

KAREN FOLEY: Good afternoon and welcome to The Student Hub Live. Well this is an induction for sports and fitness students, and we have a really exciting programme for you for the next couple of hours. Let me introduce you to the format and explain what's going to happen.

So today we're live streaming, which means that you can write comments in the chat. Now when you access the live stream, you'll see there's a little comments box on the right hand side of the screen. And you can click on that and then you can type your comments in the box. And then HJ is going to tell us what you're saying back at home as you're watching this live interactive event.

We have a range of guests coming to tell you all about studying at The Open University and what's special about sport and fitness. So today first of all, we're going to give you an overview of the qualification, and that be with Caroline Heaney and Ben Oakley. And then we're going to tell you about the blog and social media, because it's a great way to get involved with academics at The Open University and keep in touch with relevant events. Then we'll talk about the role of the tutor. Show you about one of the apps that's involved in E117. And then talk about student and tutor journeys and experiences. So there's lots of opportunity for you to ask questions, talk to each other as part of this event.

Now HJ's is going to be feeding back your comments into the studio, so I'd like to welcome you, HJ, this afternoon, and what would you like to tell students on this fine afternoon?

HJ: Oh, I'm just really excited to chat to everyone today. So if you have any thoughts, or comments, or questions on the sessions, we'd love to hear how you're getting on with your studies. We'd love to hear from you and our guests would as well, so anything goes in the chat. And people already talking about biscuits. I'm not sure our sports team approves of that, but we'll see.

But yeah, any thoughts, comments, and questions, pop them in the chat. Use the little speech bubble to the right. If you click on that, you'll get your chat box up. And you can just chat to us and connect with us on Twitter as well at Student Hub Live. And we've been tweeting OU Sport as well, and they've got a fantastic channel that we'll find more about later as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. While we were having our nice, healthy lunch today, I was talking to some of the guys in sport and fitness and I've asked them to come along to refresh this orientation and tell

us about sustenance and food for fuel. So they're going to give you some ideas other than biscuits to eat when you're doing your OU marathon TMA studying.

Right. Our first session is a overview of the qualification. Caroline Heaney and Ben Oakley, thank you for joining me today to tell students all about the qualification. So we wanted to give students an idea about what was in store, but we also wanted to ask them about how they felt about sport and fitness.

So could you tell us what your main interest is? Are you interested in sports or fitness? What sort of things do you like doing? Is it team sports? Is it running, swimming, cycling, et cetera? And also you can put in the chat which modules you're studying this year. So we've got E117, 113, et cetera. So if you know the module code or you might just like to say I'm studying a level 2 qualification in blah, then that is fine as well. And you might also want to tell us about your hopes and fears for this year as well, so we'd love to hear all of those three aspects as we have our discussion.

So what's unique then about the sport and fitness qualifications at The OU?

CAROLINE HEANEY: I think the thing that we think is really unique is we use lots of audiovisual materials to bring the modules to life. So we have lots of case study materials, which is a really useful way to help students learn. And we have lots of case studies, so we like to try and have a really applied focus in the way we teach the modules.

KAREN FOLEY: So what my students do when they're having one of these case studies? Are they profiles? How do they merge with the module materials?

CAROLINE HEANEY: And it depends on the module. We use them in different ways. But often it will be a case study so that you learn a little bit about theory. Then we'll have a real life case study so you can apply that to that particular case study. And we'll build up a whole character if you like. So you learn about the person's background, you see them doing their sport, and you build up their story.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's sort of about getting this individual perspective and thinking about how you might apply it, so that you can then take those scenarios to a real world setting?

BEN OAKLEY: Yeah, I can add a bit more though. We have a lot of fun building these. Because we watch the BBC. We think, that looks good. We need that. We will get that. So we're able to go to the BBC and say, we'd like this bit there, this bit there, as long as there's not Olympic Games that own

the rights or something. But we make and build stories around those case studies using certain material.

KAREN FOLEY: Why don't you tell us about this, because there's been a lot of programming that the school has been involved with. But tell students who don't know about the unique relationship with the BBC and how academics can be involved in programming. Because you're right, it does all feed into teaching.

BEN OAKLEY: It all goes back. What is it, 40 years ago The OU was set up based on watching TV in the middle of the night. Some of you may remember that. But obviously, as TV and the internet have sort of merged a bit, we've gone away from TV and gone towards online delivery. But we've still got a relationship with the BBC because we can go to them and we got a special agreement where we get their programmes a bit more reasonably priced than other people. You can only use so much as well.

And we also make programmes as you know with the BBC. We've made some Olympic programmes. We've made a great programme with Michael Johnson. What else have we done? We've done radio. So we pull this material to try and make the modules exciting using that material.

KAREN FOLEY: And this is really unique to The Open University. I mean, it happens in a lot of areas at The OU, but the way that you're including some of this in teaching is very relevant, as well as being able to apply some of the research that we're doing within the school to those programmes.

BEN OAKLEY: Yeah, and it's not just about sport. Remember, the course is partly about how your body responds to exercise. So there was a programme on last night, wasn't there? Called *The Human Body*.

KAREN FOLEY: There was. I missed it. I was here.

BEN OAKLEY: And it's an Open University programme as well. So we've got our eyes on that because we know in two or three years time we need to update a module and we're going to use some of that. So it's very exciting.

I'll just add one more thing to the unique part of The OU, which is you're often studying yourself. You're studying how your body responds to exercise. How it responds to nerves, and stress, and anxiety and these things. So we find people studying sport and exercise. They get very passionate about it because they end up understanding more about how their body works

and how their mind works.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. It's brilliant to be able to study on iPlayer, as well, as you're watching some of these programmes. But so much of it, as you say, does relate. And there's this whole learning journey as part of your studies and part of the things around you begin to make more sense.

BEN OAKLEY: Yes, it's deeply distracting because you'll be doing something and then you see-- well, I find it's distracting reading the paper-- the people don't read papers anymore, do they-- watching TV. And we're always thinking, oh, that applies to this. I'm always trying to make links. And hopefully some of our students will get into that kind of process.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, it is one of those things. I've had so many students say, studying has stopped me from reading a newspaper in the same way. Because all of the sudden, irrespective of the subject matter, you're starting to think a bit more critically. You're starting to think, where does this come from? What evidence is there supporting this? And really should biscuits be the main staple for OU students?

BEN OAKLEY: At Level 3 we have a module called Contemporary Issues in Sport and Exercise. And one of the titles is, can you really trust what journalists say? When you started studying and you start being a bit critical, where is the evidence for that? How can you say that based on this? So yes, it does make life a bit more-- what's the right word?

KAREN FOLEY: Interesting and integrate, I guess, I often think of it as being. Because you're right. You are shifting the way that you view things. But it's not only newspapers, and it's not only TV. Because you guys are using technology in a lot of different ways as well, which is really exciting and is something that is very unique to The OU. The way that we're including things like virtual reality.

We're going to look at some apps, social media. There are all these sorts of avenues of being able to communicate and disseminate information and inspire students, which can be amazing. But it can also be an opportunity to procrastinate and not do your studying.

BEN OAKLEY: We don't like procrastination. We like brevity.

KAREN FOLEY: Focus.

BEN OAKLEY: There's two other things I think are unique to us, which is different through other sport programmes. We did some research when we set up the programme eight or nine years ago.

We went out to talk to employers and we said, look, what do you want our students to do and what skills do they need? And they talked a little bit about sport science and about management and leadership, but the two things they really came back with, we want people to know about communication. They've got to know and understand interpersonal communication skills.

Now that's quite challenging to teach through the internet. But we've got some in the second module people do. They do delve into and explore communication and interpersonal skills. And another thing employees said to us, we want people to understand how they and other people are motivated. So it's about human motivation and understanding what drives people, what blocks people.

So understanding yourself and how other people are motivated to do things is another key thing. I can't remember what else they said, but those are the two things that stuck in my mind.

KAREN FOLEY: But it's very interdisciplinary, even though it is sport and fitness. That things like psychology as well as motivation that play a key part in what you're doing.

CAROLINE Absolutely.

HEANEY:

BEN OAKLEY: And about conveying enthusiasm and passion for what you do. The beauty is when you talk to sports students they all love what they're doing, but they're only passionate about one or two activities in particular. Or we do get all rounders. We get the PE teachers who want to do everything. But I think you got a clip of a trainee PE teacher later on, haven't you?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, no. Absolutely. Because leadership is one of the things that's very important, and like motivation is a difficult concept to teach. How do you go about enabling students to develop some of these softer skills?

CAROLINE Do you want to answer?

HEANEY:

BEN OAKLEY: I'll answer because I'm writing about that in a moment. So we make people aware of a concept. So say a word like empathy. Well, what does empathy mean? And then we illustrate it. We write a bit about it. And then we get people to look at some animations of what other people have said online. If you put the word empathy into Google, you'll get millions of results.

But we pinpoint and find the animations that we think work, and then we get people to apply it to some case study films.

I found a great case study film of Chris Hoy doing a 24 hour Le Mans race. Chris Hoy the cyclist. When he retired he went and drove a car, and he has some altercations during the 24 hour race as you can imagine as they're changing tyres. And so people watch these films like that and think, is there much empathy there? And that's how we bring it to life.

KAREN FOLEY: You're watching a lot of TV then? Caroline, can you tell us a little bit about some of the science aspect as well, because this is another thing that is perhaps more concrete. But nutrition plays a big part in a lot of this as do other aspects of science and biology.

CAROLINE HEANEY: I think the science bits are the bits that people tend to expect. And when you study sport, you think you're going to deal with the sport science stuff. So we do all the things you'd expect. The kind of three core disciplines in sport science. We do psychology, we do physiology, and we do a little bit of biomechanics.

And within that we look at things like nutrition. And obviously nutrition is a really important topic. And biscuits are OK, by the way.

KAREN FOLEY: In moderation.

CAROLINE HEANEY: In moderation. We're not [INAUDIBLE] the biscuits.

KAREN FOLEY: You should see how many [INAUDIBLE]. There's loads of them too.

CAROLINE HEANEY: There are better choices, but the old biscuit here and there is OK.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, good. Well, phew. HJ, what's going on in the hot desk?

HJ: We're just having a bit of chatter about what we do to get motivated when it comes to sport. So hopefully we'll get some good tips here, because some of us have been sitting down a long time today, and that is me included. But Natalie is interested in if there's anything in particular that you think would interest students or you find interesting about E117 and E113?

KAREN FOLEY: Oh what a broad question. OK, now let's rephrase that. What is the most exciting thing?

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

Well, on E117 obviously the most exciting thing is that augmented reality app, which you can have a demonstration of later. That's a brand new module for this year, so we got some really exciting features on there. We've got activity trackers. The students will be collecting their own activity data.

They'll be looking at data from other students. So it becomes really interactive, so you're not studying in isolation. You're integrating other students. Lots and lots of that's a really interesting feature of 117.

BEN OAKLEY:

Well, I'm going to talk about the stuff that I wrote because I know it really well.

KAREN FOLEY:

What have you seen on TV, Ben.

[LAUGHTER]

BEN OAKLEY:

On 117 I think you'll come across my topic in about week five or six. And we look at the globalisation of sport. How is sport and exercise and fitness gyms spread around the world? We tell a bit of a story and we get the students to think about how sport is spread. And then we get people to think about what the most popular sports in the world or in the country are and why that might be. And which sports are increasing in popularity. And which sports are decreasing.

And then later on in the module, I think in about week 17, something like that, I asked the question, is coaching an art or a science? Good question. Cunning question.

KAREN FOLEY:

What's the answer. I bet it's a bit complex.

BEN OAKLEY:

Yeah, and that's a challenge we have. Because most answers to most questions are quite complex and nuanced, but we have to try and simplify them. But we can't simplify them too much. So at Level 3, we learn the whole complex. But at this Level 1, we try to illustrate that it is more complicated than it might first seem. So I won't answer the question because that's for the students to do.

KAREN FOLEY:

Fair enough, fair enough. I want to talk a little bit later about how we teach in terms of the tutorials. But could we just since we're on the subject of the different levels talk a little bit about what happens at Level 1, 2, and 3, and the sorts of things that students can expect.

So could we start with then Level 1. So this is what we're talking about in terms of the E117

and 113. What are some of the key things that students are going to be really excited about- you've mentioned some of them already- in terms of their learning? And what sort of challenges might they be good to be aware of?

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

Level 1, we've got the two modules. We've got the first module that most students will be studying is E117. So that module is about giving you a really broad introduction to lots of different aspects of sport and fitness. So you look at the science stuff. You look at the management kind of stuff, and then you start to piece it all together.

And so I think what we're doing with that is we're building up that broad base of the knowledge that you need to have. And then when we move on to the second module, which is 113, which will become 119 next year for those that aren't studying it this year, we start to look at some of those soft skills that Ben was talking about. So those important skills like being able to communicate well, being able to motivate people, and all those kinds of thing.

BEN OAKLEY:

Working in teams and things like this. But it's not just about the knowledge. Doing a degree you think it's about the knowledge, but actually it's about the skills you get at the end. So by the end of Level 1 we want people to be able to write reasonably coherently and know how to reference different sources. And start to think about evidence and what's valid and what isn't.

So it's about writing skills and expressing yourself in a particular way, and being able to synthesise information into key points and things like that. So it's partly about the skills. And that's why your tutor is really important. I know you're going to talk about that, but the tutor's relationship with the student is about facilitating and helping them pass. It's much more of a discussion and a dialogue, particularly when it comes back there's far more feedback than at any other university I think you'll find.

KAREN FOLEY:

No, absolutely. Now the tutor marked assignment is a unique thing. And again, we've been talking this morning about how important it is to be able to reflect on that feedback and really learn from it. But I guess what you're saying is that at Level 1 there is a wide range of both skills and content that students are going to grapple with. And really it's about starting those basics of describing and starting to evaluate evidence and think about where it's coming from because at Level 2, things get a little bit more complex.

BEN OAKLEY:

Yeah, and also people forget that using Google, there's a skill to using- now I just keep on saying Google. There are other search engines available.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, absolutely. And yeah, there a skill to searching. And again, library are really, really good at the OU at helping students to gain some of those skills. So tell us what sorts of ways would students I guess enhance their learning through other media like Google, or other search engines, et cetera? What sort of advice would you give to students at Level 1 maybe?

BEN OAKLEY: Well I think in the module they're about to start 117. They do get some- I can't remember the framework we use. It's where they evaluate, they use Google.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, PROMPT, is it?

BEN OAKLEY: PROMPT. That's the one. I'm glad you remembered.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, I love PROMPT. I use it all the time. No, it's really good because you get this framework. If you haven't seen PROMPT, we'll put a link up to that. But we've got some great library sessions about how to use it. It's this framework and you look at the provenance, and relevance, and timeliness. I forget all of the words.

BEN OAKLEY: [INAUDIBLE] because I couldn't remember it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, no. I love it actually. Because you can just sort of sit down and go, OK, how do I evaluate this? Because is it good is a really big question. I'm much better going, when was it written, and does that really matter?

BEN OAKLEY: Yes, well, we've got all this fake, the word fake.

KAREN FOLEY: Indeed, fake news.

BEN OAKLEY: And not all that stuff. And does Wikipedia have a place? And that's debatable. And it's useful for some things, but not others. But I'm not going to go into all of that.

KAREN FOLEY: No, no, no, no, absolutely. OK, so it's good for students. They're going to learn a lot of things. They are going to be very excited at this initial stage. They might want to encase some of their learning. But fundamentally, we've talked about tutor marked assignments and about these case studies in the module material and about the assessment. What would you say to students who are very excited about being mindful of the way that they're assessed and about what they're using in their assignments? Should they be going off on these various search engines, or are they really going to need to rely on the module material and the case studies?

BEN OAKLEY: Caroline, would you like to before I jump in?

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

Give me a chance to think. I think at Level 1 students are provided lots of materials. You should be able to write a good assignment just using module materials alone, but it is also useful to have a look and see what resources there are out there. And as you said, the library stocks lots of useful resources in terms of journal articles and things like that.

But we do encourage our students to look at things in the media. So if you see something on Twitter, or if you see something in a newspaper, and you see a story. We want students to look at those things and we want them to start looking at them with a critical eye.

KAREN FOLEY:

Do you think television watching is OK then?

CAROLINE

It's OK within reason.

HEANEY:

KAREN FOLEY:

OK, so it's good to be mindful of these things. What are your students like who are studying sport and fitness? I can imagine that they're often very interested in applying a lot of this, either to their own lives or in their settings. Is it a very applied module in terms of the things that you can actually start doing with this?

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

We're very mindful that everything we teach our students is applied, because we want them to see the contextual and practical relevance of it. So we are very conscious at. But at the same time, lots of our modules aren't necessarily a licence to practise in that particular area. So for example, if you do our sports psychology module, it doesn't mean you can go out and be a sports psychologist afterwards.

It's all about keeping things very applied to the roles that people are working towards. Within our student body we've got really diverse group of students. But we've got those that are sports coaches and want to be sports coaches. We've got those that work in the fitness industry. We've got those that's been mentioned earlier that want to go into PE teaching. So we've got really diverse student groups, which is great because diverse student groups make for really interesting discussions on the forums. We're going to talk about work with the tutor, as well as work with your tutor, work with all the students is really important.

KAREN FOLEY:

Tell us then, do you study. I mean, I know a lot of you have backgrounds in sport and coaching and a various range of areas as well. How much of the content in the module applies to elite athletes, and how much can students learn from those elite athletes about what makes them unique?

CAROLINE HEANEY: Some of our work does cover elite athletes, but some of the work doesn't. Because we know in reality the jobs that kind of that top end, elite athletes, it's relatively few positions in those areas. So we concentrate on lower level sports performers and participants as well. So we want to prepare students for roles that they're actually going to do, and very few will go into work with elite athletes.

KAREN FOLEY: So tell us then what happens at Level 2, because this is, as I think I mentioned earlier, where things start getting a little bit more specialised from the broad Level 1 modules.

CAROLINE HEANEY: Yeah, the level steps up a little bit, obviously. In terms of the actual specifics of what we study, if students do ask all the fitness qualifications, is we start to specialise a little bit more. So we look at very specific areas. For example, we have a module on sport and exercise psychology. We have another module where students actually have to have Level 2 coaching of its instructions to have occurred. And I'm sure there's student watching that are preparing for that module later in the year.

And that was a really important thing when we put the modules together that we wanted to have a practical element, didn't we? So we thought we'd bring in--

BEN OAKLEY: We wanted people to exit the degree with a licence that was valid in the workplace. A lot of other courses don't have that. So people have to get this Level 2 certificate. They have to go out and get in either fitness or coaching. It's up to them what sport they use. But then they apply that learning. We lift it up to degree level in a particular module in Level 2.

The third module Level 2 is about sport and conditioning science into practise. It's called Sport and Conditioning Science Into Practise. Conditioning meaning conditioning and training the body. So we start getting into not the whole discipline of strength of conditioning, which is a profession in itself, but understanding things like cost ability and the different types of programme for different purposes. But it doesn't get too detailed. Otherwise we might lose some people. But we start getting into a bit more into the science, a bit more sport science.

KAREN FOLEY: And then what happens at Level 3?

BEN OAKLEY: Should I do that? Well, why don't you talk about the first module. I'll talk about the second one.

CAROLINE HEANEY: OK, so we've got two modules at Level 3. The first module is exploring psychological aspects of athletic development. Nearly forgot.

KAREN FOLEY: So much easier with the code, isn't it?

CAROLINE HEANEY: Yeah, I'm trying really hard not to talk in codes because that's what we always do. We talk in codes. So that module is our second sport and exercise psychology related module, but it's really thinking about how we develop athletes.

It looks at things like the coach-athlete relationship. It looks at things like the transitions an athlete will go through in different stages of their career. So starting a sport, retiring from the sport, and all the challenges that come from that. We look at quite specialist areas. So for example, we do something on depression in sport. So mental health is a really big area at the moment. So lots of interesting aspects, psychological aspects, that people need to be aware of and think about when they're developing an individual in their sport.

BEN OAKLEY: And one thing you didn't mention there is about when we talk about someone being talented in a sport, it also means they need to have psychological characteristics and tools. And we explore what those characteristics are.

KAREN FOLEY: Things like resilience.

BEN OAKLEY: Resilience. And what does that mean? People use resilience and mental toughness. What's that mean? How do you measure it? So we start getting into that a bit. We actually pick it up again partly in the second module, which is about contemporary issues, which is we had fun making that.

There was all sorts of issues on the table. We whittled it down to about 10 or 12 in the end. One of the things that we discussed there is about, does it pay to specialise in a particular sport? Is it best to be a generalist at a young age? I think you write about recovery, ice baths, and compression garments, and all that kind of thing. We talk about gender in sport. We talk about-- you can help me here.

CAROLINE HEANEY: We talk about homophobia in sports.

KAREN FOLEY: There's some really topical current issue there.

BEN OAKLEY: The concussion.

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

I think what's really good about that final module is students get to choose what they want to do. So their end of module assignment they get to choose what area they want to look at from this big choice. So it's a real chance to find something that really interests you. Something you really want to find out more about and really immerse yourself in.

BEN OAKLEY:

Explore the topic in detail and you start to use journal articles and the internet. And we ask people to contrast what the media is saying to what the evidence is saying. And sometimes there's a big mismatch, and sometimes it lines up. And that's an interesting thing to see.

KAREN FOLEY:

Excellent. Well, Caroline and Ben, you've given us a really, really comprehensive overview of the many issues that students are going to deal with. If it's OK with you, I'm going to say the other things that I know we want to cover like online learning and how that works, because we're discussing things with tutors later and you may well have questions as well that you'd like to ask. So if you are brand new to The OU, we will cover all of this in today's session. But do keep your questions coming on the chat desk and HJ will feed those in.

And we hope to cover everything in terms of online tutorials, how to contact your tutor, and how important that relationship is, and the various ways that your OU studying can be brought to life. But Caroline and Ben, thank you so much for that outline of what students can expect.

So we're going to show you a couple of very short videos now. We're going to look at Allen, who is an Olympic rower, and Alex, who is an Olympic hockey player. And then we're going to come back and give you a demonstration of the blog in social media with Karen and Helen to show you, again, how you can keep connected in your studies. See you in a minute.