

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to the Student Hub Live. This session is about your journey starts here, so your post-graduate journey and where do you start. And I am joined by Jane and Maria and Janet, who are going to tell us what's going to happen very early doors for students. But before we start looking at all of that, I'd like to tell you about some of the interactive tools we'd like to know your opinions on.

So have you accessed the Student Help Centre? Have you logged onto Student Home? Have you logged on to your module website? And we'll go through some of the distinctions between those because sometimes in particular if you're new to the Open University it's not very clear which is which. And also, have you accessed the OU library, one of the best resource says material and also support? Have you been in touch with your tutor, yes or no?

So if you can just select the one that you'd like to vote on, press the item that applies to you and then press it down and your results will send. You can also pin the chat. So if you'd like to find some of the links we've been posting in the chat box, then there's left a little pin on the top right hand side of the chat. And if you'd like to change the interface, then on the bottom right hand side, you'll see a different option. So you can just press that and the chat will go big or smaller, et cetera. So find the option that suits you best.

Now there are a lot of students out here, and some of you have been talking in the chat. And anything goes in the chat. So if you've got a question, we've just heard there is no such thing as a silly question. So do let us know that.

And do bear in mind everyone is talking about things that really matter to them, and people will have different ideas, et cetera, so it's a really important thing just to be you and get the most out of these sessions as you possibly can. And as I say, no such thing is a silly question to put to our panel. Zach and Claudia, how are you both doing?

ZACH: Yeah, we're good. A lot of some-- well, good chatter on the chat box at the moment.

CLAUDIA: Yeah, there's a few students helping each other trying to find out information about bursaries and anything else they might need as they're thinking about starting post graduate.

ZACH: Mhm. Yeah, it's good, and they're looking forward to this session definitely.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Have we got to look at some bilingual students as well have a we?

CLAUDIA: Yes, I think Rachel earlier on said she was starting to do her Spanish level 1. Undergraduate students [INAUDIBLE].

KAREN FOLEY: The chat box can go so-- it can go so far, can't it, especially when you're concentrating. So you two might want to pin some of that as well as you must do at home as well if it's going too fast for you.

OK. So in this session, we're going to take a look your journey studying and in particular focus on the first few weeks of study. So our students have just got everything. They're all very, very excited. Some are a bit nervous, some are bit anxious, et cetera. What sorts of things do you think they might be doing for the first three weeks or so of their studies?

JANE: OK. So so I'm going to talk specifically about the leadership and management pathway, and Maria and Janet are going to then be talking about applied linguistics and inclusive practise. So if we have a student who's starting at stage one of the leadership and management pathway-- and just a reminder that for all of these pathways then students are studying three modules of 60 credits each, and that most students will be doing that over a period of three years. So this is the first few weeks of their three-year journey towards their master's in education.

If they're starting on the leadership and management pathway, then they begin with questions about what is leadership and also what is management. But I think many undergraduate students, post graduate students, those involved in education, will know that leadership is a very contested issue. So it takes-- the beginning of the module, the first module, takes a kind of a broad view about perspectives on leadership, ideas about what it can include, ideas about how it might be differentiated from management, ideas about how those who are students might have engaged with ideas about leadership.

Because I think one of the things that we find on the module is that students-- potential students, students beginning post graduate degree-- have much more engagement with ideas about leadership than they possibly first recognise. That leadership is very much more of an ordinary activity than they might have first be thinking.

On the leadership and management pathway, we regularly have, for example, students who are not already in leadership positions, but who are aspiring leaders or who are thinking about

official positions of leadership. But when they interrogate their own experiences and their own past, they find that they have experiences of leading in teams, of leading in youth clubs, of leading groups in informal groupings, in their workplace, or outside their workplace, which have given them experiences and insight into what leadership is.

So that what is leadership is a way of beginning that module, and then what we do is something called framing the field. So in other words, really thinking, students and teachers tutors and across the module, about what that field of leadership is and what it entails.

KAREN FOLEY: Now we're going to be focusing a lot more in detail a little bit later on each of these pathways and really just to give people a flavour about how they might be interacting early doors. Maria, I wonder if I can ask you about the implied linguistic side of things and again what sorts of things people might be doing very early on and why this field is so exciting.

MARIA: Well, applied linguistics is very broad, and it really covers language and real world uses of language. Any area where language applies, applied linguistics covers that. So well within the MA education, that's largely teaching learning context and how you can learn language, learn through language, learn about language, in the first module. We also cover other aspects like doctor-patient relationships in health care, language in social media, a usage of there, language in new technologies generally, and quite a wide exciting range I think of where language applies.

Within education, we look at how you can-- it might not be just applying to teachers, but you might be in an education setting as a librarian, you might just be teaching your child in a one-to-one relationship, you might be teaching your neighbour how to use a computer. But learning through language-- so that's the key aspect. It doesn't have to be a formal kind of being a teacher in front of a classroom, although most of our students are in that setting. So I think it's an exciting field and that there's a lot to cover there.

KAREN FOLEY: And Janet, inclusive practise is also a very, very broad area.

JANET: It is. Most traditionally, when I've been working at other universities, we've had [INAUDIBLE], and it's been quite specialised. People have traditionally looked at just teachers and usually people working with students who have disabilities, something like dyslexia, autism, or dealing with learning difficulties. I think what's really exciting about our pathway-- and it's not just me, this is national and international colleagues--

KAREN FOLEY: This is fact.

[LAUGHTER]

JANET: Yeah, well, I just last week went to a Parliamentary consultative committee, and people were really excited about what we're doing in this module because it is very, very different from what anybody else is offering. So what we're doing is we are looking at inclusion, as the other pathways have with their focus-- in a much broader concept.

So first things we're starting at the beginning is we're actually interrogating the concepts of what is social justice, what is ideas of an equity. And I suppose I'm really excited-- my students know I get really excited about this-- I mean, I'm really excited. I mean, the very fact that I've been asked and that Parliament is now running committees on these things I think shows us just how really pertinent this is at the moment. We're dealing with huge inequalities.

We're not just-- it's not just-- disability is very much part of it. We've got a lot of teachers who are interested in it doing the pathway, but we also have other people working with immigrants, working and with refugee children, working internationally in NGOs. So what I think is really exciting about our first weeks is that people get a chance to think about it in the broader concepts. But also the module is very much set up with our learning events and with an emphasis on interaction, so that people can, and as students, can very much interact with other students from different context.

And I mean, I find that exciting because I do come from a background of teaching like a lot of our students do. I come from a very heavy involvement with dyslexia, working with, and I've worked and taught in classrooms where were dealing with mainstreaming and inclusion. But my experience working in the module is it's really pushed me to think very much about it on a broader issue, and I've started to rethink ways I work as a teach-- in my own teaching.

And these first weeks, I would like to emphasise how really important to think about it in the broad I think for all of our pathways and particularly in inclusion-- because then we can think about what inclusive practise is. Because what inclusive practise is, we argue, or module takes the view, that that is very dependent on how you see what the inequality issues, are how you see them, and how you define them, and your particular context that you're working in.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I'm not going to ask either, or any of you even, which is the most exciting. Because I don't think we can trump Janet's enthusiasm.

[LAUGHTER]

But the one thing I would say that seems to be very, very common is that there's this whole idea that people are in settings that really matter to them, that they've often coming at this with a wealth of experience, and yet they're sort of framing this within their student home, their module home, their library, their TMAs, and their tutor, and all of these various sort of torts and structured aspects. And considering that we're talking about your journey starting here, what advice would you give students in these early stages of grabbing that enthusiasm but focusing it on where might be best for their various pathways that they're looking at? It's a difficult thing, I think, especially when you're so fired up.

JANE:

I think that's true. And I mean, I think two things. I think students do begin stage one module with boundless enthusiasm but possibly also some trepidation, some anxiety. And so I think there is this excitement about the focus of the study itself. There is sometimes some anxiety about beginning that journey in terms of the level of post graduate study, the amount of support that they're going to get, how they're going to interact with study materials.

So I think just one thing to sit alongside that enthusiasm for the content is the fact that there is a hole under thread of something called supporting your study, which is about how you integrate into post graduate study. So some of the things that you've already talked about.

How do I find my way around the forums? How do I find my way around the module website? How do I start to be able to use the library? What do I do-- who do I contact when something goes wrong, and I can't get online? I mean, practical, all kinds of practical advice, all kinds of study advice which which runs alongside. So I think it is meeting all of those needs, I think, as students begin that journey.

MARIA:

I add to that that I think it's important early on to think about how you best work and how you can manage your time. When in your, probably, very busy life already with work and family, how are you going to find your best time for study and still kind of have a little bit of downtime? You know, you need that.

And added to the time management issue, I think thinking about working online. Our module is all online. And sometimes early on in stage one people print lots of things off, which might work for you if you want to study in bed or on the bus or whatever.

KAREN FOLEY: Or use your printer.

[LAUGHTER]

MARIA: But you would lose a lot of the interactivity, the audiovisual materials, the kind of link to the form. Basically, we wrote it for online study. It doesn't look as pretty if you print of. And bear that in mind and try to find ways of working online that work for you. I mean, I've been grappling with that and trying to-- I'm used to printing things off and scribbling in the margins. And I think moving to using online tools, highlighters, notes, and the fact you can copy bits. And you know, there are different affordances there so thinking about how to make it work for you.

KAREN FOLEY: And also finding other areas. Maria, I wonder if we could just-- we've had a question about what other careers you could have with applied linguistics other than teaching.

MARIA: Right I think applied linguistics work for-- I mean, if you think language is important, it's pretty well everything, isn't it?

[LAUGHTER]

We can come back and claim the whole lot.

KAREN FOLEY: It's all mine!

MARIA: While we are working within a language and teaching setting, we assume that, particularly for the dissertation, your analysing a teaching learning context. As I said before, it could be not a class. It could be one-to-one teacher-child. We've had people teaching horse riding and analysing the language they use for that. So you don't have to be a teacher.

But generally, applied linguistics is important in things where language is obviously an issue, like subtitling, translating, interpreting, journalism, advertising. But then I think it pervades everything. So I think it helps you as a manager, a leader. It-- any area where the way in which you use language is important, applied linguistics is going to help you, whether that's written or spoken on social media or whatever. So I think it might not be your whole career, but it is going to help you along the way.

KAREN FOLEY: Definitely. And Janet, what about the applications as well of inclusive practises? It's a lot broader as well than just teaching.

JANET:

It is. And I mean, I think there is a lot of assumption that inclusive practise modules and other HE and FE institutions are for special needs and special needs teachers. But this module does allow special needs and does allow you, and it is structured so special needs teachers can use it. And it will be very relevant to them. Relevant.

But it's also, as we've been discussing with the other modules, much broader. So it's-- and I think that's why I get enthusiastic about it because it's people have a chance to link and come at it from where they want to come from and their own passions. So already I can speak from working with students in our activity weeks. I've been hands on because I've been very interested in where students are coming from and what really-- what motivates them, and what they're interested in.

So the students have been encountering, and our learning events have been from, as I said, from working within refugee camps, there have been people working in international schools, working in aid, working in development, working in Malaysia, Africa, worldwide. I come across students working in Australia and New Zealand, which is fantastic for me because I can actually sound quite knowing about something having had that experience myself. As well as, of course, a lot of our students do come from English primary, secondary, schools.

Also, one thing maybe-- some of our students are actually from FE and HE, and I always find that interesting. I've actually been working with, in our activity weeks, with colleagues who work in universities as well who are coming back to do their masters. They might already have a PhD, but they're coming back to do something else. Or they might be just starting off at the beginning as a very-- tutoring in HE.

So it's a wide range, but again, for me, that's been what's been really interesting because I think you start thinking about and seeing the world in different ways. And for me, when I came into my own master's, that's what-- and I'm sure that we'd all say the same-- what is exciting about it was that I got to get out of my own classroom and my own situation, my own group of kids.

And what I wanted out-- and I think the students are telling me that I'm working with-- one of the advantages, even though this is distance, it's actually even better being distance. You can actually go out there and meet the world. And it's really fantastic opportunity.

KAREN FOLEY:

And embracing those individual differences is just so important with getting the most out of

your peers. Janet, do people approach inclusive practise because maybe they've had additional requirements in their studies? Maybe they've had their own experiences that lead them to approach the subject area? And also, many people choose to study with the Open University, not just because of the practicalities, but because for some they may not be able to get to another university. So I wonder if we could just touch on additional requirements in that sort of context, but for all of our students really but maybe based on your experience.

JANET:

We do. It's a mix really. Some students come-- I mean, a lot of students I've encountered are parents of children with autism or dyslexia, people that experience dyslexia themselves, or those kinds of issues, people with facing mental health issues. But I think it's much broader than that. A lot of them are people supporting people, supporting-- they might not necessarily or their family might not have that, but they've-- I come from that background, and I'm working with a lot of students who have been supporting people with that. And they want to know more.

Lots of-- like last year, I remember working really interesting student who's working in the Middle East and working with Muslim women. And quite contentious here is dealing with inequality and gender issues that Muslim woman face. But she wasn't Muslim herself, but her students were. And she was actually very instrumental in her institution, having to implement policy.

So yes. Yes, there are people that do have those kind of difficulties, but there are also people who are supporting other people with difficulties. Or people-- we have had actually a brilliant student who was the vicar, and she was just really interested in social justice and inequality from her own perspective of working within the church. So it's very, very broad, very, very varied.

KAREN FOLEY:

And of course, one of the challenges I guess is bringing that experience and that enthusiasm but keeping safe in your own studies. Jane, could we end the session by maybe giving some advice about students, about sort of keeping focused and keeping centred and knowing when they might need to seek support. In particular, I guess from a leadership perspective where you might be tempted to start applying a lot of the things that you're learning and again being very enthusiastic about doing so.

JANE:

I think that that's a really good question here. And I mean, I think one of the things that we, through all of the module materials that we provide and and through all of the support that we give students, are our leading students through a very careful journey because leadership is

so often part of the organisation of change.

So in other words, very often leadership is focused on the leadership of change. And that can be cathartic. That can be incredibly good for organisations. But it can also create some difficulties. So these are careful journeys, I think, that the student goes through, through these various stages of getting to the point where--

If you remember, earlier we were talking about at the stage three module where they carry out a piece of inquiry or a piece of research in their own organisation. And that is so often focused on change. But it's taken them those three years to actually develop the skills and develop the approaches to be able to do that.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, thank you very much, Janet and Maria and Jane. And you'll be back for more detailed information on each of these pathways. But that's all we've got time for in this session. Well, you've been filling out your answers to our polls. Thank you for that.

So more of you have not accessed the Help Centre. And the Help Centre's got some brilliant advice on all sorts of things, like critical thinking, understanding process and content words, all sorts of very, very practical things that you might want to use in your studies. And Zach'll put the links up to those in the chat.

I'm very pleased that 91% of you have logged on to Student Home, and 92% have logged onto your module website. So again, those are the key areas that, if you've joined just recently, Eric talked us through earlier in our introductory session. So it's very, very important to find your module website so that you can find your assessment and your tutor.

77% of you have accessed the OU library, a brilliant place. And I know you've been talking about procrastination. Well, the library is a very, very good way to procrastinate, but you must limit it. Otherwise, it can get a bit excessive. And 77% of you have done so.

And 66% have been in touch with your tutor. So that's wonderful. If you haven't already, do get in touch with them. They'd love to hear from you, and I bet you that they're trying to get in touch with you over the next few days and weeks as well.

So for those of you who haven't accessed the library, let's take a tour around the library, which is over the road from where we are in the studio. And then, you will see Zach in another context, and we'll be talking about his work at the Student Support Team. So this is essential information that will be very, very helpful if you are indeed new to the Open University. Join me

in about 20 minutes where we'll be talking about and being successful in terms of leadership and management students at the OU with Jane and Eric. I'll see you then.