

KAREN: Welcome back to the student of live faculty of business and law professor's event. Well, you've all been saying, when is the business? Well, here it is. I'm going to introduce you to Joan Hunt, who is a student experience manager in the faculty of business and law.

Joan is currently on the level three undergraduate module teams for B327, creating futures, sustainable enterprise and innovation. And also B329, which is leadership in a challenging world. Now, Joan has an undergraduate degree in public policy and an MBA and has worked with both tutors and students on the B100 module for many years. Welcome, Joan.

And I also have Hannah Griffiths, who's a student experience manager for B100 and B123. Hannah has been an associate lecturer or tutor. We've been talking about this and I'd like to ask you both about this on our level one law module since 2009. And has a background in education.

Now, Hannah qualified as a barrister. And most importantly is a former OU students. And Hannah loves working with OU students and is very pleased to be here today, which I'm delighted to hear, Hannah. So be B100, then. Let's take a look. We're all very excited about studying. We want to know when we can get our tutors allocated.

So I think first, if we could mention what's happening in terms of allocating tutors and things.

HANNAH GRIFFITHS: They're in process, you should be hearing later on today if not tomorrow about who your tutor is. So it is in the process. It is happening today as we speak. So not much longer to wait.

So don't worry about it, you will find out who your tutor is. And you're not alone. There are other level one students who are waiting to hear about their tutors as well. So it is coming.

KAREN: Brilliant. It's a very complicated system and I think COVID has presented other challenges this year. But matching students and their tutors is a really important part of the process. And it's very important that we get that right. And that will be

happening very soon.

Oh, Lydia's got a sign on her desk that says intellectual badass her friend bought her for Christmas. So if she has a wobble, it's a good reminder, which I think is absolutely wonderful.

So you've been involved with B100. I wonder if we can maybe think about some of the highs and lows of the module in your experience. What have students sort of said, Joan, was the best bit and the worst bit?

JOAN HUNT: Well, OK, actually it's Hannah who's going to talk about that bit actually, Karen. But I think what we're going to do is just to start out by telling the students a little bit about the module, if that's all right.

KAREN: That would be fantastic.

JOAN HUNT: OK, brilliant. So a big, warm welcome to all of you here listening to this today. One of the things we wanted to say is that the B100 module is a module that students take in a number of different disciplines here, where they can either study it within the Open degree, where people can choose some of their own modules that they wish to take and design their own degree. Or it's also the module that's the foundation for any of our business and management modules that we have within the faculty of business and law.

Most of the students who will be studying B100, or almost all of them, are going to be brand new to the Open University. So one of the things you should feel is a great deal of relief that, in fact, most of the people studying this module have had years of not studying in a long time. Or they've never had any contact with business study before.

So the first thing really that I'd like to say is don't worry, you're starting at a level where you're not going to be expected to know very much. But in fact, we also have some students that you can talk to and learn from who may have, in fact, had several years of business experience.

And the way that the module has been designed is to make it interesting for all of you. Because we use the case study method in a lot of the work that's done, which means you're looking at and applying what you're learning to real business

situations. And in fact, in this type of a module it's quite integrated.

It's divided into seven blocks which cover the seven blocks, if you've received your books yet, you know you've got one block to cover each one of a functional area and then you've got a book to go along with it of readings. And so you might be covering human resources, or studying some marketing, and finance and accounting is another area.

And before you panic about that, because a lot of people when they hear the word accounting or finance they think to themselves, oh dear. But what you will find is that this has all been written in a way that is accessible. And your tutors who you're going to be working with are very used to helping students learn how to take on the very introductory level of information about finance that you'll be exposed to in this module.

KAREN:

That's wonderful, Joan, thank you. One of the things we were talking to with colleagues from law earlier was about the complexity of some of the issues. But also, some of the complex skills that students were going to develop as well. Can you say a little bit about how that translates in this context to B100?

JOAN HUNT:

Sure. Well, one of the things that we do with our degrees that makes it easy to kind of grow your skills over time is that all of the modules are written with learning objectives and with very clear skills development within them. Now, sometimes it takes students really quite a long time to realise that actually if they start to build a record of those skills and actually take a good look at what they're supposed to be learning and build those up in terms of their assignments and in terms of their employability skills.

What they've then got is a record of all kinds of practical skills and application of a variety of things that they can take to the workplace with their job hunting. It's the kind of thing that within in your organisations, if you are employed at this time, you'll be able to see that you've actually got a record of the skills that you are building on the depth that you're increasing as you go long through your degree at level one, at level two, and at level three. And you've actually got that sort of in front of you.

You can look at it and you can see, wow, I've actually been building these things all the way along as I've been going through my degree. And I can apply it, and I can tell other people about it to convince them that actually what I have here is something which is quite special. And is organised in my own mind about what I'm good at what I'm not good at.

KAREN: That was wonderful, Joan, thank you. So Hannah, you were going to come and tell us a bit about some of the highs and lows, then, of B100. What have been your experiences observing this?

HANNAH GRIFFITHS: Well, this comes from tutors and students. So obviously with any module, there are going to be highs and lows. It's the same with life. But to a man, all students sort of say that the marketing and the HR aspects of the module are the areas where they really, it sort of clicks for them. And those link to ethical issues because some of the module looks at ethical issues from a theoretical perspective.

But from a practical perspective, you look at, as Joan said, a sort of case study approach, looking at some of the sweatshops for example in Southeast Asia. And also more recently and quite topical, closer to home, as some of the manufacturing textile firms in England as well.

So it's quite a real-life module. So it does touch on things that you do see in the media. And things that, if you're in business and any kind of business that you come into contact with. Increasingly, obviously we live in a globalised sort of environment and society.

So the globalisation and political context of the module is also a high. But right down to sort of the core about what business and what studying business is all about, looking at strategic tools on the module that looks at selection criteria, also very, very appealing to many students.

The laws, as Joan has touched upon, students tend to be reluctant. I know myself, the word maths used to make me sort of freeze in fear. And there is an accounting and an economics aspect to the module. But every tutor to whom I've spoken with has said, don't panic about that. It's arithmetic, not math. So it's looking at the way that numbers function, adding and subtracting, that kind of thing rather than the terrifying aspects of math.

So all the tutors that I work with, and I've been speaking to lots of them recently setting up tutor groups, they are all 100% approachable, supportable. And are absolutely so enthusiastic. So I'm looking forward to getting the student groups to support. So there is the support there even if you do come up against something that you think, well, gosh, how am I going to handle that? You've got your tutor to support you.

KAREN:

Brilliant, that's absolutely wonderful. And really, really good advice. Tutors are really looking forward to meeting students, as I know you're looking forward to meeting your tutors also.

So we asked people at home why they're studying B100. And let's take a look, Joan and Hannah, at some of these reasons. And then I'm going to invite you to say some things in response to what the students at home have said.

So here you can see that career is one of the key reasons that people are studying the module. They also think it's interesting. Perhaps there's an idea that they're wanting to look at marketing, et cetera. But there are other agendas also, things like personal development, manage my Avon, love business, confidence. A deeper understanding, learning about business, progression, furthering careers, furthering knowledge. To open my own shop, I like business, to start a business.

So there are lots of different areas here. I wonder if you'd like to talk about some of the things that students have said around some of these key ideas. Are these good motivations for studying B100?

JOAN HUNT:

I think they're, yeah, great motivations. I think what's really interesting is how varied the motivations are. I don't see anybody saying it's because I can't go to the pub after 10:00 PM, so I might as well be doing something else. But in fact, I think we do have to take into account that these are changing and challenging times. And it seems to me that some of the best things that we can all do about that is actually try to have something that we can do that we can work on together, that improves our level of curiosity.

We need to learn and to take on board all kinds of challenges, both at work and in our own home and social environments in relation to what's going on. And I think

B100 actually is a super way of doing that. What you have here is a very integrated, quite a plan really, of learning about a very wide variety of businesses, of functional areas.

Being exposed to all kinds of information and areas that you may not have had exposure to in your own working life so far. And you've got that opportunity to share it with other people, to talk about it with your tutor, with other students within the tutor group forum.

And if you've got an open mind, and if you actually keep a positive attitude, there is absolutely so much that you can learn. And to just turn yourself on really to the whole idea of learning throughout your life and of learning to get through a challenging time for all of us.

KAREN:

It is challenging, Joan. And while students are going to learn a lot of things, they're also going to learn a lot of skills. And we've seen employability feature quite highly here in terms of both students motivations. But also I know that in terms of the way that the Open University design modules, employability is front of our minds often because we appreciate that students are doing this.

So while employability's a factor, students are also going to learn a lot of skills. And we know that employers really value some of the skills that students learn while they're studying. Irrespective of if they're studying business or law, there are certain skills that the distance learning students will pick up. Joan, can you tell us about some of those skills and about how students can, I guess, recognise their value? And perhaps apply those in a business context?

JOAN HUNT:

Absolutely. Yes, well, one of the things that we've actually prepared today is a slide, actually, of some skills that have come from-- this is from the Economic Forum at Davos, which is held every year. This was in January of this year.

And what they do is they interview. And they ask questions of the human resources director and the strategy directors of a lot of the top companies within the world. And they ask them, look, what kind of skills are you going to need over the next five years when you're thinking about the fact that business is changing?

Of course, what you do have here is a list of skills prior to the whole situation of us

all going into a slightly more challenging situation. And I think it's interesting to look at these and also think about them in light of perhaps what other skills are growing in importance during this time. But if you look at the top one, it's complex problem solving.

And in fact that is absolutely what B100 is aimed at trying to help you learn to do. And when you got that sort of view of how messy problems can be and how different functional areas in different parts of companies are, they're dealing with the same problem but with a different perspective. And they have to try to coordinate all those different ways of thinking and of solving issues together.

And that's the kind of thing that is actually number one on employers' lists of what they're looking for in relation to skills. Some of the other areas that have moved up the list are creativity. That one is now, if you look at that, that's now number three. It used to be number 10 on the list, just five years ago.

So you think about what changes have we got? We're going to be moving more towards perhaps jobs being done in a more automated kind of way. But creativity is something which they just can't replace that. That's a human skill. And there is, although they could go some way towards using machines with that, absolutely you can't replace that human skill.

So I think really what I want to say about this is that within the OU now, we have various tools. There's something called Future You, which you may have been introduced to and are going to start using. This is a tool which can help you record your employability skills as you go along and start thinking about where you want your career going.

And certainly my advice to you is to do that right away, right away from the time that you're joining your undergraduate degree, start thinking about how some of the things that you're learning will relate to your employability and keep a record of that. And make use of the tools within the OU and within other kinds of resources that you find when you read yourselves to help yourself have an organised look at where you want to go in the future.

KAREN:

Brilliant, thank you. Joan, Joe Wayne says that's incredible feedback, Joan. That's really, really helped. And Heather's actually commenting on the list that you've

shown there, Joan. She saw it as part of an Accounts Payable Association chat. Meanwhile Victoria just loves the bookshelves. She says, oh wow, look at those bookshelves. But that advice has really helped.

JOAN HUNT: Good.

KAREN: It's always nice to take a sneak peek into people's home environments, isn't it? And it's really nice that we can all get together and have a virtual cup of coffee together and to ease those nerves about studying.

JOAN HUNT: Well, I had to tidy my shelves first.

KAREN: Oh, did you? Yes, they do look very tidy and organised.

JOAN HUNT: They do. Definitely I'm not always that tidy at all.

KAREN: That's why I'm not sharing my shelves because they're not very tidy. So Hannah, we've asked people about preparedness to study. And we've got a word cloud that people have been filling in about some of the ways that they are preparing to study.

So shall we take a look at that? And then maybe discuss this issue that they can do in the final few days of freedom before the study plan is going to be ruling our lives?

So Being an OU Student is coming up here. This is a really important thing for new students to do. It's a wonderful little course and it really, really helps. Perhaps if you've done that you might like to share with other people how you found it and what you've learned. Because I know Mitchell was wondering about the OU website and how to navigate that. Incidentally Mitchell, we have workshops on Saturday that may help with that.

But other things like reading, learning new vocabulary, good note taking, looking at the website, induction to business. So people have been buying stationery, reading books, familiarising themselves with the website, planning their time. There's lots and lots of things, which is really, really good.

Anise says that being an OU Student was a really good mini course to help to learn how to get about and also what to expect. So thanks for that great feedback, Anise. So Heather, what do we have to say about this and how would you recommend

students start preparing?

HANNAH

Well, as soon as-- the important thing to do, as soon as you get contact from your tutor make sure you respond to them and establish that two week contact. I think that's probably the single biggest thing that will be on everybody's minds.

GRIFFITHS:

And I mean obviously there's the OU welcome forum that's active at the moment. And as soon as the tutors get access to their own tutor group forum, because each tutor has their own forum, they'll be populating it with loads of really, really helpful tips. Things to do, checklists, things to make sure that you do in the first sort of few days off the course.

But just looking at that word cloud, some of those things, some fantastic priorities there. I saw, interestingly, somebody said unplug Netflix. And that's a really interesting one because some people find that actually having something on in the background helps them focus on study. Some people need complete silence.

So I think it's really just finding out what works for you. Stationary, definitely an important thing. You've got to be really comfortable where you are working. But thinking back to when I started as an OU student, and although it was many years ago before it was the website, I think TMA's were all posted and you had handwritten tutor feedback, was just working out strategies to support networks. Because at times it can be tough if you're juggling study with life, and work, and whatever else you've got.

So just making sure that you do have those strategies, whether it's putting your books down and going for a run, or going for a walk, or going and having a scream in the back garden, making a cup of coffee, whatever it is. Just something so that you've got that balance. And preparing for that means that when you do need it, it's ready for you. As well as having the perfect pens and the nice place to study as well.

KAREN:

Absolutely. Elizabeth also has done the short course Being an OU Student, says it tells you everything you need to know. Callum says it's so reassuring to be surrounded by people in similar situations. Isn't it just, Callum? And we'll all get through it together. Marianne says, I can't wait to get started. And Nicole says, my children just came in and said, go mummy, which is the best. I think it really is. It's

really nice.

JOAN HUNT: That's nice.

KAREN: Michelle, how is everyone at home?

MICHELLE: Oh, they are great, Karen. We've got Joe Wayne here who says that he is feeling already so much support from the OU, which we love. And that's wonderful. And Eliza said that her tutor said that the tutor gets nervous too. So I think it's important to think about that, that it's not just the students who are nervous at the beginning of all of this.

And Ryan said he's studying because he wants to prove that he could have done this 10 years ago. But he can definitely do it now, which I think is wonderful. Many of our students do come back to prove something to themselves or their families.

And Tony said he's much more-- or she, my apologies if it's a she-- much more comfortable following this session on. So lots of really good vibes about this session. Now, Noah did have a question about books for B100. So if I throw that back to you-- I was going to say in the studio-- but if I throwback that back to Joan and Hannah, could you advise on some books for B100 please?

JOAN HUNT: Well, in fact, I think the best advice, because this question is often asked by students. And I think that what the tutors would reply is actually just read the books that you're given, unless you're somebody who really is into business books. Then yes, I mean, by all means, if you're somebody who's a great reader and a great studier, you can read other things. But you don't have to.

The business books are, the readings are there that are supplied to you. What I would encourage you to do is to be very aware of what's happening in the world around you. And try to read newspaper or magazine articles which will talk about companies within them. And occasionally try to read some articles that are good in-depth articles.

And visit the OU library. It's one of the very first things you do in terms of signing up for one of their-- not visit it physically, but sign up for one of their information sessions. Because you can get for free all kinds of publications online that will help you with your degree. It's more about trying to apply what you're learning rather

than reading everything you can get your hands on.

KAREN:

Absolutely. Jarod's clearly a lover of books and says that the complete *A to Z Business Handbook* is very good. It's got all the terms, and definitions, and examples. And sometimes having reference books I think can be a very nice thing to have, especially when you're learning new things.

But equally, the OU library has so much out there for people. Not only publications, but also books, and resources, et cetera. Now, you're both associate lecturers or tutors. And you've had many students. Sometimes we're super excited at the start and then things happen in life, as we've mentioned beforehand.

So sometimes things can get in the way of studies, and we just can't prevent those from happening. What advice would you give to students about, I guess, their expectations and when things may not go to plan? Joan, can we come to you first for that?

JOAN HUNT:

OK, I think really the best piece of advice is not to panic. Because actually this happens to all of us. We don't know what's going to always be happening in our lives and things can get out of control. So be kind to yourself, don't expect that you're going to feel on top of things and be ahead of things at all times.

And I think if it does happen that you get behind, it is not the end of the world. Just sit back and think to yourself, how can I plan to catch up? Get in touch with your tutor. One of the things tutors say is actually if a student reaches me, gets in touch with me, and tells me things, I'm absolutely happy to help.

It's when they don't hear from you that they might start to think, well, maybe it's not that important to this person. And then it's so much better to reach out and to actually tell people, look, I'm struggling with this a bit. I need more time to catch up because of what this has happened, that has happened. So open, honest communication is absolutely key. And be kind to yourself.

KAREN:

That was wonderful. Well, Hannah, you'll be pleased to know that Laura's just gone on her phone and her tutor has been allocated to her. So that's all in the pipelines. All happening now, so that's really good. And Jarod says thanks for the shout out. Not a problem at all.

Hannah, would you like to share some of your experiences for students and give some advice? We're in the last few minutes of this section.

HANNAH

GRIFFITHS:

Well, yes, I echo exactly what Joan says. I think life does get in the way. And I think the best piece of advice that I was given and that I pass on to my students is to work smart. And if you do fall behind, work backwards. There's no shame in prioritising. Focus on what is important at that moment in time.

So for example, if certain blocks of the module are not relevant to an upcoming TMA, skip over them temporarily. Go back to them at a later date. But just focus on what you need to to get that TMA in so that you don't fall behind. Yes, you can get extensions.

But once you start that sort of cycle of extension, it can be quite difficult to catch up. And your tutor will always be there to support you. So it's again, maintaining that contact.

And I guess from an AL perspective and a former OU student perspective, just remember what an amazing thing you are doing and how valued all your courses are by employers and other bodies. You mentioned in my intro that I'm a barister. I got my scholarship to pay for my bar fees on the strength of the fact that I had been an Open University student because they recognised the commitment that it takes.

So just remember that. It's an amazing thing that you are doing. And enjoy it. And keep in touch with the tutor. We are all approachable, definitely.

KAREN:

Absolutely. Now, I think you've both shown that. And not only have you said your experiences, but I think we're got to end with a couple of your colleagues' experiences. You'd ask some colleagues for some of their feedbacks and their top tips for student success. So would you like to share those with us? Hannah, have you got some there?

HANNAH

GRIFFITHS:

Yes, yeah, I do, I do. So first piece of advice is to read and listen to feedback on TMAs. You will get a score out of 100. I think that's the first thing we as human beings want. We want a numerical score. But there is also feedback in areas for development and praise in there as well.

Your tutor will always tell you what you've done well and will always highlight for you ways that you can make it even better. So listen to that feedback and respond to it. So you're not making the same errors time and time again, which can be quite demoralising. So Joan, I think Joan has one as well.

JOAN HUNT: Yes, I've got a lovely one, which somebody has actually taken from another writer. But it's perfectionism is just fear in high heels, which I love. And that's really what that's getting ideas is, look, you're writing an assignment. Don't feel like it has to be great or perfect or anything. Get it down there on paper and get it in and you're going to be improving as you go along. Just half of actually getting to the end of something is being willing to sit down, write down what you're thinking at the moment. And don't get feeling that it's not good enough.

KAREN: Oh, that's really good. I love that. I think that'll be a thing, definitely, for sure. Do we have any other quotes, Hannah?

HANNAH GRIFFITHS: Yep, one AL, a couple of ALs, actually, said be sensible but when you can work, if you do set a time and you're just not feeling it, you're not in the mood, don't put pressure on yourself as Joan said earlier. Be kind to yourself. Take a break, come back to it when you can. Because we all need to be in the right mindset or it's just not going to work and it gets more frustrating. And that makes it harder to come back to it next time. So again, be realistic and be kind to yourself.

KAREN: Thank you. And Joan, do you have a final thought for us?

JOAN HUNT: I do, actually. This was just something so lovely really that I picked up from a student in a forum. And her tutor had asked the students, look, what was your favourite block of the module that you've studied and why? And this particular student said that it was the final two blocks, which are ethics and globalisation.

But what I really loved was the comment that the student made. And that was that ethics should sit at the heart of every human and stir up a fire that can help change the responsibilities that shape lives. In a world that requires compassion and conscience, it starts with us.

KAREN: That is wonderful.

JOAN HUNT: I know, I thought, gosh, she's learned a lot on B100, hasn't she?

KAREN: Absolutely.

JOAN HUNT: I just thought, it ties it all together, really.

KAREN: It really does. Well, thank you so much, Hannah and Joan for coming on. And being wonderful tutors and being so friendly as well. And giving us some insight into what it's like studying the module. Some of the support that's available for people, really taking note of that feedback and that relationship with your tutor also, and to enjoy it, I think, which is one of the key messages. It is so exciting. It will change the way you think forever. And that is something to really, really celebrate. Michelle, is everyone at home OK?

MICHELLE: Absolutely, we're all talking about when to start, how to start, what we should read, when we should read it. All our questions about our tutorials. And so yes, everybody is buzzing I would say at the moment. And just great to see so many engaged students. They're going to be brilliant, absolutely brilliant.

KAREN: Yes, absolutely. Well, we're going to have a quick break now. And we've got some videos. We're going to see Robert Craw's video *What to Expect When Studying Level One Business* and Michael Keenan, *Coping with High Intensity Study*. So join me for our final section of today's programme after this short video break. See you then.

[MUSIC PLAYING]