

SHL 135 Tuition 26th Sept 2023

ISABELLA HENMAN Good morning. Welcome to this Student Hub Live broadcast, Making the Most of Your Tutor and Tutorials. My name is Isabella Henman, and I'm a tutor with the University, as well as being the Student Hub Live host.

Many of you might have seen me last week when we were talking about freshers. Many of you might be still brand new students, waiting excitedly to start your module. As I said to people last week, I am very excited to start my latest module as well, and have to keep hold of myself because it doesn't begin till 7th of October.

So don't worry if things aren't all there yet. Most modules-- these October-start modules-- don't start until either this Saturday or next Saturday. But we'll give you lots and lots of information.

I have got some lovely guests with me today. I have got the lovely Chris, the lovely Jane, and the lovely Karen, who are all-- you can see them all there. Chris is a tutor, Jane is a tutor, and Karen is a student with the University.

There's also some lovely people on the chat, who will be doing their best to answer questions for you. I've got Heidi, who I will be going to at regular intervals.

I've also got George, Heather, and Philip. And you'll be able to see that they're people answering the questions because they will have the "SHL" designation next to them.

So what I wanted to do first is come to Heidi, who has been attempting to keep track of the extremely busy chat and what people have been talking about so far. Heidi, what has been going on so far?

HEIDI: This lot are going to keep me on my toes today, Isabella. We've got lots of people in the chat having loads of conversations, which is lovely. We've actually got a few poorly people in the chat.

So Anastasia, she's got her three-year-old at home with a cold today. So I'm really sorry to hear that, Anastasia. And Donna has a really nasty chest infection. I think, from what Donna was saying, she works with children. So it's very likely that you're going to be picking up all these horrible bugs.

Stella says that she'll be quietly watching and listening today because she has her two-year-old twins at home with her today. So I'm doing my best to multitask. We've experienced that lots in these fresher events, Stella. You're not alone. Lots of multitasking. Lots of children running around. Lots of animals in the background. You can probably see my dog, Martha, over my shoulder.

We've got international students joining us again. Lovely to have you with us. So hello to Mustafa, who's joining us from Finland. We've got Randy, from Canada. And we've also got Chloe in Canada as well. I imagine it's quite early there. I was trying to do my calculations, depending on whereabouts you are. But hello and welcome. Hopefully you've got your coffee or your cup of tea already.

We've got Susanna, from Normandy, and Farah, in Mallorca. And I was just saying to the team, I'm so jealous. I love Mallorca so much. One of my favourite places on Earth.

Angela was about to start studying Understanding Global Development. Now, I did the first module of the Master's in Global Development back in 2015 and loved it, Angela. So I hope that you really enjoy it. I know the team that developed that module really well.

We've got Melanie, who's joining us from a very, very wet and windy Northern Ireland. Rose is currently at the University of Essex, in the magnificent library there, the weather is alternating between sunny and cloudy.

Lucy is on her fifth year of her LLB. You are so close to the end, Lucy. Just two more years, the LLB, that is. That's hard going. But well done. That's fantastic.

Anastasia, studying design and innovation. We've got Kirsty, third year studying social sciences. James, completely new to the OU, and studying B100. Lovely to have you with us, James.

We've got Jackie, watching from a wet and grey Kirkbymoorside, who's studying D200 and D241. And Eva has transferred to us from another uni-- so she's also new to the OU-- will be starting forensic psychology. And then, finally, we've got Nicholas doing history, and Daniel, who says his dogs are currently rotating between sleeping and looking out of the window. Once they see it's raining, they go straight back to sleep.

So lovely to have you all with us, and thanks for saying hello.

ISABELLA HENMAN: It's just started pouring with rain here. And we were having a discussion before the broadcast started. Apparently, it's Storm Agnes. And we were trying to debate whether that was a nice name for a storm or not, but anyway. Yeah, it's hitting me as well now.

So in addition to all those people that Heidi was just mentioning, we've got a widget that you've been answering to say where you're from. And we should be able to display that now to see roughly where people are around the UK. And this is where I'm always absolutely rubbish with my geography, trying to look and trying to work out where it is. But you'll know where you are if you're that spot. I'll just leave it to that because I'm not very good at working out that one.

And we've also got the word cloud of what kind of things people have been studying. And oh, look at that. Lots of people doing psychology, counselling, English literature, the Open Degree-- we love the Open Degree, it's lovely-- and unfortunately, my eyesight's not quite good enough. I will be trying to squint. I can see History in there and I can't really read anything else because, unfortunately, it's a little bit small for me. But there you go.

So it's great. And do feel free to carry on engaging with the chat. Heidi didn't get the chance to mention earlier, but she did say briefly-- the chat is very busy. If you find it too busy, there's a little pin icon and you can get it to stay in place and then scroll up and down if you want to. And that's absolutely fine along the way.

So my first guest today is Chris, who is joining me from possibly a very wet place as well-- or maybe you've got nice weather, Chris. But Chris, you have got a very interesting title, which I think is a bit of a mouthful. It may or may not get to show at the moment, which is a shame because people might not be able to see this. But perhaps you could tell us. I said you were a tutor earlier, but you've got a number of other roles with the University as well. So why would you particularly like to talk to students today and get them to know about what's the benefit of their tutor and tutorials?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Thanks, Isabella. And good morning, everybody.

At the moment, the sun is out down in Cornwall, which is pretty rare. So anyway, it's fantastic to know there are so many people joining us. And thank you for having us on Student Hub Live.

A lot of my job with the University is actually concerned with how we look after students and how we support them via their tutors. So that's why I'm really keen to talk about it today.

So my official job title is a staff tutor. Basically, that means that I spend part of my time working on our online learning materials. I work in science, but similar things happen across the University. But a large part of my time is spent actually line managing the tutors who work with you, the students.

So I help set up a schedule of tutorials at the start of every time the module runs, every time the module presents. And we make sure that tutors are settled into the module that they're tutoring. We sometimes give them some bits of advice. We check that they're marking and their feedback to you, which is so valuable to help you improve and develop-- that is checked and I signed that off for the tutors I look after. So there's an awful lot that goes on behind the scenes, which we're really keen is all focused on making life as well supported for students as possible.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. So I think most students probably don't actually realise that they've got the managers. Because as students-- and being a student myself, and as I was a student before I started-- I had no idea that there was this. And I had no idea that there were actually people making sure that the tutors were doing a good job. So hopefully people that are watching will realise that's actually quite a nice thing.

So Chris, maybe you could explain a little bit about how, for example, tutorials get organised. How do you decide where they're going to be or when they're going to be?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: OK. Well, that's a very good question. So we would normally start off-- the module team-- so the University, a central part of the University, will work out a programme of tutorials that will run throughout a module. So many modules present over nine months, for instance. Some present for longer or shorter periods. But we will then work out-- so at the start of a module, there's nearly always a session where you get to meet your tutor in your tutor group.

And then usually the tutorials are spaced through the module. So that as you're working through the books or the online content that's teaching you in your module, the tutorials strategically-- so that the tutors are able to offer study skills, advice, they might be helping you with a particular concept-- there's often time to ask questions of the tutors as well. So really, it's to help you access those materials and also provide you with some support around the assessments and things like that that you may need to be doing.

But also the thing to say is that the tutorials-- all modules, I think, have online tutorials. So if you're able to join them online, it's a really good chance to chat with other students live and to build some community. Of course, we record, too. You can watch them back afterwards. And as well as that, there's a limited number of face-to-face tutorials, which where they're run depends on the number of students and also on how many tutors we've got in a particular area. But generally, face-to-face tutorials-- some modules and some areas of modules-- if you like, related modules-- run these as day schools or tutorials in places that we try to get as accessible to as many students as possible around the country.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thanks, Chris. And I know that's something that we often get asked by students about face-to-face. And I know myself as a tutor-- and as a student before that-- I used to go to a variety of different places for tutorials. Not all modules have face-to-face. And we do need to be open about that, to begin with.

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Yeah.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Your module will say if there's face-to-face. I do know that, for instance, some modules have-- you mentioned introductory day schools-- but I know that there's some interesting looking subject day schools that are being launched. Do you know anything about those or is that a question that is best placed for somebody else?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: I know a little bit. Certainly there is a move to try and open out to day schools so they're not always focused on one particular module, but for a group of modules, where students can

attend-- meet students on these related modules, for instance. Maybe first-year students meeting second-year students or something like that. And these will be run by tutors. And they'll have a broader focus so that you are developing some skills and knowledge around your subject area. But, again, a real focus on the value of face-to-face interaction and being able to build some community.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. Thank you. Because for those of people that are new to Student Hub Live, Student Hub Live is not one module. We work across the whole University. So all levels, all subjects, to build study skills. And when I talk to Jane later, we'll be talking quite a lot about the study skills and how tutors can help with that. But we're also about building community. And community is actually a really important aspect of the University.

Because we're a distance University, many people watching will be thinking, I'm a little bit lonely. I'm just sat in front of a computer. Is that all I get for six years? But we've got lots of different things and lots of ways where you can connect to other students, whether-- [AUDIO OUT]--

HEIDI: Oh, dear. We seem to have lost Isabella. Oh, goodness me. Well, we've got a little bit of a technical issue at the moment.

So Chris, I have actually been massively overwhelmed with fantastic questions in the chat. So just to kind of throw you in there, is it OK if I ask you a couple of questions, if we just go to those, because there's so many coming in?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Of course, it is. Yeah, absolutely fine. I will do my very best to answer them.

HEIDI: Fantastic, Chris. Thank you so much. So we've got lots of people that are studying A111. And some are saying that they haven't heard from their tutor yet. So this is a question that Kelsey has asked. Are we able to offer some reassurance to our students that some of them may not have heard from their tutors just yet, but not to panic-- there's still plenty of time that they will hear from them very soon?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Absolutely. Yes. It's a really good question, and it's fantastic that people-- Kelsey, for instance-- you're so motivated and everything. The modules-- most modules don't officially start yet. If your module starts in October, it won't be for another-- perhaps this coming Saturday or the Saturday afterwards-- maybe even the Saturday after that. So your tutor will normally get in touch around the start of the module. Every tutor works slightly differently. Some of them will get in touch before the module starts. Some of them tend to get in touch at the start of the module, when it officially starts.

I'm a tutor as well. It's something I do part time. I tend to reach out to my students around about the time the module starts. Because that's when they'll all be hopefully planning and ready.

Having said that, I'm also a student. I'm on the Open Degree. And every tutor I've had works slightly differently. I've always had a really positive supported experience. But exactly when they make contact at the start, it can vary. But I think the main thing is it's great to see that you're keen to hear from your tutor. And I encourage everybody to make contact with their tutor because your tutor is going to do so much more for you than just mark your work and provide feedback. That's a really important thing. But they are there to answer academic questions and help signpost you to things.

So yeah, I don't think there's any cause for concern. But it's really good that you're keen to hear from your tutor and to establish a rapport with them.

HEIDI: Great. Thank you so much, Chris. Hopefully that's reassured some of you that are joining us today.

So there's a great question from Kimberly here. So are we able to show tutors where we are with our assignments and get feedback, and if we're on the right path before submitting?

I know this is a slightly tricky one, Chris, isn't it? And one that I experienced because I myself am a former OU student. I studied with the OU for six years. And it's so helpful to get that feedback on your draft. But obviously, tutors are quite restricted in terms of quite how much they can guide you so that they're not crossing over the line.

So can you talk us through that process and how much feedback our students can get?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Sure. If it's an assessed piece of work, usually what a tutor can do is very, very limited. Because, as you say, there's crossing that line into they're actually sort of starting to answer the question for you. So I would generally say there is absolutely no problem. If you're not sure about something, just reaching out and asking your tutor-- I was wondering about this; please, could you advise me-- and I think that's always the best way to go.

But I would say that you'll often find support and help in tutorials. Particularly early on or with big assignments or tricky assignments, there's often some help in tutorials which will help you really get to know the assignment, get the topics that are covered in it. And those will be designed to help you make progress with the TMA or whatever assessment it is you're doing without actually crossing the line-- without a tutor doing too much to help you.

But if in doubt, I would always say ask. And it may be that if your tutor can't help with something specific, they can still give some advice on study skills or the technique you're applying to help you along the way. So you certainly shouldn't be afraid to ask for help. Because this is potentially a new experience for some people. So it's finding out where the help is available and where the boundaries lie. And your tutor will be able to advise you of that, with no judgement or problem. Don't worry about it.

HEIDI: That's great. Thank you so much, Chris.

So Eva has asked, I can see that my tutor is listed. Should I reach out to them or will they make the first move? I know we've had this question a few times in the past. I think there's a little bit of apprehension that some students feel they don't want to come across as being too pushy or reaching out to a tutor when it's not the right time. But I think this is a great opportunity to reassure our students that our tutors are so friendly, and they're there to support you. And I know in the past Isabella has recommended don't hesitate, but it'd be great to get your thoughts on that, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Absolutely. I would say, yeah. I mean, every tutor is different. Every tutor works part time for the Open University. So around the start of the course, they'll probably tell you when their typical working pattern for the OU is during the week. But there is no problem in reaching out to your tutor early. It may be that they don't pick up your email for a few days or something, or they get in touch nearer the start of the module, or they may respond immediately.

I'm studying a module this year that starts in a couple of weeks' time. I saw that I had my tutor the other day, and I just sent a quick email, saying, I just wanted to say hello, hi, this is me. Basically, a quick introduction. But I haven't heard back from her yet, and that's fine. I'll see. The module doesn't start for a while yet. So I would say every tutor is different, but there is nothing to be lost by reaching out early if you want to.

HEIDI: That's great, Chris. Thank you so much.

I think we've got Isabella back, then, for a little bit. But I think we might have lost her again. So I'm sorry, Chris. I think we're going to carry on a little bit of a Q&A with you and me, if that's OK, Chris, just to put you on the spot some more. Oh, that's brilliant. OK.

So David's asked another question. I think the contact between the student and their particular tutor is sometimes not all that specified. So how much interaction is allowed, and what topics are in scope? What a great question. Is there a limit to the amount of time a tutor may give to an individual student?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: That's a very good question. And it's also a very difficult one to give a definite answer to. It would also, I would say, depend on the level of the module and perhaps where the student is coming from. We always try to give our students as much support as possible. As I say, around the start of the module, a tutor will usually indicate to you, I usually answer your emails within a certain amount of time. I usually work these days for the OU. If you need to contact me, I could be contacted. This is my number. This is my email.

So you'll find out where your tutor sits. And I guess the main thing to say is they're there to help you access the distance learning. So they're not teaching you like a full programme of study. They run a few tutorials that will help you with the tricky bits. But your first port of call for the actual study is the books or the module website, or both. And then you can ask your tutor questions if you're having problems with that.

And your tutor will often signpost you to things. So it may be, have a look at these materials in the library. These will help you develop the study skill you're asking me about. Or have a look at this tutorial recording that ran-- maybe there was a tutorial two weeks ago, and it ran-- and you could visit that for some tips.

I would always encourage you to reach out to your tutor. I mean, remember they're part time. But there is no harm in asking for the support. And your tutor can then talk about it with you. Or if some students have individual requirements, more complex or more specific needs, talk to your tutor about it. They may not be aware of everything, and they will then, if necessary, talk to their line manager-- like me-- and we'll always try to come up with a strategy that will mean we can give the most support possible.

But I think the main message is don't be afraid to ask your tutor, are you able to help me with this? Because your tutor can just say, yeah, that's something I can help with, or actually, you need to contact the Student Support Team. Let me put in a referral so they can get in touch with you-- something like that. So your tutor may be a signpost service to certain things. But most academic things, they will be able to offer some support with. And I think, yeah, get in touch with them. Ask.

HEIDI: Really helpful. Thank you so much, Chris. So we had some feedback from David. David, I do appreciate that the chat can be quite difficult to follow within Student Hub Live. So what I would recommend is, if you are finding the chats moving very quickly-- and even if you're using the pin on the top right hand side and you're finding it quite difficult to follow-- just don't worry about it for now. It's my job to put some of the key questions forward to the presenters. By all means, do pop your questions in the chat if you want me to put those forward. But this event will be available to watch back again afterwards. So don't be too concerned if you're finding it difficult to keep up with the chat. It's something that we have with lots of our students. So please, don't be too concerned about that. So a couple of similar questions that we've had through, then, Chris. So Claudia and Henrietta-- Claudia says, is it possible to get too far ahead? So Henrietta says, can we start the module ahead of time? I think very often there's this. People are keen to really make a start on the reading and really getting in with the module materials. Is that OK for them to do, Chris? Is that a good thing?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Absolutely. Yeah. I think the message would be don't panic. You don't have to do it. And everybody will manage their time differently. Some people might have more time some weeks

than others. So they might want to get ahead one week so that the next week, maybe they're really busy with something else-- work or family or whatever. So yeah, it's absolutely fine. And often part-- maybe not all, but part of the module website-- will be available. Or I've been sent the first book of three for the module that I'm studying, so I've started looking at the first few bits.

But usually there's a timetable on the module website, the study calendar, which will suggest what you do each week. But it's fine to adapt that.

In terms of getting too far ahead, it will depend very much on the module, the level, and what's required. Most modules have some sort of collaborative work or group work in them. So it may be that you need to plan time at the appropriate point in the module to participate in a group activity on a forum and things linked to assessment.

And if you're really careering massively far ahead, you might want to have a little chat with your tutor. Or just use a TMA or some of the questions in the module to check that you're understanding things and you're doing all right. Because sometimes you can get a bit far ahead and you've gone so quick, you might have forgotten or missed out some of the important bits earlier in your enthusiasm.

So I would say, look at what's required in the module, notice, talk to your tutor. Have a look at the module materials. Because sometimes there are these collaborative activities or important things that are timed within the module that you can only do within a certain time period. So I would try that. You can get quite far ahead on modules, and it can be perfectly all right. But just take stock of it. And certainly, if you want to start early, do so. But don't feel that you have to. I think the most important thing is to be planning your time and just trying to look ahead about what you're going to do when so that you've got this steady pace planned out that will work for you

HEIDI: That's great, Chris. Thank you so, so much.

And I think that we've got Isabella back now. I think we've managed to sort out our technical issues. Hi, Isabella. Have we got Isabella back? Not quite yet? No?

ISABELLA HENMAN: I think I'm here.

HEIDI: I can hear her. The dulcet sounds of Isabella. Are you there? I don't know if it's this is Storm Agnes.

ISABELLA HENMAN: I think it was because I mentioned about Storm Agnes. And I think Agnes is-- I think it is. I don't know if you can think Agnes is doing-- [AUDIO OUT]--

HEIDI: I think it's this Storm Agnes. We were joking earlier on. I was saying it's absolutely pouring down with rain outside and it's really grey and it's horrible. And Isabella was saying, oh, maybe this storm has hit. And I said, oh, no, it should be fine. And we were laughing at Agnes not being a particularly terrifying name for a storm. But I think it must be the storm.

So we've got lots of questions coming in, which is great. So Chris, I'm going to give you this slightly meaty question, if that's OK. So it's one that a few of our students have asked us. And I think it is really important that we do address it. So Erin is one of our students that asked this. So she said, there are still University strikes that are happening intermittently. Is there any potential that this will affect us being allocated our tutors?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Yeah, you're absolutely right. And it's a good question and one that's really important to address. Yeah, there are intermittent strikes and industrial action, absolutely. And everybody-- every tutor, every academic member of staff-- may participate. And that is absolutely their right and expected.

The module-- we're in the middle of five days of action, I believe-- but our modules don't start for another week or two yet. So I don't think, in terms of the current action, that it will have effects on allocation of a tutor or anything like that. And the other thing I would say is, when industrial action happens during the University, when a module is in presentation in the middle of a module, the University tries its hardest to mitigate the effects on students. Students are always front and centre of what the University is trying to protect.

So if you like, the University will do its best to minimise any disruption. So we always work hard to do that.

HEIDI: Thank you, Chris. That's brilliant.

And I think we've got Isabella back. She's back from the depths of Storm Agnes. I think she's back with us. Thank goodness. Here she is. Lovely to see you.

ISABELLA HENMAN: I think so. Thank you. It's lovely to be back. It all went very much haywire for a while. And I was frantically pressing buttons and going, Agnes, just because I mentioned you might be mean, you can't be mean to me. I'm so sorry, everybody.

But thank you, Heidi, for dealing with things. I think I came back in on Chris having to deal with a bit of a difficult question there. But thank you. It looks like Chris was doing really well there.

So are there any other questions? Or was there anything? Because I don't know what's been happening. This is live and this is what happens.

HEIDI: Yeah, of course. Yeah, I've actually got loads and loads of questions coming through, Isabella. So if we can do a couple of questions, that would be great.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Absolutely.

HEIDI: So there's a really great one that's come in from one of our students, who says, my tutor is a magistrate and also head of an A-level subject at a sixth form. So the question is, do you think my tutor will actually have the time to give to their students? And I know that many of our tutors do multiple things. They're the most incredible multitaskers. And actually, that really benefits their role as a tutor. So it'd be great to explore that a bit more, Isabella.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you. Yeah. I mean, I guess I can talk about that a little bit from my own perspective. So what I do is when I send out welcome letters to students, I say when my contact hours are. And I know when I've been a student, my tutors have done that as well. And I know that Chris does that as well. And I think Jane does that. And when I come to Jane in a little bit, she'll explain a little bit about how she does it.

But have a look, first of all. If your tutor sends out a welcome letter, see what they actually say-- their timing. Because they may say, due to my work, you can phone me on this. Please leave a message. I know that my current tutor who sent me a welcome email last week said, yeah, because they've got a full-time job doing something, so they will do their best to monitor, but they will get back to you.

I know I've had messages from other people that will say things like, I aim to respond in two days. So just because your tutor does something else doesn't mean that you are the bottom of the priority, as it were. But do look to see what they say. It may be they have very specific contact hours. They may say they're available, say, 7:00 till 9:00 weekdays or they're available at a certain point at the weekend. But they will let you know. So that's quite a good thing.

So I said I would come to Jane. I think it would be a good point now to do that. Because, Jane, you work in Access, don't you? And Access tutors work very closely with students, don't they, in terms of supporting students? And now, we did have a dedicated broadcast for our freshers Access students last week. But

perhaps you could say a little bit about how you do a welcome to your students and you tell them about your availability.

JANE HARRISON: Hi there. So yeah, it's a good question. And I think Chris has touched upon the fact that every tutor is a little bit different. So I can't apologise for that. It's just we're human. But absolutely right on Access. It's slightly different. I do send out a welcome letter, and it does have that contact preference in there. So as you said, Isabella, it's a good idea to actually read that letter if one comes out to you.

But because we have one-to-one tutorials with our students-- or we can; not all students want to take us up on that, but many of you do and I hope you will-- it does mean we can have a bit of to and fro about what works for both of us. My work means I can be fairly flexible with my time. Other people, as Isabella gave in her example, maybe not quite so flexible. So just ask. Just ask. And then you can work it out between you on Access.

Oh, I think Isabella has disappeared again.

HEIDI: You are kidding. This Storm Agnes, she's stolen her again. Right. OK. We seem to have lost Isabella again. I do apologise for us having these technical issues today, but it does offer us up a great opportunity to just put all of your questions to those on our panel.

So I've had plenty of other questions that have come in. We've got one that's come in from Stacey. So Stacey, very excitingly, is about to become a grandma. Her daughter is due to give birth on the 6th or 7th of October. And Stacey says, what will happen if I miss my first tutorial? Can I catch up or will I be marked down?

Now, this is something that's very common. Lots of our students have things that come up. They've got other responsibilities. They've got other things that they need to be at. So will this affect their progress with their studies? I don't know whether you want to answer that question, Jane, or we can go to Chris. Whichever of you would like to answer that one?

JANE HARRISON: Well, I'll give it a go, and then Chris can chip in and put me right, perhaps. But I would say, yeah, do let your tutor know. And congratulations, by the way. I hope it all goes well. You should be able to manage if you can't get to a tutorial.

Now, from my own experience studying with the Open University, it's better to go to tutorials if you can. It's good if you're there live, or part of it, because you can ask the questions as they pop into your head. But these days, especially with the online tutorials, you can watch the recording afterwards. You can ask your tutor if there's any notes to follow up after the tutorial. There are many ways to catch up if you need to catch up. By and large, it's extra information and a chance to get to know other people and to feel more like a student.

So if you can't make it to that tutorial, let your tutor know. But you should be absolutely fine to catch up later.

HEIDI: That's great. Thank you so much, Jane.

So Louise has just popped in the chat there. I'm pregnant, due in April. So this is interesting for me. So congratulations, Louise. That's really, really exciting. I have mentioned in previous freshers events that I started my studies just after my little boy was born. And I studied for six years. He's now a big, grown-up teenage boy. So I know what that feeling is like. And I know that it can be a bit daunting. I was very fortunate that my son was a good sleeper during the day. Not at nighttime. He was a nightmare at nighttime. But during the day, he had lots of naps. So I was able to squeeze in lots of OU study then.

So another question. We've got a question from Jane for Jane-- or it can go to Chris, whichever you prefer. Will we keep the same tutor throughout the degree, or will they change with every module?

JANE HARRISON: Well, we change with every module, generally speaking. You may get the same tutor if they tutor on more than one module. So you may get them at one level and then at another level. But, by and large, you may see quite a few tutors as you work your way through your degree.

I don't know if Chris wants to add anything to that, whether they've got any tutors that tutor on absolutely everything.

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Sure. Thanks, Jane. I think Jane has done a great job of answering all of those. And also congratulations to people who have got happy arrivals coming soon. And obviously, best wishes for it. I hope it all goes well.

Yeah, generally, you would have a different tutor for each module. Some tutors-- I work in the area of environmental science, and some of our tutors do tutor multiple modules, which means that you could be assigned the same tutor for more than one module. But usually, with a new module, you'll have a different tutor.

There's something-- if I may, Heidi-- could I just come back on quickly? I know there were some questions about when tutors are available and support, et cetera. I would just add two things to the discussions we've had. Many modules-- not all of them, but many of them-- operate forums, where you can post. It's like a digital message board. And they're usually monitored by tutors teaching on a module and the module team.

So if you needed to ask a question and your tutor wasn't available for a day or two or something, you can always post a question on the forums. And the other thing to say is every tutor has different availability, but your Student Support Team, the SST, have pretty generous working hours. And there is always somebody in the SST. If you couldn't get hold of your tutor and it was an emergency or there was something maybe not directly related or whatever, you can get in touch with your Student Support Team, and they can then reach out to other people if there's an emergency, to get cover put in place or if your tutor wasn't available one day. So do remember, you can always contact the SST as well.

HEIDI: Thank you, Chris. That's really, really helpful.

So I think we've got Isabella back again now. Hi, Isabella. Hello.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Hi. I think this is being a bit of an unsuccessful one. But you know what. This is what live things happen. This is what it's like when you're studying, isn't it, where things go wrong? And I know this session is about making the most of your tutor and tutorials, but this is a very real example of things can happen. And one of the reasons why, as a tutor, I always say to people, please make sure that you look at deadlines and work ahead of time. Because if this kind of thing happens when you're trying to submit a really important piece of work, it's a bit of a haywire thing.

So it's [AUDIO OUT]-- whenever I'm trying to talk to you, it happens. So making the most of your tutorials is about making the most of your study and trying to do things as well as you can.

So I'm not quite sure what was said while I was away, but I think we were talking about the Student Support Team and-- did you get the chance to talk a little bit about study skills, Jane? I'm not sure whether you did. Hopefully you were able to. So let's see whether we can have-- [AUDIO OUT]--

JANE HARRISON: I think I've just lost Isabella again.

HEIDI: Yeah, I think we have lost Isabella.

JANE HARRISON: Oh, dear.

HEIDI: I think it's a little bit glitchy in the background. So I know that Isabella was going to talk to you, then, about study skills. So if anyone's got any particular tips that they want to share in the chat-- if you're perhaps a little bit further along with your study and you want to share some of your study skills, please do.

But, Jane, do you want to talk a little bit through about some study skills, perhaps give some examples and some tips for those in our audience?

JANE HARRISON: Wow. OK. I'll do my best. Because study skills is a huge-- I've got to wave my hands about-- huge area. Huge. So I think probably, if you're an experienced student-- and I think there's a few of you out there today-- you will have got the hang of some of the things-- such as time management and organisation, prioritisation, note taking, perhaps-- and I know there's a great Student Hub Live session on note taking. I popped along to that one myself and found out lots of new techniques. So I do recommend that one, if you're still running it.

So those sort of background core skills-- it depends on how you look at them. But then there are module-specific study skills as well. And if you have a good look around your module materials, you should find somewhere where it will tell you about perhaps the learning outcomes-- they might call it that-- or it might be hidden somewhere in an assessment. So do have a good read of those assessment guides and your module material because you'll find some study skills in there that are specific.

So for instance, you might be developing numeracy skills-- working with data. We all have to work with IT these days, don't we? So I mean, that's a biggie. And so we're all developing those study skills. And here you are today and we're kind of wrangling everything, aren't we, online. So we're all learning today.

Also, I always say it's about communication. And a big one that lots of people ask me about is essay writing. So lots of people not keen on maths. So we've mentioned numeracy skills. But also people not so keen on the idea of writing essays. And it's a skill you can actually develop. There's little tweaks according to whichever module that you are working on at the moment, and your tutor can guide you with that.

Then there's kind of broader skills that-- I think of them as more personal things. So a really important one there is learning to reflect. So there's something in one of our booklets-- and I'll just do a little plug there-- so if you go to StudentHome and you look for the Help Centre, you'll see there, it says Study Skills. So if you actually log into that, you'll find there are study skills booklets. And I think they're great. Have a look in there.

One of them said something about repetition without reflection is just, well, basically doing the same thing over again. It's not learning. So learning to actually reflect-- developing that skill of reflection-- is a really key one and something that, again, your tutor can help you with. So that's just a few that spring to mind. I think the IT can be a biggie. So one of the things I've done with my students recently is looking at how to create graphs using Excel. Because I find that Excel-- I don't know what you find with Excel, but I find it can be a little bit tricky. Things get lost in translation.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah, absolutely. And we've had the whole IT thing, and things aren't working yet. I hope that I can continue. I do apologise in advance. Obviously, the system is just being really, really iffy today. Which is what happens. But yeah, reflection is a good thing. And it was interesting talking to Jane about those different skills and doing little cross-plugs to what online workshops we do. Thank you. I thought that the note taking one was good. We do ones on essay writing and so on as well.

We don't do ones on maths, but I know that there's lots of resources to do with that. But some of those you may think, oh, that doesn't apply to me. But study skills, they're the things that underlie all of your

study and they help you. So one of the reasons why tutorials happen-- what's different about OU tutorials and other places-- and I remember at the start that some of you had transferred over from another British universities-- we don't necessarily do lectures at the Open University. So we're not conveying all the information you need to know which you need to quickly write down. You've got all the module materials. So tutors and tutorials are helping you get the most of those module materials and work out what's important from them.

So while I've got a little bit of a stable signal, I wanted to try and come to Karen now. Because Karen was one of my students last year in one of my Level 1 modules. And she was able to manage a number of different things. And she came along to tutorials and she did her best along the way.

So Karen, could you perhaps tell us a little bit, from your perspective as a student, what you found useful about tutorials?

KAREN JOANNOU: Well, what I found very useful-- the fact that I can read the module material, as it's been pointed out here in this session, and I can go over the tutorial. And I can ask the tutor to perhaps go over things that I might not have understood in the first place.

And Isabella, you did very well in spelling out the sort of things with diagrams, with visual representation, like props and diagrams, and explaining things and giving us time and attention. So that's what I really enjoyed about your tutorials, Isabella.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. Thank you. That's really kind. That almost sounded like-- I wasn't prompting Karen that she had to say that. But I remember, with some of the tutorials we did, we did use props. And I think you were one of the ones where I used beans. So Jane was talking about maths earlier. And I like using physical things. I haven't got any beans on my desk at the moment. But I remember you saying that you found visual representations really helped you. Could you say a little bit more about why they helped you and why they were useful in tutorials?

KAREN JOANNOU: Well, I'm neurodivergent. And it might work for me more because I'm neurodivergent. I think it would work. I don't think that's really the reason why it would work very well for anybody. It's like putting out there a concept and making it simpler so that the person can understand.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Great. Yeah. Thank you for your honesty. Yes. Because I think some students-- well, it might have been mentioned while Agnes-- [AUDIO OUT]--

HEIDI: I think we've lost Isabella again. Hello, everyone.

JANE HARRISON: I think so, too. Heidi again. You're going to be getting sick of me. Yeah. I think we've lost her. Sorry about that.

So just in the chat-- we were talking slightly earlier about study skills there-- so in the chat, my colleagues have put some links in there to some OpenLearn courses. So on OpenLearn, if you're not familiar, that is our free learning platform here at the Open University. And you will find thousands and thousands of free courses over there. So my colleagues are busying away, putting some links in there for study skills.

If there's particular areas that you want to have a bit more practise in in terms of developing your skills, you will definitely find it over on OpenLearn.

Just out of interest, Karen, have you engaged with OpenLearn as part of your studies?

KAREN JOANNOU: I have.

HEIDI: Have you used OpenLearn?

KAREN JOANNOU: Indeed.

HEIDI: What courses have you enjoyed?

KAREN JOANNOU: I've done about 30 OpenLearn courses. I've enjoyed mostly the science ones. I've enjoyed the maths ones, history and arts, geography, business and money. And I've also enjoyed using the Student Hub very much, alongside my studies. Because the Student Hub helps me with those study skills.

For example, I have a lot of problems answering the question-- take that as an example-- I have a lot of problems understanding what perhaps the course materials-- I thought that I was doing well in understanding the course materials, but I've gone on another tangent I found in the feedback in my TMA-- all sorts of a variety of things that students struggle with, and I struggled with. So I find the Student Hub, when I attend the live sessions and I interact with the tutor and I ask questions, it really helps me. And I sit and I make notes on the Student Hub as well.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Lovely. That sounds great, Karen. And I think the important thing there is sometimes it's about recognising what you want and what you need as a student. Because everybody here is on their own study journey. Some of the things Karen is saying, you'll think that definitely resonates with me. Other things, you'd be like, no, that doesn't apply to me. But finding it, though-- we were talking before Agnes battered me again-- we were talking about visual representations.

And you're also talking about taking notes and answering the question. And that's a very important thing. And I think that's one of the key things about tutorials, isn't it? Getting that chance to ask the questions and say, this is what I think, but I'm not 100% sure. So could you maybe give me a little bit of a steer on that one? It's not asking the answers. It's not asking for the answers, is it, Karen? But it's about going--

KAREN JOANNOU: No.

ISABELLA HENMAN: --have I got the right idea?

KAREN JOANNOU: It's about working out a solution to the problem.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Right. Lovely. Thank you. That sounds really useful.

Now, I know Heidi has been doing things, but I know how he's got a number of other questions that have been coming through. So hopefully I'll get the chance to hear you say those, Heidi, before my system goes funny again. So what kind of things have people been asking about?

HEIDI: Well, we talked a little bit there about study skills. So some people have been sharing some tips and ideas and advice, which is really useful. So Kim says, read the material first in full before you highlight or start making notes. It will cut the amount down, and your notes will be more impactful as you have the main points. I think that's a really good one.

And Katrina says, figuring out what time of day my brain suits specific thinking styles. So such as studying module materials, doing course activities, watching Student Hub Live, and other relevant recordings. Also, habit stacking, such as doing dishes whilst watching a webinar or tutorial. So I thought they were really useful.

I know that one for me is really important.

KAREN JOANNOU: I do my laundry, and sometimes I get up and walk around the room. So yes, I also multitask while I-- in response to your feedback, I sometimes multitask as well while I'm studying. And that helps me, too.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you, Karen. Interesting that the laundry helps. That's a very interesting one. I'm not sure of that. I know some people do cleaning alongside, but I guess laundry helps as well. So that's really useful. So thank you, everybody, for sharing. Do continue to share your tips. And that's a very useful thing to do.

Oh, I was thinking about Post-its during that. I was just trying to look for my Post-its. And I think that idea of summarising things down is quite an important thing that often-- particularly those of you who are new, you might be used to writing lots and lots of information-- but working out the key things that are important and then distilling them down into the most important things. Badged open courses I can see mentioned. I don't know whether these questions have been answered already, but people are asking about which particular Student Hub Live things, whether they're introductory or advanced, you can go to. Anybody is welcome to all, but think about what position you're in.

So I guess it's the same as we're an Open University, and in our first freshers event last week, John was giving us a really good bit of information about what it's like to be part of an open university. So we don't set any things in. We don't say, you've got to do this first to come in to study this. And many people haven't. But many people who are new to higher education, particularly if your Access or Level 1 or you're a fresher and you're just coming in, it's about getting used to things, I think.

If I come to Chris next. So Chris, I remember when you started at the University. I know you came in as a tutor, but you're a student as well. What did you find that you had to adjust to about learning in this kind of environment than perhaps somewhere else?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: That's a really good question. As I said, it's getting to know yourself and what works for you. I had to be fairly organised to manage my student study alongside my job. So I went through and I wrote down dates of tutorials, and I signed up for tutorials-- which you can do on StudentHome. I made sure I had my assessment deadlines because I knew that, at some time, some weeks, I'd have to travel for work or there was something else going on.

For instance, at the moment, I suppose, if I was just starting out as a student, I probably wouldn't have actually thought about this, but I've got a big musical project that I'm involved with in three or four weeks' time. I'm studying introductory Spanish this year. So I've actually made a bit of a start, as I mentioned earlier-- slightly early-- on the book I've been sent just so that I know that I would feel personally very anxious if I thought the course was further ahead and I was getting behind. That's me.

Some people sometimes get behind and then catch up or talk to their tutor and work out how to catch up. But for me, it was mainly about planning my time and trying to anticipate when I'd be really busy or when I had a personal commitment or something so I could manage my studies around that. That was the biggest hurdle for me, I think.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And I think that's a really interesting point. Because right at the start, you said about you as a manager organising tutorials in specific places. Now, some students might look at those and go, I've organised my time around my different commitments, but the tutorials aren't at the right time for me. You mentioned about them being recorded. I think, in terms of tutorials and making the most of your tutor, some students may not be able to attend tutorials.

What would you encourage them to do in terms of how to communicate with their tutor to get the most out of things, Chris?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: I would say that the majority of our tutorials are online, and there is always a recorded version of that, to my knowledge. So if you can't make a tutorial, it's really nice for your tutor and also nice for you in your rapport if you just email them and say, my apologies, I'm working or I have to put the kids to bed or I've got-- whatever-- you don't even have to say why, but just, unavoidably, I can't make your tutorial, but am going to watch the recording. And I really encourage people to watch the recordings.

And then, after that tutorial, if there's something you need to ask your tutor or you want to ask your tutor, reach out to them.

The other thing I would say-- and again, not every module does this, but a lot of modules do-- often, what you get in a live tutorial is supported by forums. These are these digital message boards. Your tutor may often post the slides, the PowerPoint slides, or a worksheet of problems that they might be going to work through in the tutorial on a forum thread. Sometimes tutorials are run by other tutors also tutoring the module, and the tutors share out the tutorials between them.

You may hear cluster forum referred to in that because we put tutors into clusters. So I would also encourage people to interact with forums because you'll find often a tutor will say, hi, I'm giving a tutorial tomorrow on this. Here are my slides. Or here's a worksheet to have a look at. Please pop any questions here after the tutorial, as well.

So the forums are often a place to go to ask questions, as well, of other tutors and of other students to get help and also to see what's going on. So they really do support what goes on in the live tutorials and with those recordings.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah. And I think the key thing in the middle of what you said there is about asking questions. That is such an important thing. Karen talked about it earlier, saying that she asked questions. She asked for things in different ways. Sometimes, with the best will in the world, when we're delivering information, we might not be delivering it in a way that goes in here for you. So what goes in here for me might be different from what goes in there for Chris or might go in for Karen or for Jane.

So we can't always promise we can do things in a completely different way for you, but do communicate with your tutor. So for those of you who don't have an allocated tutor yet-- so Access and Open, I know some of those modules are being allocated at the end of the week-- because remember, most October start modules don't start until this weekend or next weekend-- so you're not missing anything. Don't worry. You can still do things even if you haven't got your tutor. But think about those questions that you want to ask your tutor.

Now, I might come to Jane for this one. So Jane, because you talk to your students regularly, do you encourage them to make like a list of questions to ask you? Is that something that you find some of your students do?

JANE HARRISON: It sounds like a really good idea. I must confess, I've never encouraged them to do that because I never thought of it until you just said it. But some of them do and some of them don't. We'll just have a conversation, really.

I'm sorry, I'm having headset trouble so it might slide over my face any moment. Not to worry. We will plough on.

But something that just jumped into my mind when you were talking to Chris-- and I'm sorry to skew off completely to one side or the other-- that is that the same applies for me when it comes to feedback from assignments. Because one of the ways that we interact with you and you interact with us is through the assignments.

Obviously, you write your assignment. It goes in to your tutor. Your tutor will provide feedback and feedforward-- I don't know whether that's still a buzzword, but I hear it bandied around quite a lot-- that's that guidance, really, those pointers that help you develop your skills in the future.

But don't be afraid to ask your tutor questions about the feedback that you're getting or the feedforward. If you don't understand, ask your tutor. You can have a conversation about that.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah. Because we actually quite like you asking us questions, don't we, even if we don't want these massive long list? But the reason I mentioned it to Jane is because we share a module we both tutor on. And some students actually say to that-- actually, yeah-- some students say they build a little bit of a question.

So I want to come to Heidi now because you've got a number of questions, potentially, or other comments that people have got. Heidi, what else has been going on?

HEIDI: Yeah, some great other comments. So Kelsey has given some advice. If your module requires you to memorise things, I found making my notes not only gets me thinking for what I may be asked in a test, but also saves time making flashcards. Kelsey did this for her A-levels, and achieved high grades.

Anne has put a really nice supportive comment in there for everyone. Remember that everyone is in the same boat as you. No one is any better than you. Everybody is different. But just because you may only be studying one module at a time and others are studying multiple, they may just have more time than you.

And I think that's a really nice comment to make and just reminding everyone. Sometimes it's easy to look around and we see people, and they seem to be superhuman and they're juggling 1,000 things, and we think, oh, well, they're managing to do it, why is it that I'm struggling? But we are all so different and all of our circumstances are so unique.

Sally, I just want to very quickly respond to your question. You've asked how you can private message somebody that you've seen at a Student Hub Live event. Now, we always say to our guests, please, don't share any personal information in the chat at all. If you would like to connect with each other, you can go across-- I'm going to ask one of my colleagues to put the link-- across to the OU Students Association forum. So hopefully one of them is putting that link in the chat at the moment.

You can go across to the forums. And that's the kind of place that you can share information and you can keep in touch with people.

In terms of questions, then, Isabella-- so Sebastian has just asked, what modules do Isabella and Chris teach on? And you just picked up there that you and Jane co-teach on a module, as well. So it'd great to know what Jane teaches, too.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Yeah. So Jane and I are both on the STEM Access module, Y33. Chris tutors on something in EEES, but I can't remember what. Chris, what did you tutor on?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: My full-time job is as a staff tutor, so as a University academic. But I also have a small tutoring job with the University. I tutor SXE390, which is the Environmental Science Research Project, the final year of the final degree.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Not the EEE in there?

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Yeah, EEE is Environment Earth and Ecosystem Sciences.

ISABELLA HENMAN: And I always say EEES because, you know what, I can never get the full term. It's the same with all these three-letter acronyms that we have within the University. I'm like, oh, three different things.

CHRISTOPHER HUTTON: Millions of them.

ISABELLA HENMAN: Thank you. Yes. So there's a number of different modules that we tutor. So hopefully we've given you some ideas. Sorry that everything has been rather haywire today.

Well, Heidi I know has been doing a fantastic job of covering whilst Storm Agnes is being mean. I need to not mention Agnes' name. Because every time I mention Agnes, she comes and batters me and causes problems again.

But I just wanted to finish with everybody and say thank you to my guests. So thank you to Chris, Jane, and Karen today. And thank you, Heidi, for covering while things were going wrong.

There is a feedback link in the chat. We do welcome your feedback. And once again, I apologise for the technical issues I've been having. But you know what. As I said, this shows that life happens. There is this reality. We're studying at a distance university. Some of you have got physical books, but you all have online modules. And it sort of goes to show-- it wasn't an intentional thing, but I always say to people, make sure you have contingency time and contingency measures.

So my contingency measure was to try and get my phone to connect and give me a hotspot. But that was also causing problems because clearly the signal for that was also having problems. But think about these things practically. So think about all those things that, when you want to do your best job, ask your tutor questions. Obviously, your tutor can't necessarily solve all the technical issues for you. But you can go to tutorials-- online tutorials. There's lots of information.

For those of you who didn't see our broadcast last week, Being a Great OU Learner, Zoe gave some excellent advice about how to make the most of tutorials and gave some practical information about the differences of where you're looking between StudentHome and your module website. There's lots of information there. But we just want to encourage you to do your best job, communicate with your tutor, think about what you want. It's your learning journey. But we want to help you. We're here at the University to try and help you do your best possible job.

And now, I think that's everything from me. So have a lovely rest of your day.

[MUSIC PLAYING]