

KAREN FOLEY: Good morning, and welcome to the Student Hub Live. This is our (re)Fresher's orientation event for OU students. My name is Karen Foley. And I'm a lecturer at The Open University. And I'm also a tutor and a student. And I'm here to present a jam-packed programme of all things that we think are really crucial for you to know as OU students.

Now, I know you've been talking in the chats and some of you have been to our boot camps before. But I was thinking about this before coming along today, and thinking, actually, there's something so incredibly special about being an OU student, whether you're at the start of your journey and just sort of becoming familiar with what this tutor is, and what a TMA is, and what's all this stuff on the virtual learning environment? Or maybe, you've been studying for some time, and you can't wait to get cracking with your next module that's going to start in the next couple of weeks.

So whatever you are doing, welcome. And we'd like to know how you're feeling, where you are, which module you're studying, which level you're studying, and maybe what your favourite study slack is, and also what your favourite stationery is? Now, these have been hot topics of conversation at Student Hub Live, pretty much since we started going, but in particular, last week at our boot camp.

So we've been having these study skills boot camps, which are all about the skills you need for OU students. And this fresher's event is about inspiring you. It's about giving your knowledge, and about taking some of the things we know-- for example, from sports science, about which are the best foods to study with-- and from Liz Marr, who is the director of teaching, about what stationery is best used in your studies. So we've got a really great programme lined up for you today.

Now I've asked you to fill in all this stuff. But how do you do it? Well, for those of you who haven't been to an event before, you will see that there are widgets, these, like, interactive tools. And they're on the bottom left hand side of your screen. You just click on one, select the option that applies to you, and then you can send the results. Then, you can see what everyone else has said, as well. So there's an added advantage for letting us know what you're doing. If you see a word cloud, we need three things, or the results won't send. So if you can't think of three things, just put one or two, and a full stop, and then your results will submit.

Now, HJ's been busy on the chat. And he's alone today, because poor Sophie is poorly. But HJ, welcome. How's everyone out there?

HJ: Everyone's still really well. There's loads of people in the chat, loads of people returning, and loads of new people. So, hello, good morning. It's great to chat to everyone. It's nice to see everyone introducing themselves. And we've had some study tips, as well, which I always like.

So Satinda says that, make sure you take a five minute break once in awhile, just to get refreshed before you go back into studying. And I really like that. And Natalie's asking if I've got the biscuits. Well, we've got the sports people coming by later, so I thought I'd hide them away and give the appearance of being somewhat healthy today. But Malcolm also sent me a virtual cupcake, but that has no calories. So that's always great.

But yeah, anything goes in the chat. If you have thoughts, comments, or questions for our guests, we'd love to hear them. And our guests always love to hear from you, and just say hello. And yes, we've got some comments about-- Luisa's studying very hard today, so she's highlighting and going through her chapters. And what you might find helpful on the top left, which I'm finding helpful, is the pin button, because it's going very fast in the chat. And if you go to that page before, into the top right, as well, that there's a little profile button. And Will's just changed his name because [INAUDIBLE], and I think-- yes, if you want to change your nickname, that's great, as well. So yes, really excited to start today.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. No, thank you, HJ. Yeah, that pin at the top, the right hand, is a godsend when the chat is going really, really quickly. And also, don't forget that you have an option to change the interface. So you can select from one of three different layouts. So depending on whether you want the video smaller or bigger, you can choose to play around with it.

As HJ says, anything goes in the chat. We've got lots of content planned. But we need to know what questions you've got that we can answer-- how are you feeling about your studies? but most importantly, for you to meet other students and share your experiences, and also your advice for each other.

So as HJ says, it's important to have a break. So whilst we've got the whole day's content planned till about 8:30 tonight, it is very important that you take regular breaks, and have some nice food and things in between. So don't forget to do that. It's all available on the catch up afterwards, if you don't miss any of it, or you'd like to watch it again. So that'll happen very shortly after the event is over. So don't worry.

OK, so our first session, we thought, how are we going to welcome you to The Open University? And we thought, well, let's get some students. So I've got two students here, I've got Kulvie and Zana. And thank you for coming along. You're both very interesting examples of students. It's very difficult to get typical students, because everyone is so, so varied, with such different experiences.

But what's really interesting about you guys is you are on the sort of taught post-graduate programme, aren't you, Zana? And Kulvir, you're working at The Open University, as well. and you're studying, which is quite a common thing to do. So tell us, what do you think most students need to know right now, as they're just sort of starting out on their undergraduate degrees?

KULVIR: I think, just take it in your pace. Don't rush into it. Also, it's going to be a bit nerve wracking. You going to be probably, like-- you're creating materials in the posts, or online on the websites. So it's good to just take it easy.

Get to know your tutor. I think Contact them first. Be active in the forums. Get to look at content and materials as quick as you can. And just start getting into it, really. I think the quicker you get into it is the better it gets.

ZANA: Yeah. I think that the idea of getting to know people is really key, because the nature of your studies is that you are away from other students, where you feel that physical isolation sometimes. So I think it's just crucial to getting involved early on, get to meet other people in your tutor group, maybe go to the tutorials, if you have them. Use the forums. Use any kind of media to get to know other students, who are in this sort of thing is great, to get that chat going and get to know people, and realise you're not on your own, and other people are thinking the same things as you, or talking to students who've been on previous courses, and get to know the feel of it and what they're saying, get ideas and tips from them, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Tell me about the sort of anxiety thing that you sort of touched on, Kulvir. Michelle in Northern Ireland is feeling quite nervous. And on our Wordle, we've got loads of wonderful feelings about exciting, happy, you know. But there is this sort of nervous anxiety, almost like you're about to run a race, or do something. And you've almost got this adrenaline, isn't it? Why do you think people feel this anxiety? What do you think it's all about?

KULVIR: I think, with studying and working, and with a busy lifestyle that we all have, sort of wishing is

different to fit it all in. And I think if you plan ahead, take a little bit of time to just take a bit time out, just focus, look at your calendar, get your diary out, get an app on your phone, check what things you're doing, check your timetable, where you are every part of the day. Even think about possibly investing a little bit of money into a very simple E-reader, so you can just take things on the go, wherever you are. If you might be on the bus, or the train, you might be waiting somewhere. So you've got it at hand.

It's good to stay as productive as you can. I've known someone, they're coming from - they're feeling anxious, but just take it one step at a time. And if things, you think, are going to go in the wrong direction, tell your tutor straight away, or tell Student Support straight away. They can always step in and try and put your mind at rest, really, I think. That's just what I'd give someone.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Well, Natalie says, there's no need to be scared because everyone will get all they need from the Student Help Lab. Well, that's a big ask, Natalie, but hopefully we can deliver on some of that. And Amy says, she hasn't studied for a while, and that's why she's feeling a little bit anxious. And I think it's a very common thing, returning to study after quite a big break. Any thoughts on that?

ZANA: I mean, I had quite a big break. And I left school-- I didn't do A-levels. And then, I went into this when my children were very young, and I was the first person from my family to even do any kind of university.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, I've got young children. That's a perfect opportunity to have loads of time in the day, because I did. [LAUGHTER]

ZANA: No, I didn't. I think it was just-- I just got to a point where I thought, I want to give this a go. And the OU gives you that opportunity to give it a go without having to sign-- you know, everybody's signing up to go away for three years to some far flung university. But you do have that real anxiety of, like, am I going to be able to do this? Am I up to it? Have I got the intellectual ability to do this kind of study, especially--

KAREN FOLEY: Well, you clearly could, because you're here now.

ZANA: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: So how did you? I mean, this whole thing with this break, because it can provoke a lot of

nerves. I did an essay once when I was 18. Now I'm a lot older. Will I remember those skills? And it's a bit like riding a bike, is that, you will be rusty. But there is some knowledge that you can retain.

But equally, there are different conventions. Maybe if you studied something and all of a sudden you're doing a different discipline, there's all these new rules and things to follow. So what advice can we give students about sort of, I guess, that gap and how to pick things up?

ZANA:

I suppose, it's-- I mean, what I found in the OU that was invaluable was all of the support on the websites online, that the library website is fantastic for reminding about all those things about how to do referencing, which I'd completely-- I didn't know about, and study skills, how to plan your time. When I actually managed to open the first box of goodies from the OU, the first thing I saw was this calendar of what I'll be doing week on week. And that was great to help plan your time and work out what you're going to be doing, to give you a bit more of a reassurance of, yes, there is a progression here, and this is how I'm going to move through the course. So it's just using all the resources and support that's out there.

KAREN FOLEY:

Yeah. Well, John was saying earlier that he hasn't received his materials or heard from his tutor. And Gemma says that she feels more reassured now, because she spoke to her tutor yesterday. So in this sort of process, where people are receiving materials and sort of finding their way around, looking at things and getting to know things, what can we sort of tell them about this time period, because the modules are only really starting sort of on the 7th or 14th of October. So we're still a little bit early doors and keen, which is good.

So a lot of the time, the materials are in the post, or maybe they're all online, even. So it's important to be able to navigate that, John, in particular. How do you recommend people get in touch with their tutors, when they are allocated?

KULVIR:

I think most tutors only put up a very quick post on the forum. And they normally tell you sort of, like, how-- then sometimes, they send you an email, and they'll say, OK, my name is such-and-such, and I'm here to help you out. They normally set the boundaries of how they can be contacted. So sometimes, they might-- because every tutor is different. They've got different situations that they're all in, different workloads.

So they might say, this is my number in the daytime. This is my number in the evening. Contact me in an email on first basis, or if it's a real emergency, ring me. Because if you know the best way to communicate with your tutor, that you're not going to, you don't want to ring

them in the middle in the night, sort of panicking-- there's a reasonable sort of-- like, you've got to be realistic here. So it's always good to set the boundaries as early as possible with tutors.

KAREN FOLEY: So, Kulvir, have you had your tutor allocated for this module?

KULVIR: Yes, I have, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: And what have you said to them?

KULVIR: Well, luckily, my tutor, he obviously works at The Open University.

KAREN FOLEY: That's his desk.

KULVIR: So even though-- I think I'd leave that to his desk. No I wouldn't go that far, no. I don't even know where he is on campus, actually. It's such a big campus here. I mean, I just popped him a very quickly mail. I tried to ring him a few times, admittedly. But then I realised that obviously, he's probably busy doing his own work where he is. So then, I'd probably just pop him an email. And they can get back to you as when they can, because they're not there on beck and call 24/7. They've got things to do themselves, as well. So you've got to be mindful of that.

KAREN FOLEY: And we'll be having a session all about you tutor in a Q&A session with Georgina and Matt a bit later. So we'll be covering this in quite a lot of detail, and talk about how to get the most from your tutor relationship, as well. HJ, are there any comments on the chat that we need to be doing right now? You look very busy. And I see you've got a big stash of stationery there.

HJ: Yes. This is for discussion later. I heard we were talking about stationery. But I think I've gone over the top.

KAREN FOLEY: You have gone quite overboard.

HJ: Yes, I thought with stationery, there wouldn't be a line. I think I have crossed it. But no, we're just talking about where everyone is from. And we're having a good chat about the modules starting. And some people have been sending us stuff on Twitter, as well, to @StudentHubLive, which is really good.

And we had a picture of Julianna and her study buddy. And we love to see things like this. So if you want to send in a photo of your study buddy, your desk, your stationery as well-- I might not show you mine. I'm a bit embarrassed about how much I've got-- but we'd love to see that,

as well.

And people have also been tweeting us. So Isabella, the tutor that came along to our last boot camp, loved being part of it. And she's looking forward to our assignment workshop, as well. And Debra really recommends Zuma's session on boot camp, as well. She found that super useful, and the note taking. So it's good to have that recommendation, that.

But we've been talking about where everyone's from. So Julianna's Brazilian. And Amy's doing her first year psychology. She's South African but living in sunny Spain at the moment. And Davin tells me it's very sunny in the South Wales Valleys, as well, but we can see on our map that it's filling up. People from everywhere are watching us. So it's great to hear where you are studying from, as well, because it's not just one location.

So yeah, it's fantastic hearing from everyone. And oh, Jane says you can't go over the top with stationery, so maybe I'll side with Jane on that one.

KAREN FOLEY: Jane, you haven't seen his desk. There's actually no room for another human on there. [LAUGHTER] OK, excellent. Well, there's some brilliant comments there. And thanks, everyone, for sending stuff on Twitter, on Facebook, and also our email, studenthub@open.ac.uk. And Brilliant to have a selfie of your desk, your study buddy, or you, or your snacks that you're going to study with, and your stationery, also. So do send those to us, and HJ will put them on the board as and when we can. It's a really nice thing to be able to build up a picture of who's out there.

And Melanie, I know, has also been sort of saying about how getting contact is good, and that nerves can be really good, because it shows that you care, and that you're passionate about things. And she's found Facebook and forms are a really good way of connecting to people. This was one thing you were saying before, Zana, about making sure you're in contact with people, and this whole sort of idea that you're doing something really on your own, but actually, so many other people out there are studying, as well. What have you found helpful in your studies about connecting with people? I mean, you're on campus, so you've got a sort of slightly different set up.

ZANA: I have my current course. But I think, thinking back to my undergraduate courses, what I loved was I could talk to other students with those questions that I wouldn't necessarily feel confident going to my tutor about, things that, I didn't really get Exercise 2.1 Does anybody else find

that-- or just silly little things like that. And just to help you with that, getting that confidence in thinking, oh, yeah, actually, I do get it. It's such-and-such. So it's just be able to share things, and things in that instant, I suppose, because the forums and Facebook groups, you've got that instant sort of communication with people. So if you're doing something in that week, you're all on the same sort of page, almost.

And it was like, what did you think about-- because we had some very emotive videos in the courses I did, because they were health and social care. So we would all go on, and then start talking about the-- oh, it's terrible how we felt about watching these things about different people in different care situations. So that was really good, to have people to share that with, and to just converse with, because then, you felt like you were a real student-- which we are-- because you're having those sort of conversations about the materials.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Have you got any tutorials, Kulvir, that you're going to go to this year?

KULVIR: Yeah. I've Go one for TMA 2-- oh, no, sorry, excuse me, 1, sorry, the first one. That should be quite interesting. I don't know when it's going to be. But we've got it in on our, like, little calendar on the VLE--

KAREN FOLEY: So you found your study calendar, and you've decided what you're going to go to, have you?

KULVIR: Yeah. Obviously, we have, like, regular catch-ups in the forum, So that's quite important, to be as active as you can, because you're with the collective with other students, as well, so you can connect. But it's also good to have a-- most modules at The Open University have a hashtag, So if you do a search on, like, a good Twitter, you'll see a hashtag with your code. You'll see what other people are sharing on there, as well. So that helps.

KAREN FOLEY: And tell us about Facebook groups, then, that Melanie was talking about before. Have either of you engaged with any of the Facebook groups, because these are sort of unofficial setups by often administrators who will sort of make sure that everything is sort of OK. But it's outside the OU's arena. And some students, I know find it incredibly useful. And some students find them completely overwhelming, and stay away from them.

KULVIR: I actually, admittedly, had-- I'm part of The Open University's face group-- face group-- Facebook group? Sorry, get it right. But it's quite good because, when I did one of my first models on the Master's, on social education, I panicked. I had a TMA to hand in, and I wasn't sure when the cutoff date was, the time was, because sometimes, some people say it's

midnight, or someone will say it's later.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes!

KULVIR: So I always get a bit iffy on that. And I thought, I'll quickly put a question on there before the deadline. And luckily, someone responded straight away. And when it's out of hours, that's difficult to do, to ring The Open University after 8:00 in the evening. So it's great to put the message up, and then someone answered it straight away. It was fantastic, great way to do it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

ZANA: Yeah, I used them a lot. I found it really, really helpful, even, like, the gap you get from when you submit a TMA to when you're waiting for the result. And everybody's on there saying, have you heard anything yet? Have you heard anything yet? And we're all sort of itching to find out what our results are. And it's nice to share that sort of feeling, isn't it, just to know that other people are sitting at home, waiting for the email of the results to come through.

KAREN FOLEY: No, exactly. Did you have any people on your Facebook-- I've heard before that some students will get really ahead, and they're really super organised. But you two sound pretty organised, as well. And a lot of our audience out there, I know, is super organised.

But for some people who maybe aren't so organised, and are sort of juggling things and running up to the wire, it can feel a bit sort of like, everyone's ahead, everyone's really sorted and settled, and I'm not. I'm here on my own sort of panicking and flustering. And then when you're a tutor, you get all these phone calls from, like, half your group who are panicking and flustered about the whole thing. But it can feel like you're really on your own there. So what do people do in those sorts of situations?

KULVIR: I actually asked my tutor that question already, actually. He told me to try and look at your TMA question first, and work your way backwards. So try and answer all the activities that actually fit into your TMA--

KAREN FOLEY: So really focus, I guess, on the assessments--

KULVIR: --focus on those, because you could be looking at things that aren't going to be part of your TMA. So you want to try and be quite focused, but be organised, and not look at everything, but just look at the things that are going to make up the marks for your TMA. So that does help a lot. And try to be as active as you can on the forums. But just be mindful that, obviously,

some people may have more time than others, and different commitments. And that does come into play in this. So it's important.

ZANA:

Yeah, and I think the first thing is just don't panic, because it's not the end of the world if you are a couple of weeks behind somebody else. I mean, the groups that I've been in actually were very supportive, and people really kind in there, and helping people along. But I think that a lot of what we would do is default back to the tutors and say, talk to your tutor about it. Let them know. Just keep them in the loop, so if you are struggling a bit, or getting a bit behind, talk to them. You can get extensions on TMAs. There are things that can be done.

On my last course, we had a couple of people who deferred back and started again the following year, because things happened in their family, and they felt they weren't going to be able to give the time to it. So there are different options out there. It's not the end of the world. And just talk to people.

KAREN FOLEY:

Yeah. I guess it's that thing about realising what's appropriate, in terms of where to get your support. So like, your peers are really, really good to be able to panic with, to be able to reassure each other, to maybe sort of share confusion and things. But ultimately, your tutor is the one who can really sort of, I guess, sort out and clarify. So they're the person that you need to speak to, like, if you are really struggling, and see what they can do.

Maybe help focus you, like you were saying, Kulvir, about that conversation where the tutor said, look, actually, just focus on the assessment. And really, you don't need to sort of worry about anything else right now. You just need to get this assessment done. And so that was a very useful way of shifting, maybe, your workload.

KULVIR:

I mean, it's easy to just panic, you know, and then stop, and then freeze, sort of, like, psychologically. But you've got to, like, try and look at everything as much as you can. I think also, the idea of making sure that you try and, like, keep that communication channel open with your tutor. Things like Student Support Team, they're there. You can call them. They're always good at giving you guidance on what type of things you should be doing in your study, picking your next module. That type of thing is always helpful. They'll give you an idea if it's feasible or not, and how it can work with your lifestyle.

And also, the idea that the library's there 24/7. So you can actually do a web chat with the library. It could be, like, I don't know, 2:00 o'clock in morning in the UK, but over in wherever they are in the world, they'll be there to talk to you at any point of the day. So it's always good

to do that.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely, absolutely. OK. We're in our last few minutes. And I want to ask you both about what you're actually studying, because I know everyone is keen to know that. And people have been comparing the weather, and making friends in the chat. And Michelle wants to know what to do with that TMA form.

Michelle, some people can submit a paper version of a TMA for their first assessment. And some people may be, for example, in secure environments. So it's pretty much standard that one of these sort of forms in duplicate gets sent out with you module material. Keep it, and sort of in eight years' time or so, you might have a massive stash of them. But if you ever do need to submit a paper version of a TMA, then that's the form that basically says, this work was all mine, and this is my name and address. And your tutor would fill in the comments back-- it's like in the olden days, when we used to have paper TMAs and things like that.

So just keep it. You don't need to do anything with it. There's stuff on submitting your TMA. And we'll be having a replay of how to actually do that later in today's programme. So we'll show you how to work that electronic TMA system. But everything you do would probably be submitted electronically. So just keep it for now. And if you ever need it, then it's there for you. OK, HJ, any other comments in the chat?

HJ: Yes, we got lots. It's really great having people that have been here before, and on their second years, because they're saying they found the tutors-- Natalie says she's found the tutors really helpful. Everyone is amazing, and everyone's supportive. So all of us new starters are quite reassured, hearing that it's gone well for other people, as well. And Satinda said, there's so many useful links on the module guide to try and find, and that help you, and really good resources there. And Julianna's doing environmental science, and wondering if anyone else is doing that, as well? Maybe some more seasoned students have some advice in studying that pathway.

And we're talking about the weather, as well. So Vanessa says, it's very cold and rainy in Germany. And Natalie, after seeing Julianna's study buddy, really wants to get a study hamster. That might be more manageable than, like, cats that sit on my keyboard, or something like that. But yeah, it's great to be reassured. And I think Tamara says, four days to go until the module starts. And it seems that people are already on TMA 1, so it's great to have some advice about setting our own expectations, and thinking more about our own

study, and not worrying too much about getting that far ahead, perhaps.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely, because we've got a boot camp on assessments. And that is going to be on the 9th of October. So we'll be focusing on everything TMA-related. And we also, then, have some Student Hub Live essay writing workshops that Isabella and I will be running. And that's all about bringing your assignments along-- it has to be an essay, though-- and we'll all help each other write out essays by looking at the process and content words, and thinking about structure, and all this, that, and the other. So those will be a nice time for you to spend a bit of time together going through your essays. So we've got lots of ways to support you out there.

This is all about having a lot of fun, and about really getting set up for your studies. So do bear with us. We will support you throughout your journey into your first piece of assessment. OK, just tell us very briefly before we end, then, what modules are you studying?

KULVIR: I'm doing H810, which is Accessibility and Supporting Disability for Learning, it's quite an interesting module. It's in its last presentation now. So it's going to be sort of like put into other modules as part of the Masters in Online Education qualification.

It's really interesting. We got a set book to read, which we could purchase. We got loads of things like papers to read up on. It's quite-- it's just hard to explain this, but it's quite an active module, in the sense that there's lots of different things you've got to look at, legislation, accessibility rules, regulations, workplace practise, your own context, how you deal with that work. So it's really interesting-- making web sites accessible, basically, for learning.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And the majority of our students today here are at Level 1. But ZANA, you're not.

ZANA: No. I'm doing a PhD and researching end of life care. But what I would say is, when I started this back in 2001, in my first Level 1 undergraduate course, I never thought I would be doing PhD, sort of looking forward a few years. So it's just encouraging everybody out there that you can, that the sky's the limit with the OU, really. It can take you wherever you want to go.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. And we've got a lot of postgraduate students, as well. 15% of you today are postgraduate students. There's a postgraduate induction, as well. And we also have an event on for postgraduate studies on the 9th of October, also. So do check that out, if you're interested in that, as well.

OK, well, thank you both very much for coming along, and giving us some of your experiences, and some of your advice for OU students. That's been really interesting, Zara and Kulvir.

Thank you.

OK, so let's take a look at what our weather is like. It's sunny outside, I'm reliably informed. And it was sunny on the day that we did our campus tour. So here's a short few minute video about one area of the campus with Dan Weinbren. We'll be back next to look at fake news with trusted content. So we'll see in a few minutes.

[MUSIC PLAYING]