

KAREN FOLEY: Hello and welcome back to Student Hub Live and welcome to those of you who've been able to re-join us. We've had such a brilliant day. Now we're going to talk about time management, and I'd like to introduce you to my colleague, Isabella Henman. Isabella runs many of the other form of Student Hub Live workshops with me, which we do in Adobe Connect. So some of you will recognise her, but we always like getting her on video, because she always does her hair especially nicely. So even though I've straightened mine, Isabella will get lots more compliments about her hair, trust me.

ISABELLA HENMAN: I know. I have a reputation to live up to.

KAREN FOLEY: You do. You absolutely do. And looking super today as always, Isabella. Now we've got you here to talk about time management. We've just been talking about assessment, which Ruth says is very reassuring and she feels very positive. But some people have been worried about fitting things in. We've got lots of new students here. So what's the best tip, apart from coming to our time management workshops at Student Hub Live, which we've got coming up soon. Apart from that, what should students do in terms of managing their time?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Right, think about what you signed up for. So have a really careful look at your module guide and it will tell you how many hours a week you need to be studying. Make sure you use that number of hours per week. If you say - if it says you need sixteen to twenty hours and you've only got ten hours, it's going to be a problem to start with, because you're going to give yourself massive amounts of stress.

You might find that you want to allocate thirty hours, that's fine. That's amazing. You don't have to allocate thirty if it only says sixteen to twenty but do try and be realistic and make sure you have enough time to begin with. And time when you can actually focus and study.

So that's thinking about all the other things you do. You've got family commitments. You've got exercise commitments, cooking, work, voluntary work, anything like that, it can be really useful to actually set down what those things are and you can work out when the hours are that you might actually be able to study.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. I want to pick you up on that. But before I do, Rakula says that she loves your hair. It's like a water fire elements combo, which I think sums you up quite nicely. Isabella.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Well no, you're missing something, chocolate combo. Come on. We have to do the chocolate bit.

KAREN FOLEY: Well then, clearly that's brown and like nutty and my hair would be chocolate, I think. We could debate that till the cows come home. But you mentioned realistic. Now, this is my downfall because I'm actually not very brilliant at managing my time, because I do my to-do list. And what I tend to find is, that I'm really unrealistic about anything. I might even be able to allocate ten minutes for this task or that task. But often they take me a lot longer or something will land on my desk that then mean that I'm not realistic at all. So being realistic, I think is really, really hard. How do you deal with that? How do you be realistic about how long something is going to take?

ISABELLA HENMAN: It does take practise. I have to be completely honest about that. And you get used to things in time. But the really fantastic thing is if you're doing Access or you're doing Level 1, what you'll find in your induction resources in the start of the module, is it will actually give you, probably, most modules do, give you a time count. So it will say, we expect this activity to take you twenty minutes.

Note down how long it took you. And then you'll actually know. If it says it's going to take you twenty minutes and it took you twenty minutes, great. If it says it's going to take you twenty, and it took you ten, wow, you're doing really well there. But if it says it's going to take you twenty and it took you twenty-five, maybe think about why.

Is it because it's all so brand new and you're trying to get used to it, or is it that you're getting distracted. If you're studying on any kind of mobile device, are you getting distracted by cat pictures? Are you getting distracted by people sending you messages? So sometimes, you find that actually getting focused on the work is quite difficult and this is where prioritising comes in.

It can be really tricky learning to prioritise to start with. And it's something that, as I said, with the whole thing, it comes with practise. But there are tools to help you prioritise so you can work out what's important and what's not. And also, you can think that, with the best will in the world, you do want to cover everything in your module. But there may be some things that are more important to you and other things that are slightly less important to you.

Obviously, all of your module's important. But from your own perspective, whether that's your professional, whether that's your study, whether that's your personal interest, there may be some things that you want to focus on more, and others that you say, you know what? I don't actually mind if I don't do as well on that one. Because it's not so important to me.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's about being selective I guess, in terms of what really matters. It may be that for some students, they're really, really motivated by assessment and getting high grades. In that case, they may prioritise the assessment related aspects. Some people may think actually, I want to be the best psychologist in the world, so I want to focus on understanding this, that, and the other. And even if it's not related to assessment, it's important for me to understand that.

And I guess you could talk to your tutor about some of those things because they'll have an idea about what's in the module and why it matters. And also, I guess, where it's important in the qualification. Some students I know who are studying psychology, they get really het up about some of the statistics. And actually, some of the processes are important, but they don't need to be able to remember how to do this, that, and the other at the drop of a hat. So sometimes tutors can help, I guess, shift your focus in terms of where things matter and help you realise what a priority might be and what's not.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely. And your tutor is always a really good resource. Because they can help you. And it is a case of learning. It is really as a case of working things out. And when you're a brand new student, and most of you here listening to Freshers are, it does take time to learn. If I think back to how long it used to take me when I first went to university, crumbs, it was it was challenging. And I worked out that was x number of years ago, probably, this week that I had my own Freshers. And learning to take notes, I really struggled with that, because I did what a lot of people do - is just write everything out. And

that's not particularly effective from the time management perspective, because our title is about managing your time to work hard and play hard.

Now, obviously, you're working and - work to study is a priority here, but you do want to enjoy your life as well. So it's about making sure that you can fit everything in, in a way that enables you to do everything the way that you want to do it and to the level that you want to do it at. And as you said, Karen, whether that's focusing on the assessment to get the highest grades possible or whether that's something else.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Now, we asked people at home, do you use a calendar, diary or planner? Let's see what they say. So most of them do, which is very good. Ninety-four percent said that they do use some sort of planner or diary.

HJ, you don't. You use a plethora of post-it notes. Incidentally, we've got post-it notes for Student Hub Live -

[LAUGHING]

- very soon. So subscribe to our mailing list. I'm going to think of a fabulous way of getting some of those out to you guys as well. So go to the website, join our mailing list, and not only will you find out about the latest events and workshops we've got, but you can also be in for a chance to win some of our post-it notes. So HJ, tell us about your stuff that's on your to-do area.

HJ: Yes. So this is why I'm looking forward to Isabella's session, because I need some real help with this. I'm not very organised. All my to-do stuff just ends up on post-its rather than in any type of order. And I'm not really sure how to order it properly.

So I need to get a new hat. My board's been wonky for weeks. I don't know if anyone else noticed, so I need to fix that. My second-best shirt still has not been ironed. I'm putting off that.

I've got to email my tutor as well. I've got to update my CV. On Wednesday, I need to bath the dog by then, because he's having his friend over. So I've got all this to do, but I just don't organise it very well.

So I think I need some help. And maybe - I don't know. Where do I write it, or how do I prioritise it?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Can you sort him out please, Isabella? He is really hopeless.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah. I think I might like to talk to you a little bit about prioritising, HJ. So there's really great things.

HJ: Okay.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And it's lovely that you're so enthusiastic. Second-best shirt - don't worry about ironing. I don't do ironing. It's not on my calendar.

Put it away. It doesn't matter. Nobody's going to see you. Who cares about creases?

Dog friend over - they're going to love the smell. Don't worry about that one. That can go to the unimportant, not a high priority.

Emailing your tutor - up the level, high priority, important. Do that next. What was it? The fact your board's wonky adds a little bit of character, so that's fine. Sort out your priorities.

So we've got what we call a four-square grid - high priority, low priority, high importance, low importance. It's really useful. Get your post-its in the different boxes. And then, you'll just go, oh, look, I've got all these things that are low priority and low importance. I've got loads more time to think about things. Does that help, or are you now going, no, but it is important?

[LAUGHING]

HJ: I still have to think about - because that is my second-best shirt, so you know what? I'll consider the ironing thing. I'll have to have a good think about that, but I'm sure I could drop bathing the dog.

The board, I agree. It's been like that, that long - bit of character to the room, doesn't it? We'll call it a permanent feature now.

Emailing tutor, I suppose you're right. Module starts are coming. I have to speak to my tutor. So I'll do that next.

I know some other people had some questions as well. So thank you for helping me, Isabella. Sienna asks, what do you advise for students diving into Level 3 after some period of time of not studying? How would you organise your time or get set up for that?

ISABELLA HENMAN: So use your time. Your module won't start until Saturday, so make the most of all the time up until then. Remember those study skills. Remember the things. Pull out what you did before.

You will find at Level 3, you've got a lot more factual information. There's a lot less time on the basic study skills. So where I said earlier about this, this is how long it will take you, and that will come in your module, by the time you get to Level 3, you're not going to find that. So you're going to need to be very strategic.

Look at what you're aiming for. Look at what marks you're aiming for. Have a look at the assessment as soon as you can. Tailor your work to make sure you're really focused. Get rid of distractions.

Remember, Level 3 is your top bit. That's the last thing you need to do as part of your degree. So, okay, maybe a little bit of sacrifice along the way, so it might be that you have to give up a few things to get in as well as you can on that Level 3.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. Annabelle says, how about colour coding in terms of priority?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely. Lovely.

KAREN FOLEY: Might that work? Like red for important things to blue for non-urgent, et cetera? What are your thoughts on the colours?

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great idea as long as it doesn't stress you. One of my concerns with HJ and all his post-its, is he's going to get attached to his post-its, and he's not going to like me saying, take them away. And I know some people, when they colour code, it's quite tricky to work out what is important and what isn't. And they put everything is important. That's another thing where talking to your tutor can really help.

And it's something - if I give some terminology here - it's sort of external validation. You might need somebody else to help you work out what's important to begin with. As you get more experience, you can get the internal validation, and you know what's important.

But to begin with, be guided by your module calendar. Be guided by what it says is important. And then, yes, use your colours. That's a really good idea. But don't forget about the green ones once you've done the red ones, if that helps. Tangent there.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. I was talking to some people the other day about time management, which I often do. And I'm still not an expert by it. But what they said was, eat the frog first, which means that like, figure out some of the things you really don't want to do, and get on with those things first.

Because I think you're right. It's very easy to sort of number things and order things and think about the priorities. And then, two hours has gone while you've been sort of trying to re-list things, et cetera. So it can be quite challenging, as well.

But there's sometimes things that we really don't want to do. And sometimes, there are things that we do want to do, like ironing shirts, because they're just a thing. And actually, they don't matter in the larger scheme of things. So it can be difficult. So I guess, as you say, sort of step away from those and really recognise from an external perspective what is important.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Well, you know what? You can iron your shirts. And you could listen to the materials on an audio format at the same time.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And then you're actually doing what makes you feel therapeutically good. And HJ can have his second-best shirt ironed. But you still are listening to your module materials. It's the good thing about, we've got all these different formats.

I'm not saying that everything is going to be available in audio format, but you know what? If you've got to walk the dog, can you listen to something at the same time? Do you find that you're waiting for the kids in the car for something, and you're sitting there for half an hour when they're playing their football game? If you've got enough data, can you watch a video of the module, or can you pick up some of the stuff on your phone at that time?

Can you use the app? I know that one of the sessions is about the OU anywhere app. There's all sorts of different ways you can use. And sometimes, time management is working with technology, working with what's available to make your time work for you.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Because one other thing I wanted to touch on was that whole idea about time not always being equal. Some people say, I'm a real morning person. I get the, the hard jobs done in the morning so that when I can't think as much, I'm doing other things that maybe don't require so much brainpower. When's your best time of day? Not mornings.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Not in the morning.

KAREN FOLEY: It's not mornings.

[LAUGHING]

ISABELLA HENMAN: You know that I'm rubbish first thing in the morning. I need quite a long time to get up and to get ready. So one of the things that we have is that you can have a timetable of a calendar of all your hours, and you can actually work out that. And I always give the example, and I know that our students who love to study between, say, four and six o'clock in the morning, to me, no way. It wouldn't work. But some people, it does work.

For me, I'm probably most effective in the afternoons, evenings, and then up until later in the evening. And I'm fine then. Once I get awake, I'm awake. But you need to learn that about yourself.

You need to actually work it out, because if you don't know, and you're constantly getting up early in the morning to study, and you're getting tired and you're getting fed up, and it's just making you resent your study, that's not going to help. Whereas actually, if you're sat in front of the TV for three hours in the evening, and you're really nice and bright and thinking, why don't you use that time for study?

Because you know what? The TV will still be there. It will be there another time. And as I said earlier, possibly, you might need to sacrifice a few things. And if it's sacrificing something else that's knocking on your best time, then I'd say from the perspective of your study, that would be a good thing to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Absolutely. HJ, how's everyone at home? Is everyone feeling super confident with their time? And are you feeling better?

HJ: I'm feeling a lot better. I've actually organised my board now. So this side is less important. This side is more important, or the most important. And then, everything else, I've just taken off, because it's not something I want to think about right now while my module is getting ready to start.

But a lot of people are thinking about what time of day they are better at studying at, a bit like Isabella. So Toran's a morning person. I have to say I'm more of a late night. So I think it's a lot quieter, and I get less distracted by things then.

But we've got some good tips, as well. So Toran says, get yourself a to-do list manager. And a lot of other people, as well, try and have a look at their modules before the week starts to see what they've got to do and what's up ahead. And then, they can plan out what number of pages they need to do, what activities on each day.



So some people are a lot more organised than me. One great question from Sam is, what's the best way to manage two modules at the same time? I think quite a few people in the chat are on that and would love to know your top tips, Isabella.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, so that one.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. An increasingly number of students are studying at full-time intensity now, so it's very common.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah. Sorry I was going to jump straight in there.

[LAUGHING]

I think the idea of separating them out helps, because I know when I've spoken to students about it and when I'm doing different things, if you can, for instance, have, say, Monday to Wednesday on one module, and then Thursday to Saturday on the other, and then either Sunday is their day off or Sunday to pick things up. However you manage your time, it's sometimes easier to split it.

It's probably easier to do that within a week than, rather than, week to week. Because the problem is some modules have collaborative activities and things you have to do according to the timetable. And if you're always working a week ahead or a week behind, it's going to make things a lot more challenging.

But it helps, because what you really need to do is you need to focus on what you're doing for that module at that point. Otherwise, it can get really confusing in your head. And you'll be going, well, I've got this really good illustration. I can't find it. That's because it's come from somewhere else. And sadly, you won't get marks for something that comes from another module for the module that you're actually putting the assessment in for.

It's not that easy to switch brains, but if you get the idea of sort of go, right, this brain today. That brain tomorrow. I mean, it might be that you do morning and evening, or whatever. It depends on your timing. Obviously, I'm talking from the full time time perspective. But if those people are studying full-time and they're there all day, then, yes, maybe do that.

So have your morning doing one module, the afternoon doing the other, and alternate it, again thinking about what's your best time. Because don't always give your best time of day to one module and your worst time of day to another module. Otherwise, that's going to make life a little bit challenging, shall we say.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Thank you, Isabella. That has been absolutely wonderful. HJ, I just have one yes or no answer question for you. Did the shirt ironing stay or go?

HJ: It has gone. I think I'll be okay.

KAREN FOLEY: Right. That's it!

HJ: We'll manage.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes or no.

[LAUGHING]

Good. All right. Lovely. Well, thank you very much, Isabella, for that.

Now, Isabella and I, as I was saying earlier, we run workshops in Adobe Connect and a colleague Rob also helps to support us there as well. Some of those are on time management, a very, very popular session. But we also do things on essay planning. And for those of you who are brand new, we have stuff on module start.

I'm sure Tala and Eliza, in the chat, will tell you these sessions are lots of fun. But let's show you a little video so you can see how they work. The interface is a bit different to this, but nonetheless, they're a wonderful opportunity to get together. And in those, instead of chatting, we focus on key study skills and give you the opportunity to practise those as well.

So those are limited. You need to check on the Student Hub Live website and get your space for those. So please do do that.

But take a look at what's in store from you. And then, I will be back to look at a new Student Charter for the OU community with some other wonderful OU students. I'll see you there in just a minute.

[MUSIC PLAYING]