KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome to *The Student Hub Live.* For those of you who've just joined us, a big hello. My name's Karen Foley, and I'm a lecturer at the Open University, and I'm a tutor, and I'll also be your host for the next two hours, where we're going to be taking a look at feedback.

So, your TMAs-- what do you do with that feedback? How can we make the best use of it? And how can that ultimately help you to improve your grades? A topic that will be very, very relevant, whether you're just starting out or you're midway through your Open University journey.

Now, it's great to see some familiar faces. And, for those of you who've been here for this morning's session, we've been doing a maths skills builder, which was lots of fun. We did lots of equations and got a lot right, too. And I think that's really increased our confidence in maths. And if you weren't able to take part in that, it will be available on the Catch Up, so you can watch the video and see all the fun we've had cutting up pizzas, cakes, and looking at a variety of ways to get the best bargains when you go out grocery shopping.

But now we're going to have a look at assessments. So, in the next two hours of this live, interactive discussion, I've got four guests. And we're going to take a look at various parts of the TMA process. So I'm hoping that this will be very, very relevant.

Now, how you get involved in this is as follows. Most of you will be watching through the "Watch and Engage!" option. And that's where you'll be able to see the live-streamed video. You might need to refresh that, and you might need to work on a different browser. For example, if you're on a very old version of Internet Explorer, just switch to Chrome, and it should all be fine.

You'll also see a chat box on there. Now, you can change the interface. So, there's a little button at the bottom right. And HJ will pop some information in the chat about how you can do that, so that you could have the chat or the video larger or smaller so that it suits your viewing experience.

You can also pin the chat up. It's happening very quickly, but the chat, as I've been mentioning quite a lot, is a very, very important part of this process. So this is where you can talk to each other about what you're studying, what you're doing, your thoughts, your questions. It's a real space for you just to engage and be part of your OU academic community. So you can say

what you like in there, and that were all be listened to and heard by everybody else and moderated by Evaghn and HJ, who are on our Hot Desk.

But if you are in the Watch Only option, where you're only seeing the video stream, you won't be able to interact with the widgets to tell us where you are, what you're studying, and what you're doing-- which, incidentally, should be on your screen right now. So you can fill those in, select the button that applies, and then close the widget. And your results will then populate, and you can see what everyone else has said, as well.

So, if you're in the Watch Only, you can engage with Twitter. We've got a hashtag of #studenthublive17. And our handle is @studenthublive. You can also email us, which is studenthub@open.ac.uk. So there's loads and loads of stuff you can do.

But let me introduce you to Evaghn and HJ, if you haven't been here before this morning, who will be managing all of this and bringing your voice to the studio and the show. Evaghn and HJ, hello. How are you? How was lunch?

EVAGHN: Good afternoon. Yeah, it was good. Pretty good for me. You?

HJ: It was good. We were talking about lunch on the chat. And Stuart said we'd be very jealous of his lunch. So I said, if he sends us a picture on our Twitter, @studenthublive. But then he said, by the time he gets around to taking a photo, he would have already eaten it. So, I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon.

But, yeah, we had a great last session. Lots of people joined us before and joining us again. And, really, all we're doing here is chatting to you and putting your thoughts, views, and comments to the studio. So we're really excited to do that.

And I know Sylvia had-- we had a great discussion about assignments, just before we got on. So perhaps she'll have some questions for us today, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah, excellent. Oh, nice to see you, Sylvia. It's really nice when regular people come to the *Student Hub Live* and can talk to other students who may be a bit bewildered. Let us know, though, what you're studying, at what level, what you're doing, if you've been a *Student Hub Live* event before. Because that's really good for us to know, because then we can fill you in on what you might need to know and miss some of the details if we don't need to know it, as well.

Evaghn, how are you getting on with your pie chart? How much have you demolished, now?

EVAGHN: I think it's all gone, actually. [LAUGH] [INAUDIBLE]

KAREN FOLEY: None pie charts left. OK, excellent. We were having fun eating pie charts, earlier. So that was all good. Excellent. All right. So, yeah, like I say, let us know where you are.

So, what are we going to be covering in the next two hours? Firstly, we're going to be looking at feeding back to the task and thinking about how well you actually did. And Peter Taylor is my first guest, who I'm going to introduce in one second, just after I've introduced the programme.

Then we're going to take a look at the short term. So, what happens when you get your assignment back, and dealing with that, often while you're writing another one. So, how do you deal with that little moment in time where you're trying to make sense of it all and make the most of it?

We're then going to look at considered feedback, which is our ideal perspective. So, when we're looking back and reflecting and thinking about how we can incorporate the feedback from our tutor into future assignments. And then we're going to hear from Conor McQuaid, who's a postgraduate student at the Open University, and about how he's learned from feedback.

Because, as you all well know, when you start doing studies with the Open University, and when you further your academic career, feedback is an important part of academic life, whether you're having a paper peer-reviewed or you're at a conference presentation, having people ask questions. It's not just something dedicated to tutor-marked assignments. So it's a very important thing to get your head around.

But welcome, Peter, to the studio. Thank you for joining me today.

PETER TAYLOR: Thank you for inviting me!

KAREN FOLEY: Yes! Another colleague from science, you specialise in organosilicons.

PETER TAYLOR: Organosilicon chemistry, yes. So that's all things like-- Silly Putty is organosilicon chemistry. Or the kind of caulking you put round baths and the window sealant. They're all silicon.

So, that's part of what we do, but there's a lot more kind of interesting, important things that

you can do with silicon. So, at the moment, we're looking about how you can have wound implants, things that can allow-- which will kind of block up a particular part of the body, but allow cells to grow within it, and tissue regeneration. So, yeah, lots of interesting research things we do.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. But you also do a very worthwhile thing. You're involved with the Open Programme, and assessment, more generally. And you're going to talk to us today about how well people do at the actual task, with a TMA.

Can you briefly introduce us to the subject, by telling us about your interest in assessment? I mean, why is it so important to actually have this point where you think, how well did I actually do? I know I got x%. I know I've got lots of stuff here. A lot of it seems bad.

But how-- this part of the process where you actually have to take a step back and think, well, how did I do at that task, why is it so important to you?

PETER TAYLOR: Right. I've been involved in assessment for a very long time. So, as an academic, I've been involved in setting assignments. As an associate lecturer, I've been involved in marking assignments. I've been on various kind of university committees and projects looking at assessment.

And the real issue is one of writing an assignment. So I will write an assignment which I think is going to assess certain learning outcomes within the module. And I'm looking for to be able to test the student's ability to be able to achieve those learning outcomes.

But it's not really until the students actually do the assignment will I actually really understand about how well my assignment have worked in actually testing those learning outcomes. So I've learned, over the years, what works and what doesn't work, in terms of setting assignments.

But, from a student perspective, the assignment isn't just about measuring how good you are at a particular subject. It's also about helping your tutor to understand what it is that you get, and what are the things that you don't get? What are the things you understand, and what you don't understand, what you need help in.

And so, there's a really important formative aspect of the assignment, which is, in many ways, from a student perspective, a lot more important than the mark. Because it's about how I, as a

student, will be able to get information about how I can improve on what I've done, but how I can improve on my next assignment. And that's one of the things that I think we're going to be talking about over the next few minutes.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely, it is. I mean, you say it is more important than the mark. But the mark, I know, matters so much.

PETER TAYLOR: I know, I know. And, in many ways, the assessment is both to measure how good the students are, and how well they're getting on, but [INAUDIBLE] but also to provide this feedback. And there's a, tension sometimes, between that.

And so, students will often get their assignments back. They will say, oh, look, I'd got 60%, and breathe a sigh of relief, and then not quite get round to looking at the feedback. And that's the message I want to get across, about how actually, irrespective of what grade you've got, there's always good feedback in the assignment that you can learn and improve from.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, Peter, we've been asking the audience what they're studying, what level they're at. And the majority are at level 1. So I've got 36% of students at level 1, 29% at level 2, and so they are the sort of bulk. And a lot of STEM students, as well, maybe because they've heard about you, or maybe because we've been doing math. But 67% are doing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths. And then, next, we have 25% with doing arts and social sciences, and then some doing health and social care, as well.

So that's the sort of level we're looking at. Some students may have done a TMA; some may just be starting. So, if you haven't filled in the "Have you done a TMA in the last month," let us know. It just gives us an indication about maybe when you're studying and how immediate the feedback of a TMA is.

So, we need an assignment, don't we, Peter--

PETER TAYLOR: We do.

KAREN FOLEY: --to look at. But how are we going to do this, with such a diverse range of levels and students?

PETER TAYLOR: Well, I think we have to choose something fairly straightforward that most people can do and that will, in many ways, reveal lots of different aspects about any assignment. So, what do you suggest?

KAREN FOLEY: Oh. Well, we could do a compare-and-contrast essay, maybe?

PETER TAYLOR: We could, yes.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KAREN FOLEY: I don't know how much time we have--

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: They're tricky, aren't they?

PETER TAYLOR: Yeah. People have done all that math this morning. Maybe a maths question?

KAREN FOLEY: Yes-- well they all got them all right.

PETER TAYLOR: Oh, well.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, they were very good at all of that. But again, those things, you know, it's a tick or a cross, isn't it? It's easy to see how your marks adds up with things like that. It's easy to see where you've gone wrong. So how useful is that-- we need something different.

PETER TAYLOR: Right. How about drawing?

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, a drawing is a good idea.

PETER TAYLOR: Right, what should we draw, then?

KAREN FOLEY: How about a fish?

PETER TAYLOR: A fish. A good thing to draw.

KAREN FOLEY: It is. I can draw a fish.

PETER TAYLOR: I can draw a fish, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

PETER TAYLOR: It won't be very good.

KAREN FOLEY: All right. So, what's the idea, then? We're going to all draw a fish and then mark it, is it?

PETER TAYLOR: Yep, yep.

KAREN FOLEY: OK! All right. So, let's see.

PETER TAYLOR: Everybody can--

KAREN FOLEY: HJ and Evaghn, you need to draw a fish.

HJ: OK.

EVAGHN: OK.

KAREN FOLEY: And mark it. And then, if people want to send us a picture of your fish, then you can do that. How long have we got, Peter? It's very important to put the parameters on assignments.

PETER TAYLOR: Well, I think it should be about three or four minutes at the most. We don't want to leave it too long. And it's about the speed at which people can draw, thinking about what you need to put onto the diagram.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So, why don't we have a little go at drawing that? And then, in three or four minutes-- because I think that's quite an important thing to think about. So they need to draw for three or four minutes, and then we'll think about how we can mark it.

But, in the meantime, I wanted to ask. You mentioned that you've been doing various things around assessment. Have you ever written an assignment and got people coming back with something completely different to what you thought it might be?

PETER TAYLOR: Well, particularly around computer-marked assignments. So, with computer-marked assignments, where you're kind of asking a question and then people are using various ways of choosing the right answer. And sometimes, a long time ago, when I was much younger, you try to put in distractors, things that are almost right but not quite right.

And sometimes I got too clever. And actually the distractor was too good. And it was confusing students. So I've learned sometimes to be able to not try to be too clever sometimes.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, this is an interesting point, because, often, when I'm teaching, I'll say to students, this is not a trick question. We're generally trying to assess what you know. And so the answer is, you need to answer the question, not think, well, it could mean this or it could mean that. Have you got any advice to students about how we're setting assessment to measure things, in a distance-learning environment?

PETER TAYLOR: Well, one of the things that I think you have to remember, and we come back to this again and again, is the context. So, what's the context that the question's being asked in? So, you know, usually you're studying a particular subject. So, when you're asked asked particular question, you've got to kind of gauge your answer in the context of that subject. That's the first thing to think about.

And then to start to just to look at what some of the words mean. So, in the question "draw a fish," draw-- Ok, there are various meanings for the word "draw," but I think it's pretty obvious we want people to use a--

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, not copy and paste.

PETER TAYLOR: --pencil or-- to draw it. But a fish-- a fish could be many things. So I'll be interested to see what different kind of images of a fish appear. And that's part of the challenge for writing questions, is to try and stop those ambiguities within the question, so it's quite clear what's being asked for.

And, I have to confess, sometimes people like me, who are so steeped in a subject, you forget how difficult it is for the newcomer to come and understand what the question and what some of the subtleties are there for. And that's why, when I write a question, I usually get a range of different people just to test out for me, before it goes to the students. So, members of the module teams, maybe an associate lecturer, will read through it and kind of say, actually, you're being a bit too clever here or a bit too subtle there. You know, just check your language and make it clear what you're asking.

KAREN FOLEY: And often you'll communicate these sorts of things in these student-guidance notes, won't you?

PETER TAYLOR: Well, they're really important. And so, sometimes, the question is gazed. But then there is a useful kind of narrative, just explaining, trying to unpick what exactly is wanted. And it's important to pay particular attention to that.

So one of the mistakes I think students sometimes make is that they answer a question they want to be asked, rather than the question that was asked. So they will give you a particular answer. But, when you look at it, you think, mmm, you haven't actually dealt with the things we asked you to do. So it's important, the student perspective, to really read and understand what's being asked of them and to give a response based on what's being asked rather than

what they would like to be asked.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, indeed. So, reading them before you do the assignment is obviously really important. And many people will highlight them and go through them. But reading them retrospectively can also help you make sense of how well you've completed the task.

PETER TAYLOR: Yeah. So, often-- and this is partic-- it depends on the size of the work, sometimes-- but often, with a big piece of work-- and I associate lecture for one of the project courses. And if someone's working on a project, I often say to them, when you finish writing it just put it down and leave it for a week. And then come back and reread it.

And it's that kind of-- when you're writing, you're often so involved with-- and you miss things. And it's only when you've kind of taken it out of your mind, and come back and read again, that you can kind of start to some of the things that are missing.

KAREN FOLEY: Looking at it a bit more objectively, isn't it? Absolutely. OK, well, I think we've had about three to four minutes, now, for our fish. But, just before we do that, you'll see some widgets on your screen which are specific to Peter's session.

So we'd like to know, have you got an assignment that you can look at? Because that, in all honesty, would be quite useful, not just through Peter's session but throughout this whole next two hours. If you've got something, you might be able to take a look at it and think about whether any of the things that other colleagues are talking about can apply to you. Also, I'd like to know whether you think you've got the grade you deserved.

Have you drawn a fish-- yes, or no? I'll need to know that quite quickly. And then, when we score them, we will do a nice bar chart to see what you scored. So, please, fill in the first three widgets, there, that are appearing on your screen, if you're in the "Watch and Engage!". And if you're not, come into "Watch and Engage!," use your student or your staff ID to access that, and you will then be able to see the chat, the interactive tools, as well as the video stream, as well.

OK, Peter, so, everyone-- I haven't drawn a fish. I've been busy chatting away. But HJ and Evaghn, have you drawn a fish?

HJ: Yes!

EVAGHN: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: May we see your fish, please?

EVAGHN: They look the same, actually, don't they?

HJ: They do look [INAUDIBLE].

[LAUGHTER]

EVAGHN: Yep!

KAREN FOLEY: Have you also been chatting? Because in three to four minutes-- [LAUGH] 79%.

HJ: Perhaps we procrastinated a bit on this assignment.

EVAGHN: Yeah, yeah.

HJ: But we've also been given another fish, by Angela. And apparently Fish, lead singer of some band. I can't say that.

EVAGHN: Marillion.

KAREN FOLEY: Marillion.

HJ: Marillion-- there we go. [LAUGH]

KAREN FOLEY: All right, yes.

HJ: So, I'm not sure that's quite what we're after, though, when you said--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KAREN FOLEY: Well, Peter didn't specify.

PETER TAYLOR: --context. That's really interesting, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent.

EVAGHN: [INAUDIBLE] probably, then, right? [LAUGH]

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. [LAUGH] Well, let's see. 79% of you have drawn a fish. So, let's mark it, Peter.

PETER TAYLOR: Right. Well, I brought some props along.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, good, good. We love props.

PETER TAYLOR: I knew were were going to draw a fish somehow, so I have a fish, here, and a very, very small fish, here. And again, they're about illustrating context. So, in this particular mark scheme, there is one mark if there's a mouth.

KAREN FOLEY: Everyone will be very good at maths, by the way, so they'll all be able to add this up [INAUDIBLE]

PETER TAYLOR: One mark if there's an eye. And one mark if there's a tail, known as the "caudal fin." Two marks if you've got scales on it. Two marks if you remember that fish do need to breathe. So it does have to have gills. And then two marks for each of the other four fins. And it appears that a fish has four fins-- a dorsal fin on top, a pectoral fin near the mouth, a pelvic fin underneath, and an anal fin at the back, near the tail.

So that accounts for 15 of the marks.

KAREN FOLEY: Evaghn is positively shocked.

[LAUGHTER]

Don't worry, Evaghn, this isn't a real assignment. [LAUGH]

PETER TAYLOR: Now, in true OU style, there would need to be a title. So we want five marks for a title. And then there's 10 marks if it's drawn to have a three-dimensional representation, 20 marks if it's in colour, and 50 marks if you remember to label all of the fins and the eye, et cetera.

So we've been a bit harsh, there, I know. But it illustrates an interesting point. So we want to write down your score out of 100 and let us know what they are.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. So, when you have added all of those up, you can score them. So we've 0 to 20, 20 to 40, 40 to 60, and so on and so forth. So, if you just let us know where your mark applied. And you might want to put your feedback to Peter's feedback about the scoring in the chat and let us know what you thought about that.

So, Peter, I guess your point here is that, unless you know what you're being assessed on--

PETER TAYLOR: Yep!

KAREN FOLEY: --magnificent as your drawing may be, if you don't know how it's being graded--

PETER TAYLOR: Yeah. So, it looks as if-- from the marks scheme, it was a pretty kind of anatomical kind of--

KAREN FOLEY: One of your colleagues must have done it.

PETER TAYLOR: --image of the fish that you wanted to kind of say it's a conventional fish, with all of those particular kind of key aspects to it. Whereas the skate-- it's a skate, by the way-- it's a very different kind of shape. So probably, that would have been quite a challenge, in terms of making sure everything was in and fitted with the mark scheme. And the singer with Marillion is a similar kind of issue.

So, making sure the context is right, that you need to draw a conventional fish, and you need to think about what kind of diagram it's looking for. I was looking for some fish in art, the other day. And there was a Matisse picture of some goldfish. Which was a beautiful picture. But when you actually looked at the fish, they would not have got many marks on this particular grading system, because they were just kind of splurges of orange.

And similarly, I was looking at some Escher symmetrical diagrams, where the fish gets converted into a bird. And again, you know, the fish in that particular painting would not have got many marks. So it's understanding what the context, what you're being asked to do, and understanding that, yes, you need to draw this anatomical version of the fish.

And so, we were a bit mean in just saying "draw a fish." I would expect us normally to say "draw an anatomical version of a fish, remembering to include all of the fins and other kind of aspects of the fish. Draw it in three dimensions. Draw it in colour. Label it."

So I think we'd ask for those things specifically, to make sure that students understood that they were needed. But, from a student's perspective, it's import to remember to do all of those things. Because, in the end, it was, what, 50% for drawing it in colour. So, that's half the marks. So, understanding the importance of the various aspects of the task is quite key.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. No, it is. We asked people-- I mean, it's great. A lot of you have got an assignment that you can look at. So 78% of you are saying that you have got something that you can look at, so that's brilliant. Get hold of that.

And, if you haven't got something, and you're not studying, you obviously can't get something. But if you haven't got something, and you'd like to dig around for it, do get that out, and maybe

you can spend a bit of time having a think about how you might take on board some feedback. A recent assignment would probably be the most useful.

We also asked people whether they felt they got the grade they deserved, and 87% said they did. Which is very, very interesting, and I'd like to pick that up, as well. And we've also got the scores on the doors. So, HJ and Evaghn, let me see how you do. And then we'll see how everyone at home did.

EVAGHN: You go first. [LAUGH]

HJ: [LAUGH] Well, I've got five points.

EVAGHN: Oh, I've got 28!

HJ: Ah, there we go. But, annoyingly, this one also got five points, just because it's got the title.

[LAUGHTER]

So I'm sort of square with that one. But I think Stuart commented, as well, that he's going in for a reset with this one. So I might have to join in.

KAREN FOLEY: Are we allowed to reset assignments?

PETER TAYLOR: Yeah, I think so. I think there was-- technically, the question was faulty, and we should allow students to reset.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGH] OK. Well, let's see how you all did at home, how everyone got-- OK, so, 46% got 0 to 20. 20 to 40 is 31%.

So, most people would have got, technically, in terms of OU passing thresholds, would have failed the assignment, Peter.

PETER TAYLOR: Yep.

KAREN FOLEY: But, on a plus note, 15%, 8%, and 8%-- just over 30% would have passed.

PETER TAYLOR: Yep. But I think that's because it was not a well-thought-through assignment.

KAREN FOLEY: No, it wasn't. But we would like to thank our colleagues from D100 for letting us use that, because it really is a great teaching point. If you don't know what you're doing, magnificent as

it is you're not going to get the best marks.

PETER TAYLOR: Because we were drawing, I did go look one of our arts courses. So, this is Renaissance Art Reconsidered. And I thought to myself, I'll just check what kind of information that students are given about assessment.

So there's a booklet called "Assessment Information for Arts." So that's arts courses, themselves. There's the module guide. And in the module guide there is a description of what's needed for the general-assessment activity.

Then there's an assessment guide, which has got lots of useful information in it. And then there's TMA01. And it's interesting that this TMA01, as well as having the question, then includes exactly what you said, in terms of guidance notes. So, as well as asking a question, it explains what they're really looking for.

So, there should be enough material within the course for students to be able to get a clear understanding of what's being asked of them. The problem is making sure that students search out and know where to look.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, because, like you said, there is plenty. And often they're in different places, with different things. There might be a referencing guide which would be very useful to look at. How to submit, how to format the TMA.

There's so much stuff there. But, you know, again, it's about recognising what you need to know and then how you can get it when there are multiple ways.

PETER TAYLOR: In particular-- that's right-- when you move from one module to the next-- you know, the website is differently organised, and it's trying to make sure you can move from one to the next.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. No, absolutely. HJ, what's this about appeals, with the marks?

HJ: Oh, yes. So, I've been told this needs to go for remarking. And it's actually got seven. So, more than mine, not the same, because Fish has eyes and a mouth. [LAUGH] So--

PETER TAYLOR: Excellent! Excellent!

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: OK. But, I mean, assignments can also be appealed, if students don't understand. So, when you're getting your assignment back, and you're thinking-- you know, a lot of our students are saying, yes, they do think that they got the grade that they deserved, so they would be unlikely to do anything. But it's very important to be able to actually understand what your tutor's saying, in terms of what feedback you're getting and whether or not you think that mark is deserved or not.

PETER TAYLOR: So I think one of the things is to read the feedback carefully. Because the feedback should be explaining to you where you gain the marks, but also where you lost the marks, and how you can improve next time around. So I think you really need to read that carefully. And only if it really doesn't make sense to you, do you kind of just go back to your tutor and say, can you just explain this again? And hopefully you'll get a clearer understanding of what's needed.

I think, in many ways, the important thing is to look at the feedback you get. And think about things like, what were you being asked around the fish? What was wrong with my fish?

But think about what-- if you were given that question again, how would you answer it differently? What have you learned from the feedback you've been given? And how can you then apply that to the next assignment, and the assignment after that?

So, for me, the feedback isn't just about making sure that you know how to draw a fish properly next time. It's about, next time, when you're asked to draw a dog or an elephant or whatever, you then have got some ideas about what you might be being asked to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Peter's that's been a brilliant, brilliant session. I'd like to end by asking-- I mean, that's great advice. But is there any other advice that you would give people? Because we're going to move on to this very tricky sort of emotional time, with Klaus-Dieter, who's going to talk about that immediate return of the assignment and what we do. But what's your general advice?

PETER TAYLOR: General advice is to make sure that you do make some time to look at the feedback. It might not necessarily be the time you get it back. So you might get it back, and you look at it, and you're busy doing other things. So you open it, you see the mark.

But make sure you've kind of built some time into your study planning, to be able to say, when I've got this back I'm going to spend half an hour or an hour, just going through that feedback and thinking about how I could improve and how I can use what I've learned in my next

assignment. So, it's about making time to do it, as an important activity.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, absolutely. Peter Taylor, thank you so much for coming along today. That's been a really, really useful session. And we will see you very soon at our Fresher's fair, where you're going to be talking about--

PETER TAYLOR: I'm looking forward to that again.

KAREN FOLEY: --lots of different activities, as well, there. Excellent. All right. Well, that's been great.

My next guest is going to talk about what happens when we get the assignment back. So, a lot of you have got assignments. And you might like to put something in the chat-- and I'm going to go over to HJ and Evaghn in a second-- to talk about how that sort of feels, in terms of when you're getting that assignment back.

Often you might be working on another assignment. They might be completely unrelated tasks. And you think, well, that was an essay. I'm doing a report now. What's the point in looking at this one to compare to that one?

So we're going to spend a while looking at how one deals with that space. And if you've done an assignment recently, which a lot of you have, then you might have some ideas about how you handle those various activities going on. HJ and Evaghn, what sorts of things are people talking about right now?

EVAGHN: Yes. There's some good stuff in the group. Some of them had fish for lunch, which is quite fitting. So we've enjoyed the chat about the fish and the marking stuff.

Kate said that she often finds it hard to continue studying until she's got feedback from her last TMA. So I think there might be something there to say about how to deal with feedback and how to emotionally handle it. And Sylvia also said she finds it pretty stressful when she's told her TMA's marked but hasn't looked at the mark yet. She finds that little period of time quite stressful, until she sees the mark. So, again, I think it's just about handling your emotion and setting yourself, being ready to receive the feedback and the mark, basically.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. And what about you two? Because you've both been studying with the Open University. How do you both relate to that side of things? Is it really difficult to start something new before you've ended something old?

HJ: I think, personally, I found that I agreed with this point, when it came up. Chantelle said she agreed with it, as well. I'm not too sure why. You know, we were talking about, it might be an emotional thing. And I think, that's it. Just sort of, I don't know, the expectations that you put into an assignment, and then just waiting for it to come back, and feeling like you can't move on to the next bit until you've done that. So, yeah, I'm not sure.

EVAGHN: Yeah, I think for me it's difficult. I mean, I think if you're doing one module, it's a lot easier than if you're doing two. So, at the moment, I'm doing two. And what happens is, you kind of finish one assignment, and you have to go on to the next one, But you want to give yourself a break, and you want to see how well you did with that one. So I think it's just a mental thing, in terms of coaching yourself to keep going until the end of the module, as it were.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. And often they come at similar times, don't they, because of the way the assessment patterns work?

EVAGHN: Mine are about a week and a half apart, which is quite annoying. But, at the same time, at least, if I'm in that mood for work, I can hopefully just try to keep that momentum going.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Absolutely. So, well, let us know your thoughts on how you deal with all of those patterns and cycles. But I'd like to welcome my next guest, Klaus-Dieter. Thank you for coming along. You're from a completely different area to Peter of the university. And you're in the Languages department.

But today we're going to talk about this whole, very challenging issue of when you get your TMA back in the cycle. I was at a tutorial on Saturday, and some of the students said, I just can't move on with the next one until I've had my marks back. And I said, well, I'm not giving them-- [LAUGH] no, [INAUDIBLE] [LAUGH]. But some of the tutors hadn't returned the work yet, because it was just on the borderline of the 10-day turnaround period.

But the assignments were completely different. And I wasn't quite sure why there was such a mental barrier. Is this something that you've heard a lot from students, about moving from one task to the next?

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Yeah, and I think we all recognise that, too, in other aspects as well. You finish on one task, and you kind of want to have some external validation. You know, how well have you done? And it may be difficult to go on to the next one.

But, in a way, if you look at your whole life-- as a student, as maybe a parent, somebody at

work-- it might help that people actually do manage to get on with their other life. It's just that block. I can't do more studying, until I've found out more about that TMA.

There may be a notion that the TMA and the result I get is the culmination of the point that I've reached, up until that moment. And I would like to offer a different perspective, in the sense that it is only a step in a cycle of learning. And the feedback that you get-- that's the mark, but also the comments from your tutor-- is actually very, very important, to close that loop and then move on to the next step. So it's sort of cyclic learning.

And unfortunately the way-- we're a big university, and there are lots of students and tutors involved, and processes. We just can't do it as quickly as we would want and as, I'm sure, students would like to have their results back. So we kind of have to live a little bit that you might be engaged in several cycles of learning, even across different modules. And that's a skill of being an independent learner, and also a function later, or while you are in your job, in that sort of parallel fashion.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely. There's a lot going on. And I think you're right. You know, there are techniques that can make that easier to bracket certain things and identify what's going on. But it is a skill and a challenge.

Right, so, we've got some widgets, here, for you I'd like you to fill in, please. How did you respond to your last TMA grade? So, if you could let us know which option there applies to you.

What three words best sum up your response to your last TMA? So, those of you, the majority of whom have recently done a TMA, what three words sum it up? If you can only think of one or two, you just put a full stop in the others, because the form won't send until you've put three things in there.

The next question is, how does your TMA score impact on your next TMA? So, how important is that grade, in terms of impact? That could be your motivation, your time you put into something. It could mean something else. And you can put comments in the chat, as well.

So, on that Likert scale, how much does that score impact on on your next TMA? And, did your tutor understand your work? Sometimes it's very easy, when you're looking at the learning outcomes, and you're looking at your assignment, to say, yes, of course I've answered this question. I've gone into a lot of detail. I've described this. What do you mean I

haven't done this?

So, do you get the sense that your tutor actually understood what you were doing? And I guess the point that we're going to really pick up on is, do you need more clarity? And how can you actually take on board more clarity by either talking to your tutor, or thinking a bit deeply about what you've actually been doing, or talking to other students? So, how can you actually get a sense of perspective about the extent to which you actually met that task and somebody else was able to understand what you were delivering in relation to that task?

OK, so we've talked about sort of getting the feedback back. And there's this very emotional time where, like you say, you look at the grade. You might then think, oh, that's dreadful. And people will either have done better or worse than they thought they might.

I wonder, as well, if people can put in the chat how often you think, oh, yeah, this was a this assignment. This was a 72, or this was a 64-- whatever. Do people actually sit down and think, this is in this sort of bracket-- that's what I'm expecting? Or do they just think, it was brilliant-- if I don't get a first, that's it?

So what are your thoughts, then, Klaus-Dieter, on this whole idea about grades and proportioning grade and sort of the usefulness, I guess, of thinking about how much time and resource you've had to put into something and therefore what sort of output you should have?

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: We're kind of trained to deal in grades. And research has shown that, even where people try to be just focused on feedback, on comments, the grades were the kind of thing that mattered. And, indeed, giving grades and feedback seems to be the best way forward.

The question really is, so, what does a number represent? 63, 59, 88. We've seen, in the earlier session, you could put it into boxes-- let's say, 1 to 20, 20 to 40. What does it mean to you to be in a box? I don't think it's a very useful information.

I guess a lot of what people probably want to do is to compare. So, how did I do, compared to somebody else? And, again, you know, this might seem like a useful piece of information, but I don't really know what I could learn from--

You know, you and I, let's say we would do a course. And you, let's say you do brilliantly-- 99-- Karen, and I do just 44. What am I going to learn from that?

It would be much more useful if I then said, hold, can I see your feedback? What did your tutor

write about the things that worked well for you? And maybe I can learn something from that. And, in that sense, if you can draw on fellow students, on drawing their feedback and learn from that, that's OK.

But I think the most important part is really dealing with your own feedback first. And I think that's where a lot of things, a lot of the time, people don't do themselves justice. So I can imagine--

And I've asked some students, so, what do you do? And I almost suspected, and you quickly open the envelope, or you open [INAUDIBLE] like it used to be, you open-- the email, look at it, take in the number, maybe take in a couple of words. And the emotions come up. Disappointment, anger, joy, whatever it is.

And then maybe it's the point when you first put a kettle on, make a cup of tea, and just give yourself a little bit of time to just allow those emotions to sit with you. Because they're there for a reason. And why don't welcome them?

And then you go back and look at the details. And I think a key point that we all need to-- and Peter pointed it out-- assignments are written to test learning outcomes. They don't test the person.

So, the mark is not a reflection of who you are as a person. It is just a reflection of where you are in your learning journey, within a particular context, within a particular task, and in whatever circumstances, you are at the moment.

The session was sort of built dealing with TMAs, with feedback. And I think, in the title already, we set ourselves up to look at it from a sort of positive-negative perspective. "Dealing" is something that we often use in a negative context-- dealing with anger, dealing with maybe trauma, or just dealing with a sick child, or something-- you need to do something that is not optimal.

And then you end up thinking of positive feedback and negative feedback. We do that all the time. There is potentially another way of looking at feedback, and that might help with those emotions, as well. And, if I could, I would just sit somewhere else to just represent that perspective.

If we say, the feedback gives us information about our learning, it will help us with our learning. And it gives us something to feel good about. Those two elements.

So the learning part could be, OK, it tells me things went well, so I can use those in future assignments. Or it tells me where there's room for improvement, and I get some very, very detailed feedback from my tutor, which is brilliant. So, those parts help me with my learning. And, if you want, this is all positive.

And then the second part is feedback to make you feel, well, I think this is important, when we should allow ourselves to receive that, too. So, if you get a high mark, and if you get wonderful, glowing comments from your tutor, of course you're not going to have a bad time, I think.

If it didn't go so well, there's still probably-- there might be a comment, saying, like, I see you've really worked hard. And that could be a positive statement, in the sense of, yes, I have really worked hard, and my tutor has noticed it. Or a tutor might say, I can see an improvement from the last TMA.

And, again, the journey to the end of the module might still be a long one. But you could take that as a step that has worked. And that could make you feel-- that could help you maybe, if you like, deal with some of the emotions that came up.

And I would suggest, let's not call it "dealing" with feedback, sort of receiving feedback, just letting it all come, and make the best of it, whatever you do with it.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. That's such a good point. We asked our audience what words sort of come to mind. And things like "wow," "confused," "relieved," "happy," "brilliant," "satisfied," "inspired," "disappointed."

So there's a real range of things, Klaus-Dieter, that are coming up with people, in terms of their TMAs. Overwhelmingly, I think it's a lot more positive. Because we also asked them, and I'd like to show this onscreen, "How did you respond to your last TMA grade?" So let's see how that's moved.

So, a large proportion, 41%, had said "relief," and that's followed by "delight," at 29%, 18% "anger and confusion," and 12% "disappointment." So, like you say, there is this very emotional reaction to something in the short term.

We've also seen that a lot of the students here are level 1 or 2. And something that I've noticed with students that are at the end of-- well, just beginning level 2-- is that they might

suddenly say, well, I was doing really well until now. And now I'm doing something more complex.

Or they might say, why are my marks-- why have they gone down so much? Because the tasks get a lot more difficult. And, like you're saying, people do need to consider the task and everything in isolation, because it's not a reflection of how good you are or even, like you say, how good your academic abilities are developing. It's about the extent to which you met that particular task.

But we also asked people about their TMA scores impacting on their next TMA. And a large proportion are saying it really, really does impact very, very much, indeed, in terms of what they're doing. So it can be a real hindrance.

But I'd like to pick up on this point that you'd made about the TMAs and looking at them in isolation about a task. Because it's very easy, once you start studying, to view grades as a trajectory and think, well, I started at this. I want to do better next time. Or, I got this mark, so I'm doing worse. What is your take on this idea of how we view grades as a trajectory?

PETER TAYLOR: It depends a little bit on the module that you're doing. So, if all the assignments are of a similar nature, then you might be forgiven in saying, OK, there's a trajectory, and I'm going up, or down, or whichever way. But, as Peter said earlier, every TMA is written within a context. And even if the type of TMA is the same, in any subject or field there'll be areas that you are more engaged with, that are more suited to you, than others. And it would be quite natural to do better in those that resonate more with you.

In my area, in languages, for example, we often alternate written and spoken assignments. And that's just-- some people, one speaks more than the other. And it would be very, very hard to then say, OK, I've done really well in my written, and maybe I didn't do so well in my spoken. I'm going downwards.

No, it's just a different assignment. And I think the key is that, once you've had your cup of tea, you sit down and really look very detailed at the instructions. And really make-- there's a lot of reflection involved, here.

So make your own notes. What is it exactly that that's been said, here? There will probably be areas where you're not quite sure. I think that would be the time when you go back to your tutor, or maybe you talk to fellow students. They might have got a similar response.

But then, also, you can then actually make a plan of, OK, what am I going to do with this feedback? How can I turn that into something that's useful for my learning? Reflection is a key skill, so you need to have that time. And, as I said, it's part of the cycle of learning.

But you can reflect until the cows come home, if there's no action that follows it. And, in a way, your tutor might give you some hints of what you could do. The action, however, must come from you. And that's where you then can start planning action.

And, by doing, by being active about addressing previous feedback, it may help to actually deal with working alongside on the other part of the course, in the sense that you're not inactive. This is not something that's hanging over you. No, you're actually taking steps, one at a time. It's part of your plan, just like the studying every week is part of your plan. That might help to mediate that kind of dissonance, sometimes, between studying and getting the result from a previous TMA, some time in your studies, during the week.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. Now, Jonquil is going to do the next session, on the time after we sat down to work on the feedback. So, if we could sort of move back a bit, just to think about this immediate thing. Because you've raised a lot of good points, and some I wanted to pick up on.

This idea about getting clarification, and also picking up on some of the good points. Because, like you say, there often are good points. And it's very easy to dismiss those. We're naturally inclined to think, well, how can I get better? How can I improve?

But, like you say, this good feedback is very important. So, first, could I ask about making sense of that in the immediate sort of space? Because, after a tutor's marked it, it's very fresh in their mind, and you're also working on something else.

So, how might students most appropriately get some clarification, if something's really unclear, where they think, I don't understand why you've written that?

PETER TAYLOR: I think if you engage, if you have that half an hour and really engage with the feedback-- and our tutors write really, really extensive feedback, a lot of them-- there's a lot of rich material. But it takes a bit of time to think it through, make sense of it. And if you can turn it into your own notes, then I think that marks part of the understanding. And if you can't, then there may be an issue, here.

And students mentioned confusion as one of the emotions. Then, that would be the one

maybe to contact your tutor about. But I think, just going back to your tutor and saying, I don't understand it, that wouldn't do justice to the tutor actually spending quite a lot of time writing and thinking the feedback through.

It's far more useful if you try to work it through. And if there's a pocket of information that you don't understand, then you can have a very targeted conversation that will help you more. And I think that that's sort of key for being clear about what the feedback actually told you. And then the next step, of course, is taking action.

KAREN FOLEY: So you could almost start processing some of this. And I guess once you start actually saying, what is the problem, and start writing it-- say, you start drafting an email to your tutor, for example, or trying to clarify really what the problems are-- it might be that you've worked through some of those aspects, just by trying to articulate them.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Yep. And that might work for some people. And maybe you do write that email, and you start with, OK, I'm getting all this-- A, B, C, D, E. I'm getting it all. But you mention it, so your tutor also knows, OK, that certainly landed.

But I'm not getting F and whatever the next [LAUGH] letter of the alphabet is. And then the tutor has a chance to really-- from an informed position-- to really hone in on that particular area that you're not sure about.

KAREN FOLEY: And it might be that then you could have a conversation, and they could explain it. Because it's very difficult, sometimes, without track-changing something, to maybe say, you've gone into too much detail, or too little. And sometimes that can be difficult for students to actually get a sense of what should be removed and what shouldn't be.

HJ and Evaghn, how is this resonating with people at home?

HJ: I think we had a little chat, earlier, asked people about what they expect out of the marks. And Jeanette said, at she wanted a first for everything, but it did sort of change as she went along. And she sort of learned how to pace her expectations.

And we were talking about how I do it, as well. When I've got marks, whatever band they've in, if I see an improvement that's always a good thing. We were having a little chat about that, so that's very good.

EVAGHN: Yeah, there's also some stuff in there about people getting their grades back and maybe not

getting marked for things that they should have got, or getting marked wrong and saying, well, I thought I did what I was supposed to. So, I think Klaus makes a good point about, when you get feedback, talking to your tutor. But it might also be a point to talk before the assignment and get maybe a bit of feedforward, for want of a better word.

KAREN FOLEY: That's a very good point.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: I've asked a colleague of mine, Maria Fernandez-Toro, and she made a very, very, very important point. You could be your own feedback-giver, if you like. That would be like a real sense of, I'm taking my faith in my own hands.

So, if you get a TMA, you look at not just at the learning outcomes that are being tested, you also look at the marking scheme. And then, on the basis of thinking about that, you write your TMA, and then you use the marking scheme, and you mark yourself. Of course, that means you have to finish your TMA just maybe a day before the deadline, but that could be a way of really submitting something that you've really, fully thought through. And that might help also with understanding the feedback, when it comes back to you.

There's also courses-- some courses have peer assessment. And I personally think it's a brilliant way of engaging with the task of being a tutor, with evaluating somebody else's work. And you'll always learn from that.

So, on the introductory course in languages, we have one peer assessment in there. And Maria tells me 25% took part in it. And it's a shame, because, when you look at the forum discussion that happened as a result of the peer assessment, there was a lot of learning in there. And maybe other people read those forum contributions, as well. But I don't think anything can beat just getting stuck in there and doing it yourself.

It's very easy to label reflection, self-assessment, or any reflective activity as, ah, not so essential. I'd rather read another text, or I do another task. And reflection is a key part of the learning. And you really miss out [INAUDIBLE] if you don't engage with it.

And these kind of peer assessments are really ways where you can actually look at other people's stuff and see, how would I mark that if I was a tutor? And that will already carry a lot of learning.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Absolutely. I was talking to some students on the weekend. And one of them said, yes, I thought you'd spot that. So, one paragraph was a lot weaker than the others. And she said, I

thought you would.

And I said, that's absolutely brilliant, because if you can spot the areas of weakness, you don't have to do something about them, but it allows you to sort of, I guess, manage your expectations about where your grades might fall and also know, if you had more time-- because no one's expecting perfection, are they? It's about knowing where you might do things, if you could, just so that, as a reflective learner, you're becoming more in tune with your own processes.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: I just heard that last week. And if you already know about the areas where you can improve and even have an idea of how you could improve, then I would not be worried about you at all. It's only when you kind of have no idea where you are and what might be needed to get better grades, to get better feedback. That's really when a bit more work is required.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. I'm going to leave all the stuff about confusion to Jonquil's session, which is coming up next, because I wanted to ask you about this idea which we were talking about earlier, which is when you've got these, you know, waiting for feedback and another task, or maybe completely unrelated tasks, and taking some feedback from one thing to another. Do you have any motivational techniques or ideas about how students might manage that space, where they've had something, they need to be working on something else, and they don't feel able to start, or they feel so demotivated that they aren't then able to progress?

PETER TAYLOR: There are a number of steps that you can take. And what I would say is, as you go through studying modules with us, try and find the kind of motivational tricks, tips, devices that work best for you. Because there's tonnes of research out there, but, in the end, of course, it really depends on what you make of it and what works best for you.

So, my first still would be, this is not about you. This is about an assignment. And it was about an assignment in the past. Now you're working on something different. There may be some commonalities between the two assignments, and, by all means, engage with the feedback.

But if you're already dealing with the old feedback by having taken some action, you can say, oh, no, this is already-- I'm working on it. I don't have to worry about it. There could be, of course, the, let's say, motivational chart or something. Just gather all the positive feedback that you've heard so far, put that all on a piece of paper or on stickers--

KAREN FOLEY: That's a lovely idea!

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: Put it up. This is a bit like TLC, that, you know-- just a visual TLC. Why not? I mean, we all feel sometimes down. And if we can remind us, OK, at that stage, this person said something really nice in relation to my studies, why not, if that helps you?

You could also reengage with the purpose of why you're studying at all. So, what will studying this module give me, in the end? What can I do afterwards? What kind of opportunities does it open up? Will it tell me something about myself, give me an opportunity at work, or [INAUDIBLE], you know, like maybe a change in career? Why is it--

How does the studying link to the purpose, to my life purpose? And that might be enough, just allowing those 10, 15 minutes to reconnect. And maybe, lastly, sometimes the day is not going your way. So, if you feel a little bit down, don't force it. Just allow that emotion to happen. You sleep over it, and the next day, it might have disappeared.

KAREN FOLEY: Do you think there's also something in this idea that so many people are passing-- you know, they might not get the grades they want, but they're actually passing. They're getting further and further to getting a degree.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: That's another one. I think, reflect on the journey so far, exactly. So, maybe you are in a 60-credit module, you know, nine months, and it seems like a big step, and then you didn't get the kind of feedback you wanted. Remind yourself you've already done three months.

And maybe at the beginning you didn't even know, how could I fit all the studying into my daily life? You've just managed three months. That's quite good. Or maybe you're already halfway through your degree. OK, there's still a lot to go, but, you know, you've done quite a lot already.

So, looking back at what you've achieved may well help you to keep perspective, to come back to it. And it was good to have Peter's session, before. An assessment is a tiny, little element of the whole learning process, focused on certain learning outcomes that we want to test partly as a-- you know, where are you, partly, where can we help you to get better on it? And it's nowhere near-- I mean, the bigger picture is always much, much bigger than that small assessment, however bad it feels in the moment.

KAREN FOLEY: I remember times in my journey when I've been studying and I've felt really heartbroken by something. And you look back, and it was so monumental at the time. But then actually, with

hindsight, and the more you do, and the more exciting things you do, things change in perspective, don't they, as well? And it's remiss to say it doesn't matter and, you know, it's just, go and get a master's or something, then the degree classification doesn't count as much. So, you can look at things in terms of a journey, but also time does shift things, doesn't it?

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: It does. And I'm sure students who are in their fourth, fifth, sixth year will probably have gained some of that perspective. I would also like to just remind students that, if you study a course with us, alongside job, family, you know, maybe somebody you need to care for, or some voluntary activity, you're already a winner, you know. Being able to put that assignment in time is already a huge achievement. And I think you should just sit back and occasionally just enjoy the feeling that you have achieved. And maybe that also puts the result, the number that you get, in perspective.

KAREN FOLEY: No, you're so right. So many people are juggling so many things. And they think, oh, I'm a bit more scattered than everyone else. I'm less organised.

But, like you say, some real battles that people are often up against, when they're trying to do this. And actually getting through it is amazing. People don't give themselves enough credit always, do they?

Klaus-Dieter, thank you so much for coming along. You've given us some brilliant ideas. I love the idea of writing everything you've done so well up, I'm going to do that for myself, so that I know what not to worry about. And then I can say, well, at least I can do x, y, and z. So, I really think that's brilliant.

So, thank you for coming along today.

KLAUS-DIETER ROSSADE: You're welcome.

KAREN FOLEY: And we'll see you at some future *Student Hub Live* events, to talk about languages specifically. Excellent. Evaghn and HJ, before we welcome Jonquil to the studio to look at things, just let me know how everything's going and what people are saying. Are people feeling a little bit more at ease with things? Are things making sense?

HJ: I think so, yes. Kate was saying that it's good to hear from tutors' perspectives, which is really nice. And we're talking about, as Evaghn said earlier, that if there's stuff we're unsure about, about talking to our tutors, and Kate says-- and I definitely agree-- that OU tutors are great at

being positive and wanting to help students.

And Sylvia's asking if it's normal to feel nervous about TMA marks. I think that's a definite yes. I think everyone does, because we put so much into them. And I think it's just a sign of how much we care about it. That's what I always think, when I'm nervous, it's because it's something we care about. But, uh, yeah.

EVAGHN: I was going to say, Chantelle says she's quite terrible. She has very high expectations, and she tends not to celebrate any of her achievements. She just feels relief, then panic, and then moves on.

So I think what Klaus said about taking time to actually understand that what you're doing is important and you have achieved something, and just taking time to enjoy your achievement, is good. Hopefully that'll make you feel better about the next one that's coming.

And I just want to remind all our viewers that, if you're having any problems in the chat, just refresh the window, and it should come back as normal.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Yes, a good thing to refresh, actually, often, isn't it? Great. And you can also pin the chat, as well, if it's going a bit fast. So don't forget there's the Pin button.

And also the option to change your screen layout, so that the video or chats can become small or bigger. There are three different options for that. If you're stuck, there's the Frequently Asked Questions section on the website, as well, that will give you some information on all of those things.

Well, thank you both. I'd like to welcome Jonquil to the studio. Welcome, Jonquil.

JONQUIL LOWE: Hello, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: Hello. Now, we're going to take a look at considered use of feedback. So, this is after Klaus-Dieter's immediate reaction to the TMA and thinking about what things you might do in that immediate aftermath. And we're looking, really, now at being a more reflective learner, generally, and thinking about things in a more considered way. So, maybe a little bit later, after that process that Klaus-Dieter's been talking about.

Now, we've got some widgets, here, which we'd like to know your responses to. So, how many times do you look at your feedback, when you receive it? Now, there's no right or wrong, here.

I know that you're very conscientious students-- and very good at maths. But just let us know, honestly, you know, how many times you look at it-- once, twice, not at all.

Did you understand what you did well? So, again, picking up on this point about recognising some positive feedback. Do you understand where you need to improve?

A lot of you had mentioned before that there were some areas of confusion, maybe disappointment, et cetera. So, you might want to put something about that in the chat, as well. But, you know, yes or no, do you know where you need to improve?

And then we've got a word cloud here. So, three things. But if you can't think of three, you can just think of one or two. And in the other spaces, just put a full stop, so that at least your responses will send.

What are some of the areas that you need to develop on? So, are there things that keep coming up that your tutors told you about? Introductions, conclusions, referencing, et cetera. Are there any things that are coming up in your work that you feel that you need improving on? It would just be interesting to know, really, what, as a collective group, people are dealing with at the moment.

So, Jonquil, you're from the Social Sciences. And we've got a lot of STEM students here, and also a lot of the students from Arts and Social Sciences. Now, this whole idea about considered feedback is a good one, because I think it's something that we often know how to do, in our heads, and we think, yes, I should look at my feedback.

We all know that's a good idea. I should pick it up maybe a couple of times and look through it. But sometimes it can be hard to do that, can't it?

JONQUIL LOWE: Yes, it can. And I've got a couple of slides with me that I'm going to use. And the first gives us that kind of big picture.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely.

JONQUIL LOWE: And then we'll have a look at what that means in practise. So, you know, here's the big picture of what's going on. So, you've done your TMA. You've got the feedback. You've got your mark, you've got your feedback.

Now, to really make the most of that feedback, the next stage is that you really need to both

read that feedback and internalise it, reflect on what it's actually saying to you. What have you done well? What's your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

When you've done that, you can then put yourself in a position to have some kind of action plan of how you're going to address those weaknesses, how you can build on the strengths that you've got, and then you experiment. Put them into practise in your next TMA. And you can see, this is like a cycle.

And so, this is the cycle of learning. It's about becoming an independent learner. It's not about your tutor telling you, you must do this. It's about your tutor helping you to reflect on how you become a better learner. And eventually you'll do this cycle of learning without your tutor. You know, you will be self-reflective, as a matter of course.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, this is such an important thing, because-- and, like many social-sciences diagram, you can see the cyclical nature of things, here. Which is all well and good if the tasks are similar. But often, we'll do a descriptive essay, a comparing-and-contrast essay, a report, et cetera, and we might have a plethora of assessment types in one year.

You might think, well, I'm not doing another compare-and-contrast essay, so it doesn't really matter right now, because next I'm working on this. But next year, you might be doing one. And these are still skills to develop.

And so what I really wanted to focus on is, I guess, trying to take on board some of the feedback and identifying, really, where things are, context- or subject-specific, in particular if you're doing a varied degree or an open degree or something like that. And also when you can recognise, well, I may not be writing an essay of that kind, but there are various things that I could include, still, in my next piece of assessed work.

So, how would you recommend that students can identify some of this? I mean, do you use a journal? How do people work on this, so that they can either use it now or save it for later?

JONQUIL LOWE: Yeah, good questions. Well, let's break it down into stages. These come from some of the open-teaching tool kits. And what I've done here is I've slightly rejigged these steps, in order to fit this nice mnemonic PROACCT. You know, double Cs. It's not great. [LAUGH]

KAREN FOLEY: Don't worry, there's no one from English Languages here.

[LAUGHTER]

JONQUIL LOWE: Just as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Sh!

JONQUIL LOWE: But the reason I've done that is to stress that this is about you being an active learner. You know, it's not a passive process. So it is about you engaging with your learning, which I think is exactly the point Klaus-Dieter has made, as well.

So, the first thing is that you probably don't want to do this immediately you get your mark. When you get your mark-- you've already talked about that-- you've got a kind of reaction to how that fitted with your expectations. And you're probably not in the best position then-- you might be busy doing other things, anyway-- to have this kind of reflective period.

So the first thing you want to do is to set yourself a study period, put it in your diary, allow yourself about 20, 30 minutes when you know that you're going to sit down and really look at the feedback you've been given and reflect on how you can use it. So, that's the first bit-- plan this meeting with yourself.

Now, I would start with the PT3, the assessment summary. So, you tutor will both have marked your assignment and put comments on your script but will also have made this summary of feedback. And a lot of that feedback actually is feedforward. It's about how you can do things better in the future.

So, your tutor will probably have highlighted some of the strengths that you've got. That's great. You know, and you know that those are things you can continue doing. You might want to develop them further, but they're good things that you're going to continue with. And then there will be some other things which are weaknesses that your tutor is suggesting that you might put more time into, more effort, and that they might then take you forward further.

Now, very often, those will be kind of generic skills. So we're talking about generic academic skills, generic study skills, sometimes employability skills, as well. But they tend to be the sort of skills that will apply whatever the assignment you're doing in future. And so they're well worth putting that effort into. So that assessment summary, the PT3, is where you'll get that kind of overview.

Now, I know some students just read the summary and never bother to look at the comments the tutor has put on their script. And I think part of that is as you say. It's because, well, I've

done that assignment. I'm not going to do that one again, so what's the point?

But actually, I would recommend that you open up the assignment. And what you'll see there is, still, these widely applicable comments of things that you could be doing better. You know, it might be referencing, say.

But what you've also got is the specific example. Here is how you've done it. Here is how, ideally, you would do it. And your tutor may also have given you some suggestions of resources that might help you.

But an important thing is that, if you don't understand your tutor's comments, then get in touch with your tutor and ask-- you know, your tutor is opening a dialogue with you. So, if you feel that you're not quite clear what he's saying, he or she is saying, then get in touch, you know, and find out more.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, you teach in Economics. Do many of your students get in touch with you, if they don't understand things?

JONQUIL LOWE: Well, I think it depends on the student. I wish more would. I wish all of them would! But there are some students who are definitely better at using their tutor.

And sometimes it's just about breaking the ice. You know, I don't know about you, but I really go to quite great lengths at the start of a module to make contact with my students, because, once you've broken that ice, they know they can contact you, and they feel more comfortable doing it.

But there are some students who perhaps prefer to study on their own. And that's fine, but you really should contact your tutor if you have need, if you don't understand something. That's why your tutor is there. You know, that's part of their role. And you have the right to contact them. So yes, I think all students should be proactive, when they want to.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. In the chat room, we're learning lots of new words like "feedforward," which actually, in all seriousness, is a very important teaching point and something we do try and do. So often, those things will come through in the script comments about doing things better next time. And feeding forward, I guess is the same-- well, the opposite of feeding backwards.

So it's about saying, when you're writing an essay, you could do x, y, and z. And, you know, sometimes I've found, certainly, when I'm marking, there are a number of times where I'll

really thrash out what needs to change about an introduction. And then, after a while, I'll think, this student isn't maybe engaging with some of this stuff.

I mean, these students are. We've got, like, 31% looking at it three, 31% looking at it four times.

JONQUIL LOWE: Really!

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

JONQUIL LOWE: Gosh, that's--

KAREN FOLEY: At their feedback.

JONQUIL LOWE: --amazing. That's really [INAUDIBLE].

KAREN FOLEY: And a lot of them understanding it, and a lot of them getting a real sense of where to improve. But these are the very diligent students, and we don't always expect that. You know, some students, because they're doing so many other things, don't have time.

And all of a sudden, it might be three months in. I haven't had time to talk to you, sorry about that, but I need you right now. Would it be OK, then, still, to get in touch with your tutor and say, sorry I haven't been doing so much stuff, but actually now I really-- I have a bit more time or space to do things, because life permits. So, could we have a dialogue?

JONQUIL LOWE: Yeah, that's absolutely fine. And, I mean, it's a given, with distance learning, that students are engaged in all sorts of other things. They're working, they're looking after family, you know-- all sorts of other demands on their time.

We know that students can't get in touch with us always exactly to some kind of timetable. But your tutor is there, throughout the whole module, whatever stage you're at and, you know, knows perfectly well that you're studying at the pace and in the chunks that fit around the rest of your life. It's not expected that all students are on page 136 on day x. You know, that's not how it works.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, brilliant. All right. So, we've talked about this idea. So we've got the PT3, which you've said is the summary. That's the sort of discursive, lengthy part of the assignment. And then you've got the detailed dialogue or the script comments that are going on. And these-- are you suggesting that they need sort of separate approaches, because they're doing different

things?

JONQUIL LOWE: Well, I think the summary has kind of packaged for you what your strengths are, what are the areas that need work. But the script comments, it's a bit more buried. Because obviously those comments are more focused on this particular assignment.

But there are sort of common themes that will be emerging. And so, as you read that, you'll be able to see those common themes, as well. But I think why the script comments are really useful is because you're getting in-context examples of what your tutor is talking about.

So, on the PT3, he might have said, you know, you need to improve your referencing. When you go to the script, you will actually see some examples of, oh, I see, yeah, I didn't phrase it that way.

KAREN FOLEY: But what if there aren't the examples? Would it be OK, then, to go to your tutor and say, you say I need to do this, but I don't know how. And then you could say, I can see I've done x but not y.

And actually, like Klaus-Dieter and I were talking about, sometimes going through that process can help you become your own sort of guide, in terms of where those areas are. But I guess otherwise you would seek clarity, wouldn't you?

JONQUIL LOWE: You would seek clarity. That's right. But I would also stress that most, certainly social-sciences, assignments have a self-reflection at the end of the assignment. And not all students do that self-reflection, but it really is a good idea to, because that is the beginning of that self-reflective process.

It's also interesting. It's the opportunity to kind of steer your tutor and actually say, well, these are the areas that I think I'm having problems with. And so, you kind of take the lead. You are being proactive, there, and saying to your tutor, these are the areas that I think I want your feedback and feedforward on.

And your tutor will quite probably agree. Sometimes they won't. You know, sometimes they'll say, well, actually you seem to be doing that fine. I thought this other area was something that maybe you should be focusing on.

KAREN FOLEY: There's a lot of chat-- and I'm going to go Evaghn and HJ in a second-- about bothering tutors with comments. And I know that most tutors are conscious, when they're marking-- I certainly

am-- about giving appropriate levels of commenting. So it might be, sometimes, for example, that you really need to work on your basics. And then the next time you get an assignment, you might pick up on things that you hadn't mentioned that were still not happening there, but they were less of a priority.

So there's this whole idea about the extent to which tutors can appropriately feed back without overwhelming people completely. So, would students be bothering tutors if they, A, didn't understand what the tutor said, or they were noticing things where things were being picked up where perhaps they were reflecting on their feedback and nailing those and then getting other sorts of comments?

JONQUIL LOWE: Right. So there are two things, there. I mean, one is, no, you're never "bothering" your tutor. That is what your tutor is there for. If you were in a bricks-and-mortar university, you would quite naturally go to your tutor at the end of a lecture, or you'd go and knock on his study door or whatever.

Because we're distance-learning, OK, you're going to do it in a different way. It might be email, text, phone, whatever. But, you know, it's the direct equivalent. Your tutor is there to support you in your learning.

And yes, you should get in contact. And he or she will never think you're bothering at all. And, in fact, most tutors, you know, they enjoy that engagement with students. That's the interesting part of teaching, after all.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And even though they work part time, there's always a way that you can get in touch, by texting or emailing or whatever, saying, can I have five minutes, or whatever? And, in particular, I'm always impressed when people identify what the issue is they'd like to talk about, because it shows that they've thought through some of it.

Evaghn and HJ?

EVAGHN: Yes. Yeah, I think it might have been Jeanette that made the comment about bothering tutors. And Sophie's on the chat, as well. So Sophie basically just said, it really helps to get into the habit of actually contacting your tutor, even if you don't need help, just so you can get a further understanding.

I think my point is, you don't really-- or you can never ask enough questions. So, the more you talk to your tutor, the more questions you ask, the more you'll get a better understanding and

hopefully get a better mark. So I think people are getting that point now.

HJ: I think, as well, what I used to do to talk to my tutor and enter into a conversation, even by email, I'd ask, oh, just confirm, is the tutorial still going ahead on Saturday? And they'd say, oh, yes we'll be looking at this, this, and this. And then we start a conversation, which was really good.

So I like the idea of getting into practise and habit. So, maybe saying, oh, I saw the assignment. Thanks for the feedback. And just, then, when there is something that comes up, you have the confidence in that you know that you can approach them. But all the tutors I've found are absolutely brilliant. And, like Jonquil said, they want you to come and talk to them.

And I think Kate and Chantelle are just talking about having local study buddies, as well. So, just having someone else, just to talk things through. It doesn't even have to be another student. So, sometimes I just like talking out loud with other people-- kind of helps reject things and work things out, as well, and sort through some problems you might be thinking about with your assignments, as well.

EVAGHN: I would say, just to echo that point, the squeaky wheel gets the oil. So, really, if nobody asks for help, no one will get help. And if somebody asks for help and the tutor thinks that, oh, the student might be struggling with this point, he might actually send something out to make other people understand it. So you might not just be helping yourself, you may be helping everybody else, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: That's a brilliant point, Evaghn, because I often find that, especially when assignments change each year. So, sometimes you might think, actually, you start getting a few questions through, and you think, ah, yeah, they could do with some clarification around this. So it's a good point. Excellent.

JONQUIL LOWE: I think that's great. A couple of things come out, there, for me. One is that no problem is too trivial. You might think, I can only bother my tutor if it's a really big, major issue! But, you know, it doesn't matter if it's a small issue.

But, yeah, also, if you're asking it, you can bet there are loads of other students who have also got that same question in their head. And so, yeah, do ask it. Yeah, it's great.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. OK. So, the next part, then, [INAUDIBLE] is your action plan, isn't it?

JONQUIL LOWE: Well, that's right. So, you've got all these comments. So, what are you going to do about them?

KAREN FOLEY: That's what I want to know.

[LAUGHTER]

JONQUIL LOWE: Well, it kind of depends, doesn't it, I suppose, what the comments are. But you're probably going to focus more on your weaknesses, to be fair. You know, you should never forget the strengths, because those are the things you are already doing well. You need to continue doing those.

But, if there are areas where you need to do better-- so, your tutor will have given you some guidance. We've talked about referencing. But sometimes it's about planning your essays. Sometimes it's that you tend to put forward views but not arguments, so you're not bringing evidence in.

So there are all kinds of things that might be going on. So, you've got to, having identified what those weaknesses are, think, well, OK, what's my plan for dealing with those? So it might be that you need to go back and look over some study skill material. It might be that you contact your tutor, ask for suggestions of what you should do.

Your tutor might, for example, have some study sheets that have some worked examples, to give you some practise. Or it might be that you just need to discuss with your tutor to get this concept kind of clear in your head. So there are all sorts of actions. That's why it's a kind of action plan, rather than a sort of more detailed. It depends what the weaknesses are.

But you've got to think, OK, I've got this weakness, I want to make it a strength, so making it a strength is my goal. What's my plan for getting from where I am today to where I want to be? And your tutor is there to help you do it.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, what's your take on this? This is something, when I'm marking and giving feedback, I find really difficult. Because you're writing a lot of comments. And sometimes, one thing would make a massive difference to the grade. But it is still proportionately one sentence out of a lot of sentences.

And I'm really interested in how you recommend students can identify the areas that would be easiest, and most effective, bearing in mind they've probably got maybe, I don't know how

many, maybe 30 or so comments on a short essay. And there may not be 30 or so things to improve. So, how do people prioritise and recognise, then, where those things might be? Because I think sometimes it can not be obvious to people.

JONQUIL LOWE: Yeah. Well, hopefully your tutor is pulling out some of those things, particularly in the PT3, in the assessment summary. So, your tutor is well aware that there might be 30 things that they could pick up on. But they themselves are going to prioritise, because they don't want to overwhelm you.

So your tutor hopefully will have done some prioritising, anyway. And the PT3 should be kind of pulling out the most important points, the key points. Otherwise, I think, really, I think you would need to talk to your tutor. Because I think it's quite hard, as a student, to know whether it's your academic voice or the lack of evidence that is the really big issue.

I mean, probably it's going to be things like the lack of evidence, really. But, at the end of the day, by the time you get to the end of your module, hopefully you'll have cracked all of those things. But you're right. You can only do so many at a time.

So, we might take these slightly out of order. But, having the action plan, you might have a lot of actions. And you do need to choose those priorities.

KAREN FOLEY: Which would have no impact on your acronym, here, because they're both two Cs. [LAUGH]

JONQUIL LOWE: [INAUDIBLE] It was cunningly designed. [LAUGH] But let's talk about the learning journal, because I think that's a really useful way to help you to choose your priorities and kind of getting to know yourself as a learner.

So, a learning journal is not a list of what you've done or what you've read in your module text. It's a reflection on you, yourself, as a learner. And so it's more about thinking about, OK, why did I do things that way? Could I have done it differently?

And some of what you put in that learning journal will be about that feedback you've had on your tutorials-- on your TMAs. So, it's, you know, OK, my tutor said I wasn't very good at doing introductions and conclusions. OK, I think I agree with that. Here's how I might do that differently.

So it's this kind of more internal, looking at yourself, as a learner. And that learning journal, I mean, you might put all sorts of things in, today. I mean, I came across something today which

was a little matrix of how to organise something. I thought, well, that's really useful! If I had my learning journal with me, I'd have put that in. You know, there are just certain things.

And you might also come across little tests that help you to know whether you learn perhaps more visually, or you're more text-based. It just helps you to understand how you learn best and how you can develop as a learner. And it records, as well, you know, that journey of learning, so you can actually look back, over time, and you can see, well, yes I was there. But, hey, I'm here now. And, as Klaus-Dieter was saying, that actually can be very motivating.

But, in terms of your TMA, what that journal does is it's noted down the key points of your action plan and the things you're going to focus on. So, when you come to prepare your next TMA, then you can take those items from your learning journal. So you haven't just picked up that TMA and looked at it for a few minutes and put it on one side. You've actually thought, how do I use all of this feedback, and feedforward? How do I use it to make my next TMA even better?

KAREN FOLEY: And so maybe having a flick through and thinking about what's applying, over even the years and modules, et cetera, could be useful if you had a little synopsis. Let's see what everyone said. Because we asked you what areas you needed to develop. So, let's see how that word cloud's looking.

So, some people are saying "introduction," "more detail," "explaining," "critical thinking," "understanding the question." "Critical thinking" seems to be quite prominent, in a number of guises. "Needing simpler languages," "writing maths working." So, some specifics, as well. "Time keeping," "different sources," "literature searching," "evidence," "academic writing."

So there's a real range of things that people have identified working on. One thing that springs to my mind, with your journal, is this whole thing of evaluation or critical thinking. And it's a common thing. "You have not evaluated this enough. You have described it too much."

And it can be a difficult thing to translate, because, of course, every example is very, very different. And the level of detail or evaluation will depend, depending on what frameworks you might be using to evaluate that within. So that could be something worth picking up as maybe an example in your journal, couldn't it?

JONQUIL LOWE: I think that's right. I mean, all learning is really about internalising and then using that material. It's a kind of synthesis within you. So, a lot of these skills that you're learning, they're about

how to take that knowledge, to move from description to actually taking that knowledge and using it in a way that produces something different, which may be your evaluation. It may be your comparison, or whatever.

So yeah, it's that whole process, and that journey of getting to be-- I think often it is actually confidence. You know, I often read essays where you can see the description is actually, I'm just trying to put off the moment when I actually have to reveal myself, and my tutor might not like what I'm going to say. [LAUGH] You know, you have to get over that hurdle.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. No, absolutely. We're nearly out of time, and I wanted to end the last of your feedback points, here, which is about TMA preparation. And, as we were saying earlier, this can often be happening concurrently. So, while you've got the feedback, you're then working on your next TMA. So, what have you got to say about this part of the process?

JONQUIL LOWE: Well, it really is essential, I think, that you take that feedback from your previous TMAs and consider it, when you do your next TMA. I mean, otherwise you're just really looking at your TMAs in isolation, and you haven't got that cycle of learning going on. You know, it's back to that first diagram, that you need that reflection to feed into your next TMA.

And that gives you this sort of steady, hopefully steady, progression, as you go through your module. You'll be building those strengths. Each TMA, you'll have a few more strengths under your belt. You'll be able to feel that progression, as you go through.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Jonquil, this has been a really, really useful session. And thank you so much for coming along--

JONQUIL LOWE: A pleasure, as always.

KAREN FOLEY: --and spending the time to talk to us about this today. So, thank you.

JONQUIL LOWE: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: And I hope you've found that useful, also, in terms of thinking about the TMA. Like I said at the very start, these are often things we know about, but it can be really useful to actually sit down-- and I don't know whether any of you have-- with that TMA that you'd identified earlier, been able to maybe think of a couple of points that you could actually improve on for your next piece of work.

So it'd be very interesting to know in the chat whether, through Jonquil's session, you've come up with any ideas about either things you could do, like a reflective journal to identify points that you could maybe test out with your tutor prior to your next TMA, or areas that you might want to focus on to think about doing differently next time. And maybe marking those pre-- your tutor marking them-- to see how you're actually fairing, in terms of developing those skills.

So, before we move on to our next guest, who's going to talk to us about their experience from a student perspective, HJ and Evaghn, I'd like to spend some time with you, thinking about how everyone is feeling and doing and how they're making sense of this.

HJ: I think we're very happy with this session. Kates says "Yes, using feedback in future TMAs is invaluable," about what Jonquil said about looking at TMAs as a whole. And she said earlier that she's going to contact her tutor with a view of feeding forward. Which I don't think we could, like, stress this enough, about talking to tutors.

I mean, some people are saying that they're concerned about not building a relationship with their tutor because they can't go to tutorials or things like that. But, through seeing your TMAs, they have sort of an idea about how you work and how you write.

What I did is asked my tutor, once-- I brought it up before-- about what I could do generally to improve my academic writing as a whole. And, because he'd seen my TMAs, he was able to give me some pointers that helped me improve overall. So, even though you can't attend tutorials, or maybe you can't attend online tutorials, because they've seen your work they do have a bit of an idea of how they could help you. And it's just about dropping them an email, really.

EVAGHN: Yeah. I think everyone really loved that session. Some good comments about the cycle of learning. Stuart says it seems like it's never-ending. And Kate says it's something that doesn't really come easily, but she's still learning how to do it efficiently. I think that's the importance, is literally to keep going.

The art of reflection is probably quite difficult to master. But, as Jonquil said, it's quite vital for steady progression throughout the TMAs and the whole qualification. So keep reflecting.

KAREN FOLEY: Good. And are people feeling happier about their TMA? Well, not that it's a sort of, I guess, a learning outcome to feel happier about it, but making more sense of what to do with some of that content. Are there any good ideas that have come through?

EVAGHN: I think the thing about just keeping in touch with the tutor, also trying to facilitate collaboration between the peers, as well, because you're all in the same boat. So you've got probably the same problems as each other and also the same ideas as each other. Which, if you talk about, you could hopefully develop into better ideas.

So I think there's a big point about collaboration. And again, confidence, you know, once you've done a bit of things and you see that you're doing the right thing, it always gets easier to do better. So I think people are getting quite happy, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And it'd also be really useful to know how you found this experience, being with other students in the chat. You know, if you want to put something in there about how you found talking to people, whether that's helped alleviate things, whether you've identified commonalities with other people. So it'd be really interesting to know how you found that experience, being at the *Student Hub Live* events in this real time, and thinking about that.

And I'm conscious that people drop in and out, as well, throughout these sessions, which are all available on the Catch Up if you've missed any. And, if you are just joining us, then welcome to the sessions. It's all live and interactive, best on the "Watch and Engage!" option, but you can also watch only just to see the live stream, as well.

Well, our last session looking at feedback is with Conor McQuaid. Conor, welcome to *The Student Hub Live.* And you've joined us before, where you've been talking about your postgraduate work, and you boiled an egg for us, didn't you? [LAUGH]

CONOR MCQUAID: It worked spectacularly well.

KAREN FOLEY: It was fantastic! And you can watch that on Catch Up, as well. But you're doing some really, really interesting work. And I'm so glad you've come along, because I wanted to talk about this whole point of feedback, which isn't just about tutor-marked assignments. It's about being an academic and about learning.

And you're in a really interesting stage of your career, where you've been doing an undergraduate degree and now you're doing, you know, PhD. And you're getting lots and lots of different kinds of feedback, as well. So I wanted to talk about this from a range of perspectives, about how you've sort of dealt with feedback, any ideas you've got for students, thinking about conference presentations, writing papers, and all of these things of which

feedback is just such an important part.

And we've got some widgets which we'd like to know your thoughts on. So, do you often get the same feedback repeated? So maybe some of those of you who were writing about being confused about things are seeing things popping up over and again but aren't maybe understanding what the point is of that.

We've got a word cloud, as well. "I see feedback as--." So, what do you see feedback as? That could be anything.

There's three options in there. If you don't put all three things in, it won't submit. So, if you can only think of one or two, just put a full stop in the box, and then at least that will populate the word cloud.

How often do you reflect on your feedback? So, we've asked you beforehand how many times you're picking up your TMA, and a lot of you said, a lot more than three, which was great. But we just want to check in, as well, because people do come and go from these sessions. So, whether you never look at it, to you look at it all the time. I think that might be a little bit inclusive, but it's a scale, so maybe towards the top end.

And have you ever tried to mark your own work? So, like Jonquil was talking about the importance of being a reflective learner, have you ever tried that? We'd like to know. OK.

So, Conor, what's it like, being a PhD student? And what sort of feedback are you dealing with now that may be different from undergraduate study?

CONOR MCQUAID: Yeah. So, it's a lot more specific to what I'm doing day to day. So I have weekly meetings with my supervisor, my primary supervisor, and we do checklists, which were really useful to help just plan out what you're going to do.

And also I have, every three months, meetings with the drugs company who support me. So they've got a very different kind of goal orientation. They want me to have lots of results and lots of things. So it's a different kind of workload, but it all works together.

KAREN FOLEY: So you've got very different motivations coming into play and, I guess, different feedback, as a result of that.

CONOR Yes, so my supervisor would be more about the simple problem-solvings, and what I would

MCQUAID: expect to do next if I got this result, or what the literature would recommend, while the company is more concerned about actually getting results so we've got some solid feedback to build on with. And, again, it does work hand in hand, but one is more following academia and following what's interesting, and one's more about goal orientation.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Now, how do you deal with the side of things, getting these different sorts of feedback? Because you're working on a lot of complex things. So you might be working on your literature, you might be doing your primary research, et cetera, feeding back on results, doing analysis. You're doing a lot of different things, so there'll be a lot of different forms of feedback coming through.

How do you react to some of that, though? Is there still that sense that this is your baby and your work, and therefore anything negative is going to hurt a bit?

CONOR MCQUAID: It's a big step to realise that all the criticism that you're getting is constructive, or very rarely it's anything other than that, and that they're all just trying to hope for you to improve. So, yes, and something like writing, when you kind of do maybe a month or two of quite heavy writing, and then not do it for six months, learn that it's never perfect. You're always going to have to keep back, keep learning. And my supervisors are still learning every day, so this learning experience keeps continuing.

KAREN FOLEY: That's such an important point, isn't it? Because I often think students think, oh, well, I'll get to the end of my degree, and then I'll know how to write an essay, and I'll be perfect at it. And, like you say, you know, if you're not practicing skills, you can get really out of sync with them, very, very quickly.

Everybody is learning something new. Everyone's got their own battles and their own feedback. But, this idea about it being sort of a step, where you realise that the feedback is constructive, can you tell us about that? Was there a moment, or did it develop?

How did you get that sense that, actually, I've been getting feedback all the time, but now this is actually here to help me? These people aren't criticising. It's not that I need to improve, it's a way of developing, as opposed to being bad.

CONOR MCQUAID: Well, I think I always kind of felt, even through primary school and stuff, that English was never a strong point-- writing skills, and things. But the more I've gone along with it, the more I've developed. There's more of a system. And it's a very simple set of goals. And so, just the more

by doing it, the more you appreciate what it is, the skills that you're learning.

And, yeah. I just feel that you're always going to be progressing and moving forward. And, although it might feel sometimes that you're just not built to do these things, you actually are. It's just learning the process to do it.

KAREN FOLEY: A lot of feedback I tend to get, if I've submitted something, has a different perspective. So it might be that I'm writing about x, y, or z, and then someone will say, well, actually, have you considered this, or this presents a different view on things, or this, that, and other? So sometimes there's quite a real dialogue going on, in terms of different ideas that maybe people are bringing to the table.

And from undergraduate students, as well, they might be having that dialogue with their tutor, in terms of the feedback that they're getting on their script comments. How do you then deal with things that are yours? Like, you haven't written this very well, or you could develop x, y, or z, or blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. So, things that are skills-related, and things that are feeding back around ideas or different viewpoints.

Do you separate the two out and think, then, OK, well, like Jonquil said, I could chuck that in my action plan, and I could work on this? Or, actually I don't really think that's a good idea, so it's something entirely different. You're talking about something else, and it doesn't really relate to what I'm doing, so I'm going to dismiss it. Different stages of feedback, aren't there?

CONOR MCQUAID: Yes. So, it's very much-- I feel like it's my own work, a lot of the time, when I'm doing it. And so I'll always have my point of opinion. But it's very important to appreciate that your supervisor, again, is giving another area of perspective. And that's really important.

But it's normally quite clear if it's, you know, your sentence structure is incorrect here, the phrasing is incorrect here, to, have you considered this opinion, have you considered this side of the argument? You can always just have a small comment about that side, if you really want to force through one idea and say your idea's better than the other. But, yeah. So, they normally can keep it quite well structured in what way to move forward.

KAREN FOLEY: And are there times, sometimes, where you have a break from something-- we've been talking about getting space from things-- where you might think, no, I'm not talking about that right now. For example, if it's an idea. And then, maybe later, you think, actually, maybe they had a point, or I didn't really, fully appreciate where they were coming from and actually it could be

relevant.

Do you park those things? Do you have a journal that you use, like Jonquil was talking about, where you maybe put things and then dismiss them for now but come back to them as important later?

CONOR MCQUAID: Yeah. Luckily, we have a lab book where we write down all the practical things that we do. But I also put my notes in from my weekly meetings and further meetings, as well. This gives a chance that, although I might not completely agree with someone's opinion at that time, I can always have it written down and solid in somewhere to track back to.

And it does happen, quite regularly, that you've not seen it maybe from just a different perspective, and at the time, you're kind of defending your baby, so to speak. But you realise later on there is a very valid point.

KAREN FOLEY: I want to ask you about whether you keep getting the same feedback, ever. Because we asked the audience how often they get the same feedback, and 54% of them say that they get the same feedback repeated. Now, we know that learning often doesn't happen immediately, and often you need to do things lots of times to learn from them. It's not just, you know, don't do that. Oh, OK, then I won't do it.

So, learning, having the same feedback is quite common, isn't it?

CONOR MCQUAID: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: How's that been, in your situation?

CONOR MCQUAID: It's been interesting. I mean, my main thing that I would get repeatedly-- although it's decreased as I've older and doing it-- is time management. So, I find it difficult to fully plan and understand how long something will take. But again, that's just practise, and writing to-do lists, and planning what you're going to do for the week, and then seeing, OK, that took twice as long. Therefore, I know what to do from it. So, although I've always had that from primary school, probably, upwards, it's definitely improved.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. We asked our audience, as well, how often they reflect on their feedback. And it's over halfway. So a lot of them are looking at it a lot of the time, in terms of reflecting on feedback.

And we've also asked them about marking their own work. The majority of them haven't. 64% say that they don't-- have never tried marking their own work.

Tell us how that's been for you, when maybe you're reviewing things, or you've got to almost self-check what you're submitting. How do you mark your own work and be your own reflective guide, throughout your own process? Do you need to do that?

CONOR MCQUAID: Definitely. Before you want to send something away to be published or to put it in the public sphere, it has to be correct English. It has to make sense. You have to check the science in it.

I think the biggest thing for writing is to read it out loud, as you go through it, and to actually see what it sounds like. And then a gap period. So you write it. The deadline's two weeks in advance. You have a couple of days of a gap, and then you go back to it. So you're reading it as if you've first come to it. And it really helps you evaluate what someone else, who's seeing it for the first time, kind of how it expresses to them.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, that's good if you're very conscientious and you've managed your time well, but what if you don't? What if life's getting in the way, and, you know, are there any sort of quick-fire techniques you've got that you could recommend to people, about checking maybe what's in a paragraph or whether a point's actually making sense?

CONOR MCQUAID: So again, reading out loud helps a lot, but also I've got some really good friends and sisters and people like that there who are really helpful. So I fire off an email to them-- can you have a quick read through this? Does this make sense? You know, some of them aren't in science, or anything like that, so it helps a lot if just the simple English makes sense to them. So, yeah, I rely a lot on friends and colleagues and [INAUDIBLE].

KAREN FOLEY: I'm glad you mentioned this, because I think it's a really important point. So many people say, well, I don't understand anything about this. How can I read it?

And actually sometimes it's more useful if someone doesn't get what you're saying, because they'll at least get whether a paragraph has a point to it or something's completely muddled. And, you know, if we're trying to explain something, it should make sense, even if it is to an educated or informed or specific scientific community. You know, they might not get the level of explanation, but there should be an aspect that people are able to feed back on.

CONOR MCQUAID: Yeah. There's always a problem with terminology and, especially in science, that you use big, long words to explain things, just because that's the quicker way to do it. But a good point of,

especially if you're writing grants, you have to write to a layperson who doesn't know anything about this. So, being able to explain that to the everyday person is a big step in it.

KAREN FOLEY: So, thinking now about feedback changing, often for undergraduate students at level 1, they'll get a lot of feedback, a lot of hand-holding, a lot of guidance in the TMA notes. What does your feedback look like now? I mean, you've mentioned the various sorts of different sides of feedback.

But how would you say it's different, in terms of what you're getting? Is it harder to understand maybe some of the points that are raised? Are they more complex?

CONOR MCQUAID: They are more complex, but it's developed as you've developed, so that it's more specific to a specific area that you're doing. But it still should make sense. I mean, something that I've always learned quite quickly, best piece of advice, was just to say, if you don't understand, you don't understand. If you don't know the answer, just say, no, I don't understand.

Because it makes such a big difference for people. We often try to pretend that we know all the answers and keep waffling on. The simple thing is to say, I don't know, and to sit down with the supervisor, and actually go through with it. And that's always helped me a lot.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. So, recognising where those parameters are. And I guess that might be quite useful if you were thinking about what you might write about, sticking with things that are addressing the point of the question or what you're supposed to be doing. Because it is very easy, isn't it, to veer off in different terrains? I bet you find that.

CONOR MCQUAID: Yeah, you just want to follow whatever's interesting. And you keep going and following that trail. And you need to keep a structure. You need to go back to the actual, the logical steps that you're going through.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. OK. Let me just take a quick trip to the Hot Desk and see what HJ and Evaghn are talking about.

HJ: Yes. Well, we had a little chat earlier about marking your own assignments. And I think Stuart said he'd do really well if he marked his own assignments. But I don't think we mean it that way. [LAUGH]

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGH] Yeah, you're not allowed-- mind you, that's not setting the question very clearly. [LAUGH]

[LAUGHTER]

HJ: But Kate and I were just having a chat about actually how you use the marking criteria to sort of, as a guide, and to point you about what you might need to include, because it gives some guidance as how tutors mark in regards to structure and making sure the references is in there. So it can be a good reminder of what you need in an assignment.

KAREN FOLEY: Like the fish.

HJ: Like the fish, yes. But we talked about criticising-- whether tutors criticise, as well. I have brought this up on another event, but I always like to talk about it-- that tutors, they never look to mark you down, they always mark you up. So, they make sure, have they looked at stuff from the module materials? Yes, so that's a bunch of marks.

And they always build you up. And they never like to bring you down. And, if you do feel that way, maybe just talk to your tutor. Or if you're not sure about the marks.

But I also said before, about, when you do get marks, it's a bit like salami slices. So, the big things, like getting referencing right and using module materials, will get you big chunks. And then the higher you get, it sort of goes up to more little slices. So it's not that you're not doing this well by not jumping marks, but when you get to certain points, just those minor improvements are actually really big and they're a very good thing.

KAREN FOLEY: So we're going for the whole salami, but in slices.

HJ: The whole salami, yes.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGH] It has to go back to food, always food. Always food, Conor, it's ridiculous.

OK. Now, tell me about some of the other ways that we get academic feedback. So, other than your PhD, you're going to conferences, presentations, and things, as well, either as a participant or maybe giving talks. It's very, very, like, offensive when people don't ask any questions, though, at the end.

So, like feedback, it's a really important thing. And often we'll get questions saying, I didn't understand this, this, or this, Or it might be someone's reflected on a different point. Or they might want to add something to that.

So, how do you then deal with this whole idea of feedback in these other, different academic terrains? Maybe you'll go to a conference and are too nervous to ask a question, but it is such an important part of being an academic.

CONOR MCQUAID: Yeah. I think, in general, a lot of scientists and people in science are quite nervous and shy people, generally. A big step in that is, we do student conferences quite often. And so we'll actually be doing chairs.

So then we'll know that, if someone's done a presentation and there's not questions, we put forward questions to kind of get that ball rolling and start the initiative. We try a lot to have students asking questions of other students, rather than just, at these kind of small events, just supervisors asking questions.

And then it moves on to papers and publications and things like that, where it's a lot more formal, so it's a lot more structured. It can be a little bit more soul-destroying, because they're actually going right-- and you go back in the lab and do six more months of work, when you thought you had something done. But it's a lot more bullet-pointed and simple to follow.

KAREN FOLEY: So, how do you then deal with some of that feedback?

CONOR MCQUAID: Sometimes you need to go to the pub and have a quick drink, to just kind of-- [LAUGH]

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. [LAUGH]

CONOR MCQUAID: But, yeah, it's just, try and keep it as all little points possible, and just use them as to-do lists. So, you find that your sentence structure wasn't right, so find a way to do it properly. Read *Essence of Style* or some kind of textbook to help with that, there, and move on with that. And, as long as you've got a good supervisor-- which, thankfully, I do-- they'll be able to feed back on those little things.

KAREN FOLEY: And what's been the most difficult thing for you to change? Like, we were talking about how people can get the same feedback over and over again. What's been hardest, for you?

CONOR MCQUAID: Time management, as I said before, has been an issue. And, with a PhD, you don't need to be in nine-to-five, technically. Quite often, you do longer hours. But, if you decide to sleep in and stay until noon some day, there's no one quite shouting at you. It's more about getting the work done.

So, I find that difficult. You're completely self-regulating yourself. And I can understand a lot of people who are studying at home, who maybe have a part-time job or full-time job, and having to come back and self-regulate themselves to do work, instead of having a cup of tea and watching TV. That's hard. But to-do lists and checklists and stuff really help that, and just by seeing a little bit of progress every day.

KAREN FOLEY: And do you value the feedback that you get? Does it actually help you?

CONOR MCQUAID: Yes, definitely. I mean, I use it all the time, as criteria of where to improve. And I think it's a big thing to know. You're never going to get perfect, but you want to keep going. You want to keep trying to get as high up and as close to that perfection as you can.

KAREN FOLEY: Has anyone ever given you any gems of inspiration or feedback that you thought, yeah, that's definitely it?

CONOR MCQUAID: I think the big one was told that, if you don't understand, just admit it. I was in the meeting to-- or, sorry, my interview for the PhD, and I just didn't know something. And I tried to explain it. I made sure I understood the question, and then I just had to admit I didn't know.

And they were quite thankful that I did that. They were quite happy that that's the way I handled the question. And that actually helped me get my PhD.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, really, really good. And sometimes you shouldn't know. Sometimes it's just not in your domain, is it? And so, by trying to answer something, it shows that you maybe don't recognise what is or isn't appropriate to be doing at that moment in time.

CONOR MCQUAID: Yeah, it's a better sign of your understanding of things if you can just go, no, I don't understand, rather than pretend you understand. So, yeah, definitely.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah, brilliant. Excellent. Well, thank you so much, Conor, that's been really, really useful. And I think, if nothing else, so interesting, because so many people don't know that there are PhD students at the Open University, doing lots of science. And just tell us briefly, to end, what your PhD is about.

CONOR MCQUAID: So my PhD is looking with Alzheimer's and all those kind of neurodegenerative disorders. And there's a huge issue with getting drugs into the brain. And 95% of everything that's been created to treat brain disorders don't get in there.

So I'm working with a company, with the OU, to hopefully create a drug delivery system that we can hopefully treat these disorders. So, Alzheimer's is personally specific to me, but hopefully Parkinson's, Huntington's disease, and a whole host of things.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Oh, good luck with that, Conor. And thank you so much for coming along.

CONOR MCQUAID: Cheers-- thank you very much.

KAREN FOLEY: That's been brilliant. Thank you. Well, that's the last of our guests for this session. And we're nearly out of time. But HJ and Evaghn, you've been drawing on the boards and doing lots of interesting things. Did you want to give us a little plenary?

HJ: Um--

EVAGHN: Trying to draw.

HJ: Yes!

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: It's all that pie you've been eating.

EVAGHN: So, yeah, I've drawn a pie-- or tried to, anyway.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. [LAUGH]

EVAGHN: And there's eight out of eight slices there which are all gone. And I thought I might just write "salami," instead of trying to draw it.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

EVAGHN: [LAUGH]

HJ: But we also, no, because we talked about proportions, about how to show, in numbers, the whole, didn't we, as proportions. So we're going for the whole salami. That's our point.

KAREN FOLEY: The whole salami. Yes, absolutely.

HJ: The whole salami. [LAUGH]

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely.

HJ: That's the point. But I also liked our bits with the fish, and actually finding out what that TMA is about, and making sure you read it properly. And, yes, use the assignment [INAUDIBLE].

KAREN FOLEY: Is that a numerical representation of pi, there, I see?

HJ: Yeah, we were told so show pie, but we weren't sure what pi.

KAREN FOLEY: All right.

[LAUGHTER]

HJ: But it's just making me more hungry, as well. They pointed out that they think I get distracted by food very easily. And they are right.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, you do! [LAUGH]

HJ: I can't help it.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, you tow have both been absolutely brilliant. Thank you so much for chatting to everyone today, on the Hot Desk, and for sharing information and advice.

We're going to end the live sessions now, but the chat is going to stay open for another half an hour, so that you can talk about anything that's of interest to you. And, if you haven't been able to engage with the content today, it's going to be available on the Catch Up, as is lots of other stuff we've been doing.

So there's loads of other sessions there. If you're new to the Open University, we've got all sorts of things, like navigating the virtual learning environment, things from your tutor, getting advice on how to progress, dealing with feedback, looking at assessments. So there's a lot of content on the *Student Hub Live* website that you can go and check out, if you like our programmes that we're delivering.

But I'd just like to find out how you've enjoyed the show today. So we've got a couple of widgets, there, which are, if you've enjoyed it, have you learned anything, and also, what's been most useful? But it's also really interesting for us to know how you found it. So, if you can put some comments in the chat, we'd be really, really grateful.

And there's also a small Feedback button on the website. Or, sorry, it's not a small Feedback

button. Actually, it is quite small. The Feedback button will link you to a small Feedback form, even, which is very quick and easy to fill out.

So that'll tell us what you enjoyed. And maybe if you've got some ideas about things that we haven't covered, you could let us know. You can also email us, which is studenthub@open.ac.uk. So, again, any suggestions about things you might like to see.

But I'd like to thank my guests from this afternoon, who've been Peter Taylor, Klaus-Dieter Rossade, Jonquil Lowe, and Conor McQuaid, who've given us a really good summary of how to deal with assessment, TMA feedback, and feeding that forward, and what it's like to have feedback as part of your academic career. We've got resources on the website. And you can also give us your email address, using the Count Me In button, and we'll then tell you when our next event is on.

But I'll tell you now, since you're here. It's on the first 31st of January and the 1st of February, where we've got our Introduction to the Open University, which is a two-day event, in both the daytime and the evening. We're going to have lots of debates, lots of discussions, and take a look at many areas of Open University life. So I do hope you can join us then.

We're going to lead out with a couple of short videos that you might enjoy. And, as I say, the chat will stay open for another half an hour.

I'm Karen Foley. Thank you so much for being here today and sharing so much of your experiences with each other in the chat. I'll see you very soon. But bye for now.