[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Good morning, and welcome to Student Hub Live. Oh, I'm so glad you found us. And I'm sorry, our Live button went AWOL this morning. So welcome to the show.

> I know there are heaps of new people here today, and my name is Karen Foley. I'm a lecturer at the Open University. And one of my favourite jobs is doing Student Hub Live, and I'm really excited today to be here and to talk with everybody about first assessments. So I've been looking in the chat, and when all of you heaped into the room, you were all talking about some of the stuff you were studying and how you're getting on. And during this live event, we're going to have a lot of fun talking to each other, which is one of the main things that we like doing at Student Hub Live.

> Now, what we do during these events is, we aim to facilitate academic community and offer space for students to get together while learning some things. And today, as I said before, we're going to be really focusing on first assessments, what to look out for, how to sort of nail those first things, and then also how to learn as you progress in your studies. So I've got some great guests lined up today, but I'm going to introduce HJ, who is on our hot desk. He with Kirsten are going to be collating all of your comments and doing various things and talking about our task at hand, which is to draw an Easter bunny.

So I've got some Easter bunnies here for inspiration. They kind of look like this. And we've already had some entries, but we'd like you to scribble some down. We're going to be marking them throughout today's programme. HJ, how are you? You're looking very Easter-y.

HJ:

I know. I'm so excited. I think winter's finally over, we're going into spring, and there's lots of chocolate about. So what's there to complain about? But it's going really well in the chat.

Like you said, there's so many different things that we're studying. Tammy's doing law. Eliza's doing mechanical engineering. Rifma is doing adult nursing. Zoe's doing social works.

It is fantastic that everyone's coming in and introducing themselves. But like always, anything goes in the chat. Your thoughts, comments, questions for our guests. And if you've got a top tip from doing your assignments, I'd love to hear it as well, and do share it in the chat.

But yeah, we're looking forward to getting started today. And I've had a few rabbit submissions from my own family, but unfortunately, they sent them in late. So they won't be marked today.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah. Well, you can still mark them, HJ. It's just that they won't be in for a chance to win a fabulous prize. We've had this amazing Student Hub Live merchandise in, actually. And so the people who came first in our competition -- the first three are going to win some of our fabulous Student Hub Live merchandise. So we'll be sending those out, plus we'll be sending some pens and Post-It notes to everybody else who sent us an entry beforehand.

But don't worry if you haven't. It's all just a bit of fun, because we thought, what sort of assessment task can we do and mark in a very short space of time around this time of year? And we did think that drawing an Easter bunny would be something simple to do. So grab a pen and paper and draw one, and we'll be marking them towards the end of the show with Lynne. Right. I'm going to introduce our first guest, but before I do that, HJ, could you just give us an indication of how to pin the chat and also show people how they can email and subscribe to the mailing list?

HJ:

Yeah, of course. So like everyone may have seen the chat went so quickly this morning when everyone came in, and if, like me, it goes a bit too quickly for you, in the top right-hand side, there's a little pin button, which means it doesn't force you to scroll through. You can read it at your own pleasure, which is great.

And if you want to send something in to us, or if we missed something on the chat because it's so busy, just email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk. And of course, on our website as well, we've got our mailing list as well. So if you sign up to that, you'll be the first to know about all the upcoming events and all the different things that are going on with us.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you so much, HJ. Well, let me introduce you at home to our first guest. I have Tyrrell Golding, who is a senior lecturer in education.

> Now, Tyrrell's done lots and lots of things in her time at the Open University, but she's a module chair, which means that she oversees the whole module. And as part of that role, she's in charge of assessment for those modules. So I'm going to talk to her a little bit about the ways that module teams design some of these things and think about what we're trying to do, really. Because I think that once students sort of get to grips with some of these things, it's a lot easier to understand the role of assessment a little bit more holistically. Tyrrell, how are you today?

TYRRELL

I'm very well, thank you. How are you?

GOLDING:

KAREN FOLEY: I'm all right. I was expecting it to be sunny, and I'm told the sun is coming tomorrow. But you look very snug in your lovely, warm hoodie there.

TYRRELL GOLDING: I've got the heater on down by my feet as well, yeah. I was told lots of sunshine. But yeah, at least it's not raining.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. Well, it's raining here, but it's going to be sunny tomorrow, so I'm hanging out for that. So, Tyrrell, thanks for joining us. I wonder if you could give our students a little bit of an idea about how modules design assessments within the qualification, and also the role that the specific pieces of assessment have within the overall big picture.

TYRRELL GOLDING: Thanks. Yeah. I think the first thing I would say to all the students is, the assessment guide for your module is your best friend, and probably you should spend more time looking at it, reading it, getting to know it than you probably think that you're going to give to it at this stage. Really, that should give you a sense of the whole module and how it will work and how each TMA usually will build on previous TMAs, or how they relate to the subject that you've been studying. But particularly when students come into a new module, TMA01 tends to be quite low in terms of the percentage of contribution to the module. And that's really because it's the first time your tutor will have the opportunity to kind of see how you're engaging with the subject materials.

Particularly at level 1, it might be the first academic writing you've written for quite some time. And so it creates what I like to think of as a discussion that you'll be having with your tutor through your TMAs. So you'll submit your TMA. They'll give you really extensive feedback-- and I think Ola's going to be talking about your engagement and relationship with your tutor later. And then reading that feedback really sort of deeply, if you like, because that will be giving you feed forward in how you can improve your mark in your next TMA.

So it doesn't matter whether you're an OU student or a student at other universities I've worked at. Students quite often-- and I can be terrible at this myself-- they look at the mark and then go, phew, I've passed. I'll read the feedback later. And actually, the feedback is going to be the key element that helps you improve on each TMA that you submit towards your module. I think-- sorry, Karen.

KAREN FOLEY: No, no. I was going to say, go on. Go on.

TYRRELL GOLDING:

So there tends to be a weighting in your TMAs, but each one is really important. Each one will be supporting you to develop a skill or be able to evidence your understanding of key ideas, which will prepare you better to do that final assessment. I think, to reassure students, level 1 is really, really important, and it's a really safe space for you to learn your academic voice and learn to write as appropriate to your academic subject. But those module marks don't contribute at undergraduate level to your final degree outcome. Now, that's reassuring, but please don't use that as a reason to not submit something.

It's really important that you try and submit every TMA, all your EMAs, if you have them in your module, because the mark will start to show you where you are and how confident you're getting. It'll also help you to think about what skills and knowledge you'll need to develop moving into level 2, as well. So it's really important to engage with study and give it your best shot and work hard. And I think sometimes we can get really caught up on loving a subject, and the assessments-- sometimes I think the assessment is something that we think about sort of secondarily, particularly hearing that we've got some social work students and nursing students. You'll be balancing those with your placements, as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Because I think so often, as you say, we focus on the content and what it is that we're trying to look at doing. And sometimes it's really easy to neglect the skills that maybe we're being asked to develop. But within that module design, you've sort of got the content there, but also you're asking students to do specific things. And you're doing that because you know that later on they're going to be using those things over and over again within different aspects of that whole qualification. So those skills are really important, too, aren't they, Tyrrell?

TYRRELL **GOLDING:**

They are. So you might be being asked what you think is a bit sort of randomly to do a Google search, for example, on-- for me it would be policy around children and young people. But actually, the skill there you're being asked to demonstrate or to build is a research skill that, at level 3, you'll be absolutely relying on. And when we ask you to look for policy, for example, we're trying to support you to build that practitioner's skill of ensuring that you know what government agendas are and those kind of things. So it's as important when you look at your TMAs or your EMA, if you have them, or your iCMAs, that you look at the words being used.

And I love Post-It notes. I love colour-coding things. So I highlight those words. So you might be asked to describe-- which is one of those key words-- young people's policy. So that gives you the two things-- the thing you're being asked to do, the description, and the subject that the team want you to cover. And it's all in there. And I think really looking at the question, really reading the question is really, really important. And you'll find that your tutorials will talk about what you're being asked to do in TMAs. And if you're not clear, I'd suggest posting on the module forum or your tutor group forum because you can bet your bottom dollar that if you're not clear, there's going to be somebody in your group that isn't clear either. And they will be really grateful to you.

I have a mantra in all my face-to-face classes or online. The only stupid question is the question you don't ask. And I'm really happy to be the stupid person asking the stupid question for everybody, because I know that if I'm not clear, there will be somebody else that isn't. And even if there isn't, at the end of asking the question, I will then be clear.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. Absolutely. The other really important thing I wanted to end on, Tyrrell, is something, actually, that Eliza-- who is in the chat today-- was talking to me about the other day, which is this notion of how we can get so hung up on failure, and we can sort of become, sometimes, so terrified of getting a bad mark. Or maybe things aren't in our favour at home, or whatever, and we can't put in as much work as we would like to for our assignment. And you said something really, really amazing. I wonder if you could share about the difference between people who keep going and those who don't.

TYRRELL GOLDING:

Yeah. So I now have my doctorate. I've been studying for forever. I failed one of my modules first time-- at least one-- at my undergraduate degree. I had to work full-time to put myself through face-to-face.

I was a sort of traditional student then, so I was under 21-- and a face-to-face university. And then I did a postgraduate master's course-- signed up for a master's course, had to pull out of my dissertation module because I got made redundant. And the course wasn't working for me for a range of different reasons. When I first started my doctorate, I got so much feedback on my initial submission that I just felt humiliated. I really wanted to go and just drive home, hide under the duvet with my dog, and kind of quit.

And for various different reasons, which we haven't got time to go into today, I ended up having to go to a meeting that was student focused, so I had to be there. And it wasn't chaired by me, and it went really badly. But the chair just coped really well and stood up and just took it, and I thought, if they can get over a bad meeting, I can get over some bad feedback.

Do I want my doctorate or not? Do I think my research is important or not? Because there are going to be setbacks.

There are modules that you will study or TMAs that you do that just don't sing to you, and they just don't fill your soul with joy. They're a trudge. They're difficult. You know, it's like hitting the wall with runners.

Clearly, I'm not a runner, but I hear it's a thing. [INAUDIBLE] days, but having your eye on the prize. So the only successful learner is the learner that doesn't give up, because we all have those embarrassing moments. We all have those failure points. They are actually what teach us.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm. Hmm. They really are. And I look back through some of those times that I've had where I've just wanted to lie on the floor with the dogs, and you're right, Tyrrell. They do teach you something. At that moment, they're so hard, but when I look back at my other degrees and various things, I don't remember what I got, but I certainly remember crying about some of those things that were really important at the time.

And as you say, it's just that keeping going. So thank you so much for joining us, and for sharing. I think that that's going to resonate with a lot of people at home. So, yeah. That's all--

TYRRELL So good luck, everyone, in your studies. We really want you to do as well as you can. And have a lovely rest of

GOLDING: the session. I'll be watching online.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you so much, Tyrrell. That's wonderful. HJ, how is everybody else doing back at home?

HJ: Well, we're doing really well. I am slightly jealous, as around Southampton and Bristol it seems to be very sunny.

So hopefully Terry can send some of the sun from Bristol down to Wales.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

HJ: We've got lots of great tips as well in the chats for using feedback well. So Eliza keeps something to file, to

quickly refer back. Jennifer creates a SWOT analysis for feedback, as well. So looking at the strengths,

weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which is fantastic. And Paula's got a great tip as well, if you're starting out or looking to start in October-- is starting a open learning course, because there's lots of course on English

learning skills and study skills as well. They're really useful for you to get set up with.

So there's so many great tips. And we started talking about our bunnies, as well. You may see behind me that my family's had a good attempt at it. Unfortunately, I'm not that artistic, so this is my quick attempt. So I'm going to

see how I do--

KAREN FOLEY: Aww.

HJ: --how I do.

KAREN FOLEY: Very good, very good.

HJ: So that's my bunny there. Thank you. I'll see--

KAREN FOLEY: I've been busy.

HJ: --how I do later on.

BOTH: [LAUGHING]

KAREN FOLEY: You may be able to eat your Easter bunny in the background.

HJ: Ah, but, well, fingers crossed.

BOTH: [LAUGHING]

HJ: But some people are asking about sending in the bunnies. We did have lots of people send in their fantastic

bunnies, which we'll look at later. But if, like me, you want to quickly join in and join in the task and see what's

coming up, then you can always do that.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. That would be lovely. We do, actually-- in our Adobe Connect workshops, we do lots of workshops at Student Hub Live, and we like collecting lots of things. Mainly, though, we like-- well, I like cat and dog pictures, and Isabella likes pictures of cakes. So we sort of compromise on the two and get people to send us in these things, which we show at the beginning of our sessions. So if you've done a wonderful bunny, do send it to the Student Hub Live email box, and we'll have a special slide for our Easter bunnies to celebrate at our next event.

> So you can see that email on the screen. Just ping us your picture, and we will put it in our next Adobe Connect workshop. Great. OK. So it's all going very well at home, I think.

> Let me introduce you to our next guest now, who is an associate lecturer or tutor. Ola is joining us today. And I wanted to talk to him about the things that people commonly misunderstand or get wrong. Ola, how are you today, and what's the weather like where you are?

OLA FADOJU: I'm fine. Weather, not-- it's OK. It's OK, sunny-ish. I live in Luton, so kind of east England.

So when people say it's sunny, I kind of, mm. But it's OK. It's enough to go out for a walk.

KAREN FOLEY: Good, good. Well, that's lovely. Well, thank you for joining us today.

I wanted to talk about some of the common misconceptions that students have. You've been teaching for a long period of time, so you must have seen it all. What are the things that, in particular, very new students often maybe get a little bit sidelined with?

OLA FADOJU:

I think it goes back to what Tyrrell was saying earlier. It's about trying to understand the guestion. That is really the key thing. So when you do get your first TMA, please do look at the key word. So example-- you might have key words at level 1.

You most likely will have key words such as "analyse" or maybe "explain" or "describe," "identify," "outline," "reflective." Underline that key word first. So what are they asking me to do? So have they said, please identify five common mistakes a student makes? So you know that "identify" means I need to point them out.

If they say describe, then I need to give a bit more detail. So I know the thing, what it is, and then explain with a bit more. Now, going back to what Tyrrell said again, and kind of building on what she said, always ask. Don't sit in silo. Do not sit in silence.

The key thing with us being distance learning is that you do actually have an opportunity to ask questions beyond the classroom. So you can be in a tutorial and think, well, actually, I'm not going to be the one to ask a stupid question. I'm going to be a bit shy. OK, fine. But I can ask-- I can email tutor later, or I could put the question on the TGF.

And that's what you need to do. So always clarify from the tutor, what did that actually mean? How can I explain that in a bit more detail? And all tutors at the OU, I'm saying this as a general point of view-- will give you that extra information.

They'll come back to you saying, well, this is what it means, that's what it means. They might have to give you a phone call, chat to you over the line, and at least you'd start to get that clarification. Because at level 1, the first thing is not to think that, oh, god If I get it all wrong or if I don't ask these questions-- no. Don't be worried.

We are all here to learn. Even I myself as an associate lecturer, I'm still learning from students. And I'm here to be-- we're all here to be very absolutely supportive. So please ask and ask for clarification. We are here to support you at every given time.

KAREN FOLEY: Ola, I was talking to some students the other day, and they were saying, I got the feedback, and I realised that I thought that they were asking a question that was a lot more complicated. I didn't realise that it was that simple. So very often, I think, we can meet a question and think, oh, gosh, this is very interesting. I might write a little bit more about it.

> Or we can maybe think, well, that's far too simple and easy. They don't really want me to do that. What can you tell us about that the student notes and also the corresponding marking notes that sort of mirror that, in terms of the expectations the students could look out for?

OLA FADOJU:

Yeah, adding to what Tyrrell said earlier. Every module will have an assessment guide. Please access that assessment guide every time you're about to write a TMA. It's really important you do that. That's the first thing.

The next thing is always look at the guidance notes for the TMA. After every TMA, on your online, you will see-when you click Next, it will say TMA Guidance Notes. And please read through the guidance notes. If you're not clear, again, ask a tutor. Those guidance notes tell you specifically what you need to write.

And, you know, what Karen is saying is true. Sometimes you're thinking, that's a bit too easy. Of course it can never be asking me just to write a 200-- yes, that's what it is. Don't overexaggerate yourselves. Don't overexert yourself.

If they said write five things, write the five things. Don't write anything beyond it, because you don't get extra marks for writing something additional to what you're not being asked to do. So keep clear by looking at the guidance notes, follow those guidance notes, and if at any time you're thinking, not too sure, again, refer back either to the assessment guide or the tutorial that you attended.

Refer back to recording. Most lecturers give out the guidance notes in terms of the tutorial notes, the slide deck, that moment that you can go back to access that. Or, last given chance, email the tutor or contact the tutor just to clarify that situation.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Thank you, Ola. Now can you tell us about the tutor marking notes and how you actually go about marking assignments? So two things there, really, I guess. One is about the criteria that you're looking for, which, as we said before, is sort of closely related to those student notes. And the other thing is in terms of the feedback that you give the students and how they might sort of meet that feedback.

OLA FADOJU:

OK. So as Karen said, tutors have a tutor guide for all the assignments we mark, all-- they're called TMAs. And we have to follow those guided notes. We can't go off tangent. We can't say, well, I thought the answer is this.

No. They're specifically given a set of criteria you need to mark with. And then you give the feedback based on what you have marked. So example, in terms of content, you may have been asked to describe a theory or critique a theory or a concept. We will then use our professional and academic judgement to see whether you have fitted within the criteria that we've been given to mark to.

And then we'll give you feedback. We might say, for example, if you had explained that key point with a bit more depth, you could have got extra marks. Or we could say, that's really an excellent critique. I like the way how you opened up the concept and you used an example from your academic practise or your social practise or your coaching practise, whichever academic practise you are. And you've been able to link the practise you have to theory.

And once you've done that, again, you get the marks for it. So we then give you that feedback. So the question here that students need to be very aware of is that tutor feedback comes in two forms. You will have your marks TMA and your PT3 feedback.

There is a web link that I think we'll be able to show you later on, which shows you how to collect your TMA feedback. And in that place, in that link on that website, when you click on Your TMA Feedback, it gives you two choices. When you click on it, it's a ZIP file, and on that ZIP file you can open up the tutor marked TMA and open up the PT3 feedback. Now, the tutor-marked TMA is your TMA marked with tutor comments, most likely in the right-hand side in the comments. Some tutors put the comments within your TMA itself.

OK, that's it. There you go. That's it. That's it. And what will happen is when you read on the right-hand side of your feedback, you will see the tutor giving you feedback regarding what you have written.

They might highlight a particular key point and say, yes, that was really great, but you could have added a bit more depth. Or they might say, oh, you didn't reference this correctly, but here's the correct way to reference, and also here's access to the referencing website so you can have more detailed guidance. So you look at those comments, and then you click on the PT3. The PT3 will summarise those key comments but also give you key actions on what you need to improve on.

Now, what tends to happen with the level 1 students-- and it's what Tyrrell said. But also focusing on that, they think about marks. But actually, sometimes marks-- it doesn't give you the real picture of what's happened. So don't worry about the marks.

Look at the feedback. What have I done well? What haven't I done well? What can I improve on? And then you'd need that to feed forward into your next TMA.

And at the same time, even if the marks are low, again, look at the feedback. So have I-- oh, I've done that well. Oh, that key skill of academic referencing is great, I was able to critique well.

What I wasn't able to do was, maybe, write my essay in the format that I should have. But OK, I'll look at that. So it's just about looking at those pointers and using it to feed forward into the next TMA.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm. No, absolutely, Ola. And I think we've heard some really good advice from students before about ways in which they sort of capture that feedback so that they can really start working with it next time. But just to end Ola, I just wondered if we could talk a little bit about some of those-- the relationship between marks and things, because we were talking the other day, sort of saying students might say, I got marked down because I haven't formatted my TMA right. Or I got marked down because of my referencing.

And sometimes tutors will comment on things that can be really, really superfluous. Referencing is not really superfluous, but it may not have any marks associated with it. You may have, like, five comments about references and think, oh gosh, this is a big issue. But one comment about maybe not answering the question could be seen as one out of five things. So could you just give students a sense of how they might steer that proportion in terms of collating that feedback with that student note to see the big things to work on?

OLA FADOJU:

Yeah, yeah. It's a fine art. And this is my advice to students. Most of the time, tutors will tell you categorically that you lost marks for this specific comment that they have made. That's one thing you need to look for.

Key things that you need to be-- you will not lose marks for not using the right format of a TMA. So for example, you do not have a header, you don't have a footer, you won't lose marks for that. You will not lose marks for referencing for the first year. You will be given what we call formative feedback on how to improve your referencing.

And you won't lose any marks. It'll be supportive through that key thing. Where you lose marks in any TMA is about the academic content. Have you answered the question?

So if they said identify, and you've gone off and you've actually done a really elaborate self-reflection of yourself, well, you haven't answered the question. And that's why you would lose marks. Content. Always think about academic content. So example-- you may have four theories that you might need to tackle as a social worker within a particular TMA. And the question could have been, can you please describe and then critique one of the following theories?

So you've got to focus and say, OK, I need to explain the four theories, but only critique one of them. OK? And it's that bit that you need. So when you're looking at the comments from the tutor, think about content -- academic content.

If the academic content is where I've got what you will call-- not superfluous, but many comments about me not meeting that criteria-- because there's also the key assessment criteria-- then you'd know, OK, that's where I've lost marks. Where they've talked about referencing or maybe spelling mistakes or typo errors, you don't lose points for that. That's more about just building up those skills for you to move forward onto.

KAREN FOLEY: Ola, when I was a student, I'd always used to say, oh, but can I do two? And I'd go, no! You can't! You've got to critique one thing. Ola, they're too irrelevant!

> And then it took me ages. And only eventually do I see they wanted depth! They wanted me to go into a lot of detail about things, and that's why they said one. But yeah, I always used to-- it used to raise my hackles when I was told to only critique one.

But as you say, that's because that's the objective of the task. So that's been really solid advice. Thank you so much, Ola.

OLA FADOJU: You're welcome.

KAREN FOLEY: Maybe you can stay online and chat to some students--

OLA FADOJU: I will.

KAREN FOLEY: --as well.

OLA FADOJU: I will.

KAREN FOLEY: If you could log back into--

OLA FADOJU: I will.

KAREN FOLEY: [INAUDIBLE], then that would be--

OLA FADOJU: OK.

KAREN FOLEY: --perfect. So that's absolutely brilliant. So the main point is that you can lose marks in the TMA if you don't

answer the guestion that is set. And I think that's possibly one of the hardest lessons we all have to learn.

HJ, how is everybody doing at home? And how are you bearing up with your props? Mine are looking very

delicious right now.

BOTH: [LAUGHING]

HJ: I know. It's terrible. I should have had a bigger breakfast. It's too tempting to have all the chocolate behind me.

> But we're doing really well in the chat. I know a lot of us are very encouraged by what Ola's saying. Chris did say, I wish I'd had those words of yours months ago. And Joanna is finding it very interesting as well, which is fantastic. I know we did have some worries about our grammar and spelling and things like that.

> So it's great to get that assurance from Ola that although we may get tips from our tutors, it's not the main focus of the marking. It's what we're writing rather than how we're writing it, to put it one way. But Kirsten's helped me in the chat, as well.

There's loads of great links and resources for some of these tips, as well, that Kirsten's sharing with us on brushing up on some of our skills, as well. And if there's any tips or resources that you think would help others, share them in the chat, as well. We do love to see those there.

KAREN FOLEY: That would be absolutely perfect, yes. And thank you, Kirsten. It's always lovely to have our colleagues from our student support team who are so super helpful. So if there's ever anything that you're stuck on, normally, it's your tutor who is your academic point of contact. But also the student support team are great to be able to talk about loads and loads of other things there, as well.

> And at the end of the show, I'm going to show you some resources from the Help Centre, which is another go-to place. They've got some really good things like process and content-wise, activities, all sorts of PDFs and activities that you can do around submitting TMAs. So I'll show you some of my favourites that are relevant here. But there is lots and lots of support available to you as OU students.

So let's talk to an OU student next. We have Tala joining us all the way from far away in Kuwait. And Tala is a first-year health sciences student.

So, Tala, how are you today? And what's the weather like over there? I bet you have more sun than we do.

[AUDIO OUT]

Oh, I think we're muted, Tala. Let's see if we can get your sound.

TALA AL-

Is it working?

SHAFEE:

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, that's perfect. How are you?

TALA AL-

OK, thank you. I'm fine. Thank you. How are you?

SHAFEE:

KAREN FOLEY: I'm good, thank you. I'm good. Is the weather nice there?

TALA AL-

Yeah. It's very sunny. Very, very sunny.

SHAFEE:

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, we're very, very jealous, Tala. So tell us, then, about your experiences. You've just done two level 1 modules that you did together. And so you've done lots and lots of assessment during that time. I wonder if you could tell us how you experienced some of your first pieces of assignments?

TALA AL-SHAFEE:

I was very nervous, because it was the first piece of assignment that I would have done that was judged in the sense that it was going to be marked, and I was going to get feedback to improve on. But I was also really excited, because it was my first step towards my qualification, and it really made me feel like I was a real student at a real university.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm. Absolutely. And I think those assessments are, as you say, part of the thing that you perform-- you behave-as a student when you're doing those, and getting those marks back is very important. So can you remember, then, when you were first submitting assignments, what were things that worried you about the whole process?

TALA AL-SHAFEE:

I was really worried about feedback, because I couldn't tell-- I wasn't really sure whether it was personal criticism. Now, I know it's not. Now I know that it's given to help me improve. But I was really worried about it back then.

And when I did get back my first assignment, thankfully, it went well. But I was really nervous that this was the best grade that I would ever get as a student and, thankfully, that was also wrong. I did maintain good grades, but there was a lot of pressure throughout the year to maintain those good grades, so I think-- I'm pretty sure that I'm not alone feeling that way.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, I've had so many students say that, and in fact, very often, because often the first piece of assessment is very lightweight-- you know, a few hundred words. It's very easy to do well, because it's less complicated. So very often students will see a fluctuation of grades as things get more complex and different tasks are assessed.

> How did you deal with that notion? I know so many students see it as a trajectory. I'm getting better and that sort of equates to an increase in grades over time. How did you make sense of it?

TALA AL-

SHAFEE:

I think it's a learning process. I think as you go through your first year, you get used to the idea of, just because I don't do well on every single TMA doesn't mean I'm not doing well overall. And I think you learn to work with the feedback to maintain the grades that you want to start getting. And if that's not working, then you start to reach out to your tutor and create that relationship that does help you improve your grades.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm. OK, brilliant. Now, I've asked you for some advice to give to other students based on your own experience, and I wonder if you could first tell us a little bit about how you've worked with feedback-- so the feedback that Ola was talking about earlier?

TALA AL-SHAFEE:

Yeah. So at the beginning, I was really reluctant to apply feedback, particularly for one skill that I had done my whole life, and it worked well the way I was doing it my whole life. But it kept coming up over and over again in my feedback. And I didn't really understand how to apply it, so I reached out to my tutor, and they were really helpful.

So I think, read through the feedback. Try to understand where you can apply it. And if that doesn't work, then reach out to your tutor, because they can help.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And we've been talking before about how level 1 is the sort of playground to make mistakes and to really learn. How did you deal with some of those-- not mistakes, but learning experiences?

TALA AL-SHAFEE:

OK. When I first started, like any other student, I wanted to do really well. And despite being told that level 1 doesn't count towards my classification -- sorry -- I was still really nervous about every assignment that I submit. But I think throughout the year, you just learn to appreciate your mistakes more, because I realised I was learning more from the mistakes than the marks that I was getting, if that makes sense.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm-hmm-hmm.

[DOGS BARKING]

Sorry. That's at the door. The dogs are barking. They're all-- They're all--

TALA AL-

Aww.

SHAFEE:

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

I'll post time of day now that I've come back. Here we are, Coco. There we are. You can have the bunny.

TALA AL-

Aww.

SHAFEE:

KAREN FOLEY: She likes the bunny. It's the top tip. Now, the other thing is that you do a lot on social media, and you're often posting some of these WhatsApp groups, and I've seen those at the OU, which really help, for students are often really keen to join groups, and I know it's a space where students will share various things. What's your advice about assessment and social media?

TALA AL-SHAFEE:

I think social media is great. It's a great source of support, or it can be. I know some people don't like to use it. But when it comes to assignments, I would always suggest that if you have any questions, please go to your tutors or use your module forms, because there are so many risks associated with asking questions related to TMAs on social media. And you'll get a lot more accurate advice and guidance if you use your tutors or the module forms.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely. I've heard so often, well, we all agreed in our WhatsApp group that this was the right approach, as everyone's sort of gone on a completely different track. And the final thing I wanted to talk to you about is your expectations, because you seem to view this as a learning experience, and as you say, you're learning more from some of the things that maybe don't go well as opposed to the things that do. What would you say to other people who may find that a bit hard?

TALA AL-

I would say the main thing to remember is that perfection and high grades are never expected. This is an SHAFEE: expectation and pressure we put on ourselves, so please don't be too hard on yourself. And you're here to learn, so just be patient with yourself, apply the feedback, speak to tutors or student support if you need them. And yeah, enjoy the journey. I think that's one thing that we forget to do.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely, Tala. Well, thank you very much, and you've been writing some fab tips as well that are great to see being shared. And thank you for joining us today. That's been brilliant.

TALA AL-

Thank you for having me.

SHAFEE:

KAREN FOLEY: OK. No, it's a pleasure. Always a pleasure. Lovely. And it's nice to see some of the people who are in our chat.

I know there are lots of regulars there today and lots of new people, as well. But we do like to all get together and share our experiences, so it's always very lovely to see people on camera also. HI, how is everyone at home doing?

HJ:

We're doing really well, as always. Very positive and supportive in the chat. I know there's lots of people in the chat that are nervous for their first assignments, but there are so many people are saying that you can do it, and we're all a very supportive community. But Kirstie says that my tutor's very, very helpful, and I think all my tutors have been absolutely amazing, as well.

So like Tala said, building a relationship with your tutor is probably one of the keys to success. And if you're not sure about anything, your tutor will be more than happy to help you, so don't be nervous about speaking to them. But yes, we got Ola in the chat as well, which is absolutely fantastic. And Kirsten's posting lots of top tips and resources as well, which is amazing.

So we're having a great time in the chat today. It is going really fast. So just a reminder of that pen button in the top right. So if, like me, you struggle with reading things very quickly, put that pin button and it stops it scrolling through. And if unfortunately we do miss anything just because there's so much going on, just email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk, and we'd love to get back in touch with you and help you.

KAREN FOLEY: Aww, thank you, HJ. That's wonderful. Good. Well, has everyone drawn their bunnies at home?

HJ: [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: Or we got sidetracked--

HJ: We have--

KAREN FOLEY: --from the task at hand.

HJ: We always get sidetracked, and we loved hearing from Tala and it's always great to hear from a fellow student,

knowing that we're all in the same boat and we all feel the same way. But I'm looking forward to seeing how my bunny stands up. So if everyone else in the chat wants to have a quick go, get your buddies at the ready. And

we'll see how we do together.

KAREN FOLEY: Aww, I've lost mine. I've given it to Coco, who's probably going to dismantle it very soon. She's a monkey like

that. She really is.

BOTH: [LAUGHING]

KAREN FOLEY: Up, there they go, back on the chair where they belong. Great. Well, let's get Lynne here, who has the marking

criteria for our bunny and is going to explain to us the very reason for all of this madness. So Lynne, welcome.

And how are you, and what's the weather like where you are? You're looking very lovely and bright today.

LYNNE Well, I am fine, thank you very much, Karen. How are you?

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: I'm good. I'm good.

LYNNE You haven't started on that bunny behind you yet.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: No. This one. No. I haven't, but--

LYNNE Oh, the one to the side of you yet.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: --this one [INAUDIBLE]. No, no, I haven't. But I've been looking at it, thinking, oh, it's sort of maybe melting a little

bit. But now I've got all this chocolate, Lynne.

It's just ridiculous. I put so much chocolate here. There's not even enough space to display at all. But it's really,

really bad time of day to have all of this here, for me. [LAUGHS]

LYNNE Karen, do you not realise there's been a lockdown on for the last year, so we're all mentally trying to get out

WATSON: looking beautiful and sylphlike, so chocolate is banned in my house at the moment. Totally banned. No

chocolate.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

LYNNENo chocolate. But it's lovely and sunny here, as you can see. The sun's shining in, so I had to adapt to my room

WATSON: because the sun was shining right in front of me and I couldn't see anything. So I've had to pull the blinds a bit.

KAREN FOLEY: Good. It's not good for the lighting, is it? But lovely for the mental state of mind.

LYNNE Best we can do.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Now, Lynne, you saw our trailer, so let's think about our task. And I know that everyone's going to be keen to

start thinking about the bunnies that we've got. And I'd love to be able to show some of the ones that we've also

had sent in. So firstly, do you want to explain the method behind the madness of our task?

LYNNE

WATSON:

Well, I had to come up with the criteria for marking these bunnies that came in. So a bit like Ola was saying about, all the TMAs come in, and they are assessed against the criteria, I had to come up with the criteria for marking the bunnies, which was not at all easy. So it was a really hard task to come up with that criteria, because I'm a real softy when it comes to marking. So yeah, I came up with this criteria and I thought, I've got to stick to it, even though they were brilliant, all of them.

KAREN FOLEY: They were amazing, actually. So, Lynne, talk us through some of this criteria, then, and we can see how people at home may be able to grade their own bunnies. And then we're going to show people some of our excellent specimens that we've had here.

LYNNE

WATSON:

Well, the first thing is, it had to be a drawing, because the task said a drawing of a bunny. So for it to be successful, it had to be a drawing. Now, if people wanted to take pictures or everything else, was that a drawing? So first of all, had to be a drawing.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant.

LYNNE

So that was my first criteria.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: OK, so that's an important thing.

LYNNE Yup.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: And something that-- we had an excellent entry that was not a drawing, so that unfortunately meant that it didn't meet that criteria very well, even though it was very excellent.

LYNNE

It was a beautiful-- one was a beautiful photo of a bunny. It was amazing. But it wasn't a drawing. It was a photo. So unfortunately, that one beautiful bunny-- look.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Aww.

LYNNE

I mean, how could you not just fall for that fluffy thing.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: I know.

LYNNE

Lovely little whiskers and lovely-- but was it a drawing? Did it meet what Ola was saying? Did it meet what the process of the task was? And the process was drawing.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. So that very simple word in the instructions has been really important, in terms of criteria. What was the

next piece of criteria?

LYNNE

WATSON:

Well, it had to be the content. The drawing needed to draw on the requirements outlined and include a bunny and a critical selection of Easter things, because it was an Easter bunny, so it needed to contain something like chocolate, or an Easter egg. Or chocolate. Or an Easter egg. As you can see, I'm a bit fixated by chocolate.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. So it had to be adorned by Easter-like things.

LYNNE

It did indeed. Yes. So that was the content side of it. So did it have that content?

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant.

LYNNE

And then, of course, we had to go on to the depth of treatment. So it had to have an awareness of what an Easter

WATSON: bunny was. And also, if possible, some innovative ideas.

So some different ideas. So we had bunnies with-- would you believe-- masks, face coverings, and hand

sanitizers. Now, really forward-thinking bunnies there.

KAREN FOLEY: Very, very topical. Excellent. And take us through the last two, Lynne, so that we can have a look and see what

people have sent us.

LYNNE

WATSON:

So the last one had to be a structure. It had to be clear and organised, so there had to be some thinking behind

what they were doing. And there was one fabulous bunny that was-- it included the egg and the bunny in one go,

almost. So that was, I thought, really good, as it was very clear. And lastly, the drawing had to be the author's

own work.

And I have a feeling there may have been some submitted that used an iPad drawing-- not that I've ever done

that, but the iPad drawing. So that wasn't really the author's own work. They did use some IT. So I wanted to see

it with their own hand. So that was my last criteria.

KAREN FOLEY: Perfect. Now, shall we-- well, HJ, what do people at home make of this criteria? How are the bunnies stacking up,

and how are your family doing, HI, in terms of the marking guides that Lynne has set?

[AUDIO OUT]

HJ, you're on mute. Unmute yourself.

HJ: Oh, dear.

KAREN FOLEY: What have I told you about muting yourself when you're on air?

BOTH: [LAUGHING]

HJ: But I think Natasha, like myself, has forgotten that it's supposed to be an Easter bunny, so myself and Natasha

have forgot to draw any type of chocolate or Easter eggs.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

HJ: But what's really cool is the picture of the bunny. Lisa actually tells us that it's a digital drawing, and I am

> absolutely shocked at how amazing it is, so-- it did pass for a photo, so we have to take our hats off to Lisa for that. But yeah, we are trying to mark our bunnies, so I think [LAUGHS] we may have to be kind to ourselves,

because we didn't know what we needed to do, exactly. It was just a very short brief. [LAUGHS]

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS] Well, yes, and I think this is the key point Lynne was wanting to make with our brief, is that very often, we just see the task and go straight in. And of course it's very difficult to do things when you don't really understand what the marker's looking for, what they value as important, is it, Lynne?

LYNNE WATSON: That's very true. That's why that criteria that Ola was talking about is so important, because if you're doing an assignment, you really need to know what's being asked of you rather than just going off and doing your own thing. So yeah.

So it's like the photo of the bunny. Was that a drawing? It was a beautiful bunny, but was it a drawing? No.

So not always the best one-- the ones I saw, not necessarily the best ones won. It was the ones that were showing critical thinking and oh, that will be innovative in their approach. Like the hand sanitizer, right?

KAREN FOLEY: Mm, brilliant.

LYNNE I particularly fell for that.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Well, let's have a look then, I think, Lynne, and see what people did give us. And don't forget that the winners will be getting a nice pack of all of our lovely Student Hub Live merchandise. And the people who run up will get some very tiny Post-It notes. I don't know why, but we've gone for very, very small Post-It notes, which are different. And some nice pens.

> So, Lynne, let's take a look and see from the slides what submissions we've had in advance from our lovely students. And you might want to say some very brief comments about some of them. So we're going to start with this one here.

LYNNE WATSON: Oh, I did love this one. Looking at the date on the painting, it looks like it may be a much-loved pet. And I really like this one.

But what I had to say here was, yes, it was a bunny, but where was the connection to Easter there? Where was that egg or that chocolate? But it was-- I have to say, I've a real soft spot for that bunny.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm. Very, very cute. And let's see our next one. Aww. This is lovely.

LYNNE WATSON: Yes, this was one that I think may have been done on-- possibly on some sort of technology, some-- now, of course somebody may be doing that because they can't draw, because they may have a disability, which means they can't draw. So again, it was a very good bunny, and I love the bow. But again, it missed that Easter connection, that chocolate or the egg or something. But great bunny, and great skills if that was done on an iPad. I think that was very, very impressive.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And it brings to mind the whole thing about, what is drawing nowadays? Because we often associate it as something you do with your hand. But very often we're using technologies as different ways of drawing. So again, a very interesting point there. Right, let's move on to the next one. Aww.

LYNNE **WATSON:** Oh, this was really nice. You can see this one's got the masks hanging from the line above, so beautifully turnedout bunny. And maybe some connection there, because of the attire, to the Easter bunny. But the masks were good, but again, just missing that bit about Easter.

But what a bunny. Great. I thought it was really good. I have to say I really like that one. And the masks were good.

KAREN FOLEY: Very beautiful. Don't we have some very talented people? I don't know what everyone was worried about with

their assignments. [LAUGHS]

LYNNE Oh, I've got no idea, because, Karen, I tried to do one. And my Easter bunny-- as you know, I love dogs-- and my

WATSON: Easter bunny looked much more like a dog with long ears. So I have to say I really take my hat off to all these

students. Really good. Their essays will be fantastic.

KAREN FOLEY: They will, won't they? And I've got little Coco here, who I managed to get in her Easter bunny things. I don't think

I'll get them on her today. But-- Yeah. She's just spied the bunny, which I've now got back-- ha-ha-- off me.

LYNNE Ah.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS] Right.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

LYNNE --again.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, she doesn't like them. I mean, I thought they were so dinky and cute. But I'll see if I can get them on her a

bit later. But she's just not keen, which is fair enough, I suppose. Right. Let's see our next entry.

LYNNE So this was a lovely entry. And look, a big basket full of Easter eggs there. I was slightly worried about the wasp

WATSON: or the bee flying around the eggs, thinking, oh, is that going to get it before I could get it? But a very good effort.

I really like this one.

A nice, simple drawing. Did all the things that it was meant to do. Nice, fluffy tail there, great whiskers. So a

really good drawing. I like that one.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent. And the next one.

LYNNE Aww, another one. This is another one, really well-turned-out bunny. Look at that big basket of eggs, except I'm

WATSON: not sure if those eggs are chocolate.

They're a bit small. They might be proper eggs there. But again, beautifully turned-out bunny.

KAREN FOLEY: Aww.

LYNNE What can I say about that?

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Very lovely.

LYNNE Lovely.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: And we've got a couple more.

LYNNE Now, I really like this one. And this is a very clever bunny, because this is the one that has got the degree in

WATSON: eggs-ology, I think it is. A BA Honours in eggs-ology, so lovely, great, big basket of eggs.

Mortarboard, as well. Beautifully shaded. I thought this was a really cracker-- this was a lovely one.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely.

LYNNE So it did all of what we asked of it and more because, obviously, it's a very clever bunny.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: It is a very clever bunny. Aww. This one's lovely.

LYNNE And this one's a very clever bunny, too. So this is a graduation. I've seen people walk across the stage in many

WATSON: outfits, and I'm always fascinated by the shoes. But I've never seen a bunny walk across the stage.

If I ever do, then I might wonder what I've had to drink beforehand. But no, this is a very clever bunny, and I love sort of just the whole composition of that one. The basket, the-- they even got their degree in their hands, so

great, great effort, that one was.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. OK.

LYNNE Oh, this is cute.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Aww.

LYNNE This is a really good one. I love this one. I wasn't quite sure if it was a sort of self-portrait, because it did look like

WATSON: a sort of a human face in that bunny, but I didn't care because nice, little paws there.

And this is the one with the hand sanitizer in the rucksack, along with the Easter eggs, so what can you say? That

was a really good effort. That was wonderful.

KAREN FOLEY: Aww, no, that's amazing. And I think we've got one more, do we?

LYNNE And this is one-- look. It combines everything. It's a bunny almost coming out of an egg with little feet at the

WATSON: bottom, very happy. I really like-- very jazzy, too. Typical OU student here, some really sort of-- I love the

drawings on it and the markings on the egg, so yeah, I really like this one.

KAREN FOLEY: It's brilliant.

LYNNE Good bunny.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: So we've had some wonderful entries. And our winners-- would you like to announce our winners?

LYNNE Oh, have I got the winners here? Now, the winners are--

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: I do.

LYNNE --on my piece of paper, yes. Hopefully, I've got it on here on my piece of paper. So I think Justin was number 1,

WATSON: and that was the last one we saw.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

LYNNE And then second place went to Chris. And, ooh, I can't remember-- that one, yes. I really like that one.

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

LYNNE So second went to Chris, and third place went to Lizzie. Which is--

WATSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant.

LYNNE --what you say about that, that clever bunny graduating. So yeah, that's how I did it. But it was a very hard ask.

WATSON: Next time you ask me to do something, please make it easier.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS] We will. We will. But you did very, very well marking that. Some amazing entries. And I think that it just

shows that it's all based on that criteria that we have.

We've had some amazing entries. So Lisa, Stephanie, Beatrice, Christina, Ella, Jennifer, and Jodi, you were all runners up, and you will receive some lovely little bits of merchandise. And Lizzie and Chris and Justin, well done, and you will get slightly more Student Hub Live merchandise. But thank you so much for sending that in and for such amazing artwork. It's been absolutely wonderful.

Just rounding the dogs up here at the moment. And that is all we have time for. So it just leads me to say, thank you very much, Lynne, for that fun activity. And to see, HJ, how everybody is doing as we sign off for the day.

HJ: Well, we're doing really well. I think most of us are in awe about how amazing those bunny drawings were. I have

to say, I don't think mine stacks up against them. But if I'm marking it against my drawing skills, I think I've done

rather well compared to before.

KAREN FOLEY: [LAUGHS]

HJ: But we've had such a whirlwind of an adventure when it comes to assignments and sharing tips, and we're all

very supportive of each other. Do stay in touch and sign up for the newsletter as well, so you can join us on our next events through the website. And like I said, if there's anything that we missed-- because there was so much

brilliant stuff going on-- just email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk.

And I'd like to thank Kirsten as well for all the fantastic links and resources and help that Kirsten's been helping

with us today. And yeah, thank you for everyone's joining. I can't wait till next time.

KAREN FOLEY: Aww, brilliant. Thank you, HJ. Well, we do have lots of other events for you. So check out our calendar. We

advertise them three weeks before each event.

So we have a packed schedule for, like, forever, but do make sure that you subscribe to our newsletter, where you'll find out about some of the important things that we want to share with you, and also what events that we've got coming up in the future. So just look at that from the Student Hub Live website, and make sure you pop your email in that and subscribe to see what we've got going on. We do limit the number of tickets to all of our events, which are all free, so make sure that you do grab yours.

We've got lots of things coming up in terms of critical thinking, essay planning and writing, and a fabulous note-taking workshop, so lots there to keep you inspired. But we also wanted to share some resources with you. I mentioned earlier the Help Centre, which you can access from your student home page. It's a really, really good source of support.

And there's just a couple of resources that I'd like to draw your attention to. The first one is "Preparing Your Assignments." Now, this is a PDF, but it's got really, really useful information in it. It talks a little bit about various techniques of mind mapping, some of which we've covered in our note-taking session. And then there's also-- as we were talking before about the importance of understanding the question.

Some really good advice there. And it details content words and process words, and it also gives you definitions of what's in there. So a really nice thing to have to hand at all times. Also things on introductions and conclusions and paraphrasing, quoting, and referencing. So some really, really good advice here, and also techniques that you can use.

Plus, we've got information on our Student Hub Live website, as well, around submitting TMAs and technical troubleshooting, if you need those, and lots of other things there, as well. So make sure that you get those from the website, or you can do a quick search in the Help Centre. So that's all we've got time for today. A very quick hour, but I really hope that you have enjoyed the event. I hope you've enjoyed connecting with each other, that you're feeling a bit happier and more upbeat, and that we can all learn and go forwards from here.

So if you've got any feedback, please email studenthub@open.ac.uk. And as I say, please do join us at another event very, very soon. But bye for now, and thank you so much for being here.

[MUSIC PLAYING]