

Freshers Week - Welcome to the OU - 24th September 2024

ISABELLA HENMAN: Good morning. Welcome to the Open University. Welcome to Student Hub Live. My name is Isabella Henman, and I'm the presenter of Student Hub Live here. And it is once again so exciting to have everybody here. We've been planning all of this for such a long time. And I've talked to my guests and we've been talking to students about what they're interested in. So Student Hub Live is a cross-university platform that is about academic community and study skills for higher education. And we run these freshers events to welcome you to the Open University and get you used to some of the key skills that are involved. As you'll have seen from the information before, I've got some very fantastic guests helping me today. So I've got Heidi, Felicity, and George are on the chat. They're designated by SHL. And they're will be answering questions for you along there. Some of them will also be coming through to me from Heidi on camera chat. And I'll go to Heidi in a moment. I've also got some wonderful guests with me here in the live studio, or the live virtual studio, as it is. And I've got Tazzy, Darren, and Jackie. And I'll be coming to them a little bit later to get their different experiences. But first, what I wanted to do is I wanted to come to Heidi because I know we've been running live for you, for your students at home. And you've been asking all sorts of questions and things so far. So, Heidi, what's been going on?

HEIDI: Hello. Good morning, everyone. So if you're new to Student Hub Live, as Isabella said, my name is Heidi. I studied with the OU for five years. I did all of my undergraduate with the Open University, went on Master's, and I'm just starting my PhD with the OU now. I officially start on Monday. So I've got three and a half years of doctoral study ahead of me, which I'm looking forward to.

So essentially, if you're brand new to the Open University, I've been in your shoes. I know exactly what it's like. And I know that it's easy to feel a little bit apprehensive when you're first starting out with your studies. But we're here to reassure you and to remind you that it is a wonderful experience and that you have made a fantastic decision joining the Open University.

So as Isabella said, there's a few bits I want to run through with you. So to start off, just so that you know, we've got lots of people with us today. It's really, really busy in the chat, which is great. But if you're trying to concentrate on the chat as well as listening to what's going on live, you might find it a bit busy.

So in the top right-hand side, there's a little Pin. If you click on that, it will slow down the chat for you. And I use that all the time. It's an absolute lifesaver for me when I'm trying to keep up with the chat and all the conversations that are going on. We've got some widgets. So we like to make the sessions really interactive. So you'll be able to use those as we go throughout the session.

If you're brand new, as I said, it will take you a little bit of time, but you'll soon familiarise yourself with this format. We also ask that you don't share any personal information within the chat, so no email addresses, no details, no social media, anything like that. We just ask that you keep that to yourself, just for safety and privacy purposes.

So saying-- oh, hello. So we've got tonnes of people studying humanities. So I studied literature, so I did A111 as well. So all of you who are just starting A111, you are in for an absolute treat. So we've got

Gemma in Worcestershire, Alan in Manchester, Emma from Wiltshire, Cynthia from the Netherlands. I'm going there in April. I can't wait. Cheryl from Brighton and Emma in South Wales.

We've got a number of students that are studying education-related modules. So we've got Carmen in Peterborough, Tiffany in Uxbridge, and Neve from Oxfordshire. Just down the road from me, Neve. B100, an Introduction to Business Management, so you're going to be studying with our colleagues in the Faculty of Business and Law. Very exciting. We've got Helen from Glasgow and we've got Camilla from Nottingham.

I'd also want to say some hellos to our international students that are joining us today. We've got some people in amazing locations. So we've got Katie Marie from Far North Queensland, Australia. I have no idea what time it is where you are, Katie Marie. But goodness me, thanks for joining us. Lovely to have you with us. We've got Kristin, who's joining us from South Africa, Stojan from Italy, Maria from Spain. But Maria is now living in London, rainy London. It's very rainy today.

Joel in Luxembourg. We've got Melina Raluca in Switzerland. Beautiful name. And we've got Alexis in Cyprus. And then I just want to finish off by saying a big hello to Jessica. Jessica has shared that she hasn't studied for 13 years, first time coming back to studies. So, Jessica, welcome. There's going to be lots of other students in the same boat as you. And we really look forward to reassuring you all. And we hope that you really enjoy the show.

Fantastic. Thank you, Heidi. And I always forget to say that before I worked for the University, I was a student with the University as well. So that was in the days before Student Hub Live. So I didn't have any kind of freshers thing. I just sort of went straight in at the deep end to do my Master's. So actually, that brings me on to my first question.

So I'm going to come to Darren first. And we've got lots of brand new students, haven't we, Darren? And people might be feeling a little bit apprehensive. So you are here to welcome students to the University as well. What kind of things would you like to say to people? And why have they made such a good choice joining the Open University?

DARREN GREY: Well, firstly, I'd like to say hello to everybody right across the world because it's wonderful to know that we've got people engaged today from around the world. And like I say, it's really exciting, and welcome. You may feel daunted at times. You may feel a little bit nervous and a bit apprehensive, but please do reach out to us. It's a two-way process.

If you've got things that you need to know, we're here to support you. So never feel afraid to reach out and make those connections to us. But enjoy it. Make time. Make sure you've got enough time and space that you can study properly. But, yeah, just enjoy what's coming up. You'll love it, I'm sure.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. Thanks, Darren. That's a really good start. And Heidi was mentioning earlier that we have some widgets. So you'll see that first widget should be launched for you, probably just below where the camera is at the moment. And that's, what are you hoping to gain from your Open University studies? I'm just checking my wording there.

And with the word cloud, so a word cloud is built from common words. So the more times a particular word is answered-- is inputted, then the bigger it comes. You will have to enter three different options there on that word cloud. So if you can't think of three things, put a dot or a comma. You have to put different things. The system won't put them through if you put the same things, like excitement, three times, which maybe you will. And I'm sure Darren will be happy with that one.

But that widget will be launching and that will be going through. So when that's ready, we will show it on screen. So Darren was saying about enjoying your study. So how would you recommend, then, to students to actually sort of prepare themselves to enjoy their study, Darren? Maybe they'll be thinking at the moment, gosh, there's so much to do. How can I enjoy that? What's your recommendations, Darren?
DARREN GREY: Yeah, you'll start studying very shortly. Make the most of the time that you've got ahead of studying. I recommend that if you haven't already, look at OU Ready. It's a free online resource. It can take up to 20 hours for you to complete, but that is a really good investment because it allows you to see what's coming ahead of you.

Expect what it means to study at distance because you may have studied in other circumstances, but not over your computer, over your phone. So it will help you with that. It will help prepare you for some of the skills and the digital skills that you need. It will tell you a bit about your tutor, tuition, about tutorials, forums, and about your assessments and assignments.

It'll also introduce you a little bit more to the way that all of our systems work and how you study online, how you submit your TMA, tutor-marked assessment. It will just basically help prepare you. So if you've got the time over the next few weeks, I very much recommend getting involved with OU Ready because it will help prepare you.

But just generally, as you go through your course, as I mentioned before, there are times when life gets in the way and you felt maybe a little bit stressed, but remember your end goal. And that will come up in the widget. That, hopefully, excitement will be there. But remember what your end goal is. And just give yourself to enjoy yourself as you go along as well. There's so much to be learned. It's really going to be enriching for you.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Brilliant. Thank you, Darren. That's really helpful. So hopefully, we've got that word cloud is available for us to have a look at. So let's see what kind of words have come up there. Let's have a look. Confidence. Oh, that's lovely. So that's a big one. Confidence and knowledge. And this is where now I have to squint to see things. Enjoyment. Qualification. Ooh, my head gets-- independence. Ah, that's an excellent one. Yeah, that's a really good one, and independence.

Understanding personal growth. Gain confidence. Ooh, and it carries on moving, doesn't it? Career progression, fulfilment, connections, meeting people, degree, more career progression. So that's actually lovely. I like the fact that the confidence and knowledge are the strong ones there because I think that's a really key thing.

Darren was mentioning these ideas about reaching out to people. And I'll come on to-- I've got another guest that I'll come to later, Tazzy, who's a student, who she'll be giving some of her experiences of how she managed. And also, when I come to Jackie later, she'll be talking about careers. And a lot of people were talking about careers progression there.

But if I come back to Darren, you mentioned about reaching out and support, and the way that you can engage with other people. So you said we're a distance university. Obviously, Student Hub Live is an option here for people to engage. How else can students engage with the University. What kind of things could you say, Darren?

DARREN GREY: Well, we've got Student Support Services as well. So if you've got a very specific question, you want to know more, you can find out by connecting with the Student Support Team. There's a whole host of information that you've got available to you from Student Hub, from the StudentHome, sorry, student home. So please engage with that.

It can, I will say, sometimes feel like there's a swarm of moths ahead of you. And you just want to try and grab that one butterfly for that key piece of information. So just try and stay a little bit focused there, but reach out. Try and get involved in the forums when they're there. They are moderated. So they're a safe space to connect and communicate.

I know it can be a bit difficult because some of you will be looking towards studying later in the evening, whilst others will be there in the middle of the day. So sometimes forums can feel a little bit disconnected, but please do engage with that. And there are wonderful other resources from the Student Association. I think they're going to be calling themselves a student union shortly. So there's great resources there in terms of connection.

And try and build up that connection with your tutor as well. They're the person that you'll be most in contact with. We've got some wonderful tutors across the University. Try and build up that rapport. Try and get some of those connections. And, again, really emphasise that, never be afraid to ask a question. It may just open up your understanding. Lots of connections to be made.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you, Darren. Yeah, and that's very useful. And actually, on the tutor front, because I know this comes up all the time, the most modules probably start on the 5 of October. Some of you will have had your allocated tutor. Many people won't because a lot of those allocations are happening towards the end of this week.

There's been quite a lot of jiggery pokery behind the scenes of student numbers. I know from my own student groups, I've got one allocation so far, but all the others, I'm still waiting for. So I don't know who my students are yet. And I know that I had an email this morning saying that some of those would be at the end of this week.

And so don't worry if you don't have your allocated tutor yet. As Darren said, there are module-wide forums. And many modules have a welcome forum. And you can have a look on that or you can engage with the Student Union-- the Student Association, sorry, if that's what they're going to be called, the Student Union. And I know they have some freshers offerings coming up next week.

So from your StudentHome page-- and this is why-- the same way as Darren, it gets so muddling to try and work out which thing you're talking about. So the StudentHome page, it's when you first log in to the University. That's StudentHome. You'll see there's news on the right-hand side, and that will give you information about different things that are coming up.

So us in Student Hub Live, we advertise there. So all of our upcoming events are mentioned there. The Students Association is mentioned there. There'll also be information such as other events or sometimes technical things, like whether the systems are having a moment or not, or if there's any work going on. So keep an eye for those.

But when you get your allocated tutor, you will probably get an email saying you've got an allocated tutor. If not, on your StudentHome page, there's a little bit within the bit in the middle that says Your Tutor. And you'll see a name appears there. So I know for myself, as a tutor, I'll send out a welcome letter once I get my allocations. And I send that out via an email, but have a look to see-- you'll know that.

So that's one of the practical things. And so there's lots of different things you can look at. And I think Darren's explanation of trying to grab the moth, trying to grab the butterfly from all of them, not in a mean way, not squishing them, but actually, which of those is it? And it can sometimes be a little bit overwhelming, can't it, Darren, when you're starting out? That's why we wanted to do these things. So what do you think you would do in this situation? What would you look at first?

DARREN GREY: I'd also say, make sure that you check out the emails that we send you as a University because they're the key things. We'll try not to bombard you, but really do make sure you open your email and check that. Connect, as Isabella said. Look through Student Hub-- sorry, StudentHome. Familiarise yourself, the layout of the website and so forth.

Again, coming back to OU Ready. If you haven't done that, please try and spend the next couple of weeks. Invest in that time because that will help you on how you navigate your way around all of this information and all of these resources that we have. Get involved in the forums nice and early. Connect and make some contact with others.

I will say as well that there's quite a lot of social media that's out there as well. There's social media that we put out as a University. Hopefully, that will point and direct you. And you can trust and believe what we're putting out there. There is also social media that connects between students. Lots of that is great. But I would also say, just be careful what you read it, how you interpret it because you might be getting some advice that's not quite in line with the way that we're trying to do things at the University. So it's helpful to make those connections, but just try and understand and believe where you're getting your information from. And yes, just reach out.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Brilliant. Thank you, Darren. And people might know, the reason why Darren one of my guests today is I was doing a-- we were both doing an event earlier in the year, a training event. And Darren did this wonderful poem about being kind. And I thought, oh, he would be lovely to bring onto Student Hub Live because he was so lovely and positive. So I know Darren is fundamentally about being positive, and that's really important.

So one of the things we were talking about when we were planning these sessions, because we do plan these and we discuss things, and Darren and I were talking about this idea of being a student and about having a student identity. And one of the things we wanted to ask you-- you'll see that widget has appeared now. And it's, how likely are you to tell someone you're a student?

And you could actually say, how likely an OU student. So maybe you could answer that one. And then we'll see what kind of things people say because many people have this identity as a student, don't they, Darren? So what do you think sort of formulates your identity as a student before we come to the widget? Darren, what do you think?

DARREN GREY: I think we've got many aspects of ourselves. Some of us will see ourselves as parents firstly or as workers. And being a student may come a little bit further down the line. But we really hope that you're able to express and feel that you are a student with us. It's an experience that will shape you. It will change your life. I'm really confident of that. And it's best if you can share some of these experiences with those closest to you because, in some times, some ways, you will need a little bit of extra space to be able to do your work.

You should also be taking pride in yourself that you've made this commitment. And we hope that you're able to share that sense with others as well. And your identity as a student is an important part of who you are and that journey of who you will become as well. So yeah, hopefully, you can share with others that you're studying with the Open University and you're doing something really, really positive with your life.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, absolutely. And one of the things that Jackie will talk about later is how much employers value Open University students and the skills that are involved. And there's a couple of

comments that are coming in. So Amanda says, there's lots of OU groups on Discord, for those people who use Discord.

And just to say, with that widget, you'll see it's what's called a continuum. So you need to click from where it sits between very unlikely to very likely. I know that some people are putting comments in the chat as well, which that's absolutely fine. But with that, with the widget, you need to click where you think you are. And I remember when I started as an OU student, I think I was probably a little bit apprehensive to begin with because I was working full-time as well at the time and I was thinking, do I want people to know I'm a student? And actually, I remember, and this might surprise you, Darren, but I was a little bit shy about it because I was thinking, my student identity was actually quite personal to me at the time. And I was like, OK, I want to have that work face.

But because I wanted to see if I could actually work as a student before I started telling people. So I told the people closest to me, my family. But I'm trying to remember now whether I actually told people I worked with, whether I was a student. I don't know. Does that resonate with you, Darren? Does that make sense? It might resonate with people at home.

DARREN GREY: Yeah, oh, it does, definitely. You may be coming to this 10 years after you're at school, 20, 30, 40 years. And it's a case of, you're taking on something new. How does it feel telling people about it? You might feel that you won't succeed. I'm really taking a chance at this. I don't want people to know that I started and I didn't complete. But, again, I would say, try and open up about it. The more that you tell others, particularly those closest to you, the more support, hopefully, you'll be able to find from them. The same with colleagues at work. For some, you may fail-- feel nervous about telling people at work that, actually, I'm looking at studying something completely different to the job that I'm doing. And of course, there are many different reasons for wanting to do that. You may think that people at work will think, are they trying to run away? Do they not like it here? Do they not like us? Do you not like this set up?

But of course, there are so many reasons that we went into with the first question about why you are studying. Again, I hope that you can share, and talk about, and be proud of it. But I do really get the fact that, for some of you, it will be a really personal thing. And then maybe you can reveal to the world in a few years time that, I went through this, I have my degree. You didn't even know I was doing it, did you? So that would be good.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, actually, that's such a good one, isn't it? Because then you can go, ta da. Amazing. So let's have a look at-- let's see what the widget said, the one about, how likely are you to tell people you're a student? Ooh, that's really interesting, actually, because a lot of people are saying very unlikely. So that's a little bit like me, then, Darren, isn't it? So it's not-- I wasn't that unusual.

DARREN GREY: Yes.

ISABELLA HENMAN: So I think maybe you should be a bit more like Darren and be saying, you know what? I'm a student. I'd like a little bit of support sometimes because, when we think about time management, as a student, particularly as an Open University student, where Darren was mentioning, it's a distance university.

You're managing alongside all sorts of other things. There may be times where you need a little bit of support from somebody else. You need to be included with things. So actually, just saying to your family or your friends, you know what? I can't come out. I can't come out every night anymore. I know that we

used to do that, but actually, I'm studying and it's really, really important to me because that's something that I want to do.

And I think also, we've got another widget for you about student identity. Let me just check the wording of this. So give up to three words that define your student identity. So that's a word cloud again. So you need to put three different words. If you can't think of three words, then put a dot or a comma. And we'll see what kind of things come up to that.

So just, we're going back to what the University offers. We've mentioned that we're a distance university. Darren, what makes the University, the Open University, such a good distance university? We were the first one. Other than that. So what can we say about our materials and things like that?

DARREN GREY: Well, we're bringing the world in through your computer into your home or through your phone. There's so much great quality information out there. If you just think about our relationship with the BBC, for example, over the years and all of those wonderful documentaries, Blue Planet and the history documentaries, other science documentaries, a whole host, they're available. And that experience has fed its way into the materials that you have as well.

We've got wonderful resources via the library. We've got-- as Isabella says, we were the first. So we've got a long history and experience of doing this, but it's really bringing the world in to your lived experience so you can connect better with the world through your studies. And I think we've got some of the best online resources that you'll find.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely. Yeah, I firmly agree with that. I know I work for the University, but I study as well. We've had a couple of lovely comments come in though, Darren. So Elkie says, I'm open about being an OU student. Do get mostly very positive responses. Many are surprised about someone studying in their 60s. Fantastic, Elkie, that you're doing that.

And Debbie says, I was a little reticent at first-- sorry, I can't speak-- but three years down the line now, shout my studies from the rooftops. Be proud of your hard work. Absolutely. I think that's the thing, isn't it? It's that hard work and the, you're making something of yourself. Everybody that's here, life now, you're starting out. You're doing something. You are becoming a fantastic, better version of you. You may think, oh, I'm fine as I am, but you will learn things. You will make yourself better up here, wherever.

So I think maybe the word cloud about the student identity is ready to see now. Let's see what kind of things have come through there and what-- so things are-- good. So that's lovely. Proud, curious, lovely. Independence again. Enthusiastic. Mature. I love that mature one. Lifelong learner. More knowledgeable. Philosopher. Ooh, that's an interesting one. Confident, hard work, Keen. What's that one?

Quiet. Sorry. I'm not being very quiet today. I never am in these. I'm always quite lively. Dedicated. Balancing. Ooh, that's it. Discounts. Now, we haven't mentioned those, but I think maybe Tazzy's going to be talking about them later. But there's definitely some really good discounts that you can get as a student.

Now, I was talking to Heidi at the start. Now, I know Heidi had a couple of technical issues in the background, which is why I haven't been to her. But Heidi, what kind of things have been going on in the chat? You probably don't want to admit what technical issues, but what things have been going on in the chat?

HEIDI: I know. It decided to boot me out. I've also got some building work going on in the house, so I do apologise if there's a slight sound in the background. It's not the ideal timing to be having building work done, but there you go. This is life as an OU student, isn't it? There's always a million things. And now my

ring light's about to fall. So there we go. I'm just going to put that down there so you don't hear a big crash. Just bear with me. See? It happens to the best of us. Here we go. But luckily, I'm all prepared and I know what I'm saying.

So I wanted to just come back round again. So we talked a little bit about the length of time that people have had in between studying. So people have been sharing in the chat how long it's been since they last studied. And I've put them in order, and we have got an absolute champion. So I want to share that with everyone.

So we've got Stevie. It's been 15 years. And Stevie is back and studying again, which is amazing. Nicola, 16 years. Lee, 18 years. Lorraine, 20 years. Sarah, 25 years. Lisa, 37 years. And wait for it. Sue, it's been 52 years since Sue last studied. So I think we all need to give Sue a round of applause because that is absolutely amazing.

And you're going to find that you get so much support from the Open University because, as I said earlier, so many of our students do have big gaps, just as I did, and then come back to study again. So you'll find that transition is really nice and smooth. We've also got a young student with us. So Max, he said, I'm 19 years old and just trying to keep up with my peers who are at uni. So I'm confident telling them that I'm doing an Open University degree.

So hats off to you, Max. At 19, I think you're probably one of our youngest students in the audience today. So it's fantastic to have you with us. We've got a couple of questions that have come through, Isabella, as well. So Amanda has asked, are the online tutorials laid out in the same format to this, to our Student Hub Live? And Cheryl has asked, when can we book onto tutorials?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Good questions. Yes, so tutorials, they won't look like what you're looking at here on the screen. But if you come to our Student Hub Live workshops-- so I ran a couple last week. I've been running a few, and my colleagues are running them as well. So the one that we're doing-- the two socials we're running, so Rob's got a social, I think, on Friday night. That's in the online room. So that will give you a bit more of an idea.

But so online tutorials in what we call Adobe Connect. So they are through your computer, but they don't look the same as this. There are guidance videos and things that you can have a look at. And in terms of booking onto your tutorials-- I'm so sorry, I can't speak today. I couldn't type earlier, now I can't speak-- they will become available once the module actually starts. So most modules probably start on Saturday the 5. And then you'll see that they start going live.

So some of them, you might get some-- for instance, like in my welcome emails that I've sent out to the group that I've already got, I've mentioned when one of the tutorials is so they can get that in the calendar. But most of the time, you'll find out when the module starts itself. So don't worry about it. I know people at this stage really, really want to get everything ready, but there will be plenty of time. Remember, we're in that getting used to things that Darren was talking about earlier, of getting used to doing the OU Ready, looking at the induction materials, and getting everything sorted out.

So what I wanted to do now is I want to come to Tazzy. And I've already mentioned her a couple of times as one of our fantastic students. And when Tazzy and I were talking about this, we thought what would be a really good thing to start off with is thinking about what you would want to know to start with. So, Tazzy, what do you think are the things that you think are most important to know startling out, if that question made any sense at all?

TAZZY: Everybody. Isabella. There's loads of things, really. There's just knowing what to expect and where to go. StudentHome, I think, is a valuable tool for that one. And organisation, organisation is a must. A lot of people have got full-time jobs, kids. I'm only a part-time student, and I don't have any kids, and I still struggle with managing my time and everything like that. So I try to be as organised as I possibly can.

And I'm only do it-- starting level 2 in October. And I've only done my level 1's. But if I'd have known about these events from the very beginning, then I think that would have made a huge, huge difference. But yeah, just sort of try and get as much information as you can. Be a sponge.

Look around StudentHome. Look at your module Welcome Week. Week one, I think, is the Welcome Week. And just sort of maybe talk to other students as well. That's what's great about this, I think, is because people are able to ask questions and stuff. So yeah, I can't think of anything else to that question, I'm afraid, Isabella.

ISABELLA HENMAN: That's fine, because I can see in the background something I know when I was planning with Tazzy. She was saying, oh, my bookshelf in the background doesn't look neat. I said, it looks fantastic. But I can see on there those wonderful folders that you were telling me about that you've put there, Tazzy. So do you want to explain? Now, this is something we're pre-warning you about. We have a bit of a stationery thing, don't we, Tazzy? We like stationary quite a lot. So folders, tell me about your folders. Tell me what you do with your folders, Tazzy.

TAZZY: Well, as you can see here, I've got-- this is my course book for A215, which I haven't had too much of a look through yet, but I've got one for note taking. And then behind that, I've also got one which will be for TMAs and EMAs. And then behind that, even further back, I've got my level 1 notes because I did A111 and A112.

And that will go-- a lot of that notes will be good for A215, which is creative writing. So I've kept-- tried to keep as much relevant stuff in amongst all that. But I'm also learning Welsh, so I've got Welsh textbooks, and notes, and things behind me as well. So yeah, but I've got brand new folders for a brand new school.

ISABELLA HENMAN: That's what I was going to say, brand new because I could see that there were some new ones from when we spoke before. And I was very jealous that you've got lovely colourful ones there. So you mentioned-- so we'll come back to stationery in a minute because we're going to get very taken away with it. And I'm going to have to find my Post-its. I'll do that in a minute.

But you mentioned note taking. And we've got a widget up about note taking, how confident you feel. You said you've got a whole folder of dedicated-- so we'll have a look at what people are saying about that in a minute. But I can see there's some comments. So Steyanka-- I don't know whether I've pronounced that correctly, sorry-- is I'm addicted to stationery. Kate said, yep, same.

And actually, we've got some more comments about the ages, actually, which I'm just going to put in. So Max says, someone says they're 16. My record has been broken. I do actually have students who are allocated who are 16. Pauline says, I'm in my 70s. So Louise says, when you're older, you become wiser. 16 years, and I'm back doing the same subject with fresh eyes. Ooh, I like the idea of the fresh eyes thing.

So let's just go a little bit back to the stationery. And for once, I've got them. These are my little-- I love these little things. They're not very straight, but my little, mini Post-its. You can see that I've used some of them. And I think they're great. Normally, I can't find them in sessions because they've been moved somewhere on the desk, but stationery.

And we've got that as a question. What stationery have you got new for your study? Now, just up front, I know-- and I'm not being rude to anybody or I'm not being facetious in any way. I know that for many people, there are cost of living challenges. And we're not saying you have to go out and buy loads of stationery.

But you know what? That bit where Darren and I were talking about getting people on board, you can put stationery on a Christmas list or something like that saying, actually, you know what? If you want something to buy me and you're not sure, rather than buying me something-- stuff, buy me some folders for my study. That could be quite a good idea. I don't know. Have you ever done anything like that, Tazzy, asked people to buy you stationery?

TAZZY: I always do, even before I was an OU student, because I am addicted to stationery, but also because I do a lot of writing in my spare time. And I do apologise, everybody. My kitten is right behind me, so she makes an appearance.

ISABELLA HENMAN: No.

TAZZY: She will do in a minute, I'm sure.

ISABELLA HENMAN: But yes, I always ask for stationery, folders, notepads, pens. And I've just got tonnes of it. I actually had to donate a load of stationery to one of my local charities for help with-- there she is Look. [LAUGHS]

ISABELLA HENMAN: I can see she's coming up. She's coming up. She's climbing up your back.

TAZZY: There she is. Look, this is my little study buddy.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Hello, beautiful.

TAZZY: [LAUGHS]

Yeah, so I actually had to donate a load of stationery to arts and crafts charity group because I just had so much of it. But every year, I do start up again with brand new pens and pencils. It might seem like a waste, but because I do donate them on to other people afterwards, it's not really because, obviously, it gets used up and everything.

But, yeah, brand new folders because I think as well, if you've got brand new folders, even if they're just ones from the pound shop, you feel more-- I feel more organised and more energised and ready to go. So yeah, I've got loads. But also, with my language learning as well, then I need folders, and books, and things for that as well. So yeah, but stationery is--

ISABELLA HENMAN: It's not saying that-- stationery is good, isn't it? Because it's going back to what Darren and I were talking about earlier, about the identity of the student because, if you go off to a physical university, you're then in a lecture theatre, you're taking notes, and you're doing that kind of thing. So just because we're not going into a physical thing, why should we miss out? Why shouldn't we get that fun of having those kind of things?

But just going back to the note taking, so I think that widget, I think, is available for us to have a look at. So let's see what people-- their confidence. Ooh, OK. So by the looks of it-- well, there's a few people in the middle, but quite a few people not too confident about note taking. So one of the things I would-- well, several things I'd recommend, Darren was talking about OU Ready earlier. That will have links in it to study skills resources.

We do a Student Hub Live. We do sessions on that. I did one on effective note taking last month. So hopefully, one of the wonderful chat people might be able to pop the link to that into the chat. But it's a

learning exercise isn't it, Tazzy? You don't just suddenly go, ta da, ta da, I'm a student, I can take notes. It doesn't really work like that, does it? You have to practise, don't you? So how did you practise? How did you get a bit more used to notes?

TAZZY: It's hard. And I am one of these, I make too many notes. And I know I make too many notes. But also for me, note taking is about getting the information going into my brain as well. And it's all about practise. What works for one chapter of a module might not work for another chapter of a module. And for what worked for one module might not work for another module. So it is literally a learning curve. And note taking is completely personal. Nobody needs to know what notes you're taking or how you're taking your notes. It's what's most effective for you for that module, for that chapter, even for that day because, some days, I find it's easier for me to take notes than others. And some days, I might only be able to read a couple of pages of my textbook or just go through a couple of pages of the online module materials.

And it's just one of those things that's practise. And I still know I don't get it right all the time. And I know when I start my module in October, it's going to be a totally different way of note taking again to my level 1 modules. So I think it's a case of, don't panic, don't stress, just do what works for you.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, I think that's a really good thing. And we've had quite a few comments coming in. So Taia says, only thing is I'm left handed. So every time I take notes, I get ink smudge on the side of my hand. I'm right handed, but I get ink everywhere. Don't worry. Henry's got a really good point. He says, charity shops often have cheap folders and et cetera. Yeah, great idea, Angela is saying, I'm trying both digital and paper, but I seem to remember things better if it's written by my own hand, Katelyn says, I'm trying digital notes and downloaded the books on the module website. Emily's actually asking, can we take notes on laptops instead of notepads and folders? Absolutely. Yes, you can. And as Tazzy was saying, it's entirely your own choice what you do because nobody's going to check up on you, with a couple of exceptions.

So, for instance, one of my access modules, part of the TMA is to provide some of the notes you've taken, but that's the learning exercise about things. And that gives your tutor, people like me, the opportunity to say, well, you've got some good points here, but actually, if you copy everything out, it doesn't help. Like Tazzy was saying about earlier, they did-- took too many notes. And that's something that all of us suffer from.

Donna is saying, I love stationery. Does anyone have any trouble finding decent pens that don't run out soon after buying? I chucked three away yesterday because they kept stopping working. When we were doing the neurodiverse community event last month, Charlotte was telling me about pen grips. And she was saying how good they are. And I think Margaret, my colleague on the Student Hub Live, also has them. And they can be quite helpful, actually, to help.

Stefan's saying, I've got sensory issues, I've bought my pens and paper pads in bulk, so the same all year. Absolutely, some people are like-- absolutely need to have things ordered. And I know for some people, the idea of having different things on a bookshelf is a bit stressing, so that's fine. Rebecca's promoting our SHL note taking session saying, really helpful, went to one last year and got some really good new ideas about it. That's lovely.

So, Tazzy, you were talking about communication. You were talking about the differences. You said you're going to have to learn for your new module. So we've talked about note taking, but also things like academic communication. That's some things-- people might be going, we don't even know what that is.

So firstly, can you say as a student what academic communication means and how you practise that in terms of your OU study?

TAZZY: [CHUCKLES]

Oh, you've got me cornered now.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thrown you.

TAZZY: It's all-- I'm having to look at my notes. I'm so sorry, everyone.

ISABELLA HENMAN: That's OK. That's completely fine.

TAZZY: [LAUGHS] Academic communication is everything, really, I guess, from talking to your tutor to talking to other students online because you would-- if you're in forums, you're going to talk to them.

You're not going to say, all right, mate, how are you doing? And did you do this and stuff? You fall into it as well, I think.

I found at the very, very beginning, I don't know. I don't know what academic communication is. I don't even know it existed. But now I think it's kind of second nature. You have a way of communicating with other students. And what I find with forums, especially, is ask direct questions. Don't beat about the bush. Don't use 20 words when five will do.

ISABELLA HENMAN: [LAUGHS]

TAZZY: That's something that I was told by one of my tutors.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yep.

TAZZY: And always be polite and courteous. I think they call it netiquette. And I think there is something in the Student Hub Live somewhere along that. Or it might have been in my first module. But yeah, it's just literally simple words. And also, if you don't understand what somebody is saying, say they've got so much jargon in with their email or whatever, just actually just ask and say, well, hang on a minute, I don't know what you're saying. And that as well is academic communication as well, I think.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and I think that was wonderful. And nothing against you, Tazzy, but that was such a good example of what we all do because people will throw a question and you go, I don't know. It's got a word, and I don't know what it means. And people do that to me all the time. I've already demonstrated plenty of times today, I can't talk and I'm a presenter. I do these things.

But that's absolutely fine. I think when I first had to do a session on academic communication, I had to go, well, I don't know. And it's one of those things you go, well, you hear these words. We use these words. The University will use words. You've got to work out what they mean to you. So you can break it down, academic to do with study, communication to do with communication. And yeah, that's fine. Is that written? Is that speaking? Is that through a forum? Is it through your assessment? Is it through emails? There are different formats. Again, we do different sessions in Student Hub Live thinking about that, different one, because you will be communicating in different ways. But I think that point that you said, Tazzy, about being simple, I think, is so critical because we often feel as students, and I'm a student as well, that we have to sound really, really important and we have to put lots and lots of extra syllables in the words because that makes us sound like a student.

No. No, no, no. Cut to the chase. Be simple. Say what you mean. Don't beat around the bush. Those of you who were brought up and learnt your language in Eastern Europe, often, you'll be great at this from what I've understood from what students have said to me, because you've got-- you're blunt. And I'm not

saying this in a bad way. I'm actually saying this in a really positive way because people used to say to me, oh, but I'm blunt.

And that's fine, that's OK. That's what's needed. What are the facts? What do you need to do? And in fact, Ludmilla is asking, any tips for non-English natives coming from other academic writing traditions? And it is actually something to learn. There are study skills booklets. In fact, I was looking at them earlier in the week. No, last week. Get my days in track.

And there's one about studying with the OU. And that includes lots of things about wording and different academic traditions. So from the StudentHome Help Centre, if you-- I think it's within the Induction in there. It's called Study Skills Booklets. Hopefully, one of the wonderful people can put the link in the chat. And there's very good information there.

Don't be afraid to ask your tutor. That's what we're here for as tutors. We're here to answer questions. If we've answered it somewhere, we may point you to where it's been answered. So that's absolutely fine. But if you're not sure, ask particularly at the start because going back to Darren's picking out the moth, finding that butterfly, finding it, there's so many things. And it's like, well, I don't know what bit to start with. So Evelyn gave some really helpful response back to me. Every language has its own formal writing traditions, which have to be learned as part of the language as a whole. Approach it like regular language learning. I think, Tazzy, that's a really good point, isn't it? So when you were learning-- you're learning Welsh at the moment, which I admire you massively for because I would be rubbish at it. So how do you approach this? You mentioned being a sponge earlier. Do you approach this as a, it's all just going to go in? Or am I going to learn through doing? What's your tips there?

TAZZY: It depends, really. Especially for the learning of the Welsh language, it's about repetition. But, again, I do a lot of writing things down because it does go into my brain better because I think somebody was mentioning about how they or several people have said about notes, taking notes, typing, and stuff. I can't do that because it will not go into my brain.

But one reason is because I was only-- back in June, I think it was, I was only just diagnosed with dyslexia in June. So I've gone through my life not knowing that. And I'll tell you what, that having that diagnosis has made a huge difference. And it depends because, some days, I find I absorb things better by listening, other days by writing, other days by reading.

So it is kind of like an on-the-hop thing. And you're continually learning every day. In our everyday lives, we're learning something. But it's just some days, it might go in one way. And some days, it might go in another way. So that would be my sort of advice, I think, is just sort of think, OK, what's worked for me today?

Why isn't what I learnt-- did yesterday not working for me today? Because maybe you're in a different mindset as well. So yeah, just repetition, I think, is the key, and practise. You didn't learn to drive in one lesson. You had to have several lessons and repetition. And also, you continually learn how to drive after you've passed your test as well, so yeah.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, I think that's a really good point because it's the learning. So some people will say, repetition is a school thing. Fine, if it works. Some things work. Remember, it's a university and it's different. But the key thing I take from what Tazzy was just saying is explore different things. This is your opportunity to see what works for you.

You are all on your own study journey. You are all different. And that's absolutely fine. There's nothing wrong with that. I'm different from Tazzy. Tazzy is different from Darren. Darren is different from Jackie.

Jackie is different from Heidi. We're all different from each other. That's fine. There will be some things that we're the same at and some things we're different. Have a go. See what works. Now, I know, Heidi, we probably got lots and lots of questions coming in. So I think it would be a good point to come to you, Heidi, about what kind of things are coming in. What questions have you got for us?

HEIDI: Lots. Yeah, we've got lots of questions coming in and lots of people having brilliant conversations. And it's just lovely to see everyone being so supportive in the chat. I did reference earlier that Max was probably our youngest student at 19. And I've had lots, and lots, and lots of other students saying, no, I'm 16, I'm 18, I'm 19. So, Max, you're not quite the youngest.

But we had a wonderful comment here from Vanessa, who says, please tell me someone is older than me. I'm going to be 78 next February. And I aim to complete my environmental studies degree by the time I'm 80. So that's brilliant, Vanessa. Good on you. So we've got a few questions that are coming in. And I want to give virtual awards out to Leanne and Chelsea because they are the ones that are brave enough to put their hand up and say, what does this acronym mean? And I think that is so important.

And thank you for doing that, both of you, because I know there's going to have been loads of people in the chat looking through, and seeing these two acronyms, and thinking, oh my gosh, what do those mean? So thank you for having the courage to ask that question. So the two questions we've got, Leanne says, what does EMA stand for? And Chelsea says, gosh, I sound dumb, but what's a TMA? You're not dumb at all, Chelsea. And like I said, thank you so much for asking the question.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. Thank you. Yeah, so Darren did slip in very, very briefly TMA. He mentioned that one earlier. And I meant to actually bring up about acronyms. So TMA is a tutor-marked assignment. So it's basically like in-course assessment. So you will get a series of TMAs with deadlines, which you need to submit them by. And your tutor will mark them and return them. So that's the TMA. And you will see that word comes up loads, and loads, and loads, and loads of times.

And then an EMA is an end of module assignment. So it depends on your module whether you have an EMA, which is essentially like a big TMA, or whether you have an exam. Some modules have exams. Some have an EMA. Some of you will have something called an EM TMA, so an end of module TMA. It's like a hybrid between a TMA and an EMA.

But yes, lots and lots of abbreviations. Do please ask those because what you will find with the University is there's loads and loads of terms that we use. And you get used to them. And it's part of that student identity that Darren and I were talking about earlier because you have this little OU. And even saying OU, some people, you say OU and they go, what's that? Open University.

You get so used to using these terms, and it's like your own little language. Where Tazzy and I were talking about learning a language, you learn your OU language. And you're like, ooh, I know what that means. And I remember when I first started, I absolutely loved that because I felt part of a community that knew those words.

I don't know whether that resonates with some people or not. But for some people, it's jargon. Some people, it's frustrating. But you'll always see those terms are used with the abbreviation and the full term. And there's a little bit of a hint going back to the academic communication. If you ever use an abbreviation, make sure you use the full term.

So just to revisit what the difference, so earlier with those ones. So TMA, a tutor-marked assignment, that is your in-course assessment. So you'll get them in, for example, an assessment guide or a TMA on your

website. And that will give you the instructions. The questions you have to answer, you do that in a word process document.

You submit it through the ETMA system, so the electronic TMA system. That goes through online. And most modules will have a dummy TMA, a practise TMA, TMA00, which once you've got your tutor allocated, you can send through to make sure you can use the system. That's the TMA. And you'll have those. And on your module calendar, there will be the deadlines for those.

The EMA is the bit at the very, very end. And it basically encapsulates that final piece of assessment. Of course, the whole module, you will get the details for that in enough time to do it. You won't normally get that at the very start of the module, so you can't see that. The same with exams. You'll get details about how they work nearer the time.

And then the EM TMA, so the end of module TMA, a few modules have some things. For example, access modules have them. And technically, usually, the difference between an EM TMA and an EMA is your own tutor marks the EM TMA and another tutor marks an EMA. But your module will give you lots of details.

Essentially, there are a bunch of questions you have to answer, as simple as that or as complicated as that. But you will get those in your assignment guide, which you might see some of those appearing already in that sort of welcome and induction week. But for some people, your TMAs will start to appear later after your module started. So I think that's dealt with those. Are there any other questions? Ooh, Darren, Darren's got something he really wanted to added now. So, Darren, what did you want to add now?

DARREN GREY: Yeah, I just wanted to give a tip, really, for when you do submit your TMA. Make sure that you read the feedback that's come from the tutor. Quite often, it points you in the direction of what needs to come next. We do know that a lot of our students just look at the score, don't worry about the feedback. Use the feedback. It really points you in the right direction.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and I think that's a really, really good point, Darren. And I realise when we were talking earlier and I thought, I meant to come back to you. When we were planning, we were talking about accessibility and inclusion. Now, I mentioned the word inclusion earlier. And Tazzy mentioned about her diagnosis with dyslexia.

But you were very keen, weren't you, Darren, to talk about accessibility within the University and what the University offers. So perhaps, could you say a little bit about those offerings? You mentioned the Student Support Team. There are other support teams, aren't there? So what's available there in terms of accessibility.

DARREN GREY: Yes, in terms of accessibility, so the things that we have to do as a University to respond to your specific needs-- it could be about a disability, it could be related to mental health-- we have support services. We've got disability support services as well within the University. So it is really important that you tell us about yourself so that we can shape what we do to provide that offer and to make you a successful as possible, really.

And I know it can feel a little bit daunting at times to share some of this information with us, particularly as you might not have had really good experiences with other large organisations. But we need to know about you so that we can support you in the best way that we possibly can. So there is support out there for disability, students that have disabilities.

And I'd also like to just highlight quickly, if that's possible, about inclusion as well. We would like to also know a little bit more about who you are, some of the other aspects. It's been great that people have been talking about being carers, about age, and so forth, but things like ethnicity, and gender identity, and a whole host of other things, some of it, this is important for us to know. So, again, that we can work with you and look to support you in as best and most respectful way as possible.

So we're trying to evolve our curriculum materials so that it's as representative of all people and all backgrounds and the wonderful diversity that we have in the UK, obviously, globally, but certainly at the OU. So we can help you, but we need to know a little bit more about you. And we do treat that confidentially. We're not just sharing it here, there, and everywhere. But if you don't tell us, you might be missing out on a few things that could make you a little bit more successful.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Brilliant. Thank you, Darren. That's really, really helpful. And we may circle back to some issues to do with that later, but I wanted to come on to Jackie next because I sort of-- I dropped in earlier about the career progress. And we saw that there was lots of people that were saying that in that word cloud. And wanted to come to you. Jackie, as you are a careers and employability consultant. Hopefully, I've got that right. Could you perhaps tell us a little bit about that and why you're so excited to be here today to welcome students to the Open University?

JACKIE PICKLES: Yeah so first of all, just say, hello, everybody. It's really great to be involved in this session. So the other thing I just want to say is I've actually-- I'm going to be starting, studying in October as well. So this has been a really useful session for me, kind of hearing about all the different things as well.

So, yeah, I'm a careers and employability consultant. And that title sounds a little bit daunting to some people, but essentially, I'm a careers advisor. When I used to work in schools, people used to call me the careers woman. So yeah, so we're the part of-- I'm part of a big team with Careers and Employability Services here at the Open University. We've also got employability advisors, which I'll talk a little bit about in a second.

And we've also got a team of people who work within faculties, kind of looking at kind of career information within the modules, and also work with employers, and also on all the kind of communications and information. So there's a lot of people in the team to really help you make the most of your studies, really, to help you get where you want to be. So, yeah, essentially we're here to help you kind of realise your goals, really, whether that's to do with progressing within your career or whether that's personal goals. And I think there's a question or a widget around that, I think?

ISABELLA HENMAN: There is. Absolutely yes. So we've got that widget, which is I'm studying to progress or change my career from zero, not at all, to five, totally. So you'll see that appear below the camera. And we'll come to that in a bit because we know, don't we-- and I mentioned earlier. I know-- sorry, let me get myself in gear. We know we have lots of students who are studying for career. Not all. But employers do really respect OU students, don't they? Can you say a little bit about that? What kind of things are particularly respected?

JACKIE PICKLES: Yeah, definitely. As I say, we have a whole team of people who work with employers. And employers work with us on events and sort of open sort of careers fairs and things like that. And we get fantastic feedback from them around how they view our students, really, and graduates. So some of the general things, they talk about Open University students bringing sort of a huge range of skills, like the skills that you develop doing this online study, so time management, independence,

resilience, being organised. We've had all the conversations about stationery and getting the things all in place, juggling with working full-time, maybe managing a-- caring for a family or other members, managing a disability.

All of those things alongside the OU study just gives kind of amazing skills, really, in, like I say, sort of the time management, really, and all of those things. And employers are really aware of that. We've recently had a quote from an employer who had a placement opportunity. And they had several Open University students successful. And

They basically were saying that the professionalism that came across with the OU students was really clear and the kind of-- like I say, just the way that they can communicate, and also the kind of technical skills, so being able to work remotely. So lots and lots of different skills that you can gain that will help with employment. But also, there's lots of evidence, that employers really, really value all of that.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely. And you were mentioning things like time management and other skills. And you'll see that-- the people at home will see we've got another widget there about the-- what do we call it? I'm starting to progress or make changes in my personal life because, often, those skills are relevant as well. So while those running, I know that we've had lots of questions come in already for you, Jackie. So I'm just going to go to Heidi to pick up some of those questions. So, Heidi, what questions are there for Jackie?

JACKIE PICKLES: Put on the hotspot?

HEIDI: Yeah, we're getting some questions in. Yeah, so the first one, Jackie, then from Shalor. Jackie, can we get help with reviewing our CVs? And then I've also got a question from Melina Raluca. How does a career consultation work for international students or for students who'd like to work abroad in the future? So I'll give you two there, if that's OK, Jackie.

JACKIE PICKLES: Yeah, so with the CVs, yeah, definitely. That's definitely something we can help with. So we have an interactive online CV review tool. So that's called CV 360. And you can access that through our website. So that's an initial sort of way that you can do it. You can upload your CV to the CV 360, and you'll get immediate sort of feedback around content, format, layout, that sort of thing. And then when you've kind of gone through that, you can then request a review, which will be through an employability advisor or a careers advisor, careers consultant.

So you can go through it that way. Or certainly, if you want to book a conversation, an interview with a careers advisor or an employability advisor, we can certainly talk through those things in the conversation. So we can definitely help with the CV. There's lots of information on the website as well around writing a CV, and different formats, and different layouts, and things. So yeah, that's definitely something we can help with. I think the other question was around international students?

ISABELLA HENMAN: International students. Yes, it was, yeah.

JACKIE PICKLES: Is that right, yeah? So, yeah, obviously, our service is available for all students, wherever you are, whatever stage you're at, whatever your interests are, but also wherever you are in the world. So we talk to students. I've spoken to students recently in Japan, Switzerland, USA, Spain, all over. All over the world, we kind of do it.

Sometimes, it's a little bit kind of-- I'm sort of doing a call. Usually, it goes through Adobe Connect. It's up to the student how they want to book the call. And this is the same for, obviously, international or UK-based students. You can choose whether you want a telephone call or through Adobe Connect, where we can do a video and that sort of thing. Quite often, international students choose Adobe Connect and we

kind of do it that way, but it's their choice. So sometimes, I'm kind of doing this and thinking, goodness, what time is it? Where are they?

[LAUGHTER]

But definitely, that works just the same. And we offer the same sort of service.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely.

JACKIE PICKLES: The third bit of the question, I think, was around-- was it around people wanting to come to the UK for a placement or people, UK students, wanting to go abroad for a placement?

Whichever way it is, we can--

ISABELLA HENMAN: We might have to go back to Heidi for that.

JACKIE PICKLES: Yeah.

HEIDI: Yeah, so the question was-- so the first one you've answered, thanks so much for that. Or is there career advice for students who'd like to work abroad in the future? That was the question from Melina Raluca.

JACKIE PICKLES: Yeah, definitely. We've got information that we can refer you to. We can signpost too. Also, we can talk about the background, the sort of general career planning aspects of it. So what is it you're hoping to do? And think about pros and cons, decision making, that kind of thing. In terms of information about working in another country, like I say, we can look at that together and we can signpost too more detailed information.

A friend-- well, a colleague in the Careers team had a really great analogy, where she was sort of saying, sometimes it's about helping someone get in the boat. If you imagine going on a journey across the sea, sometimes it's about helping people get on that first step of the journey, getting in the boat, setting across-- setting sail across the sea. But when you're actually there finding the job, the role, in another country, you might need someone in that place to actually guide you in. So I hope that makes sense. But certainly, we can help with looking for that, yeah.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you. And there's a question that's come in from Cynthia. Do you offer career help for freelancers as well?

JACKIE PICKLES: Yeah, definitely. So anybody who is a registered student, and then after graduating-- or after completing your final module for three years, we can-- you can use our career service, the Open University career service. So regardless of whether you're freelancing, where you live, whether you're looking to start your own business, whether you're wanting to do voluntary work, all of those things, we can support with, really. So yeah is the answer.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely. And we've had Connor saying, is there anyone else in their work van on a lunch break? Which I think is fantastic, Connor.

JACKIE PICKLES: Brilliant.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely.

[LAUGHTER]

Yeah, and actually, I've had students in vans and in all sorts of places. In fact, I'm sure we had a couple of students who were saying that they were-- there was somebody that said they were a long-distance driver, so they were going to be studying in their breaks. And ooh, there was something else similar to that. I can't remember what it was.

But let's have a look. So we did those two widgets earlier. I think it would be a good idea if we have a look at those, wouldn't it, Jackie? So let's have a look. So the one about making changes in the personal life,

so in the middle there, so some people, sort of yes. But I think maybe we'll talk about what we mean by those changes.

And what was the one about the career, so about wanting to make-- what was our question, the studying to progress or change my career. Have we got that widget available? It's probably seemed to be quite a while ago that we launched that one. So let's just see if the producers can show that. Excellent. Right, that should be ready. Yeah, OK. So actually, again, sort of in the middle. So some people, not at all. And that's fine. I'm guessing the person earlier who said they were 78, and wanting to do their environmental studies degree, and just wants to better themselves, that's absolutely fine. So in terms of those personal skills, Jackie, I know you're an employability and careers consultant, but what kind of skills do you say that students gain that are actually useful? So they would be useful for careers, but they're useful for everyday life as well. What kind of things would you suggest?

JACKIE PICKLES: Yeah, I guess, as you're going through the study, that the sorts of things we talked about earlier in terms of planning, being organised, looking ahead, maybe being resilient, thinking about the communication, the way we talk to people. A lot of students say-- and the thing about being able to critically reflect on things.

So things that people say to me is that they kind of think about things differently after they've studied. So it's able to have different kinds of conversations with people. So all of these things may be not in any way related to employment or work. It might be around-- like I said, you might be looking at doing some different voluntary work or just sort of in a caring position.

I've worked with students who are carers for a member of the family, or a close friend, or whatever, and being able to negotiate with professionals that they're sort of getting support from, being able to have those conversations in a bit-- in a more of a sort of reflective, assertive, professional way, or however you want to say it. So all those things can help with different areas of your life, really.

We do-- the way that we kind of organise our support with the career service, we look at whatever stage people are at. So one of the stages that we talk about, we call that progress, but it really means around sort of progressing personal goals. So it's really clear that we do support people if they're looking at that as well, just not kind of specifically looking to get into a new job or change career. So if you want to sort of have a conversation about those things, that's fine too.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely. Thank you. And I think that's the key thing here. It's like what we were talking about earlier, everybody is different. So just because you don't automatically know what career you want to go to, there can be something. So reach out. Darren said at the start, reach out, ask questions, find out who there is, and see what there is available because there's all sorts.

So Jackie was talking about some of those skills. And we were asking people about developing themselves personally. So I wanted to come back to Tazzy now because, Tazzy, you mentioned about having a dyslexia diagnosis. And you said you'd got that this year, but it's made a big difference knowing about that.

So I'm sure we've got quite a few students that are watching now that have got either a diagnosed disability or a disability they may think-- and I'm just going to clear the terminology here, disability is a legal term. It's not saying, we think you are disabled. So there are things, and you will see that there's an option where you can declare a disability. And as Darren said earlier, it's never to your detriment.

Nobody's going to judge you. But, Tazzy, could you tell us a little bit about what kind of support you've got and how that's helped you as a student, since you mentioned it?

TAZZY: The first bit of support was actually getting my diagnosis. It was sort of made in passing when I did an access course back 10 years ago with one of my local colleges. And they said, oh, there's a possibility you might be dyslexic. And they never followed it up or anything. And it wasn't until I was talking to my tutor for last module that I said, I think I might have this problem because my spelling, punctuation, and grammar is atrocious.

And it was actually them that said, have you thought about checking out for a diagnosis? And it was a long, drawn out process of getting to that diagnosis in that there's a huge waiting list. And it was actually the Open University who actually helped me get onto the-- through the British Dyslexia Association. They helped me go through the application process. And the Open University actually helped with the financial costs as well. So that was really good.

And since I've had that diagnosis in place, it's helped me in that I can have some one-to-one tuition. I'm now able to get some help with student finance. And the name of it has completely gone out of my head for-- no, someone else is going to have to come in and tell me what it is because I can't remember the name of the-- it's to do with--

ISABELLA HENMAN: Is that--

TAZZY: --and finance, and stuff.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Are you talking about Disability Living Allowance? Disabled students?

TAZZY: That's the one. No.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Or not?

TAZZY: Yeah, Disabled Students Allowance.

ISABELLA HENMAN: One of those. Disabled Students Allowance.

TAZZY: Yep, that's the one. And I've finally been approved for Disabled Students Allowance. And I'm now waiting for my assessment to find out what support I can have. But after speaking to Student Support, they said that I will be able to have one-to-one tuition, especially around my academic skills, spelling, grammar, so on and so forth.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah.

TAZZY: And I will be able to get software for spelling and stuff like that.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Right.

TAZZY: And for any exams, I will be able to have extra time. And also, even though I was going through the process of getting a diagnosis last year, I spoke to my tutor. And I had a wonderful tutor last year. And they were able to say, right, OK, if you need any extra time with extensions and things like that, so I was able to get extensions in place.

And all I had to do was send them an email saying, I'm really sorry, but I need some extra time. Can I have a couple of days? And they were able to do that. So I am still waiting for my assessment to find out exactly what I need. But then when I had my assessment with the BDA, British Dyslexia Association, the assessor actually gave a really detailed report with things that she thinks that would be good for my educational needs and help and support.

And also, with that assessment I've been able to take it to [INAUDIBLE]. And they've been able to put into place measures as well. So the assessment has not only benefited my OU studies, but also my Welsh studies. And also, I can take it off-- I can actually take it into my workplace as well, so if there be any adjustments that needed to be done at work.

So the Open University have not only got me the help to get the diagnosis for dyslexia, but also encompassing every aspect of my life. So that for me was a huge win. And it was a huge weight off my shoulder because I was at times thinking, well, I must be really stupid because I can't understand grammar and-- which seems crazy because I'm doing creative writing in English literature.

And my biggest weakness is grammar, and punctuation, and stuff. So it's helped me that I'm not stupid. I'm actually quite a clever person. It's just that I need this additional support. And I'm able to take it with literature. I'm grasping it for everything I'm worth because I know that it's going to make me a better person, a better student. And it will improve my life as a whole. And I'm trying--

ISABELLA HENMAN: Right.

TAZZY: There are very few people I've actually told that I'm dyslexic. I'm kind of still ashamed of admitting it because I got my assessment. I was 39 when I got my diagnosis. And I'm still sort of feeling a bit ashamed, but there are people that I'm happy to tell. And it did take some time to absorb it as well because, even though I had my suspicions, it wasn't-- when I actually got that diagnosis, it was kind of like a punch to the gut a little bit as well.

But my tutor was able to send-- sent me a lovely email saying, actually, it's good that you know now. We can put all these things into place. So that was really, really good. And I'm just so grateful that I now have that diagnosis. And you're never too old to get that diagnosis either.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, and I think that's one of the things that I've heard consistently. I run the Neurodiverse Community Sessions as well, and we're launching some for disabled community. And there were many students who actually get these diagnoses later in life. As you say, you were 39. And it's part of their Open University studies that brings that to the fore because you wouldn't necessarily know. You may have thought of something. You may have been aware that maybe there was something different. But until you actually start to have to do certain of those skills, you don't realise. So we've had quite a few comments coming in. Kate said, I chose the OU because I thrive remotely in the first place. Isabella-- my namesake, wonderful-- says, I have dyslexia, dyspraxia, and sensory processing delay. The support I've already received from OU is fantastic. I can't wait to start the module, actually, in October.

Suzanne says, I've have cancer. And so studying through chemo, great to get my mind off hospitals and cancer. Yeah, absolutely. Sometimes, you know what? Study is the thing that takes you away from all those horrible things. I've had that myself as well. Lindsay's put a couple of comments in. I think it's the same Lindsey, but it might be a different one.

She said, I have ADHD, dyslexia, and audio processing disorder. The Disabled Support Team and Student Finance England support have been amazing. I have a new laptop for free with lots of software in it to help me. And there's also the Open University mentor services. I have James phoned me up and we have a chat for 45 minutes. You can have up to three sessions. He just asks me what I'm up to and guides me in the right direction.

So I know from talking to students previously-- and I know, Tazzy, you were brave enough to say that you were ashamed of this in the first place. And thank you for using that terminology because I think that's something that people often think, I can't possibly say something. I don't want to admit it. And Darren was saying earlier about this, please do share that with your tutor, with the Disability Support Team, with the Student Support Team. It's never, ever going to be to your detriment.

As Tazzy, says, she's grabbing things with both hands to help. And as other people have said, there's lots of things that are available. We don't know-- I'm saying we as the University, not just me, but the

University doesn't know if you don't tell us. So do say. And when your tutor sends you a welcome email saying, is there anything that might impact your study, do not be afraid to say, you know what? I find grammar really hard. Could you give me a few pointers?

Or you know what? I really struggle to actually understand the question in the first place. So perhaps you could give me some pointers on recognising, what are the most important bits. Your tutor can't necessarily reword everything. They can't change the assessment for you, but there are support services there. So maybe, could you give some examples about what kind of things you've experienced, Tazzy, that actually really helped you so far?

TAZZY: My tutor. I've been very lucky in that, for my first two modules, I had brilliant tutors, and they were huge supports. Student Hub Live as well has been a massive support. I think I'm a huge advocate for Student Hub Live, actually. The non-modular courses that are run are brilliant. And Margaret, she's LEGO obsessed.

ISABELLA HENMAN: [LAUGHS]

TAZZY: That's why they sometimes stay-- stick in my mind. And obviously, Isabella has got her chocolate addiction.

ISABELLA HENMAN: That's the first time chocolate's been mentioned. Oh my gosh, I can't believe we've got this far without saying it.

TAZZY: And also, it's about-- Student Hub. Live is about community as well. And I've get the email through Eventbrite. And I look at them and go, can I make that session? Am I unsure? But I normally sign up for every single one that comes through. And then hopefully, I remember to cancel later on if I can't attend because it's not just-- it can be very isolating studying with the Open University. And you need that sort of-- well, me personally, I need that sense of community and that sense of belonging.

And when you're studying independently, you can lose that a little bit. So going through to things like the Student Hub Live events. And I think I've taken the essay writing, how to write an essay, better essay one, about four times now. But every time I attend, I find something new that I didn't realise I'd remembered. And there are things that I've picked up in-- from the event site, the Pomodoro technique, which has helped me not just with study, but also in other parts of my life as well. And Isabella is going to say, can I--

ISABELLA HENMAN: Can you explain what the Pomodoro technique is? Yeah, you knew what I was going to say.

[LAUGHTER]

TAZZY: I think it was originally based on a tomato or something. And what it is, basically, they say, set a timer for 20-ish minutes, and then work hard for those 20-ish minutes, and then take a five-minute break. Rinse and repeat four times. And then after that, have a longer break of, say, 20 minutes or something. And then if you can face doing another round of it, then go for it.

I normally do about 25 minutes at a time because 20 minutes just isn't long enough for me to get through a chunk of reading. But it's really great if you plan what you want to achieve in those segments. For example, what I'll do is I'll get one of my Post-it notes and I'll write down, Pomodoro one, read pages three to five, for example. And then I'll take my five-minute break.

But I'll actually physically get up from my desk. And I will go and make a drink, or I will grab a biscuit or something like that. And then I will then come back to my desk for my next round of 20 minutes-- 25 minutes. But what I do is I have a kitchen timer, which has fallen on the floor somewhere.

ISABELLA HENMAN: [LAUGHS]

TAZZY: And I'll set that for 25 minutes. And that actually sits magnetically attached to my desk lamp.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great.

TAZZY: And that then-- one, I can see how much time I've got left. And also, it means then that I can see it. I can hear it. And then on my phone, I set the five-minute alarm. So then when that alarm goes off, I then go back to my desk and I pick up on my next segment. But one thing I've learned is, if you set yourself a goal for, OK, in 25 minutes, I want to read pages three to five, and then you realise at the end of it, actually, I haven't read-- although, I didn't read as much as I wanted to, it doesn't matter because I've got another 25 minutes and I can carry on where I left off. And also, I found it even breaks down housework as well.

ISABELLA HENMAN: [LAUGHS]

TAZZY: I'll set my timer for 25 minutes, and I will do-- I don't know. I will lightly clean the kitchen. And then I'll have five minutes where I'll have a cup of tea, which normally ends up taking about 20 minutes because it's tea.

ISABELLA HENMAN: [LAUGHS] That would happen. Yeah, absolutely. That would happen to me as well. I'll be doing it the other way around, five minutes cleaning, 20 minutes cup of tea or eating chocolate. That's my side.

TAZZY: But also, what I've found as well is with doing the breaks in between the study, what I might do to myself is I might write a list of 25 minutes of reading. And then during the five-minute break, I might go and wash up. And then that sort of clears my mind a little bit and also helps me digest what I've been doing.

And if I've been writing notes, then also, it gives my wrists a little bit of a break as well because I think there is something scientific around this 20 minutes. But yeah, they say do it in segments of four, and then have a longer break at the end of the fourth segment, and then go back and do it. It's literally rinse and repeat, but it does take practise.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah.

TAZZY: I also find I'm more motivated when I do it that way and I get a lot more done.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Good. That's good to know. So Evelyn said, I was forced to learn the Pomodoro technique at school and was knocked off them, but it's actually coming in handy now. And apparently, Cynthia said it was because his kitchen timer was in the shape of a tomato. And Kathy says, a tea break is never going to be five minutes.

And just a couple of other things. So talking about the community, Michael wants to know whether anybody is going to be doing any study groups in the metaverse. That sounds quite an interesting one. I've never quite got to grips with what the metaverse means, but yeah. And Cheryl is sharing, I have BPD, anxiety, depression, fibromyalgia, and long COVID. Sorry to hear about all of those. I was so ill in hospital with COVID and fought being put on a machine. This changed my life and pushed me to do what I want to do. That's fantastic, Cheryl.

And Lindsey says, it can be daunting applying for DSA. It can take several weeks, the DSA, the Disabled Students Allowance, but persevere because it's well worth the effort. You can access Student Finance England support and Open University support for help as well. So sometimes, you do need to go through sort of formal diagnoses bits for certain things, but others you don't.

But discuss that with your disability support team. They're there to help you. They'll get lots of-- they've got lots of information. That's what they know. They know all of these things. And then you can share things. If there's something that you found out about that really helps you in your particular condition, share it with others.

As Tazzy was saying, that's what she likes about Student Hub Live. And we are about community building, sharing skills with each other. We have people like myself and Margaret, we're presenting and we're saying skills about tutoring things, but a lot of it is about you learning from each other. That's why we're sharing these different suggestions because I'd never come across the Pomodoro technique before I started doing these Student Hub Live sessions. But so many students mention it. I'm like, OK, that's fine. And you may or may not realise you're doing something like that. The fact it's got a technical name, fine. Find out what works for you. That's the key thing. What works for you? Does 25 minutes work for you? Or actually, do you find you have to concentrate for longer? So you need 45 minutes. Practise. Have a go. All of the brand new, whether that's access level 1, find out what you're doing.

Find out what works for you in this kind of study because what works for you isn't necessarily going to be the same as what works for others. But some of those things could be really, really useful. So we're wrapping up soon because we haven't got that much longer left. But I just wanted to come to Heidi again to see whether there's any further questions that we need to know about, that we need to answer. And I see you've got your beautiful on your lap.

HEIDI: Yeah, can you see her? Can you see her? She's come up. Yeah, this is my new little addition to the house. This is little Alexia. Flew over from Cyprus a week ago, so she's still settling in. She's quite needy. She likes to be on my knee a lot, as you can see. So I think she's done pretty well. She's only come up in the last 10 minutes. So yes, there's been some conversations going on around some of the groups that we've got available at the Open University, so particularly around the LGBTQ group. So Chloe said that they wanted to find out more about the group at the OU and is trying to figure it all out. And then Anastasia raised awareness of there being an OU Pride event on the 1 of October. And apparently, there's information on the Student Association, OUSA, OU Student Association website. And my colleague Rafa has put some information in the chat for people. So if you're interested in that, do go along, have a look in the chat, and you can find the link there to find out more.

We've also had a number of questions about our Friday Night Social this week. So lots of people-- there was some buzz that was put into the chat where someone was saying, are you going along to the quiz on Friday? And people were saying, oh, there's a quiz, is there? And yes, there is. We've got our Friday Night Social coming up. So that's taking place between 6:30 and 8:00. Rob's going to be presenting that, and I'm going to be supporting him.

Max asked, what are the questions going to be about? So there's going to be fun games and a relaxed chat. So apparently, you can take part in our student scavenger hunt, and play a few rounds of Where's Bobby, and share some funny stories. So it's just a really relaxed social event on Friday, and really lovely if you're new to the Open University, and just to put your mind at ease and to have some fun.

And then I just want to pick up, then, quickly on just how astounding our students really are. So, Isabella, you mentioned earlier about Suzanne's comments. Suzanne mentioned that she currently is fighting cancer and is going through chemotherapy. So it's great to get her mind off of hospitals and cancer. And there's been a real outpouring of love and support in the chat.

So, Suzanne, I'm not sure if you've been able to have a look at them, but Stoyanka says, sending lots of love to you. I'm proud of you, Suzanne. Victoria says, Suzanne, you're a hero. Good luck to you. Gemma says, Suzanne, you're a warrior. And Andrew says, Suzanne, wishing you all the best, both with your treatment and with your studies. It's choking me up a little bit, actually. So lots and lots of love in the chat, which is really, really lovely. And we send you all of our very best, Suzanne.

And Paula says, I had a spinal injury at Christmas and had to learn to walk again, and still having issues with her hands. So I'm really sorry. I don't know why I'm getting choked up by this. But, yeah, just amazing student stories in the chat. Always so inspiring and just such a pleasure to be able to pull out your messages and your stories.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you, Heidi. And I've been there myself. And in past events, I've definitely teared up and, actually, on a couple of occasions, not been able to continue to speak when I've heard about different people's stories. And I think that's one of the main things. We're welcoming you to the Open University today. You're all on this fantastic new journey.

What I wanted to do in these last couple of minutes, I'm going to go to each guest in turn. And what I'm going to ask them to do is sort of encapsulate what they would like you to know about studying with the University. And maybe a sentence or so, so just so you know what's coming up for that one. Just before I do that, Stevie says he would die for Alexia. Not to be dramatic, but thought Alexia was absolutely gorgeous. So, Darren, if I come to you first, what would you say, encapsulating in a sentence, you would like people to know today?

DARREN GREY: I think it's be your authentic self. And let us know who you are so that we can work with you and make you-- and help you be as successful as possible.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Brilliant. Thank you, Darren. And, Jackie, what would you say? What would be your one sentence thing that you'd like people to know?

JACKIE PICKLES: I think I would say, just enjoy it, really. Sort of enjoy the journey. So sort of take every opportunity that you can and sort of see where it all takes you, really. It's never too early to come and get some support from careers if you want to. But it's basically about, sort of, just enjoy it. Enjoy it, take all the opportunities, and see where it takes you.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And, Tazzy. Sorry. Sorry, Jackie. And, Tazzy, what would you say?

TAZZY: Enjoy your module. It goes by so quickly. And find your community, whether it be Pride or BME, any of that. Find your community. And everybody is really, really fab.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely. Thank you, Tazzy. And thank you, everybody, for that. Yeah, so I think the key thing there is it's about the community. We said some people like a part of the Open University because they want to learn by themselves, distance university. But we do offer lots of opportunity for community, Student Hub Live, the Students Association, the individual clubs. Look out for them. Often, they'll be advertised on your StudentHome.

But you've made a fantastic choice to study with The Open University. When your modules start, probably, most of them on the 5 of October, you'll get lots of information through those. So just, we've got the event-- sorry, we've got, It's OK to Ask Questions with my LEGO-obsessed colleague, Margaret,

tonight at 6:30. And I'll be back tomorrow finding your way around. And then we've got the Carers event and the Social that Heidi mentioned. But thank you very much for watching and listening today, and hope we've given you lots of really useful information about your upcoming study.

[MUSIC PLAYING]