

**KAREN FOLEY:** Welcome back to the Student Hub Live. In this session, we talk about supporting you in your studies. We just had a fantastic conversation about food.

I've just had a snack of a banana, and a cereal bar, and a coffee. So that's me set up. What's everyone doing at home, HJ?

**HJ:** We've really enjoyed that session, got loads of great suggestions. And Vanessa's deciding she's going to walk two hours a day to work and back. So we'd love to know how that goes on. I can't walk two minutes, to be honest.

But Michelle's good to have a look at a timetable. And she's got a park beside her house. So she's planning quick walks, which sounds really good.

And a lot of people are quite confused about the video we showed, *The Rave in the Library*. They're wondering if we need to see a psychiatrist. They're just a bit confused about what happened there. But I suppose silent raves are a way of getting active and some exercise, aren't there?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah, absolutely. I guess you sort of had to be there. But we had loads of the librarians coming along and talking to everyone. And actually, it was the audience at home who says, oh, you should go and have a rave in the library, because they kept going, shh, there's no sound in the library.

So we did. But we had to have a silent rave, so as not to contravene any of the health and safety stuff. Anyway, it was great fun.

All right, so our next session is all about supporting you in your studies. I have Karen and Lee joining me today from our student support team. Now, some people are really, really excited about their studies.

Some people are a little bit nervous. Some people haven't had their tutor. Some people haven't had their material.

Some people don't know what's going on. Other people have already spoken to their tutor, got their study calendar, booked all their tutorials, and are all set to go. So people are in various sort of different states of preparedness with their studies.

But it's before module start date. So what do they need to know right now? What should students be doing?

**KAREN KLISKEY:** I think actually, at this current moment in time, I've just been talking to Lee, who's also a student. And actually, he's been quite excited. He's just heard from his tutor.

So that's good. It's still before module start date. If there's any apprehensions at all, give us a call. We're Student Support Team. We're to help you before you start and during. So you will receive your materials. So it will be all there for you. But any problems, or anything you're not sure of, give us a call.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I e-mailed my students, who I only got the other day. And I said, come to the Student Help Line. We'll answer all your questions. So I hope some of them are here today. What happened when you spoke to your tutor, then, Lee?

**LEE:** Oh, it's fantastic experience. I got email, first of all. And he introduced himself, and told me quite a bit about himself.

And just reading that email made me feel reassured I was in expert hands. And we've got a phone call scheduled for later this week, as well. And we've got a tutorial together next week. So it's moving pretty quickly.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Wow, what are you studying?

**LEE:** W101, Introduction to Law.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. So you spoke to your tutor. He told you about himself. What did you say about yourself?

**LEE:** Yes, so I replied. And I just said how much I was looking forward to starting the module, how I had some interest in the area. And so, yeah, we kind of got together, and know a bit more about each other. So already, there's a foundation of a tutor-student relationship forming there.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Now, many students may not know that their tutor is allocated to a group of students. So often, there's between 1 and 20 students in terms of a ratio. So you can get to know your tutor quite well, if, indeed, you want to.

But equally, you don't have to if you don't want to. So some students are perfectly happy not engaged with anything as they go through. But a lot of students appreciate support, but maybe don't know what is available, and what to get.

So the tutor is ideal for academic queries, anything about the module, and is definitely someone you need to be good friends with, in the sort of academic sense. But the Student Support Team offer a lot of support that people often don't know about. And you can really help students have that space and time to do more than just panic about their studies when they're going wrong.

You often give them advice about time management. You can help with additional requirements. So there's all sorts of things that you can do in a proactive and positive way. Tell us about some of the things that are on offer.

**KAREN KLISKEY:** Well, quite often with students ringing, and for some of them-- this is they're brand-new students-- might not be familiar with using the Student Home, may be frightened that they might do something wrong. So as supporting them, we can help them with that, talk them through. And often, I find quite useful for some students-- as I'm sure Lee has, as well-- is if they're on the other end of the phone, and they're able to access it at the same time, we can help them navigate it.

And I think for somebody brand-new, navigating around New Student Home page, and not being afraid to have a go and use it. There's also a Help Centre on there as well. So there's lots of support.

But anything-- if you're not sure, if you are anxious about anything, give us a chat. Give us a call. We can sit and talk through with you.

You're absolutely right, Karen, that the tutor's the great one there for the first port of call with any academic queries, and they're to help you to teach you about the modules, what's going on. For anything else at all, they can call the Student Support Team. We want to make it as easy for them as possible-- something they're looking forward to and not anxious about. So we want to put them at ease, and so that they're quite prepared and ready to move forward.

**LEE:** Absolutely. And I could just echo that, really. I was speaking to a student yesterday who was waiting to get access to their module websites. And module websites are now, broadly speaking, all open.

But the student hadn't realised, because she hadn't used computers for a long time to study, that she was a bit too scared to click on bits and pieces on Student Home, but was amazed, once I'd spent some time with her, navigating Student Home, that the material was all there, and just really sort of to have some time with the student to persuade them whatever they clicked, it wasn't going to break anything. And again, like Karen said, taking the time out to sort of navigate with a student over the phone with us at the other end, but letting them do the sort of clicking around and exploring, really was beneficial.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Because we've got a lot of improvements made in our virtual learning environments. And they're really, really intuitive if you know what you're doing. But if you don't, they can be a bit confusing.

And for some students who haven't studied in a long time, they might be thinking, when are my materials arriving? And they might be doing a module that is entirely online, and everything is nicely filed in the weeks of study. So it's a really important idea to figure out what is actually there, as well.

**LEE:** Absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Libby says, hello. Hello, Libby. Sorry I didn't email you back, by the way. I was locked out of my computer, but I'm back in now. So that's good.

Now, Jane says, how long should she wait until her tutor makes contact? I know that things have been sort of quite busy lately, sort of allocating students and tutors. And then some students-- I've see my list as well, changing, as people sort of-- so how long should Jane wait before she gets in touch with her tutor?

**KAREN KLISKEY:** If she's already got information who her tutor is, she could, by all means, be proactive, if she's got those details. Text or give her a call. But for a lot of students at the minute, we've been dealing with a lot of students who have a late registration for one reason or another. So for those students, sometimes there may be a bit of delay in getting them allocated to a tutor.

So I wouldn't worry. They're registered on the modules. They will get a tutor. They will be in contact.

But again, any concerns, we can be that intermediary, if you like, while they're waiting to hear. But by all means, they can give them a call or email their tutor if they do have that information.

But they might not have yet heard from them.

They probably got an increasing class size, as you're saying, that there could be a few. So don't worry. They will be in touch.

**KAREN FOLEY:** HJ, I know there's lots of questions.

**HJ:** Yes. One of the main questions is, why would you bring an iron into a rave? What happened there.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, that was a long story. I actually had the iron as part of a chemistry experiment we were doing something with. I was busy with that. I had it in my handbag, actually. So that's why I took it to a rave. Normally, I don't. I normally would just take a handbag.

**HJ:** So will we need it for our chemistry experiment later? Should I keep a hold of that?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yes, please do.

**HJ:** OK. But it's great to see some of the experiences with tutors and Student Support Team, as well. So Natalie's been emailing Student Support Team lots of questions. She said, it's just so valuable before starting to get set up.

And Michelle is extremely busy. She's doing two modules, starts on Saturday. And she's at a wedding.

So there's lots of advice coming through about how to change a timetable and structure. And Student Support Team-- you can call them up about all sorts of things. So I asked about my timetable, as well, and [INAUDIBLE] and some careers advice. And they're all fantastic.

And Mary did an Access course, and spoke to a tutor by telephone. And she's really looking forward to a face-to-face talk to her tutor, because she thought that was an excellent experience. Just great to hear that from everyone.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, brilliant. Thank you. So some students like calling. Some students like emailing, and actually [INAUDIBLE] call. But we asked our audience what they thought in terms of how they might like to contact their Student Support Team.

And 68% said by email. 32% said by phone. Is email a lot more popular these days, or does it just feel a bit more formal, and, I guess, appropriate?

**KAREN KLISKEY:** I think it depends on each individual student's circumstances, whether whatever suits them best. But recently, I think in the last-- this year, for sure, our opening times have increased. So we are open to support students on the phone from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm.

It used to be 5:00, but we are up until 8:00 pm. And also, we're open on Saturdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. So if anybody did want to give us a call, and maybe worked during the week, but it's about time, or they're sitting down in the evening after work, and think, actually, I really could do with some support, they can always email in.

Obviously, if they call in, there is always somebody there. So I guess for a lot of people, you were saying about the high percentage emailing in, maybe that's what suits their lifestyle. That's what they prefer to do. They can contact however they prefer to.

But we are there. We are there to listen to them. We are there to support the students.

And I think it's important for students to not be afraid. There's no such thing as a silly question. We're there to listen and help support them with their studies.

**KAREN FOLEY:** There are different sorts of things you can do on email and phone. I mean, email's really good if you've got a very specific question. If you want to know something, or if you want to request something, email is perfect, because you can just sort of fire that off, and then go to work, or do whatever you're doing, and then sort of let it sit.

But for some things, like students who've got two modules, and maybe having a sort of difficulty with study intensity-- maybe they've realised that all the assignments are due on exactly the same week for both modules-- there's all sorts of help and advice that you can give them that is very beneficial to sort of talk through on the phone, if you're able to. But I think sometimes, students don't realise that they can have the space just for themselves to actually think, how can I actually work this out? And how can I negotiate this?

And I spent quite a lot of time in your office listening to some of these phone conversations that people have. They're very friendly and really helpful. And if nothing else, they're giving somebody a space to jointly negotiate what might work for that individual student.

**KAREN KLISKEY:** Absolutely. And some re-assurance-- as you said, for a lot of students, if they're doing more than one module, that can be quite timely. So I think it is important that, before they start, that they have some kind of routine about when they're going to study, and to try and keep on top

of that.

But as we all know, life events can happen. Sometimes things can go a bit off track, or something can crop up. And rather than stroke them through, call the Student Support Team.

We're there to listen, to help, support, advise, and guide people through. And that can be from early on, and all throughout the whole of their studies. I mean, we want them to succeed as much as they do.

And it's important that they do feel if they want to, they can call us at any time. But there is the email, of course, as you said. And we always respond to those, but again, that's not immediate.

**KAREN FOLEY:** How long would it take?

**KAREN KLISKEY:** We've got two working days. We'll respond to an email in the first instance. Often, it might be appropriate to call the student. But then, obviously, if they're at work, it might be leaving a voice message. But then we'll always follow up with an email, and always invite them to call in.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So one option might be if they wanted to email, and they wanted to have a phone call, they could say, this is my problem. I'm having x, y, and z. Can we talk?

**KAREN KLISKEY:** Absolutely. And we always encourage that. Sometimes it is important to speak to students to give them that reassurance. And if it's a time thing, they're at work, if they let us know a suitable time, we can always forward plan and arrange someone to give them a call at the time that suits them, provided that's in those working hours.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. OK. Now, other things that you do in addition to helping manage time and space, and reshift focus, is dealing with additional requirements and do you liaise for many students with other areas of the university. So I've had some students who might have disabilities of various kinds, might need extra support in a variety of ways, maybe from their tutor. Maybe it's a home exam. Maybe it's special materials.

There are various ways that you can support students with that. And you sort of connect all of these areas of the university for the students, so that you can really support them. Can you tell us a little bit about that side of things?

**KAREN KLISKEY:** Yeah. Absolutely. We do have students that experience disabilities. They might not necessarily

see it as that. And they may be short term or long term.

If somebody has had an accident, and physically, they're unable for a while, we have lots of students that suffer, sometimes for a period of time, maybe with some mental health problems, anxiety, might not necessarily like to share that. But what they can do is, on the Student Home page, the student can access through the Help Centre. There's a Disability Support Form. They can submit that.

And what that will do is kind of open a door for our Disability Support team to contact them. And they will contact them, have a conversation with them about how their condition-- whether it's short term or long term-- may impact on them for a period of time, or that what they're worried about might be impacting on their studies. And they can look at all sorts of ways that might be able to help support students.

And we'll often act as advocates to be able to liaise with these people for the student, if they don't feel initially comfortable to do that, and then get feedback to them. There's lots of support there. And it doesn't matter how big or how small is the problem they might see themselves. Nothing's too much trouble. And I've just been supporting a great bunch of people, actually [INAUDIBLE].

**LEE:** Indeed.

**KAREN KLISKEY:** Really great.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And we're going to be showing you a video that we did with some of the team a little bit later in today's programme as a replay. And we have a session this evening about the Disabled Students Group, and how they can support you in a peer-to-peer way as well through your studies. HJ, are there any questions we need to ask our panel?

**HJ:** Yes. We've got quite a few great ones. So people are just saying as well that they prefer email because it's easy to do from work. And sometimes, you can put down what you're thinking if you struggle. Like me, I mix my words up all the time. But Rick's asking, do you have a Live Chat like the library?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, comparing services now.

**LEE:** We don't currently offer a live chat. It is something that's being reviewed. And we do keep that under constant review.



For us in the Student Support Team, some of our issues are very complex. And so live chat isn't always necessarily an appropriate way to handle that, when a phone call might be more appropriate. So at the moment, no is the answer.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Do you have raves like the library do?

**LEE:** We--

**KAREN KLISKEY:** We could plan it, couldn't we?

**LEE:** We could plan it.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah, we'd be up for that.

**KAREN KLISKEY:** We like your lot up there!

**LEE:** Absolutely.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Now, you two are part of Student Support Team specifically supporting The Open University Business School and The Open University Law School. So we have different student support teams, depending on what students are studying. So they might go to their appropriate Student Support Team, which is why there's not a generic number.

Students would find the details on their Student Home page. So for example, some students doing the Open Programme might connect with a range of different options throughout the whole university. But tell us, then, what's specific about your area, in terms of the law and the business schools? You've got some new things in terms of your online web pages and--

**KAREN KLISKEY:** We have. We've got the law home and the business home, which are new websites, which are easily accessible for students. There's lots of material in there for them to have a look at, lots of different tabs for them to have a look at, the forums and quite a lot in there.

**LEE:** There's loads. There's been a complete revamp this year, particularly for law, but also for business, as well. And just the way things look and feel has had a complete refresh, really, hasn't it?

**KAREN KLISKEY:** It has.

**LEE:** And we've added lots of more up-to-date, relevant content on there as well.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Well, thank you very, very much for telling students all about the ways that they can connect with you. Jane suspects that the Student Support Services are going to have a rave later. We don't know about that.

And Natalie [INAUDIBLE] says that she will take a Hoover, not an iron, which I think is a really good idea to clean up, although we didn't make a huge amount of mess in the library. So yes, from fake news to library raves, et cetera, thank you for all your comments in the chat. And thank you both for coming and telling us about the Student Support Team.

Let's check out the Student Support Team. This is a video that we made a little bit earlier, talking to some of the team. So here you'll meet some of the friendly faces, and see where they all sit.

We'll be back for some creative uses of stationery in your studies. So again, bring those tips and ideas through. And we will be joining Liz [INAUDIBLE] to talk about all of that in just a little while. See you then.