

Student Hub Live Bootcamp - day 2, part 1

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome to the Student Hub Live. Well, today is the 12th of September, 2016. I'm Karen Foley, and we have a fantastic two hours lined up for you about learning online and the writing process.

So I'm hoping that some of you have been here before. And I'm hoping that we have a lot of new students also. Today is all about getting skilled up for module start. And I'm hoping that this appeals to students irrespective of what level or what qualification you're studying. I hope that there's something in here that will inspire you to feel a little bit more ready for your start at the end of the month, for October.

So these sessions are for everybody. Students and academics, everybody is welcome. You can drop in and out as you wish. You can watch it on Catch Up also, if you aren't able to attend the whole session. So I do hope that you enjoy it.

Now, there are two ways to engage with this. There's the Watch and Engage option, which is the best, because you can see all of the chat and participate in that chat. And you can also tell us what you think using our interactive widgets, which I'm going to show you in a second.

So if you aren't in that option and you're in the Livestream only, then you need to go back to the website, studenthublive.open.ac.uk and click on the Watch and Engage option, sign in using your normal student details.

And if you don't have those, you can request a visitor account. It is a lot better. So please do do that if you haven't already.

But that's not the only way you can engage with us. You can also send us messages on Twitter. Our hashtag is #studenthublive16, and our handle is @studenthub. And you can email us as well, which is studenthub@open.ac.uk.

Now, for those of you in the Watch and Engage, I'd like to point out just a couple of things. You should be able to see a video of the Livestream here in the studio, in Milton Keynes. And you should also be able to see a chat option. Now, this chat, if lots of people are chatting-- and I know that you all are-- it can go very, very fast. There is a little pen at the top, and you can hold that to scroll down and see the chat if there's something you've missed or something you want to pick up on.

You can also change the layout. So you can click on the bottom right-hand corner and you get different screen views where the chat will be larger or smaller. So see which option suits you best. And hopefully that will make your experience a little bit more enjoyable.

So I'd like to know where you are, how you're feeling, which level you're studying, what subject you're studying, how you feel about starting your next module and whether or not you attended last week. So we're going to have some widgets that should be appearing, if they haven't already. If you could, click on those.

So the map, you just click on where you are. Some of the things like, how you're feeling right now, that has a list of three options. If you can only think of one or two and you can't think of the others just put an X or something else in that, because you can't submit it unless you fill all the fields in for those particular options. So let us see where you are and how you're feeling, and we'll feedback into that in a minute.

But I'd like to introduce our hot Desk. We have today HJ.

HJ: Hiya.

KAREN FOLEY: How are you? And hello, Annie.

ANNIE: Hiya.

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back.

ANNIE: I'm good.

KAREN FOLEY: How are you both?

HJ: Really excited.

ANNIE: Really good. We're really excited today. I think it's going to be a really good session. Everyone seems to be gossiping already about food and popcorn and everything like that. So really excited.

HJ: Yeah. We haven't even hardly started and already there's the feed talk. But I think George has a sticky ginger cake at the ready. And Marilyn has a quiche in the kitchen. So that sounds quite good.

ANNIE: That's lovely. Nice. Yeah, we've got Sylvia Logan from Canada. And she's starting her MA in Classical Studies soon, so good luck to that. And Luke Wood from the Emergency Services in London. So hopefully we won't be able to call you today, Luke.

[LAUGHTER]

We'll keep you on standby just in case.

HJ: You never know here.

ANNIE: Yep. James May asked if anyone will be taking notes for the Taking Notes session, which is-- cheeky chap there. And then Lee Christie replied he would, but he needs to learn how to take notes first. So I'll leave them with that dilemma while we get on with this.

HJ: But anything you guys want us to put across to the studio, just ask it in the chatbox. We're also on Twitter at studenthublive. And if-- because there's so much chat going on already, if we miss anything, just email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk, and we'll make sure we get our experts to answer your questions. But if you look behind us, last week we had loads of people send in all these cool selfies of where they were and their study materials arriving and their study buddies, which I thought was really cool.

ANNIE: Oh, I love that, yeah.

HJ: And we had some prizes as well to send out to those people, which are on their way. But there's so many good ones. Like all these hats and--

ANNIE: I'm loving the puppies and the dogs. Fantastic. Any cool hats you have, bring them in as well.

HJ: But we-- so if you want to send us a selfie-- because you can see us, and we want to see you too and see how you're doing, you can send us via the email address studenthub@open.ac.uk or #studenthublive16.

And we've got some great prizes to give out today. I picked out these ones, which is, like, maths puzzles. I'm thinking of maybe doing a maths module, so these might help me on that journey. But I don't understand what half of these puzzles are about, but maybe after I finish the maths module, I will.

ANNIE: Maybe you will then. And I've picked out "Women Changing the World," or should I say, "World Changing Women." And this is very good. I really like it.

So it goes through all of the times that women have changed things in history. And it has a postcard for each one that you can send away. So that's a really nice one, I think, that you'll really like.

HJ: And we've got a poster as well of "The Great British Year," which I thought was really cool, because on the back-- where is it? If I could get it the right way up. There you go.

So it shows all the seasons in The Great British Year and all the plants and animals that come out. And I think that's really cool, actually. That's really neat.

ANNIE: Nice.

HJ: So yes. Send in your selfies from that. And if you want to pick one of those that we can send to you-- because it's only fair if you're sending us stuff we send you stuff back too.

ANNIE: And we've also got some selfies in the mail. So let's check it out, see what we've got. Got one there. OK.

Oh, yeah. We've got the puppies coming in. Fantastic. Just what I wanted.

So let's see. So we've got Michelle, study buddy here. Very cute. We'll put that on the board. What have you got here today?

HJ: Vicky sent us in last week of the view from where she was, which I think is very cool. And she's got a very lovely smile there, which we always like to see. Everyone smiles when they watch this, I hope.

ANNIE: Yeah. And-- oh, look at this. Ali's hat, which looks like a kind of dinosaur-type Munchie Munsters, which is actually very similar to my lunchbox. So reckon the hat. Very nice. Love that.

HJ: And Terry sent us a picture of him with his lunch ready to watch the boot camp, which I was-- so it's very cool. Everyone should have their lunch ready. So tell us what you're eating right now. And kind of make-- that will make me jealous. But, you know, I can cope with that for now.

KAREN FOLEY: I can't believe you've brought your lunchbox in, Annie, as well.

[LAUGHTER]

I thought we'd gone over that from last week.

[LAUGHTER]

ANNIE: Has to be done.

KAREN FOLEY: It is great to see so many of you from last week. I have an attendance register because I'm keeping tabs. And I'm keeping tabs on the email box as well.

Caroline, Heather, Ali, Julia, Hazel, Mike, Dawn, Sarah, Robert, Holly, Lotti, Andrew, Carey, Lawrence, Deborah, Anna, David-- I'm just doing these quickly because I assume you can't answer. Rachel, Joann, Michelle, David, Vicky, Katherine, Ross, Anna, Amelia, Charlotte, another Chantelle, Debbie, Elona, James, Carrie, Lee, Lorella, Ruth, Sylvia, and Thomas. 60% of you were here last week, so I hope you enjoyed it. And welcome to the other 40% who weren't.

And we've also had some pictures here that I wanted to show of some hats. This was Julia's hat, which I thought was very nice indeed. And this is Ali's hat, which I think we've seen. So some fabulous study hats there. I had no idea that people studied with these hats so regularly.

It's also great to see there's a spread of you from all over the country. And 65% of you are at Level 1. 18% at Level 2. And we have the majority of students here from Arts and Social Sciences at 43%.

And about 34% of you from STEM as well. And a few others from the various other faculties. That's really interesting to know.

So if there are questions there that you do want to answer that you feel are specific to either your qualification or your level, do let us know. But we're really starting to look at Level 1 to 2 in this particular session. And then the next session, on critical thinking next week, we're going to start at some of the skills that will be really important for Level 2 also.

So our programme for today we're going to look with Georgina Blakeley at how to study online. This will be particularly relevant for those of you at Level 1 and those of you who are new to the Open University. But also there will be some tips in there for those of you who are at Level 2.

Mark Nichols is then coming along. And we're going to take a look at making the most of an online environment. That'll be a really interesting session. He's got some great ideas about how to actually study online effectively.

We then have our sessions on note-taking with Nicky Harlow and essay planning and writing with her also. And then we're going to look at the very popular subject of referencing with Fiona Durham from the library. So it's going to be, hopefully, a very interesting session for you. But do keep those questions coming.

I'd like to just take a look at the How Are You Feeling widget right now so we can get a sense-check about how everybody is doing at home. So let's see if we can get that up for you. There's lots being filled in-- excited, happy, nervous, intrigued, can't wait, raring to go, popcorn, procrastinating, confused, itching to start, coffee-- yes, coffee is good-- chilly feet, OK, unsure, calm.

OK, so there's lots of stuff here. Really nice buzz around things, though. Thanks, guys, for filling that out. And for those of you who aren't in the Watch and Engage, that's the kind of thing you can get up to if you join with that format.

OK, without further ado, I'm going to welcome Georgina Blakeley to the studio. Welcome, Georgina. And thank you for coming back, like so many of our students.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I know.

KAREN FOLEY: You clearly had a good time last week.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: So last week we looked at a variety of things. We looked at Student Home, and we looked at the study planner. We took a brief look at module websites. And we looked at key services, like the library.

And we briefly discussed the virtual learning environment. But the modules hadn't opened then, had they? So this is very exciting for students, isn't it?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yep, the module websites opened on Saturday.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: So students are in there and all excited. And the Welcome Forum on DD102 and the other new modules is absolutely buzzing with questions, which is great.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant, brilliant. So we've got a picture here. And we're going to look at a couple of things today.

I mean, in today's session we're going to have a look at the study planner in particular. We're going to take a look at using forums and dealing with some collaborative activities. And we're also going to look at OU Live, which is the Open University's online tutorial system.

So here we've got one of the study planners. And this is an example in the past from a DD102 planner. But it will just give you an idea. I mean, some modules will be ever so slightly different. But vaguely they have a similar format and that's important to recognise.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah, absolutely. This central column is the really, really important bit. It's the study planner, and it is your friend throughout the whole module because this tells you week by week what it is you're doing. So you can literally just go through it step by step.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Shall we have a look then at one of the weeks and how this sort of thing can work and how to make the most of it.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. Well, I suspect most students at the moment are kind of looking at the Module Introduction. And most modules will have this kind of introductory material, and it's what you do in this sort of first three weeks before your module actually begins, because although you have access to the module website, you won't have your tutors yet. You won't know the dates of your tutorials because that won't happen for a couple of weeks until the modules actually start.

So this kind of material is there in that sort of introductory section to look at. But perhaps if we look today at Week 1, because that is going to be what the students will do after they've done the Introduction.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And this is typically around the first week of October, isn't it?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right, yeah. Don't worry. It's sometimes a bit slow.

OK, so by clicking on any of those weeks, as you've seen I've done there, I've clicked on Week 1. And straight-away you'll see that on this side there's a Contents list. And that's one way of navigating your way through the weeks.

But if you also scroll down, it's really useful to see this box here. And again, most modules will be pretty similar. And that tells you, kind of in brief, what it is you're going to be doing each week. It's the main things that you'll be doing there, a sort of summary, if you like, of the activities.

And then the other way of navigating is to click on the Next button. So you can either use this to navigate or simply the Next button that you'll find at the bottom of each screen. So I'll click on it. And fingers crossed it works. It usually does. OK. And as you can see at the top there, if you want to go back, just press Previous.

KAREN FOLEY: And then the navigation on the side also shows you where you are within that process.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah, so you can see I've moved from that first screen, which was the Introduction telling me in brief what I'm going to do. And I'm now on Screen 2.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, a lot of people last week were saying, I've got my books. And that was great, obviously, because the books are a key part of it. How do the books fit into this? Because you're saying this is the friend throughout the whole journey.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. Yeah, most modules will have a mixture of books, and they'll also have a mixture of materials that you get on the VLE. That would be audio/video activities, that kind of thing. But this tells you what to do.

So at some point, you'll see as you kind of scroll down, it will tell you to work with the chapter. And there you see it working with Chapter 1. So it does actually tell you when to read the books. Obviously, you don't have to go online to do that. More or less you'll be reading a chapter every week.

KAREN FOLEY: But can you?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. Yeah, you can go online to do that. If you-- some people do prefer to read on screens these days. I'm not one of them. I like my traditional book.

But you can click on that, and it will take you to a PDF of the Chapter 1. So you can read when you're on the train, when you're on the go. And you don't have to lug those really heavy books that we give you for the Level 1 modules.

KAREN FOLEY: No. Although they make exceptional maths mats I've heard.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yes, yes. I'm glad it's finally useful. I'm trying not to get frustrated about that. But, yeah, it's a very good maths mat.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Oh, by the way, we've put a widget up as well about whether or not you are interested in face-to-face or online tutorials. It would be really interesting to get your steer on that because that's something we're going to be going through a little bit later. So if you could, let us know your thoughts on face-to-face or online. And again, any comments that you've got about those or questions, indeed, please do let us know on the chat.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. So this is all the activities here. It's simply watching a film. What's really useful to look out for as you're going through is the timings because each of the activities, whether it's watching a video, listening to an audio, or doing a skills activity, will tell you approximately how much time you need to do it.

And that's really good for planning your time because, to be honest, if I was a kind of new student, and I open this up, and I think, oh, my goodness, me. I've got to do all that in one week? And it's quite daunting. You see this kind of a really, really long list of all these different things to do. And you don't know what they mean because you haven't sort of looked at them yet.

But it's worth bearing in mind that, yes, some of them will take a while. So some of them will take an hour to do. This one says you need about 25 minutes to do it. But other ones will just take 10 minutes. So although it looks daunting, each week is generally about sort of 14, 15 hours of study a week.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Well, that's quite interesting. And then bearing in mind that a lot of our students here are Level 1, just looking at this, I can see that there's some stuff that's relevant to the subject area. But there's also skills. There's skimming and scan reading and tips. And those are built into the structure of the modules, in particular at Level 1.

So we're not expecting students to all of a sudden be geniuses at note-taking, for example-- although you might be at the end of this session. But in all seriousness, they are skilled throughout that journey in terms of how the module is produced to develop those skills as well as the content.

How important is it, then, would you say to do those activities? Bearing in mind sometimes you think, oh, I don't have time this week to do note-taking. I know how to take notes. I've watched the Student Hub Live. How important is it to engage with the skills as well as the content?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I think it's absolutely super important. And I know I would say that. But it is because even if you think, actually I can write really well. Just by doing these activities-- and sometimes I look at them myself, and other modules-- there's still something you can learn. So even if you feel quite confident, it's worth having a look and seeing what tips you can pick up and improve the note-taking skills that you think you already have.

But for new students, particularly, I think it builds your confidence. It's not-- if you've never done it before, there's no reason why you would know how to write an introduction, how you would know how to write paragraphs, how you would know how to write conclusions. We don't expect you to know anything, which is why you're starting with a Level 1 module. So I think it's really important to do these skills activities.

And we tend to use the materials that you'll study, so kind of topics that you're interested in, to teach the skills through them. So you're not doing a sort of stand-alone skills activity. You're using the kinds of materials, the films, the audios, on topics that you're interested in studying. So that helps you to do them as well I think.

KAREN FOLEY: I wanted to ask you something, because sometimes you have these activities and they have this box. And then they'll say, write-- write something in this box. Who can see that box?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Nobody. Shall we have a look at one?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: I'm going to just click on this one. It's part of a wider skills activity, looking at how you read actively as opposed to just skimming it and not really taking a lot in, as often we do. So this is about hard words and tricky sentences, because often the language we use as social scientists, or whatever discipline it is you're studying, might seem a bit odd if it's not the sort of everyday language you're used to. So this tells you to read the first paragraph and then jot down in the box any words or phrases that are unfamiliar to you.

Now, if I was being a bit naughty I could just write XXX or blah, blah, blah, because I'm really interested in the discussion. I don't have time to do this. I'm just going to do it very quickly.

So let's see if you can do that. Don't tell your tutors I told you to do this. OK. And it gave you the discussion. So that helps you to see if you're on the right track with the kind of answers that you put in.

So OK, although I've been a bit naughty there-- I wouldn't recommend you do that every time. Sometimes you can do that because you don't have the time and you just actually want to quickly get to sort of, what are the main points you should be getting out of an activity? But if you do have the time, and most times you will, hopefully you write your own answers and then you compare it to what's there. It'll be similar but not exactly the same.

KAREN FOLEY: It's funny because these things-- I do think there is often a temptation to think, I don't have time for this. I'm going to go through it. But actually, I've seen in a lot of tutorials these are the sorts of things that we might do.

We might say, here's an activity. Have a look at this and write this down. And actually, hand on heart, you do get a lot of learning from doing it yourself.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: You do pick things up. And also it's important to realise, I guess, when you're not maybe on track, because that's just as important as when knowing when you are.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. I mean, Karen said-- you're right. Your tutor doesn't see your answers, so you can do this. But it's really useful if you think you're struggling with something to tell your tutor, I had a go at this activity, and I couldn't do it. Can you help me? So it's a good gauge of where you are and how you're doing.

And you will find when you go to Tutorials as well that sometimes tutors uses those activities. So let's have a look at this one. Everyone was struggling with this, so let's see what the answers are and how we can get to them.

KAREN FOLEY: I might use those because all my students are probably going to do now.

[LAUGHTER]

Brilliant. Excellent. OK, so this is good. So we've got a lot of activities. We've got a lot of ways of getting to things. There's also staggered assessments throughout the study planner as well.

And the thing that I like about the study planner, and I think why it's such a good source of central information, is that everything is there. So whilst you can navigate, as you say, in other ways, this central column of the study planner contains all of the links that you need progressively to get through.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely. You can get to all the assessments, again, by just clicking on the different weeks. So Week 2 on DD102 is an assessment week. It also shows you the details of your tutorials, the different day schools, online tutorials.

Don't be alarmed, everyone. There isn't one on Monday the 10th of October, because this is last year. So please don't write these down.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes, exactly.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: These are not tutorials. But it will have that information for you. So this central column, as I said, is your friend. It's your guide.

KAREN FOLEY: And whilst you can see a certain view and be within that view and tick things off, it's also a good idea to look ahead, in particular, at some of the assessments.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely, yeah. So although you can get to the assessments through the study planner, as we've just said, if you scroll down here you can see on the right-hand side Assessment Resources. And if you click on that it will show you all the assessments for this particular module.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, why is it a good idea to have some sense of what you're going to be assessed on?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: You really need to plan your time. A lot of our students work. A lot of our students will have childcare commitments or other caring commitments. You might have holidays booked, things like that. So you need to get the key dates down in your diary.

So in these three weeks before the module really begins, look at the key dates for all the assessments. Write them down. And if you think there's a problem, you maybe have something coming up at work that you know is going to be really important, once you get your tutor, you could alert them to that and start to work out ways around it. And there are ways around it, but you need to give your tutor plenty of time and tell them that's an issue coming up.

The other thing to get down in your diary, of course, are all the different learning events. Again, students won't have details of those yet, but once they do, have a look at them and try to go to as many different tutorials, day schools, and online events as you can.

We know you can't go to all of them. They're not compulsory, because we know that students very complicated lives often. But we do recommend that you try and attend some if you can.

KAREN FOLEY: Can we talk about those learning events? I also want to talk about forums a little later. But you mentioned those in the times. Could we see how people access them, and could we take a look maybe at the online system?

We've been asking students how many of them would prefer face-to-face or online. And it's interesting because it's pretty much split between the two. So we've been fluctuating slightly more at one point face-to-face or online. So people do like both of them.

Georgina, are they quite different in terms of what is delivered? Should people go to both? What's the deal with these?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: They're not different in terms of the content. And I think that's important to stress. So if you have an online, you're not getting something that's different, worse, or any better than if you're going sort of face-to-face, in that the content that's being delivered will be the same. And often the same tutors will be doing the face-to-face one day and then they'll deliver the very similar session online the next day. So they're similar in content.

But obviously, the delivery mechanism is different. And having taught it both myself, I know that the things that you cover and how you cover them is different when you're online because you don't have that kind of interaction face to face, which sometimes smooths things over. But I don't think online should be seen as a poor relation of face-to-face. It's simply different.

KAREN FOLEY: It's like being a cat or a dog person, isn't it? They're both good but different. So where is it then-- in terms of this study planner, how do you get to the online tutorials?

The face-to-face ones, you-- I guess you click on your link, and it will show you where it is, at what time, and often there is parking information and all sorts of other useful advice. But online, on the right-hand column, then, this is where you access all of these forums and tutorials.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's right. The right-hand side, as we'd said earlier, that's where you get your assessment, but it's also where you get access to lots of other things as well. And here is the link to the online tutorials. It's a little kind of icon with two heads, so two people speaking to each other. So try and remember it like that.

KAREN FOLEY: And it's called something like an online tutorial, and OU Live Room is something thing that we call it sometimes. And those might be different. But broadly speaking, it's the two little heads in the box that's important.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. Don't worry about the different labels. We're terrible at the OU for having different labels, and it doesn't always help students. But the icons are the things to look out to. And you can click on that and get to it through there.

KAREN FOLEY: OK, so shall we have a go? Let's see if this works with our technology in terms of accessing OU Live. Now, one thing that's important to note is the first time you use OU Live-- and it's a good idea, by the way, shortly after the module starts you'll have an idea about where your room is. And it's a really, really good idea to log onto that so that you can access the room.

The rooms are open at any time, so you can go in. But the first time you access the room, you need to download a launcher, which sounds very space-like, doesn't it? But it isn't. It's just a little application. And once you've done that, it's very, very easy. Next time, you don't need to do it.

But it's a good idea to go into the room to see what it's like. And you can also hook up with other students in your tutor group. So it's a really nice space to have. So Georgina, show us, then, how it works here.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. Well, pretend that we've clicked on that link there. We're doing it slightly different, obviously, because we're using a different website. Just click on it. And the key thing here is the Join Session, which, again, sounds rather strange. But it simply means that you're going to click on that and that will allow you to enter what we call a "virtual room."

KAREN FOLEY: Right.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: But it's important to know that when you do that, nobody's going to know you're there yet other than your name coming up. So let's have a go at that.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So you click on Join Session from the OU Live Room there.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. And then it'll have this screen here, Downloading Session. And it will ask if you want to open the meeting. So I shall click Open there.

KAREN FOLEY: And you can't break any of this, can you?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Oh, no.

KAREN FOLEY: If you click the wrong button, it just won't do it. And you just go back and you just go back and redo it again.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Start again. Yeah, you're not going to ruin it for anyone else. No one can see you making a mess of it.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, all these clickings and comments of the last two days have nothing to do with us.

[LAUGHTER]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. I mean, students do have technical problems with it, tutors do, but you have to persevere. And if in doubt, ring the OU Helpdesk, because they're really good at helping solve this out.

KAREN FOLEY: They are brilliant, aren't they? HJ and Annie, how are you doing over there, and has anyone got any questions for us? I can see your lights flashing, and I'm just wondering what that's all about.

HJ: Well, we've got lots of stuff for you. But I think we've had some stuff sent in as well.

ANNIE: Yes, we've got some great selfies coming in. So we've got Alex Gibbs and his study buddies, which is adorable. Oh, my heart melts with these two. They're so cute. I want some of my own. And then we've got Ali's desk here, which is very nice.

Keep your desk pictures coming in. I can see that there's some emails here, so we'll get them printed off and shown shortly. And we also have Marie and her dog selfie reading her book on her bed with her dog, which is absolutely lovely. She's gorgeous. She's very similar to my dog, actually. So that's nice.

I just want to point out as well before anyone hasn't realised that we have a little someone watching over our desk today. Yeah, it's Sophie here. She couldn't bear to be away for too long, so she's decided to come in cardboard form, which is great. So we're going to be showing some--

HJ: This Sophie hasn't brought her microwave today.

ANNIE: Hasn't brought her microwave.

HJ: Which is a good thing because--

ANNIE: No.

HJ: -- it was making me more hungry. And it was just too noisy.

ANNIE: Very true.

HJ: We don't want microwaves.

ANNIE: 100%. But popcorn has definitely rubbed off on us. So thank you for that, Sophie.

HJ: But--

ANNIE: Delicious.

HJ: --we have got some questions. So if I give you a couple, Luigi is wondering if you could show him the first page you went to from Student Home. If we could have a look at that again. I'm not sure what was on that page, but maybe you know what that is.

But Thomas is asking-- which is a really good question-- are you OK doing some of the week's work before you're meant to? So going ahead of it. And Edward is wondering about downloading the DAISY reader, whether that's help or is there any other sort of reader software that you recommend? So yeah, just a few questions for you there.

KAREN FOLEY: Those are very good questions indeed. Thank you for those. In terms of the DAISY and things, the Disabled Students group have some really good advice, and I know they have a Facebook group. They'll be able to fill you in on what's up with that. But you can also speak to your student support team about all of those aspects.

And if you do have additional requirements, the OU are brilliant at providing formats and ways of accessing things that can suit you. I'm not an expert at that, but if you email us studenthub@open.ac.uk, we can get back to you with a bit more of a specific answer if you tell us exactly what you have in mind. And we'll try and show you that Student Home page again towards the end of the session. But again, you can watch this on Catch Up also. So we'll do that if we have time.

We've just logged into an OU Live Room now. And this is the view of what it looks like. So when you log in, all that will happen, like Georgina said, is that you will be listed on the participant panel. There won't be anything else. No one will be able to hear you or see into your bedroom or wherever it is you might be accessing it.

And what's interesting here is that you've got the various functions. So you've got video. You've got also a chat function, much like here. And you can drag those and expand them out, so you can get a really big chatbox if you want to.

You can see who else is in the session. And you can talk and turn your microphone on and off using the Talk button at the top right-hand side. And you'll also see the screen. So that's the PowerPoint where your tutor will put things on.

Georgina, tell us then, how do students feel going to their first OU Live tutorial? Because it is a little bit of a different format. But we can see here it's not so scary. And I imagine it's quite good fun. Well, I know it is.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Absolutely. It can be great fun. But yeah, most students, I think, probably feel very anxious. If they've managed to overcome the technical difficulties-- which, by the way, we've just had. We've-- taken us a while to get in there. So you'll be glad to know that we have difficulties too.

So once they've got over that, they're often feeling quite nervous. And as you say, they're thinking, oh, what do I say? Do I put my hand up? Or all this kind of thing.

But actually, it is very similar to face-to-face. And people often feel just as nervous speaking in a face-to-face seminar situation as they do online. So don't worry. Until you actually press the microphone button, nobody can hear you. So you can sit there muttering under your breath about technology and how you never want to work with it again. All people will see is that you're there.

So your name will appear. But that's all. If you're nervous about using the microphone, and students often are, particularly the first time till they've kind of got to know their tutor a bit and perhaps some of the other students in their group, you can use the chat function there.

But tutors really love you to speak. We love you to speak in face-to-face and online. So even if you just say hello, that's brilliant. It doesn't have to be more than that at the start.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. It's a fantastic system. You can certainly do more there than you can here. You can draw on the whiteboard. You can engage in various activities. And it really is a great place.

And it's a great place, as I said before, to hook up with students in your tutor group, or your cluster group, or however you're structured, so that if you do want support from each other you can get together and do that in that room at any time. So it's a good option. Thank you.

Georgina, I'd also like to talk a little bit about forums. And I wonder if we can go back to that page and look a little bit at that, because you'll be seeing now that your Welcome Forums will be set up. And they're a great thing to look at. Often people are talking about where they are, they're talking about who wants to study together, etc. There's a wealth of activity there.

But equally, they can fill up-- I mean, when I go on them-- hours gone, just gone. And so they can be a way of procrastinating. But they're a lovely way to get that sense of community.

When you're allocated your tutor, you'll also be set up with a Tutor Group forum and that will be just specific to your tutor group, or your cluster group, or however that is structured. So you'll see pretty much who is contained in that. And it's a smaller space. And sometimes those spaces are used for collaborative activities or your tutor will put notes from tutorials there, etc.

So they're a really good space to be able to access. So let's take a look, then. How do we get to them?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: OK. Well, again, this kind of all important right-hand side of the module website underneath the Assessment, underneath how we got into the online tutorials, is a list of forums. And as you just said, there are three main types.

So there's a Welcome forum. Those will all be open now. And I've kind of looked at the DD102 one. And it's very busy. Students are asking all kinds of questions, and that's absolutely great. And hopefully those questions are being answered.

Tutor Group Forums, that tends to be kind of just your very small group, your tutor and perhaps another 15 to 20 students. It tends to be used less for discussion and more for kind of information giving. So your tutor will put things up, perhaps tutorial notes, or things to be thinking about. So it's a bit like a notice board.

And then the Cluster Tutorial Forums, that's kind of much bigger. It's usually three or four tutors and their groups, so perhaps sort of 60, 80 students. And that's kind of where the discussion takes place.

Now, that kind of bigger space can be very daunting to students because you know that there's a possible 80 students who's going to look at what you've put up there. And I think students at the beginning, particular, think, I don't want to say anything because it's there, and then it's stuck there in black and white, and I'm not sure how I delete it. But no one is judging you.

It really is, particularly in these early stages, just getting to know people, saying hello, perhaps saying, why are you doing the module you are doing? How are you feeling? As we've said today, are you predominantly terrified or is excitement winning over at this point in time? And once you kind of reach out, I think people reach back to you and then you start to feel like you're part of a community.

KAREN FOLEY: But it is not a place to talk about food, is it?

[LAUGHTER]

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: That's OK.

KAREN FOLEY: Like here.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: No, no, no. Again, don't think that you always have to be serious. It's not about kind of putting on your academic gown and suddenly starting to use really long words in a way that you don't do in normal conversation. Sometimes the discussions are academic and they're about concepts, like class or disorderly behaviour or something like that.

But you can also go on there and say, oh, gosh, I hate this chapter. Is anyone else struggling with this chapter? And it's really good to know that you're not going to enjoy every aspect of every module that you do.

There's going to be chapters that you really feel that you're wading through treacle in. And it's sometimes nice to know that you're not the only one. It's not you who's struggling with it. A lot of other students are thinking, oh, gosh. I'll be glad when this chapter is finished or this part of the module is finished. So it can be used to share those kind of feelings as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Georgina Blakeley, thank you so much. That's been a really useful session going through the Virtual Learning Environment and having a look at OU

Live, and I think you've hopefully reassured everybody at home that this is a really useful space and a very accessible space also. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Well, that was good. I hope that you enjoyed that as a round-up. And if there are any questions that come from that session, do let us know.

We're now going to prepare our next guest to come into the studio, who is Mark Nichols, and he'll be with us in a couple of minutes. But I just wanted to go and see what you guys are talking about, Annie and HJ, and if there are any questions that I haven't answered.

HJ: I think one of the things that I've just had that Davin has said, which I think is a really great tip, is when you've got the online tutorials, is to head into the room a little bit beforehand to make sure you're all set up, because sometimes something goes wrong or it takes a little longer than you think.

I found that on my first tutorial. I went in on the time because it was going to start at midday, and then I found out it took about 15 minutes for me to set up. So I like that tip from Davin reminding us to get in there a bit early to make sure we're all set up. And then you can say hi to everyone as well when-- just before it starts and have a little chat with your fellow students.

ANNIE: A few people have said Dragon Dictation is a really good app, where you talk and it types for you, which is really good if you want to take notes really quickly. Or anyone that I know, I'm dyslexic. So I sometimes use that, which really helps me to kind of focus on what I want to write down, because my thought process can kind of go off if I'm writing notes at the same time. So if anyone wants to use that that's a really good one to do.

HJ: But we also-- in that session, we had a little talk about online tutorials and face-to-face tutorials. And it was really cutting it close when we were looking at that widget. It was kind of evenly split.

But people like both for different reasons. I think that both of them have pros and cons for people. So people like the convenience of online tutorials. You can just be there at home. A lot of people like face-to-face because it's meeting other students. I really enjoy face-to-face tutorials for that.

ANNIE: Yeah, and bouncing off of the students and seeing what they have to say, and that sort of thing. It is very helpful, isn't it?

HJ: And then I think someone-- ah, there you go. Samantha says she was a bit nervous about going to a face-to-face tutorial. But I was for my first one too. But I found that everyone's not there to say, you know, how brilliant that they are doing at their assignments. Everyone's like, nervous about the same things, and they have similar questions to you. So it's really good just to go along, and you'll find you'll fit in quite well actually.

ANNIE: Yeah, definitely.

HJ: Yeah, we've also had some more stuff come in. You've sent us loads of great stuff. So we've had-- was it Andrew-- sent in their workspace, which is putting me to shame because this desk is-- I really do try and keep this desk organised.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, all right, HJ. But it is mounting up. I can see it coming over the top.

HJ: It doesn't happen, does it?

ANNIE: It's coming towards me, and I'm going to have to prove it now, HJ.

KAREN FOLEY: Stacey complained about that officially last week.

ANNIE: Hey.

HJ: But we've got-- oh, yeah. Marilyn sent in the picture of the cupcake that she's eating at the moment, which looks so lovely. But I'm quite jealous because it's about that lunchtime.

ANNIE: That looks so nice.

HJ: I may have forgotten my lunch today.

KAREN FOLEY: I've brought my lunch.

HJ: Have you?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. After last week's shenanigans, I've come prepared.

HJ: Oh, nice.

ANNIE: Fantastic. I may find some food under this.

KAREN FOLEY: Would you like to see what I've brought?

HJ: Oh, yes. Go on, let's have a look.

KAREN FOLEY: Put the register down. Hmm, hmm, hmm.

ANNIE: I like the basket as well. It's very nice. [GASP] Hello.

HJ: Oh, dear. Oh, it's all the way over there.

ANNIE: That is looking good.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: What do you think of that, then?

ANNIE: Beautiful selection there.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

ANNIE: Very colourful.

KAREN FOLEY: And it's all for me and my guests, I'm afraid, this week. So unfortunately, you'll have to have your own lunch. [LAUGHTER].

ANNIE: Oh.

HJ: That's OK.

[MUSIC PLAYING]