Pre session polls

What level of study are you?

- Access
- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Postgraduate

What would you consider is your main area of study?

- Arts
- Languages (English & other)
- Social sciences
- Business and law
- Science
- Engineering or technology
- Maths
- Health sciences
- Education
- Sports
- OTHER

Have you been to any student hub live online events before?

- No (I'm brand new!)
- No (but have listened to one or more recording)
- No (didn't have time)
- No (wasn't aware of before now)
- Yes any 2020 so far
- Yes any 19J (Oct-Dec 19)
- Yes earlier 2019 (Jan-Aug 19)
- Yes previous year (any 2018 or before)

What are student hub live online sessions?

- All student hub live sessions are non modular and focus on skills relevant to study at university level

- Polls are anonymous to other participants but the chat box will have your logged in name associated with your comments

- All online sessions are recorded and available to view on catch up on a public facing website. *Small group discussions are not recorded.*

- Slides are available to download during the session from the file pod and from the main website
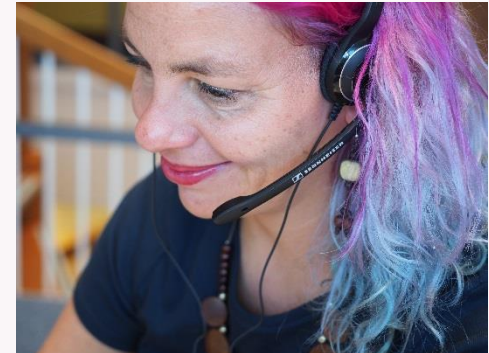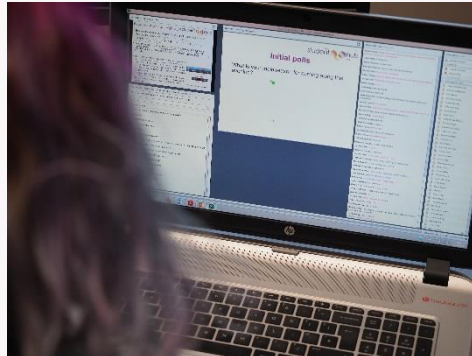
student hub live is the OU's live online interactive platform to support academic community

Karen Foley is a lecturer at the OU, head of student hub live and chairs Y032. She also tutors in social sciences, psychology and science.
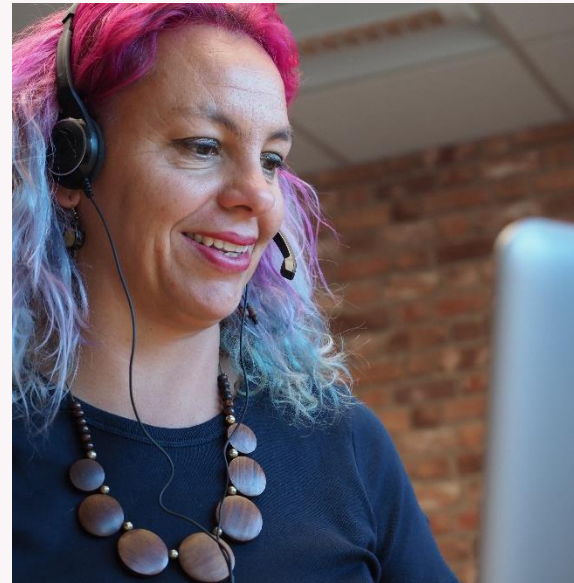
Isabella Henman is an essay writing aficionado and skills trainer. She tutors in science and health sciences at Access to level 2.

Initial polls

What is your main reason for coming along today?

(If you are on a mobile device remember you need to tap into the polling option)

To come back to these slides after completing a poll click on the share pod slides icon

Developing a good academic argument

This was our advert…

Academic argument or line of enquiry is an important skill within most essays but is not about arguing. Identifying your narrative is about how you structure the argument from an essay writing perspective and develop this in a persuasive manner. This interactive workshop would be ideal for those at level 2 and 3, although it is never too early to start developing a good argument.

Workshop

- This is going to be a structured workshop to help give the chance to think about elements that make up an academic argument (for an essay) and how you can start to put this together to clearly convey the points

- We'll give some tutor advice and links to places where further information may be found

- You'll also get the chance to discuss things with others in a small group

Arguing Poll

How do you approach arguing in everyday life?

- I like arguing as I have good opinions

- I'm always up for a chance to debate views

- I like to hear about things but people can get too forceful at times

- Sort of OK but I don't really like my views being knocked / someone else's views being forced on me

- I hate arguing and avoid at any cost, I'd rather just quietly agree even if I don't

What is an academic argument?

- It is not arguing

- It is clearly making a point

- It uses evidence and examples

- It is persuasive

- It shows the reader **you** know what is important and have carefully put it all together

- It is not personal opinion based

- Meets the parameters of **your** essay (not anything else you might like to include!)

The Loch Ness Monster (Nessie)

- A Scottish legend about a beast (dragon / dinosaur) that lives in Loch Ness

Supporting an(y) argument

- Use the 2 short answer pods available to give some evidence FOR the existence of Nessie the Loch Ness Monster and AGAINST the existence of Nessie the Loch Ness Monster

- Don't worry if you haven't heard of her previously, either look at the other suggestions or say what kind of evidence there would or could be for her existence

The idea here is that evidence can take a variety of forms. It needs to be objective (data, photographs, corroborated sightings) even if the original concept can be considered to be less than sensible.

Weighing up Nessie evidence

Good:

- Common memory / multiple people viewed at the same time and reported findings

- Visual evidence exists

- No active evidence that she does not

- No scientific corroboration

- Poor quality visual evidence

- Questionable motives

Weighing up Nessie evidence

Poor:

- I once saw a photo of it

- Someone told me that it exists

- Everyone knows it is made up

- It's a silly idea so of course it isn't true

- People claiming to see her were drunk so obviously didn't know what they were doing

What's the difference?

- Evidence can be questionable but can still be presented in a convincing academic manner

- Value laden arguments undermine integrity (even if they are true) – be objective

- It's about the approach and collating evidence and presenting in an academic fashion (almost regardless of what that evidence is – within reason)

Value laden arguments

- These are essential emotional arguments and either adding in something to try and 'play on heart strings' or otherwise persuade the reader.

- They are trying to get the reader to agree with you personally

- They undermine evidence that is objective as they are subjective

Planning

- First and foremost – <u>Plan</u>, think about what you need to do and collect everything together
  - Do you need to define anything?
  - Do you need to research some factual points? (e.g. do you understand what the information actually says?)
  - Do you have a limited pool to look for information (e.g. specific book / topic / section)?
- Planning takes time but it saves time – if you have an idea of what you need to do then you will know if you have done it

Poll

- Suggest in the short answer poll pod how you might start to work out what your argument might be for an essay – do you have any strategies?

- Don't worry if you haven't any ideas or are new to this, look at ideas suggested by others

Strategies to make an argument

- PEE
  - Point
  - Evidence
  - Explain
- You can also cover all of the for then all the against, or theme your evidence

Illustrations of PEE

- **Point:** There are different opinions about whether the Loch Ness Monster exists
- **Evidence:** There is photographic evidence of the Loch Ness monster, however some argue that the quality of this evidence is low.
- **Explanation:** while the quality of evidence can be contested, it can be argued that the volume of photographic evidence and the similarity of images produced indicate support for the existence of the monster

Clear links

- All the points must relate to the argument

- Just because they are interesting or you spent ages finding them out doesn't mean they are relevant and will give marks

- Repeating doesn't help the point (it just uses up words)

- Avoid circular arguments

Structuring

- The best argument can be let down by a higgledy-piggledy order

- Don't switch back and forth

- Each paragraph should be a mini topic in itself

- Avoid single sentence paragraphs or massively long sentences (12-15 words of often fine)

Poll

Which of the following is true of how you finalise an academic essay?

- I just sit down and write and hand in whatever I do

- I just sit down and write but then edit carefully based on instructions

- I plan carefully, write a draft and then edit several times

- I plan carefully and then write based on that plan but don't edit

- I plan carefully, write a draft and check it over once

Why edit?

- Editing allows you to focus and make absolutely sure you have addressed the argument and it is clear

- It takes out repetition and checks for any holes

- It gives a more professional overall result
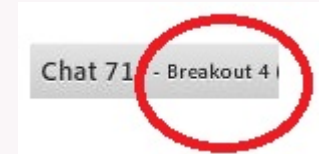
Discussion activity

- Discuss as a group your experiences of developing an argument within an essay. You may like to cover whether you have used PEE or another approach, how easy you found it to know what the argument was and whether you were successful.

- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group.

Useful points for breakouts

- We suggest you use the first couple of minutes to introduce yourselves and get used to the room. Choose a volunteer to keep the discussion on track and feed back to the main room

- Remember to activate your microphone to speak as per the instructions given.

- Breakout groups work best if people engage and contribute and discuss

- There will be ~10-15 minutes for the breakouts overall – we'll send regular reminders to let you know how long you have got left

Breakout activity

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- Please bring back a few points that you can share with the rest of the group.

This session is currently in breakouts (small groups).

If you are part of this group and have had connection issues please let us know your room number in the chat box

If you are only just arriving in this room then unfortunately you have missed the main session. Please log back out and watch the recording which will be available after the event

Alternate activity

Using the two poll pods available please answer these two questions and look at the other suggestions provide by other students. Don't worry if you are not sure, think about some of the suggestions that have been made so far:

- If you would give a best way to start developing an argument what would it be?

- What is the best thing *you* can do in terms of building an argument within an essay?

So....

- What can people share from their sessions?

Take home message

- Plan carefully so you know what the argument needs to be, then check what you have written to make sure this has been done in a coherent way that covers all sides

- You do need to understand the topic to be able to recognise what the argument is

Final polls

What do you feel is the main thing you will take away from this session?

What are you going to do as a result of this session?

Which of the following elements of this session did you find useful?

- Tutor led explanation
- Opportunity to chat in text chat box
- Opportunity to suggest ideas in polls
- Opportunity to read ideas suggested in polls
- Breakout room (discussion with / learning from other students)
- Breakout activity (reflecting on the concepts in more detail)
- Any other aspect (please give details in chat)

Upcoming workshops

Details, booking and catch up
http://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/

studenthub@open.ac.uk