

KAREN FOLEY (Tutor): Good afternoon, and welcome to the Student Hub Live. This is the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, and Language Studies, and this is our freshers event.

My name is Karen Foley, and I'm really excited to be here because, well, this is my school that I'm involved with at The Open University. And when I'm not doing this, I'm a lecturer at The Open University. And I do all sorts of things, but the thing I love most is spending time with students here at the Student Hub Live, which is The Open University's live, online interactive platform to facilitate academic community.

Now we do lots of these events for students. This is our freshers event specifically for the Faculty. But for those of you who are brand new to The Open University, we also have a generic event on the 28th of September. And we've got stacks of workshops. One's on tonight. But on module start day also, we'll be showing you around the virtual learning environment. I'm giving you the essential information that new students need to know about.

So do make sure you visit the Student Hub Live website and find out about ways in which we can support you. And also, you might like to subscribe to our mailing list so that you can be the first to know about the events that we run throughout the whole academic year to support you and your studies.

Now this is a live, online interactive event. It's great to see so many of you out there today, making friends, talking about which modules you're on, telling us how you're feeling. And we want you to be able to talk about all of those things. But it is a super busy chat room, so if you'd like to ignore the chat, you can just watch the show. You can chill out and make a cup of tea. You can come back. This is all being recorded, and the video part of this show will be available later for you to watch on catch up.

So it's your choice, really, how you spend the time. You might want to spend this opportunity to talk to other people, share advice, share your study tips, talk about your study buddies, animals. My dog, here, is being very well-behaved at the moment but might not be later. And you might like to talk about your specific aspirations, et cetera. So please feel free to make the most of that. Just don't share any personal information in that chat, please.

We've got a brilliant programme lined up for you today. And on the hot desk, to support me in this, right now, is Kieran McCartney. And Kieran, can you tell the viewers at home about the lovely pen button and the different interfaces that they might want to use for the chat?

KIERAN MCCARTNEY: Yeah, absolutely. Guys, you'll see here on your left-hand side of your screen, you've got some widgets. And you can use that to participate in the different polls and let us know how you're feeling. And then, obviously, too, do use the chat and the widget and the pin buttons as well to show us where you are in the UK, or even further afield, if that's available. And yeah, let us know how you're doing, write in the answers.

KAREN FOLEY: That's brilliant, Kieran. And how is everybody doing out there?

KIERAN MCCARTNEY: They're doing really well, Karen. We've got Moira Davidson, who's from South West Scotland. And she's studying A111 this year. And also, too, we've also got Kate Ruding, who's from South Africa, so an international student. We've got Laura Golden from Essex.

Everyone's doing really well. Angela Bell is studying K118 and first year, so she's ready to dive in. And we also have a master's student in applied linguistics, Donna Harvey, who's on EE8817.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Well, that's fantastic. We've also got our colleague Eric in the chat, who's part of the Faculty. And our Faculty colleagues will drop in. And we've also got some Student Hub Live ambassadors, I see. Tarla is in the chat as well, so lots of people sharing advice and information. It's a great opportunity to meet others.

If the chat's moving too fast, there's a little pin button on the top right-hand side of the screen. You can just hold that. It looks like a little pin, like you get those little bubbles on Google Maps. You could just hold that, and then you can scroll up and down if you would like to.

So packed programme, we're here till 5:30. As I said, drop in and out. First, we're going to welcome you to the Faculty officially. And to do that, I'm joined by Fary Cachelin, Verity Saunders, and Chris Kubiak.

Now Fary is the Executive Dean at WELS, and she manages the Faculty and represents WELS, the Wellbeing, Education, Languages, and Sport at the University executive level. Welcome. How are you today, Fary?

FARY CACHELIN (Executive Dean): I'm great today. Thank you. And I'm really excited to be here. I really, really appreciate these opportunities to just be able to communicate with our students. So it's the highlight of the week for me, for sure.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, brilliant. Well, I know they're really excited to meet you also. Verity, you're an OU student, and you're starting your final module of your degree this academic year. And you're the Faculty Association Representative in WELS. How are you today?

VERITY SAUNDERS (OU Students Association WELS Faculty Association Representative): I'm all right. Thank you. [CHUCKLES]

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah? Aw, good. It is a bit nerve-racking being here. Sometimes I think the students are all nervous at home, and they don't realise that actually for us, this can be a bit tricky also. But it's wonderful that you've joined us today. Thank you for coming.

Chris, you've been working with me developing the programme, and you're the Associate Head of School. And you have a strategic responsibility for developing and enhancing the school's learning and teaching strategy. And you've also developed modules in health and social care, youth justice, mental health, and practise-based learning. Welcome today.

CHRIS KUBIAK (Associate Head of School (Learning, Teaching and Innovation): Hi, Karen. It's good to be here.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, good. Now we've asked people at home to fill in our widgets, as Kieran said. So we've got some word clouds there. We'd like to know what you're most excited about. And we're going to show that in a minute.

But first, we thought that to welcome everybody, we'd challenge our panel today to bring an object that reminded them about WELS, so something that sort of embodied the Faculty. So

Fary, I'm going to start with you. What object have you selected? And what can you tell us in terms of how it represents the faculty?

FARY CACHELIN: Yeah, that was a really good challenge, Karen, and I had to think about it for a while. But I brought this Thai teak wood representation of Buddha. And I bought this when I was in Myanmar a few times ago, and it was my first trip to that really lovely part of the world.

And I'll tell you why this reminds me of WELS. And the more I thought about it, the more I thought, wow, this really does represent WELS. First of all, so it's Buddha, and I think it represents all the three schools in WELS and the different disciplines in WELS really well, because it represents another culture, different part of the world, other languages. So that's our School of Languages and Applied Linguistics.

Buddha makes me think of the sense of well-being, of health, of caring for others. So that's our School of Health, Wellbeing, and Social care. And then Buddha was a teacher. It's about expanding knowledge and understanding, and that's what we do in our School of Education, Children, Youth, and Sport.

Like Buddha, WELS is about seeking knowledge, understanding, and promoting wellbeing. WELS is about the interconnection of different disciplines that may seem very different, but they're connected by this global seam of helping others in development, about training professionals like our students to help others. For example, we're a UK leader in apprenticeship opportunities, if you didn't know that.

Like Buddha-- I thought about it-- WELS is about enlightenment. So what we're really trying to do is help our students shift their focus to their career goals, to help our students decide what they want to contribute to society, and what they want to do, and what they want to be. And basically, WELS, I think, like Buddha-- maybe you've seen it enough, I don't know--

[LAUGHTER]

It's sort of heavy. I'm getting tired.

[LAUGHTER]

But yeah, in WELS, it's all about educating and supporting our students to succeed in their careers. And their careers are careers that are to help society at a global level, through health, education, cultural competence. So I think we really represent The OU mission of social justice. And I think, really, we're a lot like Buddha.

KAREN FOLEY: That's wonderful, a great example. And I guess one of the key things here is that it's not just about the teaching. It's about the application and seeking to address and assist in real world issues.

FARY CACHELIN: Yeah, absolutely. Most of our programmes in WELS are exactly that. So it's about learning, and it's about the theoretical stuff, but it's also about the applied part and the hands-on part, and about how to take that knowledge to help others, so absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Well, thank you. That's a great example. Verity, which object have you chosen to bring to remind us about WELS?

VERITY SAUNDERS: I've brought in a diary. I've brought this in because time is so important to have as an OU student because your time is precious. You're using your precious time to be a student, so you've got to manage that the best you can. Otherwise, you'll end up not being able to do everything, because there's only so many hours in a day. You just don't want to end up doing a TMA, which is a Tutor Marked Assignment, at the very last minute because that is literally one thing you will only do once. And then you will learn from that.

[CHUCKLES]

StudentHome will have what you need to study each week. And I found that quite well, because it sets out what you need to do. And week one will have what you need to do that week, and so on. And I found if I use that and block out my time, I can manage to do everything quite well. You've just got to make sure you also block out time for your family and your friends. Make sure you ask for help when you need it, really. Yeah. [CHUCKLES]

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. How do you use your own diary, then, Verity? It sounds like it symbolises things. But also, I love hearing the way that you're blocking out chunks of time and really trying to focus on specific tasks. How does that help you? Any strategies you can share for people, because I think time management is an issue that's common to so many of us.

VERITY SAUNDERS: Yeah, I've found it, as I've gone on for my degree, I've found little things such as using the Outlook Calendar to block out 10:00 till 3:00. This is when I'm going to study, for example. And then, I don't know, 5:00 till 6:00 is dinner.

[CHUCKLES]

KAREN FOLEY: So it's planning out a balance of those sorts of real tasks. And also factoring in that you do need to live in the midst of study, so making sure that you have realistic times to relax and spend with your friends and family.

VERITY SAUNDERS: Yeah. That is something very important. [CHUCKLES]

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, it is. Because if you're not happy, if you aren't in the right sort of WELS space, it can be very difficult to think clearly, can't it?

VERITY SAUNDERS: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, brilliant. Chris, let's talk about your object that you've brought.

CHRIS KUBIAK: So I have this. It's a Matryoshka doll. I picked it up in a market in the Czech Republic about 20 years ago. And it sits on my desk, and I fiddle with it throughout my working day.

And it's a lot like study, actually. It actually captures the essence of study because you know how these things work. You think that you've got one look at it. You open up, and you've got something else inside. So in the same way, it's like looking into a topic. So if I say to a

student, what does it take to deliver a really caring service, say, as a teacher or as a health and social care worker? We look at this thing that we know, that we think we understand, and we start to peel back the layers. So a student might say to us, well, I know how you offer a really caring service. Some people are just born to care. We should only give those people a job in care.

So we think, OK, well, let's look a bit deeper. We open up the layers a little bit more, and they say, well, OK, well, are you sure that care can't be taught? Surely, we can teach people things so they can be competent carers. We can teach people to offer emotional labour. We can teach them to do the right things. So we open up the layers, and we look even deeper. And we say, well, there must be more to it.

There's a whole branch of philosophy around what's called an ethic of care. So we open it up even more, and we start to think about the ethic of care, which is really the basis of care is paying attention, rolling your sleeves up and mucking in, but also noticing how care affects other people. So basically, study is digging in, looking deeper, widening our understanding. And that's what we'll be doing this afternoon as well.

KAREN FOLEY: That's wonderful. Thank you, Chris. Now I wonder if I could come back to you, Verity, and talk about what are some of the things that keep you going as a student. So you've mentioned that you're towards the end of your journey. So you've obviously come a long way so far already. How have you kept motivated?

VERITY SAUNDERS: Well, I've come so far since starting in 2017. There's a few things that have kept me going. I joined the social community, which there's online meetups, Facebook groups, student forums, and subject forums. Also in the Student Association website, these things are advertised on there, so there's Community Drop-In every so often. I think it's on a Thursday.

Yeah, there's OU Support as well, so you've got your student support team and also the peer support at the Student Association as well. Also, friends and family have supported me throughout my journey as well, because even though they don't know necessarily what it's like to be an OU student, they've seen me be an OU student, so they know, kind of, how to help sometimes.

KAREN FOLEY: And the wonderful thing about The Open University is so many people have some experience of being an OU student. It's very often that you're on the train or something, and someone's got a book or someone knows someone who's completed a qualification. And it sounds as if people, in a variety of ways, have been very important to you, Verity.

VERITY SAUNDERS: Yeah, they have.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, and they do help and keep you going.

VERITY SAUNDERS: I've made friends for life. [CHUCKLES]

KAREN FOLEY: You have. I bet.

VERITY SAUNDERS: I have made friends for life.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, I did when I studied at The Open University some, I think, 25 years ago, my other degree that I did. And my best friend, still, I'm in contact with from The OU. So it's amazing who you can meet along the way. It's a really lovely space.

We've asked people at home how they're feeling, and what they're most excited about, because Fary, I'd like you to reflect on this some if we can close on some points after I've managed to speak to Chris about the programme so far. So let's take a look and see what people are most excited about here. And the key thing that's come up is learning, learning new things, adding to knowledge, watching movies, new friendships, meeting tutors, meeting people, new challenges, stretching your brain, being a student, new perspectives, improving. Biscuits, yes, biscuits are important, nice little incentives there, new challenges, and placement.

So Fary, I'm going to ask you in a second to think about some of those things to draw the session to a close, if we could. But before that, Chris, you've worked really hard on putting this programme together with us for students. I wonder if you can give us some highlights of what to expect this afternoon, and perhaps tell us what you're looking forward to in particular.

CHRIS KUBIAK: So I was reflecting on the word cloud that you've just put up, and was thinking about some of the things that cut across there that also relate to the programme. So today, we'll be kicking off by looking at children and young people's wellbeing. We know that adults' wellbeing is really important, and your wellbeing as a student is important. And we'll be asking ourselves whether children and young people's wellbeing is different from adults' wellbeing.

We'll then be moving into a double bill on professionalism. So we know that most of our students are working already. But we know that because they are working already, it's worth asking, well, what's the impact of studying at University? So as you grow in your knowledge and understanding, does your professionalism change? So we'll break that one down.

We also know that we're going to expand the understanding of professionalism as well to talk about, well, is professionalism just about how you act in the workplace? Or is professionalism also about your social media presence? So what is digital professionalism, either as a working person in the workplace, but also as a student?

And then we'll be looking at learning to learn the skills that you need to turbocharge your learning. And then we move into a look at how language learning expands your worldview. So it's a bit like the Matryoshka dolls, really. When you learn a language, you learn more than just vocabulary. You learn how other people view the world. So on the surface, you're just learning words, but underneath all of that, you're learning a culture.

And finally, we have a spotlight on WELS, so we're having a whistle stop tour around the Faculty, looking at the different programmes we offer. So it's not just about helping you understand where you're studying but also helping you think about different options you might have as a student.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, a packed programme, and something for everybody there, I think, and it's great. We've got students at all different levels here. So I'm looking forward to discussing this with colleagues this afternoon. So thank you very much, Chris.

And Fary, could we think about the word cloud that we saw a little bit earlier and close the session off with some comments from you?

FARY CACHELIN: Sure. Yeah, I'm glad to see that learning is at the centre of the word cloud because that's what we're here for. We're here to help our students and support our students to learn. That's our primary goal. And regardless of your circumstances or your background or what's going on in your life, I'd like you to know that you're not alone in this learning journey. We're here to help you succeed. That's our goal is to help you learn, and so please stay connected. Please reach out anytime you need any kind of support, and enjoy the day. And welcome again to The OU, really excited to have you here.

KAREN FOLEY: Aw, that's absolutely wonderful. I can't think we can ask for a better welcome, so thank you all very much for joining us today-- Fary, Verity, and Chris.

We're now going to have a video break and hear from Charlotte Bailey, who is actually a WELS student. She's studying Education, Childhood, and Youth Studies. And she's going to tell us about how she now has a full-time job as an international anti-bullying speaker. So I'll be back after this video.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

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