

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live. Well, this afternoon's live session is going to cover some really important things you need to know.

First we're going to talk about the OU Students Association. Then we've got a tutor Q&A. Then we're going to look at some news about The Open University. And student experience on our module feedback, and how important that is.

But feeding back your comments and chat is Lee and Mychelle, who have been talking about tickets to concerts that they've forgotten to go to, and various things like what to watch on the catch up. And there's been no mention of lunch so far, Lee and Mychelle. Is everyone OK?

LEE: Well, we're not quite sure, really. I mean, you know, food is a huge topic for us on the hot desk. So I've just tried to prompt that. I've had some chicken and spinach wraps from OU canteen in the break, and we're waiting to find out what everybody else has had.

But back to the important sort of issues-- other than lunch, which obviously is very important. We've been chatting to a few students about OUSA, or the Students Association, which is coming up. And guiding people to some catch up videos, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Mychelle, what's been going on with these tickets?

MYCHELLE: Well, my time management skills last week were appalling, let's just say that. So I would say, get a calendar, put your events in it, plan early. And I was talking to Stephanie yesterday about her time management skills, and they're ace. So really, plan ahead, make sure you know what you're doing when, and you will not waste your money.

KAREN FOLEY: And we had a really good session this morning from the library team. And Fran has written a Limerick in for us. We were talking about how you could write a love letter to the OU library about something you really, really loved, or you were breaking up with them.

This is what Fran says. Once there was an online library, the staff there were never contrary. The help desk was great, and open quite late, but the raves got a little bit leery.

We like that one, Fran. Well done. Thank you for sending that in to us.

OK, OU Students Association. I'm joined by Stephanie Stubbins and Cinnomen McGuian to

talk about the association. So for a lot of new students, because we've got a lot of new level one students, they might not know that the OU Students Association is such a vibrant community, and that they're automatically a member.

STEPHANIE: Yeah. So all students that study with the OU are automatically members. They can find this on the web site, which is oustudents.com. And we're there for support, to help build a sense of community, and also student voice for them taking things back to the Open University.

KAREN FOLEY: Cin, what's your involvement with everything?

CINNOMEN: I'm the Area Association Rep for Northern Ireland. And basically my job is to represent students for the association in Northern Ireland. Because we have representation all across Europe, and in all four of the nations.

So each of us have very different sort of things happening, and different legislation issues around education, and stuff. So the needs in the nations are slightly different to the rest of the UK. So the issues that come up Northern Ireland may not be the same issues here, so my job is to sort of find what the students are saying in my nation, and bring that back.

KAREN FOLEY: Part of what you do, in addition to supporting students, is represent the student voice. And we've talked a lot, in fact, we've been talking about student voice all the way through this Student Hub Live programme about why that's so important, and how it feeds into different areas of the university.

In terms of love letters to the library, as Fran has done. In terms of feedback for the student consultation. Feeding back generally in terms of how tutors can support students in their study. But also you encourage people to sit on various boards and represent certain areas in the University through the Association.

STEPHANIE: Yeah. So there's the Central Committee Representatives who sit on the OU committees. They're the student voice in the room. There's also Senate Reference Group volunteers just being placed, and they sit on a pre-meeting before Senate. There's also other volunteering opportunities where students can have a say. There's also learning experience reporters. They--

CINNOMEN: Community Champions.

STEPHANIE: Community Champions. There's lots of opportunities to get involved.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Now we've got some widgets out there, as well. We'd like to know where you study and what does being part of the student community mean to you. And we've also got a map, because we like to know where everybody is. So with these word clouds, where there were three options, you need to put something in each box, or the results won't submit. So if you could only think of one or two things, then you need to just put a full stop in there, and then you can see what everyone else is saying, also.

OK, so what do the Students Association actually do?

STEPHANIE: We actually help students to get together for meet-ups. We provide activities and events. Example, Fresher's, that's one of the things we've been doing last week and this week. There's--

CINNOMEN: Support, motivation.

STEPHANIE: Support. Societies and clubs. Through the studies support side of things, there's Nightline, there's Disabled Students Group, there's PLEXUS, there's peer-to-peer support, and--

CINNOMEN: Shop.

KAREN FOLEY: The shop.

STEPHANIE: The OU shop.

KAREN FOLEY: Now this is a very, very interesting thing. I mean, we've been talking beforehand about how so many students like their OU hoodie, and their OU mug and things. Is this what happens in the shop?

STEPHANIE: Yes.

CINNOMEN: Yes.

STEPHANIE: And I'm a regular buyer of things. Whenever I've completed a module, I treat myself to something from the shop.

CINNOMEN: A varsity jacket, a hoodie, because my mum nicked my old one. You know, stuff like that.

STEPHANIE: Mugs, pens.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, brilliant. Now are there essential for study, or are they just something that's nice to

have?

STEPHANIE: Some of it is essential. So the stationery, it's nice to have a nice journal to keep notes in. But a lot of it is just for rewards, or to show that you're a student of the Open University. It's nice to wear that.

CINNOMEN: It feels part of that community.

STEPHANIE: That logo, yeah.

CINNOMEN: Seeing that shield on things at home makes you feel part of it.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. You mentioned all students are involved. And you've told us about the website. And you've mentioned some of the things that are on there.

The one thing that I think all students need to know about is the NUS card, because you can get fantastic discounts to loads of shops. And so many people say, you know, oh I'm doing the OU. And it's this whole thing about student identity.

Some people think that it's not a proper university. We all know it is. We all know the degrees are much better than conventional brick universities because you're getting so many skills, being a distance learner. But tell us about the NUS cards, and how people can get hold of that.

STEPHANIE: OK, if you Google NUS US extra you can get your student card. It shows that you are a student. It's got photo ID on it. And I have proudly presented it at different events in places where you can get a student discount.

And I've had people double looking at me, like you're a student? Yes, I am. And I've shown that card.

KAREN FOLEY: Jealously.

STEPHANIE: Yeah, definitely. Also you can get discounts on things like Apple products, and certain stationary places. So I think it's an essential thing to have.

CINNOMEN: You can use it around the world, as well. I used it in Indonesia to buy a meal for my family.

KAREN FOLEY: Wow.

CINNOMEN: And they accepted student discount, because I had the ISIC build up, which allows you to use

it around the world. And it worked, and it was great.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, excellent. Now we've got some students on the student desk. Lee, you're studying with us. So tell us what people are talking about back at home.

LEE: Ah, loads and loads of really positive feedback. Sort of asking, am I prepared to study? Am I in the right place? Have I got everything settled? And really, my experience as a student is not any different at all to any other students with the OU. So it's a really exciting time for all of us at the moment.

MYCHELLE: And I would like to give a shout out to Lisa, because she's just come back to studying after years of not studying. And she's doing an access module, which is a brilliant way to get back. And I'll just say my husband did the same thing. Left school at 15, back studying in his mid-40s. And the OU's been absolutely brilliant in supporting that journey, getting back into studying.

So don't worry if you haven't done it in a long time, we are here to help you. And you'll meet many people who have the same kind of thing, where they're scared, or they're anxious, or they're not quite sure. And the fact that you're on here today is absolutely brilliant. Ask questions. We've got lots of things we want to talk to you about.

LEE: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: And we've known, don't we, Mychelle, that having a proper induction-- well not a proper-- but a good induction, and spending time thinking about your studies is often equated with student successes, isn't it?

MYCHELLE: That's absolutely right. And actually, speaking to Stephanie yesterday, she was saying to me that whenever possible she takes the time-- so even now, she's started reading her modules, she's started looking at TMAs. She said to me yesterday, the weeks that we supposedly have non-study weeks, I still study those. So she's banking her time ahead of time, in case something happens.

Because we all have things happen in life, and we all have problems. So then if you have to take a week out, you're actually ahead. So I think there are lots of different ways that we can make sure that we can stay on track with our studies. And if you come off track, we'll then ring up Lee at Student Support Centre, and he can tell you a little bit about that.

LEE: Absolutely. I'll keep you on track.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. They'll take you up on that, Lee, I'm sure. OK, so you've talked about some of the things that you do in terms of listening to students. But could you tell us about things like Nightline, and the various forms of help and advice that students can tap into?

STEPHANIE: So Nightline is a telephone line you can contact in the middle of the night if you are struggling, or just need someone to speak to. There's volunteers on the other end, and they are there to listen. So they don't give advice out.

CINNOMEN: It doesn't have to be study related either, Nightline.

STEPHANIE: No, it's just anything.

CINNOMEN: If you've got a personal problem that may be affecting your study, or it isn't study related, Nightline are really good at supporting then.

KAREN FOLEY: So what sorts of things might people phone up about?

CINNOMEN: It could be anything. You could have a family emergency. You could be feeling quite depressed. Something that is just not allowing you to get into the study mindset. And sort of giving them a ring, and talking to somebody who's qualified to talk that through with you, can really sort of help ease that burden to allow you to move forward with the rest of things.

STEPHANIE: There's also a big community of us on social media. And some of us are in the forums, as well. And that's a good way that you'll get an extra support.

And there's module groups that you can sign up for, as well, and be part of. A brilliant time to do it is when it's starting. So you go through that student journey and that experience of that module with other people that are going through it at the same time.

CINNOMEN: Exactly. It makes all the difference, knowing that it's not just you at home in your bedroom studying. Knowing that you've got access to hundreds of other people that are feeling the same stress and strains with the TMA coming up that you are. It helps you feel part of that community. It's the biggest thing that we've got going for us as students, is access to other students doing the same thing.

KAREN FOLEY: We were talking earlier, and people sent in pictures of their desks, and where they study. And we were talking about the student feedback session, looking at the various places people

study. And that's one of our widget questions that we've asked. So let's see where people study.

There've been lots of things mentioned on here. We'll just get that ready for you in a minute. Ah, here we are.

Library-- oh, the library is a big place. In my study, coffee shop, any time, that costa coffee, summer house, coffee shop, Starbucks, at home, tree house. Other coffee shops are available. The front room, bathroom-- that's an interesting one.

HJ's clearly not watching. I think he's off having a power nap.

MYCHELLE: Where is he?

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I know. I know. All day he's been having these power naps. Sport and fitness lot told us yesterday that it was really good to have these 20 minute naps, and to eat bananas. Anyway, in return for HJ eating his fruit, he seems to be going and taking liberties with these power naps. But I've been told they're a really good idea, so what can I do?

STEPHANIE: I've been told with bananas, they're very good for study, because they help keep your energy levels going. So bananas is one of the foods that you should be eating.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, not necessarily biscuits.

STEPHANIE: No.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHING] OK, now the whole thing with the Students Association is the sense of community. And you do this in a number of different ways. I follow you on Facebook. You've got a really vibrant community.

You do all sorts of things there, from radio shows, to meet-ups, to Q&A sessions. So tell students how they can connect with some of the stuff that you've got going on.

STEPHANIE: OK, So we've got a new website that's been launched at oustudents.com And there's specific areas. It's nicely laid out that you can find for support, for student voice, for community-- I'm trying to think what else. But if you go on them, if you go under community, you'll find the meet-ups, you'll find societies and clubs.

If you want to get involved with the meet-up, they'll be listed on there, but it also gives you

some advice about who to contact if you want to set up your own meet-up. The societies and clubs are all listed on there as well. Also we've got social media areas. There are groups. If you put OU Students Association, and just click, you'll find all different types of groups.

There's a community group that is dedicated to just getting students and volunteers together. But you've also got your regions, and your nations, and Europe groups, as well. So if you want to be in touch with students that are in your areas, you can go to those defined groups.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. People are talking about the hoodies. We've all decided that hoodies are a must. But some good ideas coming out of this. We might need two hoodies, because you need to wash them. Otherwise it could make going to tutorial a little bit awkward.

STEPHANIE: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: So a lot going for the shop. So check out the shop and see what's there. Get your NUS card, and you find out the other ways of connecting with everyone. You've also got a conference.

STEPHANIE: Yes. So that's a bi-annual--

KAREN FOLEY: It sounds very exciting.

STEPHANIE: It's a bi-annual conference, so that was my first experience last year. It's a time when the student leadership team is elected-- which we were both elected last year. With your officers, and your regions, and your nations and Europe representatives are--

CINNOMEN: And trustees.

STEPHANIE: And trustees are elected.

KAREN FOLEY: So who comes to the conference?

STEPHANIE: Well, any student can apply.

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

STEPHANIE: It's done by sort of area base, so there is a nice spread of people that can attend. And there you can find out all about your Students Association. You can meet people that belong to societies, have a look at their stores. The Disabled Students Group are there.

CINNOMEN: PLEXUS will be there.

STEPHANIE: PLEXUS will be there. And it's a chance to also vote on any changes to do with the association. The students get the vote on the day.

KAREN FOLEY: Wow. Is it expensive to go?

STEPHANIE: It's free.

KAREN FOLEY: Really?

STEPHANIE: Yes, so the Students Association pays all the expenses. So you literally can just-- apart from alcohol.

[LAUGHTER]

We have a nice fancy dress party on the Saturday night. So if you're coming, try to get in theme.

KAREN FOLEY: So you can come and vote, and you can come on campus. You can come to the library, you can rave in the library. You can go see the digital archives, and all sorts of other things that we've been talking about.

CINNOMEN: And shops as well.

KAREN FOLEY: The producers just told us that the rave isn't guaranteed at the moment. But I'm sure something could be arranged.

You were talking about the voting, and the roles and things. So tell us about your roles in the association. And I know you both find them really, really rewarding. What's in it for you, and what are you actually doing?

STEPHANIE: So I'm Vice President, Community. So I'm an officer. And so I've got quite a wide remit. So everything community based, from Freshers-- I've helped to develop and organise Freshers the last couple of weeks-- to student meet-ups, to clubs and societies, and just getting that community building.

I've been trialling a community drop-in session in OU Live for the last six months, which has been quite positive. Students are coming in all the time. So it's not going to be a permanent fixture, but basically I try to help bridge that gap of isolation that students feel by studying

through distance learning.

KAREN FOLEY: And Cinnomen, what's your role?

CINNOMEN: Trying to do a very similar thing in Northern Ireland. Try to sort of get the idea that you're not alone. And there's a monthly meet-up at the Belfast OU offices every second Thursday of the month. And that's a lunchtime meet-up, so that anybody can drop in when they want to. And we try to sort of have other ones, you know at weekends, for those people that can't make the lunchtime meet-up.

And just trying to foster that sense of community. Because, I mean, I've been an OU student for a very long time. And it can be really, really isolating when you feel that you're the only person-- especially if you're the only person in the house that's studying. Let alone feeling that you're the only person locally that is.

So sort of having access to other local students. And knowing that there's other people around you that you can possibly meet up with. And just sort of bringing that all together. And it's more and more important as we sort of get further up the levels, and the face to face tutorials drop off a little bit. Because you don't have anywhere near as many as you get to level 3.

And just being able to sort of meet other OU students. And that's one of the most rewarding things about being elected last year, is meeting the rest of the people in the C, seeing the trustees, and knowing that we're all working together for the same ends. Just knowing that we're all in this together really does help.

STEPHANIE: I think benefits for me is it's built my confidence. I've found out I can go in front of the camera and do media stuff, which I didn't think I could do. It's having the chance to go on to OU committees, support other volunteers, and just-- I feel so much a part, not just of the Associations community, but I feel part of the OU because of my role-- because I've got so involved. But even from the first day that I started getting involved with volunteering, it just changes you. It changes the way you look at things.

CINNOMEN: It really does. And knowing that you're valued by the people that you look up to. I mean, I have a really good relationship with the offices in Belfast. And just knowing that the director in Ireland knows who I am, and knows what I'm doing to represent students. It really does boost your confidence a lot. It really does.

KAREN FOLEY: You're talking about the various roles, but there's also clubs and societies. And I just

wondered, because I know you're involved with the Write Club, as well. If you could sort of briefly mention some of those areas that people can go and look at on the web site.

CINNOMEN: Well, I first got involved with the OU Students Association by helping to set up the Write Club. I mean, that was my first real-- although I'd been an OU student since 1999, this was the first time that I'd really done anything for the Students Association. And realising just what a sense of community that brings, and being able to chat to other people that you're interests, that's what led me to stand for election for the AAR. Because if you can foster that sense of community that we get within the societies and the groups, and sort of bring that to every other student in your region, you know, just trying to be part of that was really, really great.

And there's societies for everything. No matter what your interests are, you will pretty much find a group of people at the OU that are into the same sort of thing.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, everyone at home is talking about hoodies. Is there a hoodie society? Because Graham wants one in extra, extra, extra, extra, extra, extra large. Malcolm's going to have a look at the shop, and he hasn't had a look at the library. Don't worry there, Malcolm, it's only the start of term. You've got plenty of time for that.

And Will wants to have a hoodie so he can be a OUF. So is there a society or a club for hoodies?

STEPHANIE: No, but I'm--

CINNOMEN: I'm sure there will be soon, by the sounds of it.

STEPHANIE: But I would like to say I am not a hoodie fan. I'm a zoodie fan, which is the zip-up version. So anybody who'd rather have a jacket version, they're brilliant.

CINNOMEN: They are.

STEPHANIE: I've got three, now.

KAREN FOLEY: And what colours do they come in? Because this is another discussion point.

CINNOMEN: Every colour.

STEPHANIE: You've got red, you've got blue.

CINNOMEN: Blue, green, purple.

STEPHANIE: And also on the OU shop, it's important to let students know that there's free exam papers, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah, yeah.

STEPHANIE: So if you're starting a module now that has an exam going, look on the exam paper page, put in your module code, and you can download all the previous ones. So you might have to re-look to check for the different years, but it's worthwhile getting them.

CINNOMEN: I always used to buy those. And it's so much.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, because they're free now, aren't they, which is incredible.

CINNOMEN: It's fantastic.

KAREN FOLEY: And Lee's just put the link to that in the chat. Thank you very much, Lee, for doing that. Yeah, the exam papers. I mean, I know everyone's just starting to study, but they're a really good idea to get the format of the exam, and to identify what areas may be asked. And also whether or not you've got three essays, or short questions, or you know, how the exam is set up. So it's great to have as a resource.

STEPHANIE: Also, another tip for students that are studying, have your TMA next to you when you're studying the blocks, because things will jump out at you that are connected with the assignment.

CINNOMEN: Post-it notes.

STEPHANIE: And another tip, as well, because we were talking about time management yesterday. I've had students that have contacted me and said, I can't focus. I can't retain the information.

I learned, through saying the same thing to another student, they told me about a method where you have shorter study times, more frequent breaks. So I do 45 minutes study, have a 15 minute break. I then repeat three times, and then I'll have at least an hour. Sometimes I'll go back and do a second lot of sessions. But I find I retain the information, I don't get bored, and I can focus easier.

So if you find that you find bigger study sessions quite overwhelming, and you're not taking in

the material you're working on, give it a go. Give the shorter ones a go.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Then Let's take a quick trip to Lee and Mychelle, and see what everyone at home is talking about.

MYCHELLE: Just one of the few comments from previously, Stephanie used her NUS card in Rome to get half price entrance to the Colosseum.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant.

MYCHELLE: Which is brilliant. And Graham mentioned that he uses separate professional and student accounts, so that he doesn't get confused. So he's got his work accounts on Facebook, for example, and then he's got student pages on Facebook, to keep his life separate. And Ronald says that when he needs to, he goes and takes a break and talks to the mountain, because that's a nice peaceful place for him to regroup.

So those are some of the things that people are saying online. And Alexi, after my own heart, wants a purple hoodie. But Lee, what's a zoodie?

LEE: What is a zoodie? I think we've all been educated today. I certainly have, so thank you for giving us that. A zoodie-- I was wearing one this morning-- a hoodie with a zip, I believe. Fantastic, hoodie with a zip. It's been popular, it could be trending, could be hashtagging before the day's out.

[LAUGHTER]

Also well worth noting, as well, a few more of our students who are proud NUS card holders have been claiming a wide variety of discounts. Not only at the Colosseum, but closer to home, in Mexican-themed restaurants. There's only about 2 on the UK high street, so you can guess where your cheap nachos are from.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: I have a quick question, is it IE or Y for hoodies and zoodies?

LEE: I mean, I think we'll have to refer this to the Faculty of Arts--

[LAUGHTER]

--to get a full-- possibly even wells. It's a language question, yeah.

MYCHELLE: And something else, we spotted HJ on the form, but we wondered whether he was sleep typing during his power nap following his banana.

KAREN FOLEY: What's he been saying?

MYCHELLE: Well, he too is a hoodie fan.

LEE: He's mooted the idea of a hoodie party slash rave.

[LAUGHTER]

But I think we need to close the cupboard door where he is very, very quickly and muffle his screams.

KAREN FOLEY: We might have to upgrade that to a zoodie rave.

STEPHANIE: Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

MYCHELLE: As long as they're purple.

LEE: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: All these terms and conditions, I don't know. How's Davon's religion going? Anyone up for that still, or has that sort of died a death now after the attempts to split it all up?

LEE: Oh, the cake religion?

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

LEE: It's not really got much further, unfortunately.

STEPHANIE: They've all gone off to eat cake.

LEE: Yeah, absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: No, there were splinter groups of all types of cake. It was a bit confusing.

[LAUGHTER]

LEE: Yeah.

MYCHELLE: I think bananas probably enter. Actually, Lee pointed out earlier a combination of protein and carbs at lunchtime is quite good for sustaining the energy in the afternoon, and keeping your study levels.

LEE: And also really important to mention those past papers again on the OUSA shop website. It's an amazing resource. And I know certainly from Student Support Team's point of view, we saw them post a lot of students to those papers. So they're a fantastic resource.

MYCHELLE: And Fran's just ordered a hoodie.

CINNOMEN: Yay!

MYCHELLE: So, excellent, go online and have a look and see what you can get. And we've had some comments on mugs, as well. So a lot of love for the OU kit.

LEE: Marvellous. We can afford more biscuits now.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: And has Graham decided if he needs an XL or an XXXXXXXXL yet?

MYCHELLE: Well, I think we'll probably-- he said XL, but you know.

KAREN FOLEY: He might just be bored typing.

[LAUGHTER]

LEE: Absolutely.

MYCHELLE: He could have been sleep typing all those Xes.

KAREN FOLEY: This is the problem, we don't know.

MYCHELLE: We don't know.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, so this whole idea of Facebook, I think, is a really interesting one. Because a lot of your groups are on Facebook. And some of them, with the closed groups, you ask people to have a little OU identifier on their profile, which can be really useful as an indicator that they're an OU student. And some students may want to set up separate profiles, so that they can engage in

that different world. How common is that?

STEPHANIE: Well, I've got two profiles. I've got one that I've got for family and friends, and I've got one for the OU and associations. And I'm never on the other one. I'm always on the OU and association one. But having some sort of hint that you're an OU student, or what you're studying.

KAREN FOLEY: Or you could wear your hoodie or zoodie.

STEPHANIE: Yes, obviously. Or you can get a badge sort of identifier frame thing that you can put in with your profile. But it just makes it so much easier when you want to join any of the other OU groups and association groups.

But you will find some of the groups now, there's a new thing where you can ask prospective members a few questions. So don't be afraid of answering those questions. They're not going to be shared anywhere. It's just so that we can identify that you're an OU student, so that you know the group you're coming in all OU students.

KAREN FOLEY: So I got a few questions about the hoodies. Sherry's in the chat, and she wore her hoodie to the doctor's this morning, and now they all want one. And Jane wants to know whether the hoodies have pockets for irons.

STEPHANIE: Yes, have got pockets.

CINNOMEN: Yeah, nice big pocket. And it's got a little hole in it so you can put your bit through, definitely.

KAREN FOLEY: And they want to come ask about the sising. This is a serious question. Do they come up big or small, in terms of ordering sizes?

CINNOMEN: I think they're quite roomy.

KAREN FOLEY: Are they?

STEPHANIE: I do, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: So go a size sort of--

STEPHANIE: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

STEPHANIE: But if you have got a problem with the size, and you get it, you can send it back, because I've done it.

CINNOMEN: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, OK.

STEPHANIE: So you can get the size sorted out.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. OK, that's brilliant.

Now other students can volunteer. And does this just happen at conference that people get elected? And what are the ways that people can volunteer to support other OU students?

STEPHANIE: Well, volunteering happens throughout the year.

CINNOMEN: Yeah.

STEPHANIE: We've got some opportunities open at the moment.

CINNOMEN: We do. And we do have spaces for by-elections throughout the year, when posts become--

STEPHANIE: We've got a by-election at the moment.

CINNOMEN: We're currently in the middle of a by-election for the Deputy President of the Central Executive Committee. So I mean, there is the facility to have by-elections.

STEPHANIE: Learning Experience Reporters, they're still open at the moment. Central Committee Representatives, that's open. If you go onto the website, and click Volunteer, which is at the top, there's roles there. But there's a lot of roles that aren't on there, because it's a brand new website. I think it's getting put on, but the ones that are open are definitely on there. But there's opportunities throughout.

CINNOMEN: Student Consultation Members.

STEPHANIE: We've got 40 new Community Champions that we're just writing the training for. And that'll be starting in a week or so. But there's opportunities all the way through. From writing for the magazine, to doing a blog, to we've got radio host you could be a host for a meet-up.

CINNOMEN: Join a society, get on a committee there. There's lots of opportunities for getting involved.

KAREN FOLEY: Now you started from the club sort of aspect, and then you got confidence. What would you say to students who maybe haven't joined anything yet. Can they still volunteer?

CINNOMEN: Of course they can.

STEPHANIE: Yeah.

CINNOMEN: Of course they can. I mean, you've got to go through the door somehow. And that door's not going to open until you try it.

And if the first thing you want to do is something that's not already available, there's always the opportunity to set up new societies. We get new societies coming on board all the time. I mean, this hoodie society may very well be the next one that comes along.

STEPHANIE: Or it could be a club, because we're launching clubs, which is a less formal topical group for students.

KAREN FOLEY: I think hoodies would be a club, not a society.

STEPHANIE: Yeah, it sounds more like a club. But there's all different opportunities to join things like that. I was actually a member of a committee for one of the societies. My first big event when I came up to the campus was a societies event.

And that gave me an insight to the work the committees do. And then we've just hosted another one this year. So you even, as a society committee member, will get a chance to come up to the campus.

KAREN FOLEY: Wow, excellent. And I know a lot of you at home want to do that. So this is a very good reason to make a trip up to Milton Keynes and get involved with things. You can do your ironing as well, while you're up here, in your hoodie.

OK, so we asked people, what does being part of a student community mean to them. And I'd like to sort of feed back on some of these answers as we end this session. So let's take a look at what everybody said at home.

So, talk with other students, sharing tips, support is coming up big in the middle there. Student identity, camaraderie, opportunities, ideas, sense of belonging, empathy, connecting with students, learning, excited. Wonderful, positive. I don't think there's anything negative there at all.

Community is really important. And we know that when people feel part of a community, again, they have better opportunities to succeed in their studies. So let's just take a quick trip back to the hot desk and see if there's any outstanding questions about hoodies. And I think we've pretty much covered all the hoodie related questions, but there might be something else. So let's go and see Lee and Mychelle.

MYCHELLE: I wanted to give a shout out-- just make sure I've got the name right here, my apologies-- William. He has done some volunteering, and he agrees with Stephanie. It's given him confidence, particularly around anxiety. So anxiety of meeting new people, getting involved and volunteering, and now feeling more comfortable, and that's great. That's an added bonus to studying at the University.

LEE: And I think also, one of our students, Malcolm, has been sort of returning to study. And his life's a little bit different now, from when he first studied, when he was a little bit younger. He's sort of finding that his life's a bit more fragmented. He's got commitments with family and friends. And he's wondering how to balance that study, and life, and work all at once, as well.

And I'm sure lots of our students sort of have their own tips, and hints, and advice for him, as well. And I'm sure you guys Student Association do, as well. So we're providing some hints and tips for him there. And also on our help centre, there's some information about how to support a student if you're family or a friend of a student, as well. And that's some really great tips they have, as well.

MYCHELLE: And, Karen, I put on here, in the chat room, about the app that converts text PDFs into voice PDF.

KAREN FOLEY: I want that.

MYCHELLE: And so there's a bit of interest around that, as well. So I don't know if anybody's had experience with it, wants to share it on the hot desk, but it's a great way-- if you're commuting, you don't have time. Because we talked about getting up at 5:30 in the morning, maybe, when the kids are asleep still. So they're just trying to figure out when can they fit their study in, how can they fit their study in.

KAREN FOLEY: Right, excellent. Well, I'm also pleased that you're all moved on from the hoodies, and that everyone's now buying bags. So there's bag envy going on, because some people have got

bags, and other people don't. So the shop's going crazy.

The way that people can connect though, with social media, can really throw up a lot of advice and tips. And we've been seeing a lot of ways of supporting students. Because everyone's got these really clever ways of fitting study in with life. And I guess that's the key benefit of being connected with the Students Association on Facebook, and Twitter, et cetera, is to get some of those ideas, and to be able to share and connect with others.

STEPHANIE: For example, with the timing for my study sessions, that was a tip from another student. Also, the way that I notated my first module-- I practically re-typed the module out, and I nearly coloured it in with highlighting, because I was afraid of missing something. And I got introduced to a note taking technique where I annotate on the books now-- which I never thought I would do, but I do now. And printed material, I annotate on.

To going to a new type of studying style. When I was on my way up yesterday-- I've started on new modules-- I had an iPad Pro. I don't know if I should say that. And a pencil, and I was annotating on the device. And I literally was doing what I would do at home, but I was doing it on a coach yesterday. And it was just a brilliant experience.

In between all the volunteering I do, my health issues, I am studying at the same time. And it is a balancing thing. And I think just having one person you can talk to, even if it's another student, makes that difference. And finding the balance is, find your study time, make yourself a little study area-- even if it is in your bed-- have your stuff next to you so you're ready. So when you get into your seated position, ready for study, you know you're in that sort of zone, and you're ready to move forward with it.

KAREN FOLEY: Now students are so supportive to each other. So, yeah, it's a great idea to reach out. And tutorials, of course, and forums are a good place to do that. And you've got lots of cafes. I mean, we've got whole sorts of ways that you can connect with the Students Association.

And those links will be coming through in the chat. There's the web site, there's Twitter, there's Instagram, there's Facebook, and there's a community group on Facebook. So lots of opportunity, depending on your social media needs.

Well, Stephanie and Cinnomen, thank you so much for coming along and telling us all about the Association, and how to connect. And inspiring a very shopping related discussion, which has got us off the topic of lunch.

OK, our next session is going to be another way of considering support, and this is all about the role of your tutor. Now we've had some students letting us know that they've heard from their tutor today. Let us know in the chat if you've heard from your tutor, if you're waiting to hear from your tutor, if you've been allocated your tutor.

Because our next session is a Q&A with Georgina and Matt, and we're going to be asking them all the things that you need to know about making the most of that very important relationship. We'll have a quick video in the meantime, and we're going to show you the Jennie Lee building. So I'll see you very soon.