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KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back to the Student hub live induction event for the Open University Law School and the Open University Business School. In this session, we're going to interview some students about their study journeys. But you're all in the chat. You're all really excited. So I'd like to take a quick trip to the Hot Desk to see where you're at in terms of your studies. And also whether you've got any questions that you'd like to ask some students who've already completed their qualifications with us. So HJ and Mychelle, how's everyone doing this morning?

HJ: I think we're all doing really well and happy. And there's lots of people watching and just logging on. So if you missed what we said earlier, remember, anything goes in the chat. We want to hear from you, want to know what you're studying. We want to know if you have a study pet that keeps you motivated. My cat always sits next to me.

MYCHELLE: My cat, yeah.

HJ: Yes.

MYCHELLE: On the keyboard.

HJ: On the keyboard, yes. They choose the most inappropriate places. But we want to know what modules you're studying as well. You can always tweet us at [studenthublive](#) or email us at studenthub@open.ac.uk. And we'll email back to you as well if there's anything you want to email to us.

But we got lots of new students so just starting B100 and W101. So yes, so you joined a fantastic community. But I think, who was it, it was Rebecca is a new student and just joined us. And she said she was going to pop to the gym whilst the kids are at school, but she's going to sit on the couch with a brew all day watching this.

And Daniel does point out quite right, I think, that lifting a cup of tea does count as weights.

MYCHELLE: Absolutely right.

HJ: I definitely agree with that one. But we had a great point that our guests might be able to help

us with that. Anarie is in her second year and felt a bit isolated starting off in her first year. So what would you recommend in terms of getting involved and sort of joining in the student community?

KAREN FOLEY: Well, some really good questions and really good feedback. I'm glad that you've lined yourselves up for a day on the sofa. I quite agree. We're going to put some of these questions to Libby Walklett and Richard Murtagh, who are OU students. Libby has done a part-time association of accounting technicians. And Richard is a criminal barrister. And you've both completed your degrees with the Open University. So thank you for coming along.

Now, we've got lots of new students in the chat. And I'm not sure what your experiences were like. But this whole idea of feeling really isolated and sort of wanting to be part of a community, but sometimes not having the time and energy to be able to do so is, I think, a really common thing that students have. Tell us, how did you sort of find that side of things, the social side, the fitting in, the OUness of your study?

LIBBY WALKLETT: I found Facebook was absolutely brilliant. And I know it's not really part of the OU, and it's run by volunteers and some of the student union representatives, but it was invaluable because you do feel really isolated. I don't think people always realise how bad it can be sitting at home at the kitchen table when the children are at school or having a sleep and just sat there with you and your book and a mug of coffee.

And having Facebook meant that you could communicate, not just with students on your course, but you've got the whole experience. You've got every course going. You've got every level. You've got ex-students. You've got new people. And they're all sharing their fears, their doubts.

And then at the other end, you've got people who have graduated sharing photographs. And it just inspires you and keeps you going. That was fantastic for me.

That and the tutorials as well. Going along and actually physically meeting people and realising that you're not the only one that's struggling at home. That was good.

KAREN FOLEY: Did you find that was something hard for people to understand. I mean, I know when I've been studying, my husband will often say, go and do your revision. And I thought, I'm not revising. He had no idea actually what I'm going through right now. And it's that whole thing of there's the sort of battling with what the question is, the time to do it, all of these sort of systems and

processes. Did you struggle with that? Did it change as you developed?

RICHARD MURTAGH: Well, as an Open University Law student, I found that I had to make some changes in my life. You have to set aside quite a lot of study time to be able to achieve everything that you need to achieve. The piece of advice I would give is that it always takes longer than you think it will take. Generally speaking, an Open University Law degree takes 16 hours a week plus the time it takes to write up your coursework.

KAREN FOLEY: And procrastination time.

RICHARD MURTAGH: Indeed.

LIBBY WALKLETT: I'm an expert in procrastination.

RICHARD MURTAGH: But there are good ways to procrastinate. You can use the time that you're procrastinating to get some edutainment, combine your education with your entertainment.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, good idea. I like this. Tell me more.

RICHARD MURTAGH: Right. Well, while I was studying for my Open University Law degree, I found the BBC drama *Garrow's Law*, which I loved. And it's about 18th century English barrister William Garrow who revolutionised the English criminal trials.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

RICHARD MURTAGH: And the drama led me to read and find out more about him. And I discovered that actually Garrow was the OU law student of his day because, unlike a lot of the other students at that time, he didn't attend Oxford. He didn't attend Cambridge. He studied basically at home and was self-taught, which shows that for us anything is possible with the right motivation.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. HJ, you're nodding.

HJ: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: Have you been watching some telly?

Sorry, I was just thinking I have seen this TV series. And I like the- what was the term you used? It was edu-tainment.

Edutainment.

I really like that. I think we'll have to find some more ways. I'd be interested to see on the chat if anyone else has got anymore edutainment activities for us.

MYCHELLE: I'd just like to add I'm holding the gavel here because Paul asked me to remove it because in England we don't use a gavel in the courtroom. However, there are plenty of American television shows out there where they use a gavel.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Well, he's gone now anyway. But when he was here, he did actually give us some really good TV series that we might want to watch. He was telling us about the *Prosecutors* so that's one to look out for at the minute as well, if you fancy that. But seriously though, it is one of those things, I think, that when you start becoming immersed in your studies, all of a sudden you start finding things that sort of fit in with it. And you'll end up watching TV series and finding things that sort of support your studies and give you an idea.

Sometimes, then, this can start inspiring students who will then go off to the library and end up writing a completely different TMA question to the one that was said. So what I want to ask you is, how did you deal with this whole thing of being really excited about what you were studying as you're sort of progressing through the levels? You're getting more and more autonomy in terms of the things that you can add as a student to the content. You're being less descriptive, more evaluative. How did you struggle with that side of things when you were so inspired by what was going on in real life?

RICHARD MURTAGH: Well, when I started writing TMAs as an OU law student, I found that one of the things I struggled with initially was getting enough of the material from the course into my TMA because you have very strict word limits. And at first, these can be very difficult to come to terms with.

But actually, the word limits are there for a reason. They help you to become more focused. And eventually, after I'd say two or three TMAs, I found that I was able to get better at brevity. I could express so much of what was in the course material into the word limit and also have a point of view of my own.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, how did you do this? I think this is the most complicated thing for students to sort of get because it's really hard, this whole idea that you've got maybe 800 words here, but you want

to make a sentence with that. And somehow how are you going to sort of convey all the subtle nuances of all of that into this? How did you go about writing in your own words?

**RICHARD
MURTAGH:**

Well, I would advise students to try to get away from quoting all the time. At first, it's very comforting to just lift whole sentences and paragraphs out of your books and just quote them and reference them. Because you feel as if you're quoting the words you can't go wrong because you're literally quoting the judge or quoting the book. However, a great skill is to learn to paraphrase. And you'll find that in time, actually, what might take a whole paragraph to be expressed in a judgement can be expressed in maybe a sentence or two sentences.

So for example, you may say according to Judge so-and-so, the position is this, or according to Professor such and such, the position is that. And that actually can get you the same amount of marks as quoting Judge so-and-so at length in a whole paragraph.

KAREN FOLEY:

Now, law is very, very different from accountancy, I can imagine. And I guess in law there might be the temptation to include a lot of quotes. Is it the same for accountancy? Or are there different sort of challenges that you have for writing in your own words?

LIBBY

No. I think I started with business studies from picking bits out and putting them into my TMAs.

WALKLETT:

I think it's just experience and really listening to you tutor feedback. I think what helped me as I went on as well is that I would start planning my TMAs as soon as I could. So I would always have the question next to me when I was reading the book. So I'd be looking out for what they wanted from the question.

And with practise, you just become more concise in your writing. And don't get to the point of finishing your TMA and submitting it instantly. If you can, try and have it perhaps a week- I know it's easier said than done- try and have it prepared a week in advance. Because it does give you time to really digest everything that's in there and have a really good think about it. And it might be that you can go back, take out some words, maybe change your sentence structure around so that you can remove some words from the word count. And just to make sure that you really are answering the question.

And the points that you've put in there are the most relevant because it was always a question for me when you get a TMA marked, you open it up, and it says, you didn't need to put that in there or you're a little bit over the word count. You've nearly used your 10 per cent.

My question was always, what should I have left out? What could I have taken out? Because it

feels that once you've put all of those hours in, you feel as if everything that was in there for a reason. And that you can't take anything out because it makes less sense. It is difficult. It's just a learning process, but you can do it.

KAREN FOLEY: I wanted to ask about time management. Sunita's a carer. And she's worried about how she might fit some of these things in. And I know a lot of my students are carers, informal or sometimes in a caring profession. And often best one in the world you can plan your time, and it doesn't always go according to plan. So what advice would you give her, Syreeta.

LIBBY WALKLETT: I think, again, if you can stay in advance, so get your deadlines, put them into a calendar or get a whiteboard, and have them listed. And try to stay ahead, if you can. Because then if something does happen, it doesn't mean that you're behind. It just means that you're perhaps then at the right stage.

And I've had very similar issues. Well, I've had all sorts of issues with a burglary, a flood, building work, and a house move all in the course of B203, Business Functions in Context.

KAREN FOLEY: The B203, yeah.

LIBBY WALKLETT: Yes. And did not think that there was any hope of me getting through to the end of the course. And I did do it. It's not easy. But if you can try to be as organised as possible. So that might be asking the rest of your family to help out a bit more, may be doing job lists for them so that they're doing things like loading the dishwasher, helping with the washing, anything that they can do. Maybe online shopping is quite good.

Chest freezer- so pre-cooking food. Stick in the chest freezer when you have got the time. And then when you haven't. It doesn't matter. Everything's there. And that helps you stay a little bit more organised and a bit calmer.

KAREN FOLEY: I guess so it's thinking about what you can control, maybe, and ways that you can claw back time that might be more. And Richard, what did you do?

RICHARD MURTAGH: Well, if I might just add to Libby's points, just to add to that, it helps to talk to your family in advance. You are going to be required to sit in a quiet place and concentrate. And so if you think that maybe you'll concentrate better with a space of your own and some quiet time, it would help to get your family on board and be able to arrange that.

Myself, I was blessed and very fortunate to have a great partner who supported me thoroughly

all the way through my studies right towards qualification. And she has always made sure that I've got a little place of my own to set up my books that won't ever be disturbed or touched. And she always makes sure I get the quiet time that I need when I need to concentrate. And that's made a big difference.

So I would say to students, talk to your family. Let them know what you're going to be doing. And arrange to get the concentration time that you will need.

KAREN FOLEY: It's hard. Isn't it? And I think it's so important- I mean, for me as well, physically having a space. And if anyone touches my pile of paper or post-it notes and things, I must admit I do feel the heckles raise. Let's see what you guys said at home because we asked about whether or not you think you're definitely going to succeed or if you're worried about falling behind. And also we asked about community and how important that is to you. Whether it's very important or not important at all.

So if you haven't voted yet, you can still do so now. But there's a lot of determination. So many people thinking that they're definitely going to succeed, which is very positive. And in fact, we know that people come into these sorts of events and indeed people who have a good induction to the Open University and who feel part of the community are a lot more likely to succeed in their studies. So well-done. And I'm pleased that you're optimistic about all of that.

And then also about community and how important a sense of belonging is. So again, this is fairly important. For some people, not very important, but yeah. Again, it's an issue of time, I think. So sort of going back to that point again around creating a space and things. And how your family can sort of help support you in that as well.

RICHARD MURTAGH: I think as well as a law student, it's not just about learning the academic side of law. It's also about finding ways that you can apply what you learn because, ultimately, law is a profession and an art form whereby the law can be applied to solve problems. And one of the ways that OU students can do that is to get in touch with the OU Law Society. They have a website, OULS.org.

And by getting in touch with the Law Society and joining, they will put you in touch with other law students. And you will be able to get involved in fabulous events and days out. And I particularly recommend something that I did which helped me to qualify. And that is mooting.

Mooting is essentially a type of, if you like, a mock trial where you have a legal issue. And law

students will present their arguments, usually to a real judge. And the judge will decide who had the strongest legal arguments. And aside from the fantastic chance this gives you to apply your OU studies, you also make some fantastic contacts within the legal industry. And you make friends for life with the people you moot against and with.

Excellent. We've got a moot coming up tonight at 8:00. So do join us when we've got Jennifer and Georgina from the Law Society. And they're going to be telling us what the Law Society do, as well as showing us a little bit about how a moot works.

Now, let's talk about TMAs, the one thing that every student will be familiar with, the tutor marked assignment. So I wanted to ask you both about your experiences doing that. And also what you'd recommend in terms of learning from the feedback that you get from that. Libby, I wonder if you could remember the first TMA you submitted many years ago.

LIBBY

WALKLETT:

Yes. Very much so. I started with a 10 point introduction to accounting. And I doubted that I would ever be able to get a degree. My husband thought I could do it. I said, I wasn't clever enough. He said, you don't have to be clever. You have to work hard. You have to apply yourself.

I was sent the book. It was one of the courses that you could do in 12 weeks or 24 weeks. So I had it for 12 weeks. I kept pushing the book to one side thinking I can't do this. I'm not clever enough.

And then it went on to the 24 weeks. I went away at Christmas, or just between Christmas and New Year. And I said, when we get back, I've got 10 days left to do the entire course.

I came back. Did it. Submitted it and passed. And I realised that it wasn't the material and it wasn't the course that was going to make me fail. It was me. And it was my doubting my ability that was going to make me fail.

And once I got that back and I passed, I realised I can do it. But it's a real roller coaster ride submitting your TMAs because you've got that massive sense of relief when you hit the button, and it's gone to your tutor. But then you also worry- did I misinterpret the question? Did I miss anything important? What marks have I got? And then you sit and stew over it for a few days until it comes back.

And I have literally pressed the button to receive my TMA back like this because I was so frightened to look. It's a learning curve. Sometimes you get the marks you want. Sometimes

they're better than you expected. Sometimes they're worse.

It all helps you to progress. And you have to read what your tutor has written. There is no point in getting it back and not reading that feedback because that's how you make the best progress. They're the experts. They've taken the time to sit down and go through it and give you advice. And if you ignore that advice when you go to write your next assignment, it's a waste of everybody's time.

So I definitely, even though it's quite scary and quite daunting, read it. It's really good.

KAREN FOLEY: You have to read it. And I know like when I'm teaching and marking, you can get some brilliant pieces of work. But if they don't answer the question, they're not going to get a brilliant mark. And it sort of goes back to your point as well about how well these arguments have been presented because it's not necessarily who's right or wrong. Sometimes it's a case of an argument.

And do you see TMAs like that? In that sense of you've been asked a question. You've got to deliver on a certain amount of stuff. And the grade relates to how well you've met that brief, as opposed to how good you are.

RICHARD MURTAGH: Indeed, I do. And it does take a while before you're able to really answer a question. I know it seems obvious, answer the question. But in an academic context, that's such a difficult thing to do because answering the question can involve so many points that you have to make to show that you've really understood the course material.

But again, to add to Libby points, certainly one of the things I remember from when I started with the Open University in my introductory course, was that the TMAs were set up so that actually the first two TMAs they don't count for quite so many marks as the later assignments. And what that does is it gives you a chance to find your feet essentially, to have a go, and express yourself. And if you get it wrong, it's not going to be the end of the world because it won't impact on your overall grade too much.

But the idea is that, as Libby says, you will get feedback. You will learn from your feedback. And then after you've had a go at a couple of assignments, hopefully by about the third one you'll be doing it properly, and you'll be hitting the right marks.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Let me just go quickly to the Hot Desk, HJ and Mychelle, how is everyone?

HJ: I think we're doing really well. We're really interested in mooting and our session later. So that's at 8:30. And we've posted a link for the OULS in there as well. So yes, can't wait for that session. That's, yes, 8:30. And if there's anything we missed in the chat, then just email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk, and we'll make sure we get back to you.

But we do have a question about what level you recommend students should be at for mooting? Can they do it at all levels or is that a specific level?

Yeah, briefly, don't steal the thunder. Oh, by the way, the moot is at 8:30. But we're going to find out about the Law Society a bit before then. But I'm sure you'll tune in for the whole thing. Right. Very briefly without stealing the thunder and detracting our viewers who might have other plans for this evening, is there a level issue with the mooting?

RICHARD You're never too young to start mooting.

MURTAGH:

KAREN FOLEY: Right. OK.

RICHARD Well, without stealing the thunder, my first go mooting was in 2009. I had a go at what they call a speed moot. It's a bit like speed dating, but mooting. And essentially, you turn up. You register at a place.

MURTAGH:

And they pair you up with someone, an opponent. And you have a couple of hours. You go off. You read the cases. You come back. And you just have to go for it and make an argument. And they decide who was the best. And that was a great way to get me into mooting.

So I'd advise students, have a quick look online, especially with the OU Law Society and see if you can find a speed mooting event because they're fabulous ways of getting to grips with the art of it very quickly.

KAREN FOLEY: Speed mooting, I love it. Brilliant. Excellent. Well, I don't think you can top that, Libby, I'm afraid. So I'm going to-

LIBBY [INAUDIBLE].

WALKLETT:

Don't worry. You can do another one.

LIBBY Law next. I can. Yes.

WALKLETT:

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you both so much for coming along. That's all we've got time for today, but it's been really fantastic hearing how you've overcome the hurdles and also some of the advice that you've given to students as well. So thank you very much, Libby and Richard. Thank you as well for all of your comments in the chat. How exciting for you. And what have you got in store for you over the next few years of your qualification with the Open University?

Do pop any questions and things in the chat. We're going to have a short video break now with John Paul Knight who's going to tell us about one of these amazing things he's developed for W360 with virtual reality. So check that out.

And then we're going to come back and talk about time management. So again, a very topical session and one that will feed in. So do share your tips and advice, and we can bring those into the conversation. We'll see you in a few minutes for our next session.

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