. So we actually help you to get to the point of being able to do the assignment through the materials that we provide as part of the study calendar. And so it's good to know where you've got to try and get to, but it's probably more important at the moment to start working quite steadily through the materials that are available.

I know at the moment, because modules haven't formally started, in all the modules there's induction week things, getting started, tips, things to read through and look at, and then to join with the study calendar and work quite carefully through the materials to get to the point where you will attend a tutorial or you'll attend a forum which will help you understand how you're going to respond to that assignment.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Absolutely. So don't worry, it will all come in due course and you're not supposed to be working on the assignment right now, although it's great that you have found it Garreth.

Menna, I wonder if you could give us a bit of an idea just in terms of this overview about how theory and practise link together. You're a practitioner and we're going to be talking about some of your work a bit later. But this is something that sort of runs through the whole module in the way that we look at case studies for example, and we also look at practical applications of some of the ideas that are discussed in the module. What is this relationship between

theory and practise and why is it so important in early childhood studies?

**MENNA** I think it's really exciting to look at play and creativity. And for me the way that it's happened is  
**GODFREY:** that I was an observer of children. And I observed children that were in my care, and first off my own children and then children that came to my setting. And then I began to question--

**KAREN FOLEY:** You're in a nursery setting.

**MENNA** Yes, I do. I own a playgroup, yes.

**GODFREY:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Wow.

**MENNA** We have children from the age of two to four. And I watched them play and again, I began to  
**GODFREY:** ask questions about that playing that I was seeing. And I then went back to look at some of the pioneers, some people that were writing currently about early childhood and began to see links between what I saw and what the children were doing. So that interweave of reflective practise, looking back at what other people have said and looking at what your children are doing, and pairing up how that fits with you as a practitioner yourself or as a grandparent looking after children, however you're working with these young children, how do I warm to that? Is there something in my history perhaps that is making me feel particularly drawn to mud play in my case and to being outdoors? To

**KAREN FOLEY:** I wonder if you can tell us at home about your relationship with children. Do you have children who you're able to observe, like sort of in Menna's setting or from Menna's background, watching her own children. Has that sort of inspired you to start your studies in early childhood for that reason? Or are there other things? And maybe are you worried about having access to children to be able to observe? That's one of the things that we're going to touch on in terms of how this is built into the module. Is this a challenge for many students Natalie, sort of maybe people who don't have children to be able to observe as part of their studies and test whether these theories make sense in the real world?

**NATALIE** So on the module we have included quite a lot of video material within the online activities. So  
**CANNING:** there's lots of opportunities for students to observe children in lots of different settings and a range of children, and also in different countries as well. So it's not a necessity that students have to be have direct contact with children to be able to study this module. Of course if they do, then that is a bonus. And we do encourage students to find a placement if they can, a



voluntary placement. That might be for first time working with children, but also it gives an opportunity for students that perhaps have a lot of experience working in one particular type of setting to then go and work in perhaps a different setting, or have a placement-- you know, if they've worked in a day nursery for a lot of years perhaps and they've never worked with a child minder, perhaps to go and see if they can do that. And that just gives an opportunity to have a more diverse experience of working with different children in different kinds of contexts.

But it isn't essential. And that's because we have developed within the module opportunities for students to observe and to view children through video. But it's obviously not exactly the same as being in a room and observing children in daily activities.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, thank you. And we're going to hear more about that later, aren't we? Excellent.

Well, thank you all of you. We're going to have a short break for a minute, but you will be seeing plenty more of Natalie and Menna. Our next session, Sue and I will be talking about reflective practise. But in the meantime, let us know your thoughts on finding a placement. How are you going to be observing what you learn about? And do you have time even to do those sorts of things? So pop those ideas that you've got in the chat.

We're going to have a short video break now. I'm going to show you the legacy garden-- sorry, the Gardiner Building even, which is one of the buildings on campus. This was shot a few weeks ago when it was still quite nice and sunny, but we just wanted to give you a flavour of what it's like at the Open University. So we'll be back in a few minutes after that video for our next session, which is on reflective thinking and practise.

[MUSIC PLAYING]