

KAREN FOLEY: The Arts Hub was an online interactive event. And you're about to watch a session from that, but I wanted to explain to you how it all worked. You're about to see the video stream of the studio, but our audience participated online through chat and through interactive widgets. And those ideas were fed through into the studio from the social media desk. Of course, because you're watching it on catch up, you won't be able to do those activities, but I do hope you enjoy the discussion that follows.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Hi and welcome back to the Arts Hub. Right. We are in session now where we're going to be talking about solid foundations. And I'm joined by Janet Dickinson. Welcome to the Arts Hub, Janet.

JANET Thank you.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: I know a lot of students are really looking forward to this. Why are you looking forward to it? Could let us know in the chat? Is there anything you'd like covered? Any questions you'd like to ask? We really want this to be quite an interactive session.

But before we do that, I'm going to point out that we are going to show some widgets, if they're not already showing, on the screen. And we'd like those of you know who are in the watch and engage option to select some of those. Now, I know that a lot more of you are in the watch only option. And that's absolutely fine, but it does mean that you can neither see nor participate in any of the chat or widgets or interactive tools that are available to you.

You don't have to be an OU student to be able to access this. And you use your normal student home login, your OUCU, your Open University Computer Username and your password. That's how you get into this. And if you don't have one of those, you can look at the frequently asked questions section on the website. And you just fill in, basically, your name and email address. It's really quick and easy, and you'll get one of those. And then, you can log in.

It really is worth doing in particular, if not now, but for tonight because we have our interactive quiz where team Home are going to probably beat the audience in our Is It, Is It Not, or That

Would Be an Ecumenical Matter Quiz. So I do hope you can join for that.

To watch and engage, you just go back to that website, studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk and select the Watch and Engage button from that. But it's all explained on the frequently asked section of website.

We're going to now start talking about solid foundations. And in addition to you answering those questions on the interactive tools or widgets, we'd really like to know what you've enjoyed and maybe what you didn't enjoy so much about those first level modules, A100 and A105. So if you've been doing those, whether it's now or in the past, we'd really like to know how you experienced those, what you liked, and what you didn't like.

Is there anything that you can tell us? We always really like student feedback. And while we're on that note also, the website has a very short form that we'd really appreciate you filling in to tell us how you've enjoyed this event.

But right now, tell us what you have enjoyed and maybe what you didn't like about this module. So Janet, we're going to be talking about solid foundations and this whole idea that a lot of our students studying the arts will have done two years often, unless they've had a credit transfer, of very interdisciplinary subjects. They've been starting to look at skills in a whole range of disciplines. They really want to get into the nitty gritty.

And they often start arts because they're very passionate about it. How is having a solid foundation, in terms of how these areas are structured-- why is that important? And really, what are your tips for students as a tutor? You're a tutor in history. What's the big deal about all this, and why does it matter so much?

JANET

DICKENSON:

I think two things. I think the first thing is you're coming to university. This is the first time you're doing this kind of stuff. And we all know how to read a history book. We can all be interested in a work of literature or a piece of music. But how do you actually do something with that? How do you analyse it? How do you make sense of it?

And I think that those first two years are basically about training to become an art student, to study at university level. And if you can do that, then so many more possibilities are opened up for you when you're doing something that's in more detail because you just have the skills, the abilities, the things that you need to make the most of what you go on to do.

And the second thing, I think, is actually that as university students, as art students-- I remember this. I loved being an undergraduate because you just got to do new things all the time. And some of them, I hated doing. There are things I could still complain about with some feeling today.

But actually, I can also admit now that if I hadn't been forced to study critical thinking as an undergraduate, I wouldn't be able to think in the way that I now do. Or at least I wouldn't be able to challenge myself to think critically. Because you just need that framework. You need that structure. You need the training, again.

KAREN FOLEY: Now I mean the thing with OU students is a lot of them have had some previous experience, either life experience or you know. They'll often march in and say, I know how to write an essay.

JANET Yeah.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: And then we say, well, fair enough. But maybe we're talking about essays or source analysis or various sorts of aspects in quite a different way. And particular, they're quite different for different disciplines. So whilst somebody may have done an English essay, it would be very different to do a psychology essay. So what would you say to those students who maybe think they've got those skills and, like you say, with hindsight, maybe it's a bit of a different story?

JANET Well, I think in some cases, people really do. I mean, the wonderful thing about teaching adult students or students coming in with life experiences is that they know how to do things that we as academics don't need to teach them. And that, actually, we can use and draw upon. But the thing is we can all improve.

And however much experience you have, getting feedback on how you write or how you put a piece of analysis together is always going to help you do a better job at that. There's always space for improvement. And, also, you might find out along the way that you might do things differently. And that could open up a whole exciting new possibility.

KAREN FOLEY: And actually, that whole idea about learning is really positive. Even though sometimes you can think, I should know how to do that. But actually, developing your skills must be quite rewarding. HJ and Rachel, what are you all talking about? A lot going on.

RACHEL: We've got some feedback on AA100 and A105. Anne said that she loves the variety of the

subject. Oh, let me pin. Let me pin pin. It's all going off. Melody said, I had a great tutor for both the modules. And it was a really nice broad spectrum on different disciplines. Keep going back. Keep going back. Keith said, there's PDF versions of the materials online.

And Olga said, I did AA100 last year and enjoyed this very much. I'm doing A105 this year. I've just done the exam this week. I started to study for English language and literature, but I must say that I'm now quite attracted in equal measure to classical studies and art history. Help!

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, difficult one.

RACHEL: And so some people want to study this module after this as well, didn't they?

HJ: Yes.

RACHEL: We've got Amanda who's starting in October AA100.

HJ: I think that's the great thing about these events is that it gives you little tasters of all these different things you could study with the OU. And a lot of people go, oh, I wouldn't mind studying that. So I think we got a lot more modules, perhaps, to do.

RACHEL: Dip my toe in.

HJ: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: And is there any feedback in terms of things people didn't like? Because actually, whilst it's nice to know things that they did like, it's also really important to see where everyone's at in terms of maybe what they were struggling with.

RACHEL: Karen has just said that she found the music section a little bit of a struggle in the module. And there was another comment earlier about the PDFs, that maybe the PDFs need to be sort of-- the idea something with an index in it or something in the book. I don't know. So other than that, the most important one, I think, is like the music section.

HJ: Yes. But if you want to give us more detailed feedback about the index section, you can email us, studenthub@open.ac.uk. And I'm sure that they'd love have your feedback.

RACHEL: Yes.

HJ: So let us know specifically, perhaps in a bit more detail. That would be useful.

RACHEL: Because it's only little chat box, isn't it?

HJ: Yes.

RACHEL: Need a bigger window.

KAREN FOLEY: Or indeed, anything you can think of. If you thought, gosh, it would be really handy to have x, y, or z, do let us know. Because you never know. You just never know. The arts department, I think we've demonstrated, are incredibly creative. So let us know if something would help you like that that you can suggest. studenthub@open.ac.uk.

So after looking at these things that people maybe don't enjoy doing, what would you say to students who may be thinking, OK, I really, really want to start getting on with things. But I am stuck now in doing maybe A105 the second year. And I really want to actually progress.

How are they going to keep motivated throughout this whilst they're focusing on developing their skills?

JANET DICKENSON: It's an interesting question. Wonderful feedback there on people actually changing their mind about what they might like to study.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah.

JANET DICKENSON: I mean, I wonder if that might be something that people could think about, is to say, well, do you know what? I'm here. I'm doing this degree. I need to do this course. I need to get through it. I'm not maybe loving this particular thing that I'm doing, but what's next? And maybe I'll like that.

Again, it's just opening up possibilities. Why have you come to university? It's not just to do things you already know how to do. It's to say, here's something new, here's something different. And I would hope the motivation, particularly of our students, who are pretty motivated to have signed up in the first place.

And for them, I would hope the challenge of a new subject or just actually getting to grips with something they may be struggling with like music. I would really struggle myself to know how to study music. But it's exciting to think you might acquire a new skill. And where will that go? Where will that take you? You could end up doing a music degree maybe.

KAREN FOLEY: I read this really good post on Facebook actually. And it was about writing. And it was talking about varying sentence lengths and making music with your writing.

JANET Oh, how lovely.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: And it was written in sentences of varying lengths, saying, I might introduce something. I might use a short sentence. Then when I feel I've got someone's attention, I might use a very long sentence. And it was about making music with writing.

And actually, so much of what we've been talking about is whilst you can study something in isolation, there are all these other factors in terms of history, social context, anthropology, sociology, all of these that embed whatever it is we're studying in some sort of context that matters.

JANET No discipline stands on its own.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: No.

JANET There are always going to be overlaps, so there might be something that you can find in what you're studying that you think, oh, well, that actually opens up a new possibility of what I've just been reading about elsewhere or what I might like to go on to do.

DICKENSON:

I love that point about using language as in music. I think learning how to use language to communicate and to express yourself, that's another kind of key skill that we're trying to encourage here. And I think that's great if students are going away with that as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. OK. Lovely. Now, I wanted to talk a little bit about skills training and what students can do. Previously, we've talked about the gap level one and two. And I don't want to duplicate any of that because people can watch that on catch up very soon. But this whole idea of skills training and level one being something that maybe you can scrimp on some of the things because, of course, you're doing a lot of assignments along the way, and a lot of those are relating to content.

You can get through it. Maybe the extent to which your grades are good might vary. But if you are maybe missing out on some of those skills, level two is really quite different. So in terms of

then thinking, OK, this is really-- like you've said-- is my chance to embed my skills, really get to grips with things that I won't be able to do the interesting stuff without. What can people do in terms of getting these skills while they're going through these first two levels?

JANET

DICKENSON:

I think it's a question of stepping back, actually, sometimes from what you're actually doing, stepping back from, I have to write another TMA. I have to get it in. I have to prepare for the exam. And actually thinking critically about what you're doing as a student, what you're doing as a scholar of a particular subject or a particular discipline. And actually saying, OK, what am I doing here? I'm analysing it. Well, what does that mean?

And so I think that's something, actually just reflecting on your own practise. That's one way of kind of honing those skills. Another is just to keep on using them.

KAREN FOLEY:

Yeah. Yeah. No, absolutely. All right. Let's how we're doing on these widgets. I'd like to first look at which level everyone's studying in. And if you're in the watch only box, of course, you won't be able to use these. But we will show you on the screen what everyone else is doing. So let's see which level most of our audience in the chat room are on.

HJ:

We're quite spread. There's not many people level two students, which is surprising. But 30% of people are studying at level one. 15% at level two. 30% at level three. And we've got quite strong show from post graduates, which probably Rachel and myself included, are 24%. But we got a lot people doing the postgraduate music and classical studies courses as well, so a good showing from them.

KAREN FOLEY:

Oh, wow. Excellent. It's really interesting actually because often people forget post graduate. And I'm very glad we put that option in. So welcome to all our post graduate audience also. OK. So quite an interesting spread there in terms of levels of students, which is great.

Let's see about what doing well means for people. Because of course, like you say, there are different ideas and different things to maybe focus or reflect on. So can we have a look at the Wordle and see what words are coming up? And HJ, if you could talk through that.

HJ:

We've got quite a few of them. People are- progressing well, are delighted with where they are. Learning new things. They're- relief. That's probably after you finish the exam. I always get relieved after I finish mine. Learning new skills.

A lot of people are just saying enjoyment. So that's really important to them. As long as they're enjoying it, they feel they're doing well. I think that's certainly important. I think that's very

positive. I do like that, I have to say.

KAREN FOLEY: And how did we do on how everyone thought they did on the last module widget?

HJ: We are quite positive, I think. I think there's some people in the middle. They're not too sure. But I'm sure we can help you out, help your skills improve. But I think the majority of people were very positive and very happy.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, let's hope you're right. Returning on that link to this idea then about reflecting on things, we can think we've done well and sort of use that. What advice would you give to people in terms of how they can reflect? Because we all know we should be doing these things. But of course, it's difficult finding the time or whatever. What key questions do you think should be forefront of people's minds when they are doing a little bit of reflection and perhaps about doing some of these skills-based things and how they can actually both look at the content and say, how is my essay writing really coming along?

**JANET
DICKENSON:** I think, obviously, their tutor's feedback is going to help them. Have a look. And don't just read it quickly and say, OK, that's my mark. I'm going to go on from this. Look at actually what your tutor's broken down and identified as things you've done well and things you've done that you can improve on. Because I think, actually, the former of those is really important. It's not just about reflecting on what you need to improve. It's also reflecting on what you get right.

So tutor feedback, I think, is one thing. Have a look at your course materials. They are pretty open and pretty clear about what the OU is trying to get you to think about. So have a look and see, do I think I've done that. They'll be like a little list at the start of learning outcomes. Have a look and see and think have you met those. Have you got those?

I think other things to do would be simply to keep on asking yourselves when you look at a source, or you read a book, or you look at a piece of art, or you listen to a piece of music, ask yourself, what questions can I ask of this? What can I do with this? And that's another way of kind of honing the skills but also consciously reminding yourselves that this is something that you're doing, that it's not just instinctive, but it's actually deliberate.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Now I wanted to ask you this because you're a tutor. And you're saying, use your tutor's feedback. And I know that a lot of students will focus on the contents. They'll focus on what's correct and what's not correct. And some tutors-- and all tutors are very different, but some tutors will comment a lot on the structure of an essay as well as the contents of an essay. And

some tutors may not.

What do students do who really want to work on some of those skills? Can they ask a tutor? How can they work with their tutor to develop some of those skills? Is it an idea to maybe think, OK, realistically, where is my essay writing at? And what do I need to do to do it better? And can I just maybe do one thing each time? And can you help me with that? How could they go about getting some of that help if they did want to work on something?

JANET

DICKENSON:

I would always say, ask your tutor. That's what we're for. So send them an email and explain what it is you're worried about. And say, OK, well, how can I improve this? You may get a reply back saying, actually, I think it's not too bad what you're doing. You may just get an affirmation that what you're doing is the right kind of approach. In which case, then you've just got to have the confidence to try and take confidence from that and say, I'll do it. I'll keep going.

But yes, ask your tutor, read the feedback carefully, but also just do what all tutors recommend. Finish in enough time that you can put down your piece of work and that you walk away from it. And then, come back and read it yourself. You'll be your own harshest critic always.

Having distance from what you've written and giving yourself the chance to reflect on it, that's actually the moment where you realise sometimes what needs to be changed or what's working well. I think particularly things like structure, that's really hard to get right. But actually, a few days away, and then you come back to it fresh, then sometimes things jump out at you.

KAREN FOLEY:

And what would you say to students who maybe are getting some comments from a tutor? Like they might say, this introduction needs to include your definitions or key terms. Or one thing I'll often write when I'm giving feedback is, it would be really nice for you to end this instruction with an indication of how this essay will end.

And I know that students say, well, why should I tell you that right now? But actually, sometimes people don't understand what we're trying to say in terms of tutor feedback. What should students do then if they don't understand something that's coming up in their feedback? Or they think, yeah, fair enough. I can tell you're wanting me to add all of this, but how am I going to do that when I've got 1,000 limit word count, you know? So what do they do?

JANET

No one said it was easy.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Yes.

JANET

DICKENSON:

But I think on the point about how do you get your introduction right, how do you get your conclusion right, think about your essay as being something you need to frame, that you need to present to an audience, to your reader, to your tutor. But also think about it as something where you've got to let someone into the secret of what you're writing about, that you don't just keep it to yourself and say, well, I'll just write about this subject. You say, actually, do you know what? This is a question. That's my answer to it. I'm going to tell you that. And then, I'm going to explain, and build it, and prove it for the essay. So almost set yourself targets in that way.

How clear am I being? And see if that can help you get things right. I think the other thing you can do sometimes is call in your friends and relatives. Say, could you read this for me? The tutor said this. I don't understand. I think all study is collaborative.

So actually, just struggling on alone, you don't need to do it. You've got your tutor. You've got your fellow students you'll meet at tutorials. And also, you've got people that are emotionally bound to you. You can make them give you feedback.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. And that whole thing about what do you think my tutor might mean by this actually could throw-- that's a brilliant idea. I love it. OK.

We've talked a little bit about skills. I want to talk now about different approaches to things. Because as you've seen throughout the day, all of the various disciplines have different approaches. Some like boxing. Others like bringing in paintings, some fake. Others like doing all sorts of different things, having picnics, et cetera.

JANET

Food is a big one.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Yeah. I think they all like food. But this whole idea about different approaches and doing things differently, why does that add value with some of these level one interdisciplinary modules?

JANET

DICKENSON:

I think it's skills. Again, if you're-- say you're a historian and you're used to looking at texts. And you talk to an art historian. And they say, well, my main source would be visual images. How do you read an image?

I mean, if you ask them, they'll tell you. And you can learn those skills. And then, it might be that you're studying a subject later on at level two, level three, and you come across an image in your research. What do you do with it? Well, now you've got the skills. Now you can use it.

And lots of students talking about music and how much they're enjoying that. Well, music is everywhere. You couldn't say that you were studying history and that music didn't exist in the past societies and cultures that you're studying. So having a way of reading that, and making sense of it, and bringing it in as a source, bringing it as part of what you write about, that is an amazing skill to have.

So I think skills. But I think, also, it's about recognising sometimes where a different discipline does differ from your own so that you can not only sort of say, OK, well, that is something I'm not comfortable with. Or it doesn't particular interest me. And that's what makes me x as opposed to y. That's one thing.

The other thing is you're an art student. And understanding what an art student is and being able to define that, very useful in the pub if people are saying to you, arts isn't important. What's it for? You can just explain to them because you've got the skills and you've got the knowledge, the wide knowledge to say this.

But also, it's part of being an art student to be open to the world and different ways of looking at things or hearing things or seeing things.

KAREN FOLEY: Very dangerous these art students.

JANET Yes.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: We have a session about why are art students dangerous.

JANET Looking forward to that.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I don't know. I don't know.

JANET From behind a cushion.

DICKENSON:

KAREN FOLEY: Mind you, nothing's gone quite as badly as I thought it would today. We've spilt no blood, so that's a positive. HJ and Rachel, what's everyone chatting about while we wrap up the session?

HJ: Well, we're just chatting about skills at the moment.

KAREN FOLEY: OK.

HJ: And I think Karen had a great comment. She was saying how it's just such a great feeling when you're coming up and you're trying to learn a skill and it's such a challenge. But when you finally do it, it's such a great feeling. And then, you can use that, can't you, throughout your studies as well.

RACHEL: And what would you say your top skill is?

HJ: Oh.

RACHEL: Study-related.

HJ: I think, going through my degree, I think going from the textbooks and gaining the skill of being able to bring in outside sources as well that I find. Because there's so many things, especially within the arts, I think, that you can pick up from.

The OU library has fantastic resources. You can go to museums and things like that and have a look and see how you can bring different things into your study. So going from the narrow view of just using your text books. And then my tutor helped me look broader. I think that was a great skill that I picked up.

RACHEL: Well, that kind of fits into what Melody was saying in the chat room, what we covered earlier. And Melody was saying that she undertook an essay writing, free essay writing, on Open Learn. And she said that it really helped her to remember the small details, you know, the small things that we often forget.

And she also said, it's a constant skill that develops as we go. But for English, skills for learning helped me tremendously in an eight-week course.

HJ: That's quite nice actually. I think we'll have to look up that. We've got a list of all these MOOCs that we've got to go through for this.

RACHEL: It is. Yeah.

HJ: Another point on the tutor feedback. We do find that very important. Carol said she definitely finds that an important point.

RACHEL: Yes.

HJ: I think throughout both our studies there have been times where we've learned to use tutor feedback. I think that's very important.

RACHEL: Well, at first, when you get the feedback, you think, oh, no. Someone just- Oh, I won't read it. But the thing is-- we've had this before. A lot of students say, oh, I don't read the feedback because I don't really--ugh. But it is really handy because you can pick up some tips. You can study tips. It's a good direction.

And then, if you have time, to go through your first one that you sent and then just to try and modify and kind of add a few bits and few points in that your tutor mentioned, that can be a good thing to help you build reflective skills. That's what I was looking for.

HJ: I think with tutor feedback, though, it's definitely not a tutor criticising you. It's they're trying to build you up. And that's a very important thing to remember. It's them building you up and getting you to a stage where you can be confident and you picking up these skills as you go. And they're trying to help you and shape that. I think that's very important.

RACHEL: Yeah. Yeah. Definitely.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Thank you. Some brilliant, brilliant tips there. And thank you, Janet, for coming along and talking to us about that. As usual, we never have enough time to cover everything we want to include in a session, but I think we've got through most of it in terms of all of the skills and things that are important in level one, how to maybe reflect on some of those ideas, how to think about the importance of tutor feedback, and how to actually get that and understand it, I suppose, in more sense.

And we've seen from HJ and Rachel how important that is for students. Is there anything else that I've missed that you want to add?

**JANET
DICKENSON:** Not really. I just love that point there about students going out into the world and looking at museums or looking at anything they do in a different way and realising that's what an arts

degree gives you is that capacity. Probably.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Thank you. Well, that leads very nicely, actually, into our next session. We're going to have a video break. And then, the vice chancellor came in a bit earlier and did a talk with John Butcher, Kim Woods, and I about why study the arts. It's a really interesting discussion.

We're then going to play some replays of previous sessions relating to various modules. So if you're still not sure about things, now's your chance to watch that this afternoon. We leave the chat room open so you can chat, but we're going to have a bit of a lunch break because we're very hungry here in the studio.

And we will be back at 6:00 PM tonight to do our quiz. We hope you can come along then. We've got a really, really good session lined up for you this evening all the way through till 9 o'clock tonight. So this is where Saturday night entertainment is at.

And don't forget that you can also give us your feedback. We'd love you just to take 5, 10 minutes just fill in that very quick and easy form. Any ideas, any suggestions, ways of making this better, things you don't like, tell us what those are please on that form from the website.

You can also select the Count Me In button, and we will then email you when other events are coming up. Just these events. So it'd be great to have your details if you like coming to this sort of thing because we are going to be doing a lot more of them.

You can also enter our caption competition. And we'll just take a little look at the picture we're going to be showing you for that caption competition. Gerard. And so we'll have a look at that, and you can send us those at #artshub16 to let us know what you think the caption should be. And then, you might win a 10-pound Amazon voucher if we think it is the best one. And we'll post those out on Monday.

HJ and Rachel, thank you very much for a fantastic AM session. Janet, thank you for coming along. We'll see you a bit later, but keep chatting, keep talking to each other. But we'll be back live at 6:00 PM tonight.

[MUSIC PLAYING]