

Freshers - Access students - 21 September 2023

ISABELLA HENMAN: Good morning, and welcome to our special Access Freshers event. This is the first time, I think, that we've done a live broadcast like this just for Freshers Access students. So you are very welcome. I know we probably have people here who aren't Access students, as well, but it's lovely to have lots of people here finding out about their new student journey and finding out what the Open University can do for them.

My name is Isabella Henman. I'm a tutor, and I'm an access tutor on the module. You might have seen me in the little video as we were just starting, and I'm the presenter of these events. And you'll see that there's a variety of different questions we ask you along the way. You can use the chat as much as you can. I've got a number of people that are my guest today.

So I have got Bryn with me. I have got Bethan with me. I have got Sean with me, and I've got Karen with me. And all those lovely people, you can see them there, and I'll be coming to them a bit later. And I've also got Heidi, who I'm going to be coming to next. So Heidi is the person that is my mediator telling me what's been going on in the chat, and I know the chat has already very lively. Heidi, so what's been going on so far?

HEIDI: It is, Isabella. Hello, and welcome to everyone. Lovely to have you all with us. So as Isabella said, my name is Heidi. I studied with the OU myself, so I know exactly what you're going through.

I completely appreciate those feelings of trepidation and feeling a bit apprehensive when you first start studying with the Open University. I studied for six years and absolutely loved it, and I know that you will too. So time to say some hellos this morning.

So I want to say Hello to Anne in Cornwall. So Anne is coming back to study, again, after 40 years, which is really incredible. So welcome, Anne. And Daniel, this is my first time with the OU and distance learning, and Daniel is in Dorset.

So we've got lots of people joining us that are studying various modules. So Y024, which is psychology, social science, and well being, that's the access module, obviously. We've got Becky. We've got Colette. We've got Ella and Lisa, and we've got Pamela in Somerset.

Good morning to you, and on Y033, which is the science, technology, and maths access module, we've got Lu. We've got Daniel, and we've got Matthew in West Yorkshire as well. So good morning to you. And on Y031, which is arts and languages, the access module, Deanne says it's lovely to see everybody here. We've got Sophie in Plymouth. We've got Tim, who's studying from sunny Brighton, and we've got Sally, who's starting Y031, and Sally is from Essex.

Just a quick note to say, if you find the chat's going quite quickly, on the top right hand side, there's a little pin. If you just press on that, it will slow down the chat for you, and it makes it a little bit more manageable. We've also got some widgets there. So if you play around with those, let us know where you're studying from, and you can see there on the map that, if you're in the UK, you can pinpoint exactly where it is you're joining us from. So lovely to have you with us this morning.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you, and in fact, I think we've got that map ready. So let's see. This is where I show my absolutely rubbish geography. I'm not even going to try and guess where most of those are, but it's good to see people.

Oh, we've got people right down in the bottom of Cornwall. So yeah, I can work out where Cornwall is, and we've got people in- I'm not sure where that- is actually into Scotland, or that's the borders? My geography is- I don't study geography. I don't teach geography. That's my excuse, but it's lovely to have people there. And I think we've also got the widget of what people are studying.

That might be ready to show you the answers of that so far. Let's see whether we can get that up. Oh, this is what people are feeling. Oh, this is lovely. OK, so I'm- oh, that's good. I'm really glad to see that excited is the biggest one there, but nervous and apprehensive, pleasantly lost.

Oh, that is a really, really lovely one, pleasantly lost. Hopefully, you will feel less lost by the end of this. I've got my lovely guests will be telling you things, and I've got people that work for the university. And I've also got Sean, who's a student, who's been through, who will be able to tell you from his perspective what it's actually like. So I'll come to Sean a little bit later.

But first, I've got Bryn, and now, Bryn is a Curriculum Manager with the Open University and access. What is a curriculum manager? Bryn, can you tell us about that, please?

BRYN JEFFERY: I can, yeah. Hi, everybody. So a module, like any of the access modules, takes quite a bit of planning and organising to get it out to you, to get your module materials out, and to make sure that everything works. And as far as possible, there aren't any mistakes in it. So that's my job is to do the planning and the organising behind the scenes to make sure that people get their mailings, that the content on the website is all there, and it's all working the way it should, then also to just deal with any issues that come up as and when, really.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Fantastic. Now, we're hoping there's not going to be any of those issues, but you know what? Sometimes, things happen. Yeah, absolutely. Definitely, the fingers crossed one there. So you mentioned a mailing and a mailing that people might have had.

I know I was very excited. I got mine. I intercepted the person in the road and went, is that for me? Oh, it's my Open University mailing. So people might have got a mailing. Can you tell them a little bit about what they would have got through the post, so far, hopefully?

BRYN: Yes, so the biggest thing will probably be your block one book, which you'll have, regardless of which module.

ISABELLA HENMAN: I've got one. I've got one. Oops, I've got the leaflet as well. Ooh, I've got loads of copies of the leaflet.

BRYN: You've got everything. Yes, so everyone will have one of these, module specific. So if you're Y031, your book will be different than Y033 or Y034. And then you will also have the start here leaflet, which I think we've got to show you, and that is a really useful thing to kind of read straight off, because it contains a lot of useful information if you've got questions.

Then, hopefully, some of the answers will be there and some contact details as well. So have a look at that, and people will also have study planners. You'll have an assessment guide that tells you a lot about your assignments and a lot of information about how to do them, and you'll also have possibly some sort of module specific resources.

So, like, for Y033, you'll get a calculator and a calculator booklet. For Y031, you'll probably have some booklets that have pictures and poems in them. So yeah, look out for those as well. There's also a checklist in every mailing that tells you what should be in it. So if you check that against what you've got and you find you're missing anything, then you can contact distribution helpdesk, and they will send it out to you.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, if you're anything like me, I love checklists. I love ticking things off. It's great. I'm like, oh yeah, and then I get really confused. I go, Is that what that is? Because I miss it. We're all like that. Aren't we, Bryn? We don't necessarily read instructions. Do we? So yeah, very much look at your checklist then. Look at your Start Here leaflet, which is- yeah, that was what I was very enthusiastic. It turns out I've got three copies of the Start Here leaflet. I'm not quite sure why. Obviously, I think it's really important to keep keeping it. It's great.

So I said, if there's anything missing, if you registered late, there's a chance you might not have had the mailing yet, and there's also- it's a quite an important thing to mention about practicalities in terms of making sure your details are up to date. Isn't it, Bryn? Because any paper mailings will go to the address that you've given the university.

So if you move around, if you've had a change, just check that one. That's a good idea. Isn't it, Bryn?

BRYN: Definitely. Yeah, if anything changes in terms of personal details, just let us know through student home, contact your SST.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, SST, we've started on the three letter acronym already.

BRYN: Acronym. It's your Student Support Team. It's Student Support Team, which are a lovely bunch of people.

ISABELLA HENMAN: I got pulled up on that. On Tuesday, I got pulled up for using the word TMA, and I got told, you need to tell people what they are. That's one thing. It's a really special part of being at the university. There's all sorts of three letter acronyms, and it's a lovely, little club.

You get used to these terms, and you use them in everyday life. And other people look at you, and you go, what are you talking about? What's a TMA, or what's an SST? And you're like, I'm an OU student. Don't you know? I know these things, which is really good.

BRYN: I have whole secret language.

ISABELLA HENMAN: It is, and it's a really special secret language that you get used to. So we've mentioned that there are paper mailings. It's probably worth highlighting to people, it mentions in the Start Here booklet as well. It's only block one that people get in print. Isn't it? And that's something that's quite important for people to recognise.

BRYN: Yeah, so block two and three are studied online. We've got a module website that you can get into from Student Home, and that will contain all of that content for block two and three which is really great, actually, because it means that we can do things, like videos. We can do interactive activities.

Being online means that you can go and do a bit of research, as well, and we kind of guide you through that in terms of using other websites to find reliable information to help your studies. And also, the forums are on there, which will allow you to talk to other students on your module and chat about studies, and life, and stuff. So I think it's really helpful. So much of life is online these days. Isn't it? You know, it's kind of good skills to have.

- Exactly. Absolutely, and that's probably one thing that some people might be used to, and particularly, those people who have been out of study for quite a long time. Sometimes, people struggle a little bit and say, well, I want everything printed. I'm used to studying in printed format.

That's why we give you the block one in printed format, but then we encourage you, because life is online. The great thing is everybody watching this, at the moment, you're online. You're used to doing things, and it's absolutely fantastic to have people here today, because the module hasn't started yet. The module doesn't start, until the beginning of October.

That's actually probably worth mentioning now. We'll probably mention it, again, later. You won't have tutor allocations, until probably the end of next week, because there's lots of things still happening. So don't worry that you haven't got your tutor. Don't worry if there's some things in the module website when you're looking around on there yet. They will all come in time.

Now, we did ask a question earlier, which is- oh, I've just seen somebody saying TMA means Too Many Assignments. Love that one. I haven't read that one before.

BRYN: I've seen that, yeah.

ISABELLA HENMAN: That's fantastic. But yeah, we want to ask you. You might have seen it came across the screen earlier about what's your motivation for study. So if you can be answering that in the chat, what motivated you to study? What motivated you to come and do an access course? Or if you're here and you're not doing an access course, what else?

Actually, that's the thing. If you're studying, what motivates you to study? What motivates? Is it about bettering yourself, Bryn? What kind of things do you think of?

BRYN: So I love to study stuff that I'm kind of interested in, and I tend to kind go for various just different subjects. So my first degree was an arts degree, and I just sort of love learning new stuff, really. So I did a creative writing module a year or two ago now to just kind of expand that skill set, because I write for a hobby, and it's great.

I think it's really exciting to be able to access knowledge from other people and to be able to think of things in different ways and learn things that I've never thought of, I've never come across. I just find that really exciting. So for me, it's about the interest.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and I think that's a really important thing to bring out. Because people that are starting with an access course, many people might not have studied for a long time, or they might have had some negative experiences at school, where you're forced to study something. So you're choosing to study, and as Bryn said, it's exciting. Isn't it?

It's lovely, because you're studying, because you're interested in something, because you want to do something. I'm starting my new module myself. I'm very excited. I'm doing a master's mental health module to find out more about that, to find out about different things, to help to inform my job as well. And it's quite interesting, because you get to find things, and you mentioned about learning from other people, Bryn. That's quite an interesting thing about being at university. Isn't it, particularly with the Open University?

BRYN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, to me, that's kind of the point of any university study, and it's really the foundations of academia is this idea that we need to share ideas in order to make progress in any kind of study that we do. And that's not just learning from our kind of professors, and lecturers, and stuff, even though, obviously, they tend to be very learned, because that's their job.

But I think you get incredible insights just from other people's lives, and shared experiences, and knowledge. We're all unique people. We all think about stuff. We all have ideas about things, and being able to learn from other people's perspectives, I think, is really powerful, and it often gives us ideas that we might not have come across otherwise. And you get a kind of fusion of ideas that way, and new things come out of that. And I think that's really exciting.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And that's great, and it's one of the things, part of Student Hub Live that we do, as well as these live broadcasts. We do online workshops, and part of them is learning from other people. And I love the idea that you say about the fusion of ideas, because we learn from other people all the

time. Now, we've had some people who have said about their motivations. So Jackie says, my motivation was a case of feel the fear and do it anyway.

Wow, Jackie, hopefully, you don't feel too much fear. Stacey said, I decided- oh, and I've started not being able to talk already. That's great. I'll keep doing that. So I'll try again. Stacey said, "I decided to start studying now as my health was bad for a few years. Now, I'm better, and my children are at school. It's time to do something for me."

Similar to Caitlin, so said, "I had my two children young. I put my dreams on the back burner. Now, they're in school. It's my time. It's a nice feeling. We're all exactly where we're meant to be." I love that one.

Lou said, "I always wanted to study, had to drop out of A-levels due to chronic illness and caring responsibilities. Years later, my therapist convinced me to have a look at the OU. I didn't know it was an even an option for me, until then, so I'm really grateful."

Colette says, "My nine-month-old son is my motivation, want to better our lives. Now, I know somebody else actually who started studying with the OU when their son was nine months old," and I think it's probably an apt point to go to Heidi now. Because I know that that's something that you said before, and I know that you've also probably got lots of other things that people are saying.

So could you actually tell people a little bit about your study history? Because I know you said that you started studying when your son was nine months old. Didn't you?

HEIDI: Yeah, I'm so impressed by your memory, Isabella. That's so good. You remembered it to the exact month. Yeah, back in 2009, so I'm a single mum, and I've raised my boy on my own. I just had the one boy, and just after he was born, I actually previously used to work in radio and was due to go off- I was actually relocating.

I was going to go to the United States. I had got an internship over there. So everything was sorted. I had handed in my notice of my job. I had got rid of my little flat that I had by myself, and I was at work one day. And I remember thinking, hmm, I feel a bit strange. I don't feel too well.

Anyway, it transpired that I was expecting, so my son was a beautiful surprise. But at that point, I thought, what on Earth am I going to do with my life? Because radio is definitely not child friendly, especially as a single mum. So I thought, what on Earth am I going to do?

My mum studied with the OU. My sister had studied with the OU. And I thought, do you know what? I'm going to give it a go. I'll just give it a try.

So I started studying with the OU, absolutely loved it, fell in love with the OU and everything about the Open University. And then I started working here, because I just love it so much. And then I went on to do postgrad, and I graduated in 2020. No, 2022, sorry, so I've now got two degrees. So lots and lots of hard work, but has been an amazing experience.

And I actually work now as alumni engagement manager for the Open University, so you're going to hear from me in six years time or however long it is that you're studying with us for. You're going to hear from me in a few years time when I come knocking and say, hello, you're now part of the Alumni Association. So yes, it's lovely to be here and see you all.

Sorry, this is a problem when you snack just before you go on air. So people have been talking about their motivations. So Nicola, "I was motivated to do the access course, because I scribed for my son who's doing his A-levels and has ASD. And over the last few years, I've grown more and more interested in what he's studying and thought I want to learn all this for myself."

So I love that one, Nicola. That's fantastic. Pamela, "My motivation was to improve my job prospects after being a full-time carer for my son who has ASD on the autistic spectrum." Haneefa, "I wish to break into the industry I want to work in, and this is a really good way to do so."

Oh sorry, Nicola was having a conversation with Dean about being torn between classics and history or just pure history. So lots of people discussing in the chat about what courses they want to go on to do. So Alison is a full time carer for her mum. She wants to do something from home.

Lisa, "I signed up, because I'm hoping to start a new career. And I chose Y034 to help me decide which route to take." Such a great idea, Lisa. When you're at a bit of a crossroads, taking the access course and then using that to help you decide where you want to go is a brilliant idea.

And "I'm retired, and my motivation was to use my brain and meet lots of new people, and test myself, and do something interesting." Love that, Sophie. "I left school with very few qualifications over 20 years ago and always wondered if I could have done university level training. The time is now to find out." Yes, indeed, Sophie. You're in the right place.

And Margaret, "It's more than 40 years since I was at school. I've always wanted to study at degree level, but I feel I need an access course to get me started. My last essay was with a pen and paper." Lovely to have you with us, Margaret. This is fantastic. So exciting as you embark on this new adventure.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, it is. It's wonderful, and that's lovely. That seems to be- the 40 years seems to be- obviously, there's something about that. So it's great to have people here. Now, within what Heidi was talking about there, she mentioned ASD.

She mentioned autism and disabilities. Now, that's something I wanted to talk to Bryn about next is, because as Open University, we actually have a number of students. In fact, we have more students registered with us that have disabilities than any other universities.

So we've mentioned things, like the printed book, and we've mentioned the module websites that we have. But we can support, and we can give additional support- can't we, Bryn? -to students with disabilities. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

BRYN: Absolutely, yeah. So we have a disability support team. And if you need additional support, because you have a disability, then the first most important thing we need you to do is tell us, so that we can provide that support. We are able to offer just a variety of things depending. Some people need printed versions of the online materials, because they can't study online for a variety of reasons. Some people need audio versions of the books. We can provide that, as well, and we can do alternative versions of hard copy stuff as well. So, for example, the Block 1 book, we can do that comb bound for people that have- so I've used that before, because I have fibromyalgia. And I find it hard to turn pages. It hurts to kind of bend the spine back, so I've had a book ring bound before. And they can be done in large print, and they can be done sometimes in different coloured paper, because that sometimes helps our neurodivergent students.

So there's a huge amount of support that we can give, and once you've started and you know who your tutor is, then your tutor can provide some support and a referral to the student support team if you need it. But actually, at this point, when you don't know who your tutor is, the disability support team is there, and you can contact them, and they will happily walk you through all of the processes to kind of get whatever additional support that you need, because we want you to succeed. Whatever additional needs you have shouldn't be a bar. It shouldn't be a barrier to you succeeding.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and I think that's the key thing. It's about not having a barrier, so accessibility, and we want to be as inclusive as possible to welcome people to make sure there's no barriers to learning. We did have somebody from the disability support team in our broadcast yesterday being a great OU learner, and Becky explained some more about that then. So there were some really useful things.

So if you didn't see that one, that Watch Again will be available soon. So it's about this new journey for people. It's about exploring a lot of the time- isn't it, Bryn? -and about seeing. Because we've got the three different modules, and they're a very wide base. Aren't they? But it's about thinking about seeing what you want to do, exploring. Is there anything else that you can think of that you really, really want people to know as they're starting off?

BRYN: I think enjoy it. I think I feel like, I mean, I was lost at school horribly long time ago now in the '90s, and school often felt like a competition in the sense that you knew how you had done in your year, because there would be prizes, and top tens, and things like that. And that is sometimes not very helpful, I think, especially once you're an adult. It's a very big world, and there are lots of people in it. And there is really no point in competing.

So I think, I would say, just think about what you want to achieve, how you want to progress and develop, and you will progress as you do the access module. You're going to learn stuff. You're going to do things you've never done before that you didn't know you could do, and I think enjoy that success and kind of try and benchmark your success against your own progress, not anybody else's, and against your own goals and not anybody else's. Success for you is what you define for yourself, yeah.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, absolutely, and I want to echo that. And I know I kept talking about it in yesterday's broadcast, but you are all individuals. Please, hear me with this one. You are individuals. You are on your study journey. Don't benchmark yourself.

As Ben says, please, don't benchmark, don't compare yourself against others. If you find that healthy, fine, a little bit of competition is fine for some people. But if you're constantly going, I'm not good enough, because somebody else doing it, please, don't think that.

Now, we talked about benchmarking. We do actually have assessment now. We had the tongue in cheek version of what too. Much. Assignments. Was, TMA, but we do have assessment on the access modules for a specific reason. Don't we, Bryn? Could you explain a bit about why the university actually wants to do assessments?

BRYN: Yeah, I think assessment is important. It lets you practise the skills that you're learning, your academic skills in the module, whether that's essay writing or carrying out experiments and writing them up, depending on what you're doing. And it allows- so it allows you to do it and to work out how to do it, in that sense, to gain that skill, because you gain it by doing it. And it also allows you to demonstrate that you can do it, as well, so your tutor can look at that. But also, your tutor can then give you feedback to tell you what you've done well and to also provide pointers for how you can improve or things you can try differently and things like that.

So it's a really great point of interaction with your tutor. Actually, I think it's important not to think of it as a test in the sense of kind of a right and wrong, black and white scenario. Think of it more as a dialogue in that sense, I guess, just a little bit more practical and writing based.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you, Bryn, and that's actually really helpful. And that leads me on to the next guest that I want to talk to. Thank you, Bryn, for your insight.

Bethan is another tutor, but both Bethan and I are tutors with the university and access with different tutors. So Bryn was saying about having a dialogue with your tutor. Now, as a tutor yourself, how would you want to have a dialogue with your students, Bethan?

- Hi, everyone. Great to see you, Isabella, and talk about this with you. We often talk about, as you might have seen in that video earlier on, what it's like being an access tutor, and really, the best thing is just getting to meet so many students with so many interesting stories doing study for so many different reasons.

So the first thing we want to do when we talk to you is really just get to know you a little bit, know what would help you as a student on the course. Usually, we'll have phone call tutorials, so we can arrange that via email. As Isabella said earlier, just check your details are up to date. When you get access to everything online, make sure it's the right phone number and email address that you want people to contact you on, and then we'll start just like, I think, Bryn used the word dialogues. Really great as well. It'll just be a discussion, a dialogue about supporting you with your studies, so you can ask questions of your tutor. You can ask about the module materials, about assessments, just get to know them. They'll get to know you, and we can be flexible about how we communicate based on your needs and what works for you as well.

So most people will be having phone tutorials regularly. If there's any reason why that's going to be challenging, we can find alternatives. There's a wide range of ways that we can work with you. I know you do the same, Isabella, and work individually with students as to what suits them.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely, yeah. So you'll see, when you get the information, it says the primary. There's lots of terminology that we use, and we say, the primary, first line support is one to one phone calls with your tutor. But if you don't like phone calls, we can do emails.

We can do online tutorials, actually, and you'll see with most modules, there are module wide online tutorials. But tutors can do individual ones. We won't talk too much about online tutorials, because I think that might make some people nervous, because I think there's a bit too many things to be thinking of, because we've got lots of people who are brand new to higher education.

So I know, in one of the other broadcast's today, we talked about what a tutor is. But from your perspective, Bethan, what kind of things would you be wanting to talk about? You said about wanting to get to know your students, first of all. What kind of things would you like to find out about them, first, or would you like them to be able to tell you?

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: Yeah, great question. So I often will ask, what's brought you to access? So the same sorts of things you might have been answering on the ticker along here, and of course, you don't have to share anything you don't want to, whatever feels comfortable for you. But it can be really helpful to understand what your motivation is, because as we were talking about earlier, it's like with any study as an adult.

It's sort of about running your own race, really, thinking what matters to you, what are your progress points, what are you trying to get out of it. And if your tutor knows that, then they can help to ensure that you achieve that. You might want to share any worries or anxieties that you have as you're starting. So oftentimes, students might say to me that they may be a bit anxious about academic writing or something like that, and then I can reassure them that that's something we offer a lot of support with.

And I can just keep a note for myself of, oh, that's something the student might be feeling a little bit unsure of. So that when I'm providing feedback, I can really focus it around that as well. As you were

talking about earlier, the tutor feedback that you get, it's supposed to be and will be really supportive and encouraging, and it's what we use, the term, sometimes, correspondence tuition at the OU, which is sort of a nice way of saying that we're teaching through feedback.

So when you write something, you actually get asked in your first assignment to answer some questions about yourself and your motivation that you can then go back to at the end of the course, and it gives us a chance to then engage with you throughout all of our feedback with things, like yeah, you've really understood this. That's great. Have you maybe looked at page 32, where you can read a bit more about this, or have you noticed this bit on the website? Because there's a lot to take in.

It can be easy to miss things. So that is very much a discussion and a conversation that's happening. So if you let us know when we get to know you at the start, if there is anything, maybe it's around computing, and you're not too sure about IT use or something like that.

I mean, honestly, over the years, I've taught access since 2018 or 2019. I've probably heard every possible worry that people have, but you never know whether there could be something new. And we can usually reassure people about everything. So it's just about helping us support you as an individual. And how many students do you have a year for access, Isabella? We usually don't have too many.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, so we- and actually, this is a useful point for students to know. So in a tutor group, there's only probably about 15 students in a tutor group. So you'll see the other students in your group once you get the tutor allocation in your tutor group forum, but then there's the module wide forums that you might see, as well, which is everybody studying.

So it depends on the actual module. It depends on how many, because Y034, which we'll hear about later in the broadcast, is probably the biggest. And I think Y033 is the smallest, but I'm not quite sure. But there's somewhere between a few hundred and maybe 1,000 students studying in each presentation, and we do this October start. We do a February start, and we do a May start.

Now, I know that Heidi's got some questions that have been coming in, so I'm just going to go to Heidi now. I think they're probably for Bethan. They may well be for you. So Heidi, what kind of questions have we got that are coming in?

HEIDI: So the first question that we've got from Emily, who asks, who do we contact for support when we do not have the required evidence to qualify for alternative studying materials?

ISABELLA HENMAN: That's a very interesting one. I think Bryn might be the best person to answer this one. I'm not sure. Bryn, are you able to give us a little bit of insight into that?

BRYN: I'm not entirely sure about that to be honest. It's something we can find out, and I know that supplying evidence can be difficult, and sometimes costly, and sometimes just not possible at all. Certainly, once your module starts, if you contact your tutor, because they can get a message directly to us, but I will just look into it, as well, Isabella, and try and get back to you with something useful.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, thank you. Because I think, sometimes, this is always the interesting thing about these sessions is we forget to ask questions, and we don't always know the answers. I think, most of the time, your student support team can give you some guidance.

This is the thing. It's like Bethan was just saying. We've heard most questions at different points, but we don't always know everything. And that's actually one of the interesting things, Bethan. I think, I mean, this is probably going to be a little bit of a off the wall one. What do you think is the most unusual thing that you've supported a student with in access so far, if you can think of that?

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: Oh, that is an interesting question, not one I've been asked before. I just wanted to say to the other person that had asked about materials, as well, and when you can't provide evidence. It's always worth flagging it with your tutor, because it might be something. It depends what it is that you need, but it might be something that we can access quite straightforward and then provide to you.

The reason I say that is that, oftentimes, students have asked me for PDFs of the books and things like that. Now, that's something that's quite readily available, so that's a bit more straightforward to provide. So it does depend what it is. Now, the strangest things I supported students with, yeah, I mean, there's quite a wide range.

So I supported one student who was planning to go on to study with the OU, because I wanted to bring this up in terms of the great point someone made earlier about, am I going to go history, or am I going to go classics, or am I going to go- what am I going to study? Because oftentimes, people start the access course with one degree in mind that they might want to go on to study, and of course, the access course is fantastic as and of itself. You could just do the access course. That's great.

There is no pressure to sort of do more. The access course is just a wonderful thing to study and achieve in itself. Many people will go on to further study with the OU, partly, because they'll catch the bug of loving OU study, like so many people do, and want to keep going. And other people might have already intended that they're going to start a degree, and you will encounter so many different subject areas that, often, people end up studying something that is quite different from what they anticipated.

They might go down the English language route, or they might decide they've got maths frenzy. It's whatever really kind of excites you as you study, so keeping an open mind is really worthwhile. I did support a student to actually go and study at a brick uni. Instead of the OU, they went to study somewhere else, and we were able to offer some discussion around that and what it might look like. So it's just being really open minded about how your tutor can ensure that support is offered.

I've supported students with visual impairment quite a lot over the years in terms of how to access different online tutorials and things in a way that's really supportive for them, and I've supported students, where we've had to negotiate how we're going to manage tutorials, because they've wanted to do phone tutorials but have had some difficulty around hearing. So we found ways to make that work in terms of me just adjusting the speed of how I speak, the tone of how I speak. Because if someone says to me, actually, that I'm not hearing very well, then we could also have, like you said earlier, online tutorials, so that lip reading becomes possible. There's all sorts of things that can be- what about you, Isabella?

Anything particularly interesting stand out to you?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, I was just thinking about that. One thing I just want to mention is, in the chat, we've got the lovely George and the lovely Gareth, who have been sharing information. And they've actually shared the details of the access student support team. So we've actually got- oh, there you go. You can see the lovely Gareth and the lovely George on their photos on screen.

So they're giving you lots of information in the chat, as well, and the access student support team is specific for access students. So like Bethan says, if you're not sure, if maybe I've supported students with speech challenges before, and as you say, it is something to get used to. Because you'll notice, when I'm talking, I get quite hyperactive, because I get so excited to try and enthuse people, because I'm genuinely so enthusiastic about it. And sometimes, I'm thinking and say, OK, rein it in a little bit, Isabella. Don't talk quite so quickly.

But sometimes, we don't know. In the same way as we said earlier, tell us, tell us if there's something about you. But tell us, if we're doing something that's not helping, if we're talking too quickly, if we use terminology that we've forgotten to define, if we've used those three letter acronyms, and you're going, I don't know what you're talking about. It's our fault, because we get so used to it.

Myself, I've been working for the university since 2005. I've been access since about 2018, I think, and you know how it gets a bit second nature? It's like if you were trying to explain to somebody how to walk. You do that or how to do something. You get so used to it that you forget that people are new, so apologies in advance.

We're so enthusiastic. We love helping people, but sometimes, we need to get a little bit of additional guidance if we don't do that in quite the right way. So actually, it's probably a good point for us to actually step back a little and explain a little bit about what students see now.

Bryn told us about the block, and we talked about the module website. Now, in terms of the module website, there's lots of really useful things on there to see. So there's the study calendar, and we mentioned things, like alternative formats. Some people might not realise that alternative formats are there on every module website. Aren't they, Bethan? Can you just tell people where to find them?

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: Yeah, if you go into your resources section, you'll find loads of great things there. And I would say that, if you are wanting to do a bit of study as you start to get started and you want to just dip your toe in, it's a good time to get a cup of tea and some nice snack, and sit down, and just explore the module website. Because you can't break it.

You can just really prod around, and explore, and have a nice time seeing what's available to you, because there's loads of stuff on there from the lovely access forum, where you can introduce yourself, if you'd like, and/or just lurk and see what other people are saying if you feel more comfortable with that. And you can just get involved, have a look at the stuff when it all appears for you on your student home. Click all the different tabs, have a look at things, like the information around assessment and how to pass the module.

There's lots of great videos to watch and lots of different things you can engage with. So I think that that's probably something you're going to do quite a lot over the course of your module is just go on there and have an explore. And you'll soon find all sorts of different resources and things, and then there may be things you can share with other students you meet on the forum if you decide to take that route of getting involved and saying hi.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely, and that's actually something. When I talk to Sean later, who was one of my students in the access module earlier this year, he had some fantastic things that he developed, which we shared. I'm going to talk to Sean in a little bit, a little bit later about that, some of the things, which was absolutely amazing. He blew me away with the things that he was able to share, but I know we've had some people who are already worried about referencing.

And now, referencing is something that always comes up, and the first thing I would say is try not to worry. Referencing is not the be all and end all of module study. It's not the be all and end all of academic study. At access level, you're just starting out. There's a few principles.

I was just actually- I was sneaking. I was glad that Bethan was on screen, because I was looking. And in the Y033 access guide- and this is the kind of thing you'll see in the assessment guide. There's information about referencing. So when you open it- and there's an explanation about what referencing is.

So I know that people have been supporting other people in the chat about referencing, and some of that is about academic skills.

So the access module is not just about factual information. So where Bethan was saying, whether you're going to do history, whether you're going to do arts, whether you're going to do things, it's about skills. So could you just give maybe one of your favourite skills that you help people to develop within their access study, Bethan?

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: Oh, well, the answer to that has got to be confidence, because that is what students often say they get from the access module is, at the end of it, they feel so much more confident in the knowledge that they've learned, but in all of the skills they've developed over the course of their studies and more confident going to the next module. And I teach quite a lot of year one and year two at degree level, as well, and I can with confidence say that students who have done the access course often then come into those level one and level two courses with a really good head start in terms of referencing and things like that, the stuff that can be a little bit- we don't use it in everyday life, really- do we? -in the same way that we might use writing. We don't tend to sort of go around saying, as stated by Henman 23, you know? It's not your normal sort of thing to do.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Well, I do.

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: So we do have to get used to it. Well you do. So I would say that, really, remember with the referencing is that is what your tutors are, experts in how it works at the OU and how to reference in all the resources available. And you'll be really gently supported through that as you continue through your studies. It's something we build up to.

You're not going to be expected to provide full referencing straight away in your first assignment or anything like that. It's gradually introduced. You dip your toe in the water, and we'll introduce it. And by the end, you'll be having a go, and it will be the same system. One of the great things about OU modules is the consistency.

So referencing will be the same across different modules. Module websites even look the same across different modules. So that once you've done one, the reason that you might be more confident going forward is you've kind of become a bit of a pro not just in your three letter acronyms, but where everything is, and what everything looks like, and how to do citations or references and things like that. So do rest assured your tutor is going to give you lots of lovely feedback and help and support with anything like that, and it's probably one of the top things people worry about. Isn't it? I'd say, referencing.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. Yeah, it is, and I think one of the other things- and I think this would be a really good point to go to Sean, because I was mentioning about some of the brilliant skills that Sean did later. Now, one of the things that, as I said, completely blew me away was Sean's ability with time management. Now, Sean was an access module who started with me in February.

We were talking about this last week and said it seems absolutely ages ago. But Sean, you sent me this most amazing spreadsheet that you did about time management. Can you tell us and tell people a little bit about why you developed it and how it helped you to become a successful student?

SEAN DONNACHIE: Hi, everyone. Well, because I'm a dad of four and I'm dad taxi, so I needed to take, make sure I have time to study. So what I did was I created a spreadsheet, got all the modules, got all the sections of the modules, and then put it all into the weeks that you're planning. And then I could see. I could delete it.

I can move it about, shuffle it about, so that I can effectively say, I can't study there, I can study there. You know what I mean? I've got my son's fencing three times a week, daughter's swimming once a week, and then I want to sit down and have a beer, watching the city match or something like that. So I had to make sure I had time to do all the things, and that's why I created it.

ISABELLA HENMAN: So we've got a little image that we can show people, which some people might look at and think it's really complicated, but it's not too complicated, really. Is it? And can you just talk through what people can see on the screen, at the moment, please, Sean?

SEAN DONNACHIE: You'll see we've got all the weeks, week one to week 18, because the fast track module was only 18 weeks. So the start of the week, the end of the week, and that's what you should be studying. And then you go on to the book one, and you study two for this week, and on another sheet, it feeds into that.

It tells you, right? I've got 100%. I'm on that week. I'm on track with that, and then you can see week four. I'll be working on tutor marked assessment one, and then I say, yes, I've submitted that. So that does say it's 100%, so I'm going to try. So it's just a tracker to make sure I keep on course on what we're studying.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And I think-

SEAN DONNACHIE: And I've got a wee table at the bottom.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and it's a bit about ticking things off. And what I think was great is because you've got this bit, and on module websites, you can tick things off. And we're not saying to people, they have to go out and develop anything. But what I found amazing, and I felt a certain amount of pride. I felt very proud of you, the fact that you developed this, and you were willing to share.

And you actually shared your YouTube video, talking through this, which I think we can- hopefully, we can share in the chat. But this is the thing. We were talking earlier about learning from other people, and you spent time doing this. But you shared it with other people. Why did you feel that you thought that it was worth sharing with other people, Sean?

SEAN DONNACHIE: Because it helped me. If it helped somebody else, then so be it. If it only helped one person, then that was fine. So I created two sheets, and then, obviously, as you just stated, I created a YouTube video, because I intuitively know how my spreadsheet worked, because I created it. But some people would have went, oh, I don't know about this. So I created a YouTube video, and I posted it and then put it into the forum. And I think a couple of people commented that this is great and things like that, but yeah.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great, and I think that was really useful, because I know we shared it in the overall forum. And some people were like, wow. It's not about scaring people. It's not about saying you have to do these things, and this is what I always want to make people know.

Everybody's on their own study journey, but as you said, you had so many different things that you're managing. And every time I spoke to you, you were like, just been down to the bottom of Cornwall for my son's fencing, but he did really well. So I was like, yeah, that's great. But it's the managing life.

I'm not saying that you have to be a father of four and dad's taxi to manage things, but there's all sorts of things, and sometimes, recognising that there's different things in life. So how did you find managing studying against life? Was it smooth sailing, or did anything go haywire at some point along the way, Sean?

SEAN DONNACHIE: It did go haywire. I had a bereavement, and I fell behind in studying, and I caught up. So I talked to you because of the bereavement, and then you got contact with the student support

team and things like that, so sort of special circumstances. I mean, my brain dipped a wee bit. But through my study planner, I'm like, well, I need to get back on track.

I need to know exactly what I'm doing. So I deleted things, while I was off, and then I got back in. So life happens. You know I mean?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely.

SEAN DONNACHIE: Yeah, but I got back on track. And I completed the module, and I got a distinction, which is lovely as well.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Love getting that one in. That's fantastic. I'm very proud of everything you've done. And I think the interesting thing- so for everybody watching at home, Sean shared his time management. People at home, have you got any time management tips that you want to share, or are there anything you want to ask about time management?

Because Sean's been very honest saying, things went haywire. He fell behind. Maybe you missed that bit. Maybe you're still amazed by the fact that he had a spreadsheet and things. But I remember when Sean said, I can't do it. I had to have an extension and do things. And I remember going, well, OK, what can I as a tutor do to help? As a tutor, like Bethan was saying earlier, with tutors, we want to do the best. We can't solve things.

We can't find any extra time, but hopefully, you can think of things. So if you've got any little tips for time management, because time management goes alongside planning, as well, Sean. So what did you find that you needed to do for planning? So you said that you were managing yourself. Did you have a particular place you studied? How did you manage sort of space to yourself amongst your family and work?

SEAN DONNACHIE: Well, it was at my computer desk in my dining room, and my wife studied previously. So she helped me. She studied nursing, and what she used to do is she used to study upstairs. And I'd keep the children occupied downstairs, and she did the same for me.

So that helped me. That really helped me. So you need to get somewhere, so you can study, no distractions. So we got through it.

ISABELLA HENMAN: I think that's a really key thing, because it's very easy. Everything is a distraction. Phones are a distraction. The internet is a distraction. The doorbell's a distraction. The back garden's are a distraction, all these things, and sometimes, it's the time for yourself.

And some people may be thinking, I don't really know what to do. But that's why we're trying to give you ideas. We're trying to give you things, and chocolate is a very good- it's not a distraction. I'm being asked whether chocolate is a distraction.

Actually, Sean, I don't think we ever talked about chocolate. Is chocolate one of your things, or is there something else that's your treat? Actually, because that's the thing, treats and rewards. Do you find that you rewarded yourself for successful study, like I reward myself with chocolate?

SEAN DONNACHIE: Yeah, a few kinds of beer.

ISABELLA HENMAN: OK, so beer is your reward.

SEAN DONNACHIE: Yeah, I studied that. Yay!

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yes, done a little bit, and actually, that's a question for everybody at home. Do you work for rewards? Actually, that's the thing. What do you do? What do you think is a reward?

So I know, Sean, you have different things, and you said a beer. Chocolate's my reward. There might be other rewards that people have. So sometimes, some people might work with sort of the carrot approach, the restricting something, until they've done something.

Other time, there's reward in terms of- the carrot's the good thing. I'm talking about chocolate, the other c-word. Chocolate's the reward that sticks the thing. Now, I think Heidi's got- and I'll come back to Sean a little bit later. But I think Heidi's got some things and maybe be able to take over for me who's just got a bit obsessed thinking about chocolate and can't talk at the moment.

HEIDI: I've got some tips, some planning tips and ideas here from people that they're sharing in the chat, which is wonderful. One of the tips that I use is I am absolutely ruthless when it comes to turning off my notifications, and I've actually started this new thing, where I turn off my phone at half past 4:00 on a Friday afternoon if my phone's with me. Otherwise, you can't get hold of me, and then I won't turn it on, again, until half past 8:00 on Monday morning.

And I make that my profile picture on WhatsApp. So I then get lots of messages on the Monday morning saying, where are you? I've been trying to get a hold of you. And it's like, well, you should have read my profile photo then.

And it helps so much to then just have that time off, and when you're studying, you absolutely need to have that focus. Because I am not great with the old discipline. And if I get pinged, you know what it's like, people sending you really great YouTube videos and Instagram reels.

If I get pinged with that, I'm off down that rabbit hole for 40 minutes. So I turn off my notifications. So Heather says, stay on top of it every day, even if it's just half an hour. That's worked well for her.

Michael says, I've put everything in my calendar, my diary on my phone, which is where everything that goes on in my life lives, which is absolutely amazing, as long as you don't lose your phone, Michael. Hopefully, it's all backed up on the Cloud. And I've bought an academic diary and will use it for studying and also for daily life events.

And Deanne, I love this. My plan is to hunker down whenever I can. I'm not going to stress myself out about it as long as it gets done. I'm just going to squeeze it in whenever the opportunity presents itself. I love that, Deanne. That's a great way of approaching it, just being really to yourself and taking it a step at a time. I think that's brilliant.

And Sean, we've shared the link to your video in the chat, because lots of people have been asking for it. So thank you so much for that. I'm super impressed by your Excel skills. I am nowhere near as proficient with Excel as you are.

ISABELLA HENMAN: I know. That was why I was like, wow. And the fact that he shared it, and there's a blank one that people can fill in, which is really lovely. So that's great to hear the different things. I also understand that Deanne says, I'll be rewarding myself for every word read.

Yeah, I think, sometimes, there's reward. Sometimes, there's a little bit over reward. But now, if I come back to Sean for a little bit, Sean, we talked about assessment earlier. And I know that you said that you did very well in the end, but how did you find approaching assessment having not been in higher education and starting out in the access? What kind of things did you do to try and make sure that you were in the best place to do as well as you could?

SEAN DONNACHIE: Well, feedback from you, and when I submit an assessment, then you've got your feedback. So I worked on the key points you gave, just things like in my life. I don't usually read everything properly. I just skim for the most important parts.

So I need to read things properly, what are asked of you and the assessment, make sure it's clear. I know I went off on some tangents. I think the TMA, too, was just- don't know. I was asking and went somewhere else with the question. It was just completely disregarded, but we fed back, and again, I worked on it. Well, I did well after.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and I think that's one of the things. It's about reading the question. Isn't it? And that's one of the skills that Bethan was talking about, other skills earlier, but it's reading the question. And I remember talking to you several times about that, Sean. Can you share a little bit of your insight about how you helped yourself to know what questions we're actually asking, if you can remember?

SEAN DONNACHIE: It was just making sure that, when I read the question, and then I did the assignment, and then I didn't just forget about it, then I went back to it, and then read it, again, and then read what I put. And I went, that's nonsense. What was I thinking when I wrote that and things? Again, it was just understanding of it, what was asked of me.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And I think that's something that's quite new to students, particularly students that have been saying they've been out of study for 40 years and so on is none of the access questions are designed to be ambiguous. None of them are designed to confuse you, but sometimes, we were talking about terminology earlier. It's about reading that terminology, reading what's actually said and answering that.

And what I'm going to do is I'm going to come to Karen next. So Karen used to be the presenter of student of life once upon a time before me. We used to do lots of things together, but Karen is the chair of the new access module Y034, which is very exciting and has got all sorts of terminology in it, which she was teaching me about the other day. And I was like, I don't know what you're talking about. So share some of your excitement about Y034, Karen. Why is it so exciting?

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I'm really pleased to be here today and, of course, accompanied by my colleagues in the chat, Gareth, and George, and John, of course, who are doing a fab job answering your questions. Y034 is a new module. And I'm really excited about it, because I think, in terms of some of the things students were talking about today about what they want at the end of their course, what we're really trying to do is help students to learn with a book and online and to be able to feel really confident writing an essay in a sense.

Because in social sciences, and psychology, and health, and social care, et cetera, these are the real skills that we need to be able to master. So what we've done is we've, basically, created a whole new course that, I think, is really exciting, asking some phenomenally big questions, but all disguised with some really key skills, like time management, note taking, reading, using mind maps, referencing, writing academically. All of those things are things that we teach students throughout the module and what I think and hope is a really engaging way.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. So could you, perhaps, tell us about one of the big questions? Let's see. Let's see if we can understand if you say one of the big questions.

KAREN FOLEY: The big one, well, my favourite, actually, is block two, which is where students are going to come in the middle of the course, which is how fair is the world I live in. And that's just a huge question. Unfortunately, there are no real simple answers to it, but I think that's our block question. And then we have lots of unit questions, which is each week of study, we take a particular aspect of something that may or may not be fair, and we interrogate it with different theories, and models, and ideas.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. So I know you were telling me some terminology. Now, I think it's the terminology on the very interesting snail diagram. Is that the right one to be showing, or is that a different one?

KAREN FOLEY: It's a really good overview of the course, actually, and it shows how the module is split up. So maybe we'll just take a brief look at that, and then we can look at some of the terminology, because this is actually- I know we've got students here who are not doing Y034. But this is a similar sort of thing, and it shows us those block questions as well.

It, basically, breaks everything down into weeks of study, so you start and end full circle. But what I think is quite nice and reassuring for many students here who have been talking about things, like how to fit study in with the school holidays and about what Gareth was saying about you don't necessarily need to read everything in the module material, which is very, very true, because it's all about having this strategy. And it works well with what Sean was saying with time management, because you can see here, we've got some nice weeks, where there are optional activities, TMA weeks, and spaces to get a bit of a breather. And this is consistent throughout the whole access framework. It's a similar sort of structure to each one, Isabella.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you, Karen, and I'm sorry. I don't know whether anybody could hear. I got the really bad giggles in the middle of that, because I could just- I was doing it. I was doing this trying to read it, and I was imagining everybody at home doing this trying to read the snail diagram on the side, which was very unprofessional of me, laughing in the background.

KAREN FOLEY: Spinning take. Isn't it?

ISABELLA HENMAN: And I'm like, can we just turn that? No, no, no, I'm on my head.

KAREN FOLEY: One of our cut and paper enthusiasts, unlike Sean, will no doubt make a little wheel thing that you can spin around, so it's always up right.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely, and you can put all of those things in.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

ISABELLA HENMAN: So I know you mentioned to me a particular term. Now, I'm going to have to look it up. So you told me there was something about structure and agency. Now, that was completely new to me. I think we've got the image of it, structure and agency. But me being me has promptly managed to forget it, so can you explain to us what you mean by structure and agency?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, of course, well, this is a diagram that one of our colleagues drew for us, and it shows, really, some of the things to do with agency, which is basically our way of being able to do things in the world and the structures, which are various things in society that can either constrain or enable us. And it's rather, like, one of these things, where we think, oh, am I going to do well in this course, or shall I go for a run? But actually, some of those questions have a very simple answer.

Shall I go for a run? Yes, but actually, perhaps, going for a run could be really hard for people, because maybe they don't have any trainers or pavement, like me down my road. Maybe they've got mobility problems, et cetera. So some of these questions require the distinction between agency and structure to be able to look at some of the tensions between them, and that's what we do with all these questions, Isabella, looking at fairness, looking at equality, and looking at who we are.

We sort of think, OK, what's our agency? What sort of things can we bring? What do we want to do and deliver? But also, what are the structures? What are some of the cultural things in our world, or

pavements, or barriers, housing that can constrain and make us less successful in being able to do those? So it's really a case that there's not a clear and simple answer.

And these terms- I think they sound a bit sort of odd, in that sense, but they're common terms for social scientists because very often, we like these frameworks to be able to look at various different things but to take the same categorical things and say, OK, bearing in mind these different questions, how can we view that in terms of some of the things we want to do and some of the things that enable or disable us from doing that?

So in a nutshell, that's our structure and agency-type thing. And it's the reason why we see so many students grappling with differences, confidence, et cetera, because we've all got a different starting point. We've all got different stuff around us. And so we're all different in that sense. And we need to really consider the two and make the best of our own individual situation, as you said earlier.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great So that actually- it sounds like what we're talking about overall. So even though this is the whole thing. So I've got to try and get the right one. So I was trying to write it down. So the structure- anything that constrains, so it's termed with accessibility. We were talking about tutorials. So where I was talking with Bethan- saying that, ideally, as a student, you will have phone calls with your tutor. But actually, if I've got this right, the structure may be that for some people, those phone calls might not work. Have I got that right? Am I applying it correctly? Have I learned something today?

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. And they could be for different reasons. It could be because it's hard to hold a phone, or it could be because some people have difficulties communicating things. Some people just have a confidence issue and may not feel comfortable doing that. But I think it's about bearing in mind those things and thinking, we could use them as excuses, so to speak, or as things that we think, oh, well, I'm not going to do that because I'm not bright enough or I'm not whatever. It's really about thinking, OK, do I want this structure to be a limiter? Do I want to be limited by this? Do I want to be able to do some of these things, and really, what are the barriers that I can and can't push? And what are the reasons for that as well?

So I think it's- again, one of the whole messages of the module is you can pretty much do anything you want. It's just that some things are more complex and require a bit more thinking around some of those things to be able to do. So even though we've got these constraints, if we want something, it's very likely we can go about getting it.

ISABELLA HENMAN: OK, so I think- so for people watching at home, maybe you could think about- is there anything? Have you got barriers to study? Is that the right way for thinking about it? Because some people might have mental barriers. You were talking about confidence. So if people feel able to share, maybe people could share whether there's anything that they've thought of as a barrier to study, in which case, we can see whether we can either come up with some ideas or other people in the chat can come up with ideas, because that's one of the really lovely things about the Open University and Student Hub Live, isn't it, Karen? That people learn from each other. I'm learning from you. I'm getting it written down. I'm trying to get my head around. And you will correct me if I'm wrong, I'm sure you will.

So have I got it right? Agency- did I write this down right? Agency is things that help, or have I managed to write that down incorrectly?

KAREN FOLEY: No, things that can help can be within anything. Our agency is basically our own will- what we want to do. So if I want to go for a run, if I want to do well in my learning, if I want to be happier, I can use my agency. I can use my own motivations, goals, and ideas to be able to do those. Those are

things I want, but they're not always things I get. And that's where the structures are there. So the structures can be things like buildings, cultural differences, et cetera. So they're things that can either constrain or enable us. So basically, structures are social, and agency is kind of individual. That's a really simplistic way that I like to look at it.

ISABELLA HENMAN: OK, so that's really helpful. So the agency and will- so what I was saying earlier- everybody is on their own study journey. When we do online workshops- you may have remembered this, Karen, because I remember we had that image. Do you remember? It was sort of like walking through those mountains, and you were like, why, where are you on that bit. So if you can almost visualise that. Now, think about where you are. If you can visualise a path going through the countryside, are you at the start of that path? Are you part of the way up the hill? Are you the amazing Karen, because she's so active- she's already run up to the top of the hill. I'm still at the bottom going, [BREATHES DEEPLY] I'm going to get part of the way there because it's very much your own journey, isn't it, Karen?

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And I think one of the things that we see- Tanya and David are here, also, in the chat, and they've been moderating our forum, which many students have come to already. And so many people have been talking about- it's been a long time since they've studied, lack of confidence, trying to fit things in with children, et cetera, caring responsibilities.

So yeah, we all have these different things going on. And I think one thing that we often think is that we're alone in that. So many students say, oh, I'm worried about this or I'm worried about that, and they think they're the only one. Well, on this module- I think partly because we're often feeding students into psychology and social sciences and criminology, counselling, those sorts of fields- very often, people who want to give something back in those discipline areas are people who've maybe had challenges themselves.

And so as a cohort of students, we have a really wide-ranging cohort, basically, but many of whom have real, real challenges. And the fact that they succeed on these modules and they gain confidence- at the end of the module, we look at all of their feedback, and it is just really, really awesome what they manage to achieve under, often, very, very difficult circumstances. So yeah, it is quite a special group of students, I think, on this module.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And it sounds fantastic because even though you're talking about Y034, there's all these things they're learning. And I know we've got lots of people who've been sharing barriers. So if I go to Heidi now, what kind of barriers have people been sharing, that they've been open about and that they've been maybe been asking for help or maybe just sharing, Heidi?

HEIDI: Yeah, lots of discussion in the chat. And I just want to commend everyone that has the bravery and the courage to be so open about some of the barriers they face because, actually, by sharing that within the chat, you're going to be making somebody else feel better because they probably feel exactly the same way about you, and it's very reassuring for them.

So Godwin and Jackie have been having a conversation around procrastinating, which we're all guilty of. Godwin said, the amount of things I do before the thing I have to actually do is quite amazing. And Jackie said, you sound like me. I can find 100 things to do and still forget what I was supposed to be doing originally.

And then some of these barriers that our students experience. So Matthew says, illness is restricting time available and energy. Daniel says, my personal barrier is that I compare myself to others. That's a real

common one, Daniel. I'm happy with phone calls with my tutor. I guess it's when I start doing it, it will all be OK. Absolutely.

Sukru says barriers with what Sukru defines as executive dysfunction. Samantha- my self-confidence. And Kathleen says that she gets overwhelmed, which, again, is a really, really common one. So lots of people sharing their thoughts in the chat. And once again, thank you so much to those of you who are doing that.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Right. Thank you, Heidi. So Karen, there's a number of different things there. There are actually some quite psychology-based things, aren't there? So I mean, it might be- I think you can probably give a little bit of insight about executive function, can you? Because it's a bit like terminology that's being used? But some of those things- maybe you'd like to say a little bit more about how students could maybe progress?

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I think one thing to be mindful of- as Gareth said earlier, you don't need to do everything in this module. And the thing I'll add is that nobody's going to come and quiz you on everything in this module. So we often think that in this module, it's all about the content. And this is why those students who may have read our assessment guide and started looking at the introduction may have come across our learning goals. And I'm sure George will put some things in the chat about the importance of our learning goals.

Only one of them is to do with knowledge. And the other two important ones that we assess in academic work are about thinking skills and communication skills. So this is the ability to select the important things that are there to answer a question, to be able to write in our own words and say who said what, kind of thing.

But the knowledge is often what students worry about. And I know in the chat, people have been talking about, oh, retaining information and how hard it is to do that. You don't need to do that. That's not the point of this module. In fact, all Access modules are about giving you those skills so that if you need to go and find something, you know how to go and do it. If you need to think about something critically, using, maybe, different lenses like structure and agency or ways of thinking, hey, is this theory really doing what it says on the tin? Can it really be applied to the real world. So it's those things, those changes in our thinking, really, that are really important.

But in psychology terms, Isabella, the sort of question you ask around executive function is something we don't go into in a huge amount of detail. But one thing I will share about some of these things, that students who later go on to do psychology look at, is we have various different ways of looking at things like memory or learning. And learning is that sort of absorption of information and including it in your narrative, being able to understand that- not just being receptive to it but learning about it and why it matters, and then being able to remember it.

So a thing in Wales at the minute is this 20-mile-an-hour speed limit type thing. So I might know it. I might only be able to retain it if I realise that, actually, I can't really afford any more points on my licence. And then I might be able to remember that at particular times. But knowing something isn't just as simple as necessarily reading it or remembering it.

So for those students who are kind of looking at this book and thinking, gosh, there's a lot in there. I'm never going to be able to remember that. Or maybe people who finish their study and put the book down and think, well, I'm not really sure what I read- the important thing is the skills. And it's being able to refresh and look at that and thinking, ah, yes I was thinking about what that theory said, and I was

thinking that it may apply to this but not to that. That's the important thing. So yeah, it's that sort of internalisation of things that really matters- not being able to recall it, which is the last process of what we call memory.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, so in fact, you'll see that question going past. It was almost as if by magic that we thought as to how do when you're doing something well. So think about that. So Karen's just said, at the end, the recall is the very last thing. How do you know when you're doing something well, Karen? Do you go, yes, I feel OK? Do you ask somebody else? There's sort of internal and external knowing, isn't there?

KAREN FOLEY: Well, there is, Isabella. And I think this is one of the things. I've been told off when writing this module for using too many sporting analogies. But actually, I think sporting analogies- I'll bring up now while I can- are a really useful way of doing this because- and it's one thing that sort of undermines the course.

I always go round saying, oh, I'm really slow at running. I'm not as good at this. I'm not as good at that. And I used to find that really unhelpful because, effectively, all I was doing was beating myself up with a stick. I didn't know I wasn't doing well. I just wasn't doing well enough for what I thought should be better. And that nebulous idea was really, really not helpful. So now I know that I'm running at this particular pace, and I know I'm doing well if I've been able to run at that particular pace and deliver what's in that training session, for example. That's how I know I'm doing well.

And so I guess for our students, it's that whole thing of assessment. If we ask you this and you write about that but do it brilliantly, you're not doing well because we've asked about that, but you may be doing well in other things. So I think it's all about this benchmarking and thinking, OK, I can only say I'm doing well if I've got a clear idea of a goal.

So in the module, I've introduced SMART objectives. And we try to encourage students to be really specific because if my goal is do heaps of studying on a Saturday, I may reach the end of that Saturday and think, oh, I haven't really done very well because I've been on my phone or I've been doing this. But if I were to set a goal saying, I'm going to read unit 1 and I'm going to do all the activities, and I'm going to plan my time for next week, and I've got some specific things there, I can kind of know I've done well. So for me- and I always beat myself up with a stick. I'm always saying, I should be fitter. I should be thinner. I should be- blah, blah, blah. But it's not helpful, I don't find.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and that's a really interesting point about comparing to others. And what I'd like to do is I'd like to ask each of the guests, there, about how they know when they're doing something well. So if I come to Bryn first, what kind of things do you use? Is there anything that you use as a measure to know when you're doing well?

BRYN: Yeah, I think I like the SMART goals idea, and I find it useful, especially that very measurable thing. So I can go, right, if I have done this and this, then that will be sort of good enough in that sense. And just- because it's either that, or actually, my anxiety goes nuts because it imagines this unattainable goal of achievement. It's kind of weird- where you break- I think where achievement can be utterly intangible. You can never define it. And then you can, therefore, spend the rest of your life incredibly anxious. So yeah, definitely, the idea of having a measurable target, where I can go, right, job done.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Right. And I think that's a really important thing to mention because some people get very anxious. Karen was saying, I can never be good- I'll never be thin enough- and we compare ourselves to others, and that can make you anxious. As I said earlier, healthy competition? Fine. If it

works for you and it makes you feel OK, great. But if that's going to be bad, if you beat yourself with a stick, like Karen said, please don't do that. Now, I think Heidi has got some tips. I'll come to the other guests in a moment. But Heidi, you've got some tips that students have been sharing, haven't you?

HEIDI: Yeah, well, I've got a brilliant one from Michael. So Michael has said that, being part of these chats and seeing everyone's introductions in the forum has really made me feel like I'm not alone with my worries which has really helped me, which is wonderful to hear, Michael. And you've just offered up a brilliant tip. So Michael says, while I think of all my concerns, I'm making a list of them in a Word document, and I'll bring each of these up with my tutor as soon as that tutor is allocated. So I think that's a brilliant idea of being able to capture it all down on paper, in a nice, clear, succinct form, and then you that you can work your way through them and get your tutor's reassurance. So I thought that was a really great tip that Michael shared. So thank you for that, Michael.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely. Brilliant. So Bethan, I mean, that was great, the fact that Michael said he wants to bring things to a tutor. Is there anything- what would you say, either to students, or how do you measure? What kind of things do you do?

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: Well, I love that Michael has mentioned writing because a lot of what you were just talking about, I kept thinking, oh, writing is great for this. Writing is great for this. And be really self-compassionate with yourself if you can. And something that I like to do is- I read about it in a book once, and I think it's great- is if you're feeling really stressed out and you're feeling a bit down on yourself and you've had a difficult time- and I did part-time study myself with really young children. It was really hard. And half the time, I just had to say, if I've got through the day, then I'm winning. I've done great. It's OK. But I like the idea of- write a letter to a friend if they were in the same position as you. So you imagine your friend saying to you, I'm really overwhelmed. I haven't done much in my study. How's it going? What would you say to them, and write down what you'd say to them. And then remember that actually, that letter is for you because we often would not talk to ourselves- to our friends the way we talk to ourselves. We could be so down on ourselves in a way we wouldn't if it was to somebody else. So just try and get that voice thinking, what would you say to someone else? You'd say, you're doing amazing.

And I have to say that- I'm sure that most people here and almost everyone here will finish this course and do wonderfully. But I also would like to say that, actually, sometimes things don't go to plan, and that's OK as well. Life can be really, really challenging. And the OU is brilliant because it's so supportive at helping you complete your course when you're ready. And that might mean, sometimes, taking a bit of a break, and that's OK, too.

ISABELLA HENMAN: So going back- so we've mentioned some of the struggles. So how do you know when you're doing well, Bethan? So how do you personally measure when you're doing well?

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: Well, I'm always doing well, Isabella, because I have to believe it. So I think I do just try and always think, life has so many ups and downs. I don't want to be hard on myself if things aren't- I mean, getting feedback from your tutor is obviously great. So if you aren't worried that you're not doing well, I could like drop a note and say- I sometimes ask my peers, my colleagues, am I doing OK? Have I got this right? Have I understood what was here?

But I also have a really strange little system. You were talking about chocolate being your habit of reward. Mine is stationery- cheap stationery. So anything with post-it notes, where- I got it from a friend, an American friend at a university I used to work at. And I'd go into her office at the start of the week, and

there'd be post-it notes all over the door. And at the end of the week, there wouldn't be any post-it notes. And I'd be like, what are you doing?

So she'd write, at the start of the week, everything she had to do on an individual post-it note, from, read this chapter, write this, do this. Pick up the dog, whatever it was, and stick it all on the wall. And when it was done, she'd take the post-it note off. So you know you're doing well when you're post-it notes have all gone at the end of that week.

ISABELLA HENMAN: That's what I was just looking for. I was looking for my post-it notes. I had a whole load of ones with little animals on. Karen's seen them before. They've disappeared. So clearly, either the elves have got them, or I've stuck them somewhere. Sorry, that was what I was looking- but that's a great -

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: It's made me very sad, Isabella, that this year- there's a Wilko in the town that I lived in, and I used to go down to Wilko and get my post-it notes. So I'm really sad about the loss of Wilko. I'll have to go to the Works now to get my post-it notes.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Other brands are available.

BETHAN MICHAEL-FOX: Other brands are available?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah. So Sean, as a student, you mentioned about the things about getting marks and things. You said about feedback as well, but I don't want to put words in your mouth. How did you, Sean, know that you were doing well as a student?

SEAN DONNACHIE: Just understanding what was expected of me. And as you say, the marks- you see an improvement of the marks that- when I started taking in the feedback- it wasn't there right at the beginning. But when I started taking in the feedback, doing what was asked of me, and what I know there were tutorials, and then putting that into the assignments- and again, that showed me my progression, I guess, and that's the measurable standard that I was doing.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. Did you ever feel that you knew you were doing well at some point?

SEAN DONNACHIE: Yeah, at the end.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great, so you learned that.

SEAN DONNACHIE: Yes. So when I was doing my end of module TMA with TMA 4, I knew I was going to- I was going to do well in that because all the stuff that- I was understanding the questions. All my feedback that I got from you- and I actually put it into my assessment and looked through- I need to do that. I need to do that. And then when I got that final grade, which really chuffed about, that was when I knew that- it all came together.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, so that's a really good thing to be thinking about. So one of the reasons why I wanted Sean on- other than the fact that he had the brilliant time-management and planning things, was because he came through. And the key thing, from what Sean just said- I'd like people to hear is- at the end, he realised. Not saying it will only happen at the end, and I'm going to come to Karen again in a moment because she'll be able to give us a bit of insight on this, maybe, from the social sciences perspective.

But sometimes- Bethan was saying she asked other people. And it's this idea, sometimes- you ask other people, but sometimes you know. So Karen, can you tell us a little bit about that, maybe from the psychology of learning, for people that are just starting out, who may be thinking, how do I know if I'm doing well? I don't know. I need somebody to tell me. Can you give us a little bit more insight?

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, that's a really hard question, Isabella, but a really good one. Let me try and see how I can answer that. I think many students here have been talking- and I identify with this, and I think Bethan said it as well- about just getting up in the morning. And sometimes that whole notion of putting one foot in front of the other is so important.

Doing things and keeping moving, I think, is really important just in terms of doing well. You don't get to the end unless you take very little steps. And it's like that- when you're doing an Ironman, you have to take very, very slow and tiny steps. But every little step will help. And if you stay static, you don't go anywhere- even though you feel like you're not maybe getting anywhere fast.

So I think one is in terms of assessment, and that's why we have assessment at the Open University. It's also why we don't look at draughts or anything like that, Isabella, because students need to learn from the feedback that they, then, submit, which is all weighted. So very early on, it doesn't matter a huge amount. It's only worth, say, maybe 10%. Later on, it matters a bit more because it counts for more in terms of the grades that make up your overall assessment. But ultimately, doing these skills and progressing to the end gives you great confidence and everything like that. You don't even actually have to pass an Access module to get to level one either. So those things are good to know.

But I think, for me, in terms of psychology, it's about where your own goals and direction are- your own agency. Some students want to pass. Some students want to really enjoy things. Some students want to do really well. And I think it's really important to bear that in mind because you can't hit yourself with a stick unless you know where your benchmark is.

When I was an OU student in my early 20s, I loved psychology. I didn't really love following the guidance, though. I was really interested in stuff. I used to go and research all sorts of things I shouldn't do. But I had a blast. And I wanted to learn my way and do my kind of things. My peers, on the other hand, were reading the assessment guidelines religiously, following them and getting much better grades. But they were doing something kind of different. And I think it's always important to bear in mind that I knew they were getting better grades because they were delivering things. But at the time, in my early 20s, I thought, I'm not complying with such nonsense.

So I think it's really important to bear in mind that everyone has different stuff, but a number is a very poor indication. A sense of improvement from one TMA to another is also not the best because they're all assessing different kinds of things. So you can't view it like a trajectory. And they've all got increasing complexity, which is why they're worth more towards the end.

So it's all about, really, that level playing field. You can only measure whether you're doing well by knowing, actually, what it is you're trying to achieve, and then thinking, how might I know? And this is something social scientists do all the time. How do I know? How does this theory or how does this idea make sense? What measures can I put in place to test it? How can we research the world around us and use some sort of evidence to support this? I know I'm doing well on my assignment because I aimed to do this, and I achieved to do that. And that's the way a psychologist would try to answer those questions, with some evidence to support these points.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, so that's a really important point. And I know that not everybody that's watching is studying psychology. But the reason why I'm asking Karen all these things is because we are all people. So we all have these things going around fizzing around in our heads. We have all these impressions. We have these emotions. We have the anxiety that Bryn was talking about. We have these different things where things go wrong, that Sean was talking about. And there's things.

But you are all students. So you're all learning, and you're all on the Access module. And that thing that Karen was talking about is that- we keep saying, please don't measure yourself against others. And this is one of the things that's the big difference between school and higher education and the Access module is because at school, you get these things.

And I remember one of the reasons why I switched away from doing A-level maths is because I really, really struggled at the start of A-level maths. And every time we had a test, you had to give the marks you got out of 20. And everybody was saying, oh, yeah, I got 19, and I got 20 or something. And I had to go, I got 2. And everybody would just swivel and look at me. And I was just- I felt I was just totally shrinking inside, going, well, clearly I'm a failure because I've had to tell everybody. And that's a really dangerous thing, isn't it, Karen? To feel that you're being told that you're not good enough.

KAREN FOLEY: It's actually the topic of the second unit in block 2, where we talk about self-esteem and this whole notion of feeling not good enough because so many of our students have this massive sense of imposter syndrome, which, in psychology, is this idea that you're kind of an imposter. You're acting like something, and nobody really knows that you're a huge fraud underneath it all.

And I think so many students coming to Access- I don't know whether anyone in the chat identifies with this kind of thing today- they think, oh, everyone's much better than I am. Everyone will be able to nail this. Everyone knows what they're doing. I'm the only one who's got kids running around my ankles and all sorts of shenanigans going on.

So yeah, that whole notion of how I'm good enough we talk about in terms of self-esteem. And again, that whole notion of measuring some of these things. We can only know how good we are or something if we actually look at it and think critically, well, how good are some of those scales? How helpful, really, are they?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Right. So I'm just conscious that we've been really serious, haven't we, Karen? Now, we know when we talk about things- now, I've mentioned chocolate. We haven't got your lovely doggies in the background. But I wanted to just get a little bit light because I don't want people to think that it's all serious. And Access, is lovely and as I said, I normally get hyper. And I've realised that I've got really, really quiet. I want to tell people a couple of stories that hopefully will encourage them. So Karen knows that I love Strongman, and I love watching Strongman. And I like watching Strongman because I can't do it. I mean, yeah, OK, I can move a couple of things. I don't lift or anything.

But it's about seeing people achieve things. And the reason why- as I said- why I loved having Sean on because I saw him progress through the module, and Sean said about how he progressed through the module. Life wasn't happy. Life didn't go brilliantly. But he made the decision. He went and get happy. And I like chocolate. Chocolate is amazing. So I find that chocolate really makes me feel happy. I don't have it all the time. I do have a number of different types of chocolate. And I know that you find that exercise makes you happy, isn't it?

So just in terms of- to end on a high note, some suggestions about things that can help students. So we've talked about lots of things about- we probably did a little bit of the constraining, the structure, and sometimes get anxious and things. But this agency about how you can make yourself realise how brilliant you can be, because everybody here is watching you. You're fantastic. You've made the decision to be an OU student, which is wonderful. You're starting out at Access. You're going to gain some of those skills. What other positives can you tell people that they're going to get, Karen?

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, I think they're going to get so much from doing this. And I think for so many people, it's that satisfaction that they're doing something for me. It's time to change that agenda- people who've talked about having bad experiences beforehand. This is something, really, that is completely nourishing, I think, for you.

And not only does it help you write an essay, but it really helps you win arguments in the pub because you can back up all your points with evidence. You can construct a logical argument. You can critically look at the world around you and say, hey, Daily Mail, I've read your article saying chocolate is good for everyone. But when I look at it, I can see this. And we've got these frameworks to help students do some of these things.

And I think that not only do you get the satisfaction of- maybe even to your children, saying, you know I'm at university now. I'm doing this module. I'm learning all these things. But you learn how to balance your time and squeeze everything in. You learn about all these things about how to argument, how to back your points up with evidence. And you get that confidence, I think, as you're working through your assignments and getting that feedback there from your tutor, to know that you're improving and developing something.

And many students, I think, don't want to go on and do a degree. Many do. But some students just think, I just want to know that if I wanted to, I could, or I just want to know that I can get some of these skills and get that confidence. So I think this course gives you so much. And what I've really tried to do in Y034 is to apply some of those things.

So if we're talking about a theory or whatever, how can our students take something away from that that they can apply anywhere in the rest of their life? So I think studying with the OU, meeting all these other students, having that "me" time and trying to carve that out and protect it is just so valuable. But ultimately, it changes the way you view the world. It changes the way you think. It gives you new tools. And for me, that is really exciting. But it means sometimes- I always say to my daughter, don't ask questions you don't want to know the answer to. Sometimes that knowledge can make you think about stuff, like all the questions I'm having at the moment about sustainability, which features in our module as well, and environment. So these things change things, but they also give you the tools. And I think, for me, that feels really empowering, and I hope our students get a sense of that as they're working through it.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely. And that's what we really want to do. I think empowering is a good thing, and recognising that being here, listening to these things- there's lots of really good points. And I want to go to Heidi just before I finish up to get a little bit of a flavour of what's been going on in the chat or whether you've got anything you want to add, just your little pep talk, Heidi, about this idea about- of empowering and being great.

HEIDI: Absolutely. Yeah, we've got some great comments in the chat. So firstly, I would say I've found that studying actually becomes addictive. And in the beginning, it might feel that you're nervous and you're apprehensive and you're thinking, how am I ever going to get my head around this? Trust me. In a few years time, once you've completed your qualification, you'll be in the same boat that I'm in now. So did my undergrad over six years. And then I took a little bit of time off, and then I was back into my post-grad. And then I thought, oh, phew, it's all done. And now I'm thinking, what do I do with myself? I've got to go back and do some more study now. So you'll probably find that you're in the same boat.

Anne put a lovely comment in the chat saying, I feel like I've crossed one hurdle already logging into this chat and seeing everyone's views and knowing that I'm not doing this on my own. Christine says that, I've done well if I've got out of bed and made a start on something, even if I don't finish it. It's just taking that first step. Christine, absolutely.

Daniel says, I feel that I know when I'm doing something well because I am truly in the zone of what I'm doing and time is flying by. Suzanne says, I know that I'm doing something well if it takes a piece of me in the short term, but in the long term, I feel like I've gained. It's important for me to keep sight of my goals. And I love this one. Gabrielle says, there is a quote I tell myself- can't remember by who, but it goes, "Good, better, best. Never let it rest until your good is better and your better is best." So I thought that was a really nice one to finish on.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Wow. OK, I don't think I'm anywhere near the best bit yet, but I think- as we finish up, we really want people to hear- everybody that's starting out, you're starting out. It's the freshest week. I know people are nervous. You'll start to get some more information. We've obviously shared lots of ideas in the chat. You'll see that there's a feedback form in the chat as well. We do welcome feedback to make sure that we're doing the best we can. If there's particular events that you think would be really helpful.

I know everybody's head will be doing, like I do- what I call- my head goes all fizzy, because there's so many things that we want to say and so many things that we could have said. But just please hear this- you are starting out, so that quote about the being better- so you are trying to better yourself. That is fantastic. You're making the first step.

They're your steps. Remember that illustration that I was thinking about and we were talking about with Karen earlier- wherever you are on that pathway, whether you are still at the bottom of the path, whether you're part the way along the path, whether you're hanging off the side, whether you're feeling you can't even start, or whether you are part the way up the mountain, you're at the top, you're waving, wherever- your study journey- you measure yourself against yourself. The brilliant thing about Access is there's lots of reflection. You get to think about what you're doing, what you're hoping to achieve, and you will do brilliantly. You will do the best job you can do because you're. So have a lovely rest of your day, everybody, and hopefully, we'll see you at another event soon.

[AUDIO LOGO]