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KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to the Student Hub Live Induction Event for Sport and Fitness. We've had a really interesting hour and a half. And this is the last half an hour. So now is your chance to ask any questions. I'm joined by Jessica Pinchbeck and Caroline Heaney. And we're going to be talking about the student perspective.

So anything that we haven't covered that you want to know about? We know that a lot of you out there are doing a variety of exciting sport and fitness things in your spare time, like sports coaching and swimming, et cetera. So there's lots of stuff going on. You're studying at various levels. We've heard a lot of you are just beginning your studies with The Open University. And some of you are partway through.

So now is the time to ask questions that we haven't covered and let us know your thoughts and hopes and possibly fears, if they've come into play yet for this next academic year ahead.

So we wanted to focus really on the student perspective. We've heard about things from the tutor perspective, where we covered the importance of going to tutorials, about connecting with tutors. Some students are following their tutors on Twitter already. [LAUGHS]

Hopefully, they've all connected with your blog. But your students are quite distinct, because a lot of them are doing stuff, as well as studying. I mean, most students are doing stuff, as well as studying. But your lot are very, very active with their Fitbits on and their various interesting qualifications.

Now all of that diversity feeds into a wealth of experience that will hopefully come into play in the tutor group forums and the connections that people make with each other. But why is the student perspective important to bear in mind right now? What would you tell students about how they can position themselves within the setting, within their tutor group, within the whole OU community in terms of making their studies as successful as they possibly can be?

JESSICA PINCHBECK: Well, one thing that we try to do, Karen, with our module materials is to allow students to apply it to their own experiences. So many of our students, as you say, are either working in sport and fitness, or they're working as personal trainers, sports coaches, or working in primary schools or secondary schools.

And even if they're not working in sport and fitness, often they're participating in some form of sport and fitness themselves. So they're doing the modules to improve their own personal knowledge and how they can improve their own performance.

So one thing that we do within the modules is we ask students to apply what they're learning to things that they have experienced, their own coaching, and their own clients. So if students are working or have knowledge of a sport and fitness setting, it's really beneficial. And hopefully, they'll be able to, as you say, bring that into their studies and be able to apply that as they work through the qualifications.

CAROLINE

Yeah. I think that's really important, that we've got such diversity within our student groups.

HEANEY:

And I think drawing on that diversity and the tutor group forums become a really rich place for sharing experiences.

KAREN FOLEY:

We talked earlier about some of the various disciplines that are coming into play here, and things like science, psychology, and motivation, and all these sorts of things. And also, this idea that sometimes we will focus on elite athletes, and sometimes we are focusing on non-elite athletes.

Students are approaching this from a variety of perspectives. And I know that if I was a student, maybe without that experience of elite athletes, which as you pointed out, is very few and far between, how would you say students should go about this whole idea of levelling? Especially if they've got this app on them and they're measuring their performance against other students?

What's important to bear in mind in terms of valuing one's own diversity as a student, as you progress? And how important it is to share things that maybe didn't seem so important to you at the time.

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

I think everybody's on their own individual learning journey. I think that's the first thing to think about. And you might not think that because you speak to someone in your group that's working with really interesting elite athletes. You might think that their experience is more important than yours. But actually, your experience with different types of people can be really interesting. And you can learn a lot from each other.

So I think it's valuing any experience you've got as a practitioner, with different population groups, whether it's your own experience of-- you may have no coaching or any type of

experience like that at all. But you may have experience of doing sports. So you might be able to draw on your experience of being coached or being in a gym, and those sorts of things, I think.

KAREN FOLEY: And we often encourage students to pick up on transferable skills, things that they may not have identified. Like often, your time management tasks, being a busy mother, and being able to provide a nutritious lunch in less than five minutes with an empty cupboard, all of those skills are things that can really come into play when you may be looking at a blog that's about nutrition or about sustenance.

There are so many things that students will have experience of in ways that maybe they didn't expect. How can they take some of that experience and start applying it?

JESSICA PINCHBECK: Yeah, I think motivation is a key factor. And one of the things that we do is we have a sports psychologist that tutors on one of our modules. And he holds sessions on how you can apply those principles to your study. So boosting your motivation for academic study, as well as using that for sport and fitness goals as well. So there's a lot of crossover about what you can apply between your studies and about being prepared for sport and fitness as well.

KAREN FOLEY: So your students are going to know what to eat when they're studying, how often they're moving, compared to the rest of the whole cohort, and maybe about motivation. It's a really, really key thing. But I guess it's so much more broad than just sport and fitness.

What are some of the ways that you'd recommend students can stay and keep motivated and maybe stop being motivated? This was something we started talking about much earlier today, as we started the programme, about starting to feel motivated. What can we learn from what you know that students can start applying right now?

JESSICA PINCHBECK: I think for me, experience of talking to OU students, is that sometimes distance learning can feel quite isolating. A lot of our students are used to being part of sports teams and clubs and people interaction.

So sometimes when you start to study with the OU, it can feel a little bit isolated. So that's why we have the blog. We have the Twitter feeds and the tutor forums. And it's all about really making that online community of learning and getting to know your peers, getting to know your tutors, and us as an academic team as well, really building that community of learning so that you can draw upon each other's motivations as well. And maybe things and subjects that a

specific student isn't as strong at, they can talk to other students and get some motivation and ideas from them as well.

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

And I think we're already seeing on our Welcome Forum that's been open for a couple of weeks now, we're seeing students supporting each other. So your busy mother you spoke about earlier, we're seeing people with those stories and people coming in with their own journey into coming to the OU. And I think there's real value in that people supporting each other and not having those feelings of isolation.

KAREN FOLEY:

Now how important- I mean, I know you've got the app that will collate a lot of information. And community is a really important thing in terms of your blog and your social media. But can you tell us a bit about why that matters and why students tend to do better when they connect with others? What is it that other students add?

CAROLINE

HEANEY:

I think it's just a different perspective, because sometimes it's very easy just to see things from your own perspective. And what we're about- university level study is. About broadening your mind, looking at things in a critical way. And if I have one very blinkered perspective on something, if I were in a forum and I talked to both of you about it, and you've got a different perspective, that helps me to see things differently. It makes me think a little bit. And it helps me learn and grow.

JESSICA

PINCHBECK:

I think it's the same as when we're actually producing the module materials. We work in a team to produce the module materials. And we all come from very different backgrounds. So Caroline's from a sport psychology background. I'm from a more educational background.

So when we're discussing, actually, what's going in the module, that makes sure that there is a real balance so we're not too sports coaching heavy or too fitness heavy. And I think it's the same for the students that, actually, like Caroline says, they can get a real diversity and knowledge of different contexts and, hopefully, bring that all together.

KAREN FOLEY:

So it's all about this balance. And whilst I can imagine that a lot of your students are motivated and will be good at their time management and very focused, life can sometimes get in the way of studies. And I wanted to talk about how this might happen for students.

Although they're very, very excited right now, what tends to happen in terms of the student journey? Can you give us some ideas about how things can happen, both maybe in terms of really successful study experiences and some way maybe students have overcome certain

hurdles that life's thrown in the way to get support from their tutors and keep going with their studies.

**JESSICA
PINCHBECK:**

Yeah, well, I'm actually an OU student myself. So I'm currently studying my PhD here with the OU. So I'm working full-time. I've got two children, running a household. So I think empathy is the key thing. And Caroline studied at the OU as well. So we all have experience of being a student. And we know how demanding it is.

So my advice would be just to have that really good working relationship with your tutor. And be able to realise when things are tough, when you might need a bit of extra time. And just make sure you shout for help when it's needed. I think that's the most important message that I could send to OU students.

**CAROLINE
HEANEY:**

And I think it's not being worried if sometimes things are difficult. It's not going to be a perfect journey. Probably most students are going to have little setbacks along the way and have busy periods. And that's normal. And that's part of studying.

And as Jess said, you contact your tutor if you have any particular issues. There's loads of support out there. So if people need help, talk to your tutor. Talk to the Student Support team. And there is help out there. And there's always a way of getting around difficult periods.

KAREN FOLEY:

Because it's this thing of motivation, isn't it? Often students have a goal in mind. And they're wanting to do something for a reason. And often, that's really well-thought through. They really want to achieve this.

And I was looking at the OU Facebook page the other day, because we've had the graduations recently. And you see some of these student journeys and the challenges and hurdles that people have overcome, how much that degree really, really means to those students. And sometimes holding that when the going gets tough can really, really help you think about how to jump over the hurdles to get there.

**CAROLINE
HEANEY:**

And I think something that's really nice for students to have a look at is, on our blog, we've got a load of student stories. So if you go onto our blog, and down the right-hand side, there's a list of categories. There's one called Student Stories. And we've got stories from loads of our students, all different backgrounds and what they've achieved and little hurdles they've had along the way, little tips for other students. They're really well worth the read.

JESSICA

I think when you're talking about motivation and you talk about goals as well, it's about

PINCHBECK: sometimes you have to readjust those goals. So not necessarily the end goal, but the small steps that you take along the way. So it might be that you need to talk to your tutor and change the timescale of some of the things or change a particular goal that you have.

And I think that's what Caroline is saying about the support that's out there is that we can sit down. We can talk to people and maybe readjust those goals so that they can achieve their long-term goals in the future.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. I'd like to take a quick trip over to HJ, because I'm very sorry, HJ. We've been covering so much content here. [LAUGHS] But I did offer students the chance to ask any questions at the beginning of this session. I know you've been talking about a lot of other things as well. But is there anything that we haven't covered that we need to address right now?

HJ: I think most of us are excited to have our tutors allocated and getting ready to study. And we're talking about our top tips as well. So Sarah had a great tip about using the chance for the module starts to have a look around at the website, have a play with things, see where everything is.

But a lot of people have been sharing tips, as I said. And it would be interesting, because we're talking about it today and yesterday, about what your most nutritious or recommended study snack would be.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: I'm very, very sorry, you two.

[LAUGHTER]

However, you are the experts. And I'm really pleased you're going to come onto our-- well, not you too, but Ben is going to come onto our Refreshers re-orientation weekend and talk to us about food. It is really, really important. And I'm sure that many students need this brain food to focus. And you've told me that my Brazil nuts are a really good idea, and my teacup, and also cereal bars, and things like that.

But what sort of things do students learn about energy levels, glycemic indexes, and things that can keep them on track with their studies? Is there an answer for our students who are very hungry, who need--

[LAUGHTER]

--to write a TMA at the last minute?

CAROLINE In terms of what students learn about nutrition, it's a really popular subject with our student.s

HEANEY: It's one of the ones that students really engage with the most.

KAREN FOLEY: I can see why. [LAUGHS]

CAROLINE We've got a study topic in E117 that is specifically nutrition. And we revisit nutrition again at

HEANEY: later stages in the qualification.

In terms of snacks that are going to make you study better, I'm a psychologist. I'm probably not the best person to ask. But fruit is good. I always have a banana on my desk when I'm working at home. Sometimes I have the old biscuit or something naughty. But in moderation, that's OK.

JESSICA I think I'm a grazer as well. So anything that I can constantly be eating as I'm typing as well. So
PINCHBECK: a bowl of nuts, anything like that, yeah, so just to sustain those energy levels.

CAROLINE It's a running joke that we're quite food-oriented in the sport and fitness time.

HEANEY:

KAREN FOLEY: I'm TV-oriented as well. As HJ found out earlier with Ben and his various programmes and things. But it is important to keep motivated. And sometimes food can act as a reward. Food, I mean, is a very emotive topic. And again, it's interesting to take that aside from things, to think about motivation and things, and actually think about food as fuel.

CAROLINE Yeah, in all seriousness, people, when they sit down to do a lot of work, they tend to sit there
HEANEY: for hours on end, and not eat. And that's not a sensible thing to do. You should be eating food.

JESSICA And as well as eating, it's also making sure that you're active as well. So like you say, we're
PINCHBECK: guilty of it as well. If we sat there working, sat at our computers, it's getting up and getting active. And actually, that helps your productivity.

So if you're there and you're working on an assignment all day, at lunchtime, get up. Go out for a run. Go to the gym. Just have a little bit of downtime. And then when you come back to it, you'll find that you've got the oxygen moving. And you'll crack on with it a little bit more.

KAREN FOLEY: It's all about, I think, caring about yourself. And the way that we do that with exercise, with food, and the way that we view our study as important really, really matters. So tell us, with these students who are often studying in the margins, trying to get things done in a busy schedule, what would you say to students about caring for themselves and carving out time and space for their studies? Maybe recognising how important this is and being able to communicate that with people, which can be really, really challenging.

**JESSICA
PINCHBECK:** Something that I used to do with students in my tutor group is we would have a weekly timetable full of all different slots. And they would plan on the timetable what they have on a weekly basis. And then they would look at the gaps that they've got free. And they would look at where the study would fit into those gaps.

And just having that weekly planner of things that they do regularly and trying to stick to those time slots actually helped develop a retain so that there was time for study. But there was also time for play, time with the family, and just to build that into a weekly schedule. I mean, things do change. And you have to be a bit flexible. But if you have that as a starting point, it can help.

KAREN FOLEY: So if we're having to give up certain thing to fit some of the study in and eat more biscuits and things- because it's a balancing act, isn't it?-- what would you recommend students do in terms of being able to reprioritise?

Is it a sensible thing to actually look at this and say, OK, if the studying has to come and then something has to go out, maybe that was my Friday night drink at the pub. Or there is a sense of having to reallocate time and also think about getting those basic needs met, like being able to have family time and nourishment of various kinds. How do students try and balance those various things to get what they want at the end?

**CAROLINE
HEANEY:** I think they draw on those transferable skills that you spoke about earlier. Most of our students come to us having had very busy lifestyles already. And they've been used to juggling lots of different things. So it's just learning to transfer those skills that you've developed and juggle something else.

And, as you say, sometimes things do have to change. And you may have to give up that Friday night drinking. But it's about thinking about the goal that you're trying to achieve. And how important is it that you go out on that Friday night? And you might think it is important.

You might think that Friday night is really important for your mental health so you get a chance to relax and unwind. And that may be really important.

So it's a hard question to answer, because I think it will be different for everybody, what's--

KAREN FOLEY: It's about understanding, I think, what makes you individual and what- I mean, I know for me, if I don't go out for a little run or something, I don't often get the headspace. So sometimes my husband will say, you're really busy. Why are you going out for a run? And it's like, because I need to, because otherwise, I can't sort of think. And everyone's got those things. And I guess, as part of being an OU student, you start to figure out what actually is worth the investment.

**JESSICA
PINCHBECK:** And I think there are certain things that you can't control. If you're a mom or a dad, and your children need your time and attention at certain points, then that obviously comes first. And I think we all have families. And we understand that.

So again, it's just about that contact with the tutor. Look, I've got this situation. Can you help me? Strategic study, what's the most important thing? If I've got two hours this week, what's the most important thing that I do? And it's about having those conversations with other students and tutors and like you say, prioritising.

**CAROLINE
HEANEY:** And I think one thing a lot of our students do is make use of opportunity. So lots our students study on the move. So if you've got a train journey to work, and you've got your phone with you, you can download your module materials onto your phone. And you can be looking at stuff while you're travelling. So you're not wasting that time that you might be sitting on the train.

And I speak to loads of students that do that. They grab those opportunities. So they're on their way to a training session, and they'll be reading a journal article. And so it's making use of those small opportunities. And if you have lots of those during the week that can actually add up to a large study time.

**JESSICA
PINCHBECK:** I always study while my kids are in swimming lessons. I know that's an hour where they're both in the pool. And I've got an hour uninterrupted.

[LAUGHS]

But it's little things like that, that if you can build those into your routine, just even if it's a pocket of half an hour or an hour where you know that you're going to be uninterrupted, it's quite

useful.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Now I'm going to ask you to end by telling us, apart from the things you've shown us today, which were the app. We've looked at social media. We've looked at the blog and Twitter. So we've done some really, really fun things. I want you to both think about something that you think students will find really, really exciting at any level. So you can pick one thing.

But before I ask you for that, I'm going to go to HJ just to get any final thoughts from the Hot Desk and also to thank you for chatting to everyone, HJ, this afternoon.

HJ: We've had a lot of great chats with everyone today. We've been sharing lots of great resources. So if you go on our main website, studenthublive.open.ac.uk- I remembered it--

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

HJ: --you'll see all the resources related to this event. And a lot of us are going to be downloading the E117 app and seeing if we can get from a flatline to a bit more active, maybe some encouragement there.

But Davin also shared the Skills to OU study pages as well. So we can have a little look at them before we start study. But yeah, it's great seeing all your advice and knowing that you're ready to start off and excited for tutors. And hopefully, we'll catch you soon if you're not attending this afternoon's sessions. And we'll love to hear how you're getting on.

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you very much, HJ. And thank you for all your contributions in the chat also. OK, so have you thought about something that is really, really exciting that students might learn about this year?

**JESSICA
PINCHBECK:** I'm going to be very biased, and I'm going to say, because I'm the chair of E117, I love the fact, and I've been monitoring the Welcome Forum, where the students are brand new to the OU and as they get their first module. And students get really excited when they receive their module materials.

So I think getting that package through the post with everything in there and logging on and just getting started and just seeing what the OU is about. And can absolutely vouch from hearing the students say that they're looking forward to the module. And they're looking forward to starting their studies. So I think that just initial signing up, becoming part of the OU sport and fitness community, really, is the biggest buzz, I think, that our students will get.

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you.

CAROLINE HEANEY: Mine is a little bit similar to that, I'm afraid, but mine is that first TMA, when they've got that first bit of work in, and they've got something back. I think that's the point where it really feels like they're a student. They've done a bit of work and they've got something tangible to show for it.

KAREN FOLEY: No, those are brilliant. I had a text today saying, yo, you'll have delivered your OU package.

[LAUGHTER]

Oh, I can't wait to get home. That's so exciting. There's nothing like receiving a book. But equally, there's nothing as exciting as going online and starting to get to grips with that space and finding the library and finding your online rooms and all these sorts of ways of connecting with other people as well.

JESSICA PINCHBECK: We probably should've said Student Hub Live as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, you probably should have. [LAUGHS] Right. OK. Well, we're getting them back next week to tell you about food and what we can learn about nutrition in our studies.

But thank you so much, you guys, for coming along, and for the other people who've come and contributed to this session. We've had Ben Okie, Helen Alton, Ola Fadu, and Ben Langdon as well. So it's been a really great two hours.

We're going to show you a quick video about the cella bar. But if you'd like to join us for some more conversation this afternoon, then you can come back for our next session, which is on childhood and youth in about 5 to 10 minutes.

Now, we have got our in set site working up again. So if you want to come out of this link, you can go back to the Student Hub Live website, refresh the browser. And then you can enter the site where we will have more chat and more widgets and interactive tools up and running for you. So please join us just after 3 o'clock for our next session.

But bye for now. I hope you've had a great afternoon. And thank you very much for coming. See you soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

