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KAREN FOLEY: Good morning, and welcome to the Student Hub Live. My name's Karen Foley. I'm a lecturer and a tutor here at The Open University, and I'm going to be your host for this morning's first bootcamp to welcome new students to The Open University.

Now I see that some of you have been filling in these with widgets or interactive tools and that a lot of you haven't been to these events before, which is brilliant. So welcome. Let me tell you how it all works.

So this is a space for our academic community. And we do this because it's sort of been widely agreed that students who feel part of a community and who go through a really good induction process are much more likely to succeed in their studies. So well done, you're already on the right track.

So I've invited some guests from across The Open University. And we thought about some of the things that we think new students really need to know about. So we're going to be covering who's who in the OU. We're talking about getting your computer set up for studies, the VLE, the virtual learning environment, which you're going to become incredibly familiar with in your studies, online tutorials and how they work, and also your tutor. So that's all in our first bootcamp.

Now we've prepared some stuff that we think is really important. But the most important thing is you at home chatting. Now I can see a lot of you are in the chat box and you've been all introducing yourselves. And if you haven't already, tell us who you are, what module you're studying, and you might want to let us know how you're feeling today. And that'd be great, because what makes these events really, really special is your contributions in the chat. So talking to each other, letting us know what you think, letting us know if you disagree with our panellists or agree with them, and also sharing your study tips and time management tips, which we know OU students are experts at doing.

Now how is this all fed in? Well, H.J. Is on our hot desk today, and we've got a few other colleagues from The Open University. So they'll be collating and feeding in all your responses. So let me introduce you to him. H.J., how are you?

HJ: I'm OK. I'm really excited. We've got lots of great chat. I've got Lucy in the chat helping me out, as well, which is fantastic. And yeah, it's great to see everyone. Everyone seems to be doing well. A lot of people just starting or coming back again.

Brian was just having a good chat about he finds tutorials very necessary. I like tutorials, as well. They are my favourite thing.

But we've got people doing nursing, history, politics, psychology. Joe's looking forward to being an OU student. And Daniel can't bear the wait until the course starts. So hopefully, we'll get all geared up for our courses.

So any thoughts, comments or questions you have for our guests, I'd love to put them to our guests. We have fantastic guests and they always love to hear from you.

One thing I do find, there's lots of people in the chat. So there's a little pin to the top right, which means that you can scroll through manually and it doesn't just keep going down, so you have a chance to catch up. So I always recommend doing that. So put anything you want in the chat. Anything goes. And you can also connect with us on Twitter, which is always good, at Student Hub Live, where we'll be posting lots of different things and you can let us know what you're thinking, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, thanks, H.J.

So, brilliant. Introduce each other in the chat and also tell us where you are and how you're feeling and what level you're studying and which subject you're studying and how you feel about studying and watching in the next month and whether or not you've attended a Student Hub Live event before.

Now some of you already been doing this. And these are our widgets, our interactive tools, and they'll be displayed on your screen. What you do is you select the widget that you'd like to vote on and then just press the option that applies to you, and then close it and your answer will submit. When there's a box with like three things on it, that's a word cloud, which come together into a beautiful plethora of words. And what you do is you need to put three things in there. So if you can only think of one or two things about how you feel about starting the next module, just put those in and put a full stop in the end, so that your results will submit.

OK. I think that's a lot of admin over and done with. So hopefully you've figured out how it all

works. Oh, one last thing, actually, I should tell you is that you can change the interface layout of your screen. So there's a little box on the bottom right-hand side. You can make the chat or the video bigger or smaller. And if you're having trouble with any of this, there's another way to access the Student Hub Live, which is through the Live Stream Only link. And you can find that link on the Frequently Asked Questions section of the website. So do that if you're having any problems.

All right. So our first session, Who's Who and What's What. Well, I'm joined by Zach Eaton. Zach, thanks for coming along.

ZACH EATON: Hello. Good morning.

KAREN FOLEY: How are you?

ZACH EATON: I'm very well. Thank you. Good to be here.

KAREN FOLEY: Good. Yes, now you're in our Student Support team. And I figured that you were the best person to tell all our new students who's who and what's what. Because we've got a lot of new students out here, Zach. But there are some students who may be studying who also may not know of certain things that are available to them. So I wanted to run through some of the things that we wanted to cover.

Now you're a senior advisor and you're on the Student Support team. So tell us then, how does it all work in terms of what happens when students want to get in touch with the OU, often by phone or email or whatever, how does it all work?

ZACH EATON: So there's a number of ways they can get in contact. They can go through to our advisors in Student Recruitment and by phone. They can submit a query through their student home page, if there's something specific that they want to find out. And it will be, those requests will get triaged through to us and the relevant team. And usually in the senior advisor's role so my role, we like to give our students a ring. But if there's something quite simple we can just respond by email and just quickly answer their query and find them a solution.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Now there's a number of people within the Student Support team, aren't they, who do a range of things for students. How do you triage those calls and requests and things so that it goes to the right person who can help students, and what sorts of things do you tend to get coming in?

ZACH EATON: So the way that the Student Support team works is we work to the information, advice, and guidance framework. So if it's something to do with getting some specific information, our advisors in Student Recruitment will be able to find out where that information is. If a student is having issues maybe understanding or making a decision, it will then go through to the senior advisors who can make sure that they're making informed decisions and know exactly what they need to do. And if there's more guidance-related issues, then our colleagues, our educational advisors, will deal with that query and help those students along with a bit more personal conversations.

KAREN FOLEY: Now you're within The Open University Law School and Open University Business School. And each area of the university has its own level of advisors who have subject specific knowledge, isn't that right?

ZACH EATON: Yeah, exactly. So I myself am a senior advisor who specialises in law and in the curriculum and the nitty gritty bits of studying towards law. And the faculty of Business and Law is broken down into post graduate and undergraduate business, as well. So everyone has their own kind of niche that they kind of specialise in. And that goes throughout all of the faculties in The Open University.

KAREN FOLEY: So what sort of things do students phone you guys about then?

ZACH EATON: It can range from anything, really, from if there's issues while they're studying, trying to organise booking tutorials possibly, extra exam arrangements. The list is endless. And anything really that a student can't find out from their tutor, they can always come free to their Student Support team to ask.

KAREN FOLEY: So you're almost like the first line of support for pretty much anything. And then when does the tutor come into it, in terms of things? And we've got a session later about how to get the most out of your tutor. But students often say, oh, I'm really worried about calling the wrong person. Who is the wrong person, and who is the right person?

ZACH EATON: I suppose really there's not really a wrong or right person. I think when you're studying on your module, anything that is module specific, your tutor should be your first point of call. Because they're going to know-- they're not just there to mark your assessments. They're there to guide you through your studies, give your individual support, looking at face-to-face tutorials. So building up a rapport with your tutor is definitely important.

If there's anything else that you're not sure of, then you can always come through to the Student Support team, and we'll be able to either direct you in the right place or get you the kind of advice, information or guidance that you need.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Well, let's see how everyone's feeling right now. Because we asked you to fill in our word cloud with how you're feeling right now. And I'd really like to see what sort of mood everyone is in on this Monday morning.

Well, there are lots and lots of really positive words here, which is brilliant to see. Although some people are feeling tired and scared and needing coffee and quite tired and nervous, counting down, prepared, impatient, shy, anxious, eager, apprehensive, sleepy. Excited is, I think, one of the biggest things. A whole range of emotions here, Zach. And I'd say this is really, really common when you're starting the module. Because there's this whole thing of not quite knowing what to expect, but feeling really excited about the future.

What sort of things do you think new students are going through right now? Maybe even continuing students who are about to embark on a new module, perhaps with new forms of assessment.

ZACH EATON: I can definitely relate to being nervous and anxious about taking on study, regardless of how much credit is or what it is that you're studying. It's an exciting time. I think the best thing to remember is just to remain calm. You've got people there to support you. Look at the module websites. October starters open now. So make sure you're looking at the websites. Get involved with the forums, start speaking to people, and just really relax into it. Don't think too hard about getting anything wrong. Because we are on hand to help them out.

KAREN FOLEY: HJ, how are people feeling in terms of, there were some people saying they felt shy or nervous. Is the chat going nicely?

HJ: It's going really nicely. I think Vincent just said, I think the SST are great and they can put you at ease at last, which is really great to hear. And lots of people are chatting people. We've got Tricia from the Netherlands, as well. So international viewers, we're getting up there. And Debbie from Cardiff. So nice to see a fellow person from Wales there.

Perhaps we can get some help from Zach with a couple of questions. We would like to know, what's the difference between a TMA and ICMA?

KAREN FOLEY: Good question.

- ZACH EATON:** So a TMA is usually an essay and it's a written piece of work that you submit to your tutor. Whereas an ICMA is a computer marked assessment, and it usually consists of multi-choice questions which you do on an online form and you can go then. It won't automatically submit the assessment that way.
- HJ:** Great. And if we email you guys, how long does it generally take for you to get back to us?
- ZACH EATON:** So depending on the complexity of the query, we like to get back to everybody within two days. Now not all the time we can find the solution in two days. If it's something quite complex, we might need some specialist help from other departments and other members of staff. But we will get back in contact with you to update you and ring you back if we need any further information from you.
- HJ:** And is there anything you would recommend if something comes up? So if there's an emergency that's interrupted our study, is there anything else we should do?
- ZACH EATON:** Well, let your tutor know. Always, always let your tutor know. Building up a rapport and just keeping your tutor in the loop if anything does happen is vital. We might be able to look at extensions, individual support sessions to help you catch up. And if it's something that is, any personal circumstances and you're not sure who to turn to and what to do, just give us a ring. Don't put your head in the sand. Because there are ways that we can help you. And the sooner we know that, the better.
- HJ:** Great. I think, Susan said, as well, she agrees with you in saying that sometimes you feel that your tutor's not there to be passive, but actually they really want to hear from you if you need help. And you've got the Student Support teams, as well. So it's really fantastic.
- ZACH EATON:** Good stuff.
- KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Now you do have students, when they're having difficulty thinking about whether study is right for them or maybe starting a module and thinking, actually is this course right for me? Tell us about how you guide students and help them to create a space about thinking about the right solution? Because I think sometimes people think, oh, I'm going to phone them and they're going to say, yes, continue, or whatever sort of thing. But actually, you provide a really lovely service and almost counselling people to making the right decision for them.
- ZACH EATON:** Definitely. I mean, our job is to make sure that students are on the right course at the right

time doing the right study intensity, and just making sure that they've got everything that they need to be successful in their studies. It's quite common for people midway through their studies to think, actually, is it right for me? And we'd look at down to the basics, time management, have they got support outside of the university, what's their situation at home like, to make sure that they've got the time and resources they need to be able to study successfully. And then we look more into whether or not, if a student wants to change their studies, what they can do. Are there other qualifications, routes or pathways that would be more suitable for them? And we will look at the beginning of the journey and also the end. So what they want to do in their career after they finish their qualification and what they need to do academically before they go on that next stage of their journey.

KAREN FOLEY: It's a really important point. Because so many students beginning their qualifications, they guess, I'm aiming for this. And then they'll sort of go through and all of a sudden start thinking, actually, I'm not sure if this is really right for me. And we've got the Careers Advisory Service, who are brilliant at giving people support longer term. But you're really good, I guess, at talking them through the qualification and looking at the options and ranges of things. Because there are various different ones, which I guess is why having a subject specialism can be really useful.

ZACH EATON: Definitely. If we take Law, for example, there's different kind of learning outcomes and the way in which you need to learn how to learn for different subjects and qualifications. And halfway through, or at the start, you may find that actually that way of learning isn't right. And so we need to look at other options available and what's going to be right for the student. You're always going to be more successful in your studies if you're doing something that you're passionate and love doing. And that includes what you're working towards and the way in which you work. So we'll look at different qualifications that will suit the student's individual needs and their passions, and hopefully, tailor make them up with something that they're going to be successful at.

KAREN FOLEY: So I guess students should give you guys a call when they've got a spare moment to really think through their qualification think through the right options, and just make sure that they've got enough there. I mean, at level one, though, you often have a range of options. Things start narrowing down the further you get through your qualification, don't they?

So when might be a good time for students to check in and think about these things in their module? Probably not right now when they're starting.

ZACH EATON: No, no. I think possibly the best time, give us a call in May. If they've gotten near the end of their module and their studies, if it's a 30 credit module it may be a bit sooner, just give us a call after. Let us know what you felt about it. Let us know what's going to-- is it going to be similar to other modules in the future, because there were certain aspects I don't like. Do you like the group work? Did you like the kind of assessment that was being asked of you? What did you think of the kind of questions and how you thought the feedback from your tutor helped you? Is it something that you want to work on, or is there a change in what you want to study? All of those questions and more, you can just [INAUDIBLE].

KAREN FOLEY: So have a qualification MOT then round the end of your study, when you're starting to work on the next module. But before then, you guys are the people to call if there's any uncertainty, anything you're not sure about, you triage things for disabled students and make sure that we've given students the right level of support. Yeah?

ZACH EATON: Yeah. So before you start your studies, if there's any-- if a student has any learning, specific learning difficulty, long-term health, or mental illness at all, get in contact with us. Because we can arrange support. We can look into stuff like the Disabled Students Allowance, which looks at anything from human support, travel costs, and technical assistance, including training. So yeah, if there's any kind of issue, it's always best to do it the sooner. The sooner the better, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Well, Zach Eaton, thank you very, very much. I hope you found that useful. I hope it's been useful to see how lovely the Student Support Team are and the range of questions that you can go to them with, and when you might want to go to them, as well. So thank you for that. HJ, any last minute questions we haven't covered?

HJ: I think maybe some quick ones we can get in.

Sheila's wondering if there is any support at weekends?

ZACH EATON: Yes. So I was actually on at the weekend.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, was that the time? Oh, yeah!

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KAREN FOLEY: The hours you work. Good point.

ZACH EATON: So the office was open 8:00 in the morning til 8:00 PM at night. On Saturdays, we do 9:00 to 5:00, as well. So if you have a query on the weekend, don't panic. You can give us a ring on the Saturday.

HJ: And there's quite a few people wondering when do they get their tutors?

ZACH EATON: So tutors are still being allocated. The final enrollment date was a couple of days ago now, on the 14th. So we're just making sure we get the student numbers in. And the allocation, some people might have already got their tutors. Others, it might be another couple of weeks before they get in contact with them and give them a welcome.

HJ: And I think Tanya just has a last one. Have you got any tips for Tanya who's doing full time?

ZACH EATON: Yes. Just, the time management aspect of it for full-time study is going to be really important. So if you've got a full-time job, 35 hours per week, make sure you can get at least two to three hours of study per day, or manoeuvre it around the weekend, where you can. Because we'd like to say 18 to 20 hours is the recommended and the optimum amount of time to study on a 60-credit module.

KAREN FOLEY: Often the way the courses are structured means that you've got similar sort of deadlines, as well, for the TMAs, the tutor marked assignments. So I guess it's really important to make sure you're on top of your study planner.

ZACH EATON: 100%, yeah. Definitely.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Excellent. Lovely.

Well, thank you very much, Zach, for covering all of that with us. And I hope that's been a good introduction.

We're going to show you a little video now of the campus tour. So it just gives you a sense of what's outside the studio. So I talked to Dan Weinbren about a book he's written, which is the history of the OU. And then I'm joined by Mark Nichols. And we're going to talk about getting your computer and your space all set up for study. So join me in a couple of minutes for that.

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