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KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to the Student Hub Live. Well, this is our induction for students from the Open University Law School and the Open University Business School. I've got two people here who you really want to meet. They are tutors. They might not be your tutors. You are probably being allocated your tutors. But they are some tutors. And your relationship with your tutor will hopefully be one of the best relationships of your OU journey this particular year.

So John and Tracy, thank you for joining me today. Tracey, you've been a teacher on B100, which I know a lot of our students are studying, and its predecessor for quite some years now. And John, you gained your first degree with the OU. You started as an undergraduate in 1971. And 10 years later, you've been a tutor on various modules, including B100. So I'm delighted that you've both been able to join us today. We've got loads of widgets, so we'll like to know your thoughts on how you're feeling, what you're studying, where you're studying. If you're studying full or part time. Which level you're studying, and whether you're studying B100.

Some really important questions actually, is that we're not just here to eat biscuits and have fun. We're here to help you feel a little bit better about your studies. So we'd really like to know about whether or not you know more about what's expected of you as a student as a result of attending. So there's yes, no, or unsure. And whether or not you understand more about how the curriculum works and whether you feel better prepared and supported for your studies. So please do click on the box, tick the one that applies to you submit, to send. And we'll feed those in later.

OK. We've got a lot of excited students here who are studying B100, and I first wanted to talk about the purpose of B100, if indeed that's not too broad a term.

JOHN JACKSON: Well, basically it's to try to understand the world of business and organisations in general. Not just business organisations, but organisations such as not for profit, NHS, schools, charities. It gives an overview of what businesses and organisations in general are all about. How they're structured, the culture. The things that we all have to do. Look at human resource management, finance, accounting, ethics, globalisation. Such aspects as that. We cover all of in B100.

Because it's important for people to understand the world of business and the world of

organisations to make better contributions towards that world we live in.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, we've been talking earlier today about employability skills and about things that you might have without knowing. And B100 is a very interdisciplinary module. You're learning a lot of different things. You're also learning a lot of different skills. There's a lot going on that you may not be aware of.

TRACY QUINN: Yes, definitely. It's not just about the course content for the students. There's a lot of extra things that they can take away from it. And it's things that not only will help them in terms of their wider studies, but also as well in their kind of wider working life. So things, for example, such as critical thinking. Being able to look at an issue from different perspectives and be able to think about things from the point of view of different people. Things such as searching for information, being able to evaluate information. And being able to look at something and say, yes, this is good. This is bad. And make better judgments about whether or not information is valid and relevant to the purpose.

KAREN FOLEY: But even things like communicating on forums, submitting an assignment online. Writing an assignment online. Those are really, really key things that one could put on a CV as well.

TRACY QUINN: Definitely. And things that are learned in B100 will very much set the students up for the journey that they're going to take with us.

KAREN FOLEY: So they're getting a taste of lots of different things, different methods. Different ideas from the different disciplines that they might be feeding into. Because it's a very broad module that will feed into a whole range of specialisms later on. And also, as you say, some of the skills that they're learning- the reading, the note taking, all of those things are embedded throughout the module as they're going through. OK, so how do you guys as tutors, then, on B100 support the students as they're doing all of this stuff?

JOHN JACKSON: There's a variety of ways. There's a contact with what we call the tutor group forum. Each student is allocated to a tutor, and the students in that group have the tutor group forum in which the tutor can communicate and correspond with all of the students within his or her group, but also the students can talk to each other within the tutor group forum. That's one method, and it's a very important method that the students do learn to use the tutor group forum for all of the questions they have, to talk about the assignments, talk about the activities. But not just tutor to student, but student to student as well. That's one method.

KAREN FOLEY: And do you take biscuits to tutorials?

JOHN JACKSON: Of course.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: They are compulsory. Do the students take biscuits?

TRACY QUINN: We encourage them to bring their flasks. Flasks and biscuits, definitely.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. We've talked about some of the online tutorials where you have to have your own biscuits. And other tutorials, the face to face ones, you can bring biscuits to because you're in a setting. You've also mentioned the tutor group forum. Broadly, what's the ratio, then, between students and tutors? And how well might you get to know your students, and how well might they get to know you?

TRACY QUINN: So any individual tutor group forum, the ratio is approximately 1 tutor to about 20 students. So it's a nice enough range to be able to get the views and opinions of different people, and to gain insight from people from different backgrounds. But at the same time, small enough so you've still got that contact. There will be people who you get to know as you work with in the forum. And probably people that then you're going to keep encountering again as you move through your studies.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, some students have been saying over the last few weeks- because we've been running a variety of boot camps and things. Which if you haven't seen, you can watch on the catch up. They've been saying, well, when do I get my tutor? And we know that there's a very complex process going on matching the two at the moment. But when they do get allocated their tutor and they see those details, what do you expect the students to do? And what do you both do?

JOHN JACKSON: Well what we do as tutors is we send out a welcome message within the tutor group forum, but we also send a group email so that they not just have to wait until they have access to the tutor group forum, we get one to their private email. So it's a welcome, saying who we are, what we do, and what the course is all about. And an introduction, say a little bit about ourselves. And then next week, when B100 tutor group forum open, they will correspond with us. The tutor forum is already open, but the tutor group forum are open next week. They will see what we've written about the welcome. We've had the introduction.

And we want them to get talking to each other and to us. Tell us a little bit about themselves.

What their expectations are. Their hopes are. If they have any anxieties, what are they? So they can discuss it with the tutor.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So we've got 5 per cent of students here who've already studied B100. If you have, tell the other students what to expect, please. And 71 per cent are already studying B100. But I wanted to talk about this point, then, in the module, just before module start. And in fact, going up to module start. Everyone's got their highlighters, or not, as the case may be. Their stationary ready, etc. What you think a student should be doing right now in terms of getting set up to study?

TRACY QUINN: The first thing, really, I would advise students to do at this stage is as soon as they get access to the online material and online resources, just to spend a little bit of time actually having to look through and learning to navigate your way around the B100 course page. It will feel new. It will feel scary. And it will feel as though it's a lot of information to take in, but to get over that just have a look around. Just set aside half an hour, an hour. Click all the links, see where it takes you. And just familiarise yourself with that information. It's one of the best things that a student at this particular point can be doing.

KAREN FOLEY: What have you got here, John?

JOHN JACKSON: The expectation is that they will all get this module guide, and they need to read this through fairly thoroughly to see what's coming.

KAREN FOLEY: What's in it?

JOHN JACKSON: Well, it's an overview of the whole of B100. How to approach it, what the blocks cover. Talk about assignments, talk about the other aspects of what they're going to do. Activities. Talking about the issues with each other. We want students to talk to each other, not just student to tutor.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely. Now, this whole idea about getting an overview is a really important one. And I think something that sort of becomes more clear, I guess, or certainly for me the more I studied, was to sort of have some sense of that there were five of these, and that I would have this number of assignments. And broadly these would be the themes. And it might be this theme linked to this theme a bit later. It was very important as I was studying, but I remember right at the start thinking, I'm just going to colour all of this in really well and read everything through. And I don't really care what's going ahead, because I'm just going to hold tight and

get through it.

How do you encourage students to deal with this whole sort of dilemma between trying to get an overview of something that arguably they don't really know about?

TRACY QUINN: We would just encourage students, really, if there's any issues or any questions or if anything feels too daunting to them at this stage, then please do get in touch with the tutor. That's exactly our job, really. That's what we're here for. So if it all seems a lot to get your head around to start with, we can help you. We can help point you in the right direction. We can help show you the things that are most important and which you can be focusing on. So do please make use of your tutor.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. They should definitely get in touch with you, but what is most important then?

TRACY QUINN: Just familiarising yourself. It's going back to the point we made before. But at this stage, just trying to get used to the different things and just basically knowing what the B100 looks like. So that when we talk about the course website, you have that idea in your mind. When we talk about tutor group forum, again you've got a picture in your mind of what it looks like. So just trying to put pictures to all of the different things. That's one of the biggest things that students can do.

KAREN FOLEY: Because students become more familiar as you're going. But when you're first starting it can be odd. And I think things like finding the assignments and finding out when their due.

TRACY QUINN: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And expanding your study calendar so that you can get a broad overview of things is important. Students will start sort of doing week by week things, then, on their study panel. And they'll have things that they can tick off. And they'll be like videos, and they'll have activities. Now, what do you do in terms of monitoring all of these activities? Because I know that students will say, well I filled them in. What did you think of my results from question 1A?

JOHN JACKSON: Well, you touched on currently important things- students should focus on this study planner, because that outlines what they need to do each week and what is coming up. But we don't monitor them in terms of assessing their contributions. We monitor to see if they understand what's going on so that we can give them feedback and guidance. It's just to see that they are familiar with everything, and they're comfortable with the tools that we supply and they have at their hands. And it's important they do feel comfortable in using the online materials and the

online tools.

So the only time we actually monitor them as such is when we have to assess their assignments.

KAREN FOLEY: So you don't see all the activities that they do. That's really for their learning. It's sort of, I guess, mirroring that classroom. It's like if you had to think about these things, what would it be and you'd write them down. And actually those things can be really, really helpful shifts in learning and understanding. And so students do those on their own. The tutor doesn't see any of that. They don't know what you've done. They don't see all the ticks. It's the assessments that really matters in terms of what is assessed. That's the only thing?

JOHN JACKSON: Well, we have to be careful, though, that when they're doing activities and comments in the TGF that they are on the right lines. If they are going awry, then we might come in and say, well-

KAREN FOLEY: Of course. So that's the tutor group forum, but it's also- I was referring, I think, more to these online activities where we might ask students questions and they can fill things out in the virtual learning environment. So yeah, they'll do that as well.

JOHN JACKSON: The only time we do that, they are asked to perform activities collectively within a discussion in the TGF where we do mark them. They do gain marks for collaborative, as it were, activities.

TRACY QUINN: If students are having any issues or any concerns about the activities that their doing, again, that's what we're here for as tutors. So the answers to activities won't come directly through to us, but if a student has any queries or questions we are happy, more than happy, to help them with that.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. OK. So we've been asking our students what they're doing right now. Aside from eating some biscuits, they are mainly doing business. They're very excited about all of their new modules. Hey, let's have a look at actually what you put on the word cloud, because there are some lovely ideas coming through here.

Studying, again. Getting a degree. Approach being a student. Meeting new people. Helping other students. Learning I can. What a lovely thing. Student Hub Live. Brilliant. Better understanding. Meeting similar people. TMA. Oh. Yes, really. Well, I guess it is good to look forward to a TMA. And finishing! Which is very optimistic, because you can do it. OK. So lots of

things going on there. Right.

TMA's, then- a really important part of the whole process, tutor marked assignment, where tutor's will spend a substantial amount of time going through an individual's work, giving individual feedback, that that student will hopefully learn from and then use to progress to the next assignment. So can you tell us broadly how that process works? What happens in what time period? And what happens on B100 with this? Because again, a level one module sort of matters is a lot less than a level three in terms of the overall qualification. So can you talk us through the assessment?

TRACY QUINN: So at various parts of the module, students will have to do the assessments. So the first assessment that students will be doing will come at the of block one. And that will be a piece of writing based on a case study and is something that will be submitted through what we call the ETMA system, an online submission system that will come through to us as tutors to have a look at and to give some feedback on.

So the idea is that in B100 we really do hit the ground running. And so it means that there's a really good opportunity at an early stage of the module to get a feel for what the assignments are like, and even more importantly to get some feedback. One of the things that we would encourage with that first assignment, it should really be seen as an opportunity. An opportunity to see the things that you do well. To see the areas where there's perhaps room for improvement. So please don't see it as something scary or please don't see it as a threat. Please really see it as a chance to help yourself to get better and to help us give you some personalised impulse to help you get better.

KAREN FOLEY: And how did I submit their assignments, then, for marking? What happens?

JOHN JACKSON: It's an electronic system, as Tracy just said. When they go online and look through their web site, they'll be given instructions on how to do this. And they have the opportunity to submit a dummy TMA to their tutors just to make sure that they understand the system. The tutors will give feedback saying, yes, received OK. So that when they come to submit their first live, as it were, TMA 01, they know the procedure because they've done it on a dummy. There are no marks for a dummy case, it's just a test to show how to do it.

KAREN FOLEY: What do they need to do, then, to pass the assessment?

JOHN JACKSON: Well, there are five TMA's all together, and they're spread, obviously, over the whole of the

module. The marks for each TMA are averaged across the whole of the module. The first TMA is worth 10% of total marks. So it's an easing in, as it were. And even if they fail a TMA, it doesn't mean to say they'll fail the whole module, because they're averaged. So students can get, say, a 35% on one TMA, but they could get 60 on another, and it balances out. Because the overall threshold for passing is 40 per cent.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's 40 per cent. There's a handy assessment calculator, isn't there, that students can use to sort of see how that weighting, I guess, of the various assignments goes. But it's a nice steady increase into things. Is it as hard, the first assignment, compared to the last?

TRACY QUINN: This first assignment is very much just designed to ease you in and just designed to kind of show you what kind of questions you will be experiencing as you work through the module. There is a steady increase as you work your way through, and you will find that TMA 5 we're asking you to do slightly different things. Things, for example, that might involve a little bit more critical thinking. But you will be well prepared for that. The activities that you'll be doing on a week by week basis are designed to develop not only your knowledge of the business content, but also the skills that you'll need in order to be able to tackle some of those slightly more challenging assignments that come towards the end of the course.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Now, the case studies in B100 run through the module and are really interesting. And in fact, we've got a video afterwards about the B100 module by the B100 team, which you'll enjoy watching hopefully. But tell us about the case study and why this matters?

JOHN JACKSON: Case studies are based on actual organisations to give some reality to what they're studying. It's not just a pure academic course. It's about how do we apply the concepts and theories and modules that they're learning to the real world? Through case studies based on, as I said, actual companies and organisations they learn to see the usefulness of academic theory into a real company. For example, Dr. Anja Schaefer, who is a member of the module team, is a family member of a German company called Schaefer Kalk. And because of Anja's family connections, we are able to use the Schaefer Kalk case study throughout the whole of the module to show a German typical middle size successful company and how it's structured, how it operates. So we give an international dimension, too, through the use of case studies.

KAREN FOLEY: So this is almost using academic theory to bring these real life issues, to make sense of them.

TRACY QUINN: Definitely. And there will be an opportunity for students, for example, as well to start to bring in their own case studies. When it comes to TMA 2, what we ask the students to do is to source a

job advert, something that's of interest to them, and to base the whole assignment around that particular case study as it were. It's something that we find students enjoy. It's something that we've found students have actually taken so much of a liking to the job advert they're using they've applied for, and in some cases, actually got the job. So it really does help to place what they're doing in a real world context.

KAREN FOLEY: I want to just end by asking about some of these forums. You've mentioned the tutor group forms very early on in this discussion. And I'm aware that some of the assessments are marked discussions. So when are those, and how often do students need to then go to their forums?

JOHN JACKSON: Well, I would hope they would go on a daily basis, because tutors will put key messages in there. They will put key advice in there about approaching a particular subject or a particular concept. And for when the TMAs are due. We give a lot of advice when TMAs are due, about how to approach them and what to look for. And so I would try to encourage students to go on at least a daily basis. If they can't manage that, maybe every other day. Because there will be a lot of information going back and forth from the tutors to the students.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And they can subscribe to those discussions, as well, if they don't want to go into it. So they can get an email link and then they'll get a notification when there's something going on. So that can be very helpful. I often do that. So thank you very much, John and Tracy, for coming and explaining all of those aspects of B100. That's been really useful.

Now we're going to show you a video, as I mentioned earlier, which is by the B100 module team about the B100 module. And then we're going to have another business discussion where we're going to talk about secrets of Silicon Valley. So join me in a few minutes after this video.

[MUSIC PLAYING]