

KAREN FOLEY: The Arts Hub was an online interactive event. And you are 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 that you enjoy the discussion that follows.

[THEME MUSIC]

KAREN FOLEY: Hi, and welcome back to the Arts Hub. Well, it's been a very eventful day so far. If you're watching in real time, welcome to those people who've joined us recently.

Now, there are two ways to engage with this event. You can use the Watch and Engage in which case you will see a slightly different interface. You'll see the video stream which you can see in the Watch Only option. But you will also see a chat room where we're having a lot of conversation, mainly about food, et cetera, and also some interactive widgets.

Now, in this session we're going to be showing a few of those. So those of you who are in the Watch and Engage room, we're going to be asking you a couple of questions so that we can check up how you're feeling and various other things. So if you could fill those in for us while we go through that session, that would be very useful. You just type in the box and press Enter.

I'll also just mention that if the chat is going on and you need to pin it to see it a little bit more easily, there's a pin, much like a drawing pin, on the chat box. And you can do that, or you could change the interface to make that chat box even bigger.

So the news. Let's just have a brief update on how everything is going. Oh, yes. Um, we do apologise for giving the rhinoceros, uh, lettuce which is apparently not the done thing. So we've stopped that.

Right, I'm joined in the studio by Jeff Horner. Jeff, welcome to this wonderful world we have

here. Now, we're going to be talking about level one to two.

A lot of students here are at level one and level two. But there is this difficult conception about what actually is different.

Now, you're a tutor for the Open University. And I wanted to really sort of get to grips with how some of this gap differs, because of course for art students, they've been doing two-- mainly they will have been doing two-- very interdisciplinary, very broad level one module. So they'll have been learning lots about different things.

So level two isn't, for art students, just a gap in terms of jumping from level one to two, being asked to do slightly different things. But also there's this whole idea that they're starting to specialise and starting to learn about maybe subjects in more detail than they did at level one. Why is this such a big issue then?

JEFF HORNER: I think the big advantage of having done level-- I've been in the OU quite a long time. We went through a period when people could do any course they liked at any time they liked. And people who came in directly at level two quite frequently struggled a lot because they hadn't got used to the way the OU works, hadn't developed study skills, they hadn't got the, sort of, basic terminology of whatever discipline they were doing.

The big advantage for level one students moving to level two is that they've at least built up study skill habits. They've learned some of the basic terminology of, in my case, religious studies or literature or whatever. So that's a big advantage.

On the other hand, there's an awful lot more to do. It's very specialised. There's going to be an awful lot more work. I don't know a lot about A105, but I teach AA100. And you can get away with not doing very much of AA100 really.

KAREN FOLEY: Not if they're your students.

JEFF HORNER: If you think of what you're assessed on on AA100, there are students who've missed probably half of course, because they're not going to be assessed on it. They're not going to have an assignment. It's not coming up in the EMA. You can't do that at level two.

So they're going to have a great deal more work-- expected to work at a greater depth. But the big advantage is they'll have a chance to develop study skills.

KAREN FOLEY: Mm. No, absolutely. Rachel and HJ, I'd like to talk about what students are most looking forward to.

HJ: Oh. Um, this is one of our widgets isn't it? Hang on. If I can find it. Oh, no. Sorry. I'm getting a bit distracted here. There is all this great chat. So it's hard to keep up with everything.

But we have had some questions for this session. But at the moment, we're very interested from our last session looking up pomegranates. So that was good.

Everyone's really interested in food. And there was recommendation that we should probably have an OU food module because that would just be fascinating, especially going from that session.

But we are starting to talk about going from level one to two. And we've had a lot of different experiences with that, haven't we?

RACHEL: What was it like for you going from level one to level two?

HJ: I think it is a bit of a jump, isn't it because they like to give you a soft start with level one. And level two is generally more challenging, I think, because it brings you up to the midway point of your degree, doesn't it, quite fast.

RACHEL: Well, it is. At level one-- cause if you think about it, you've got like a module, like AA100 that covers a lot of the arts, doesn't it? So it's very, kind of, diverse. It's scattered. So it gives you a broad understanding. And then when you go to level two, you start going into more your subject's specific studies. So I think that's kind of like the difference.

So I think there's a lot of excitement going from level one to level two. For me there was because I started to learn more about the subject rather than just the general topic.

HJ: But the good thing about having the more soft start with level one is that you sort of learn how you learn. And you prepare yourself for that jump to level two as well, which is very important.

RACHEL: And tips would be to get organised. That's it.

HJ: That and organised, yes. But we want to know your tips as well. So let us know if you've got any study tips or any tips. Or you want to know about how you found going from level one to two as well. Was a bit of a challenge? Did you feel really proud? Or were you a bit lost? Let us know. We'd love to know.

But we had a specific question about that as well, which I thought was very good. But Cheryl would like to know is there any advice about how to prepare further for a level two module? So she says she has a couple of introductory books about Classics because she is going on to level two Classics but was wondering if anyone had some recommendations.

I think she's taking a break for the summer and starting again in October. Is there anything in particular we'd recommend in the meantime?

JEFF HORNER: I don't know the classics courses. I teach the world religions course at second level. So I don't know the classics course. But I think the biggie, you've probably got a lot of set books-- a lot more reading outside the course modules.

So the big thing to do is if there's a lot of books, get them early, and particularly, I don't know, if you're doing a literary course with some enormous novel in it, read the novel before the course starts. You can do an awful lot of preparation by looking at those sorts of things early.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. No, absolutely. And if you like events like this, do click on the Count Me In button because we're actually going to be having some events to get people geared up and ready for those modules. So back to the website, Count Me In button. And while you're at it, you can also click on the Quick Feedback to let us know what you thought of the event.

So Jeff, this idea then about level one to two, so you're saying students don't necessarily need to do everything at level one. Now a lot of level one is often skills basis, learning how to write essays, learning how to time manage, et cetera.

But students are often very clever and can figure out what they need to do for assessment and get through. And is this why then you're saying that they don't necessarily need to do everything? And my question then would be, well, what are the implications if you've maybe missed some of those key skills that you've skimmed over?

JEFF HORNER: I would never recommend people missing out on stuff at level one, but they do. In the real world, they do. All I'm saying is that you're not going to be able to do that in level two.

KAREN FOLEY: Right

JEFF HORNER: One, there's going to be assessment in my course anyway. There is going to be more assessment on more parts of the course. Two, there's probably going to be an exam, and you

have got no idea what's coming up in the exam.

I think the other thing about assessment is, HJ was saying, level one is a sort of easy introduction, which is obviously right. Also, within AA100 the assignments are built up. You know, you start off with 500 words or something and end up with 2000.

In level two courses I've ever been involved with, you might get a slightly less demanding assignment for the first one. After that, you're right in it. So you need to be prepared for more time, I think.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So I appreciate that you're teaching in one specific discipline, but I'd like to talk more generally about what you'd recommend students do. So they've gone from these, you know, very generic modules to something very subject specific. What are some of the techniques that you would advise your students to do? Things like, I don't know, maybe keeping a glossary of terms? Or what sorts of things would be useful for them in terms of how they actually navigate a more in-depth study of certain subjects?

JEFF HORNER: Glossary of terms is one of the things I put in my notes for today. I think that's really important right from the start. You're going to have all sorts of technical terms, people, all sorts of things that are important. Build that up really early.

I think the other really big one-- you had a session this morning on the library. One of your first sessions was on the use of the library this morning. I think the biggest single thing you can do at level two is get onto the library website early.

I think it's true that every module website will have in the resources bit, to the side of the screen, will have library resources. In my course the A21 site has sources library sources relevant to A217.

You really do need to start using the library. It's a wonderful resource. It's got mountains of stuff-- books, journals, all sorts of stuff.

Religion is my subject. Lots of students go onto the web and Google all sorts of stuff. And you get some very funny stuff on religion.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, yeah, I know. I know.

JEFF HORNER: So use the library resource.

KAREN FOLEY: So in terms of skills then-- so we've talked about resources and ways of doing things. But there is a difference in terms of how we're asking students to think at level two, isn't there? I mean from level one, often it's about describing. Maybe there's a bit of comparing and contrasting.

But in terms of how we're actually getting them to look in-depth at some of this material does start to change, doesn't it? And sometimes students can get a bit of a block on that. And say, well, critical evaluation, that sounds very, very scary. And I'm really not sure how to do that. What would you say to students who may be starting to identify those different skills that may sound a little bit scary?

JEFF HORNER: I think almost any assignment in the arts, the important question isn't what and when. The important questions are why and with what effect. If you can bear that in mind, you're going to be on the right lines.

All assignments are a balance of sort of narrative, analysis, and description. It's the analysis and the description that are the really, really important bits, I think, generally speaking.

KAREN FOLEY: But that balance changes, doesn't it, as you go up the levels. And so the description becomes, yeah, less, I guess, important as you're starting to use more critical evaluation.

Have you got any top tips then for students that you could give them in terms of how to identify, maybe, what they're actually doing in terms of that content? Do you advise students to-- I mean, well, I tell a lot of mine although I'm in a completely different area-- to highlight various certain things that they can see a balance of things. How do you encourage students to recognise maybe when they are describing and when they're evaluating and how to identify the difference in their own work?

JEFF HORNER: That's an interesting question.

KAREN FOLEY: So a lot of students say, oh, I am talking about it. I don't know what you mean. And I say, but you're not talking about it in the right way. You need to be-- I know that you've said that. But it's what does that mean really. And it's getting over that jump that, um, the people that, well then, am I using my own opinion? Whose opinion am I using? And how am I actually working with that? It's quite a difficult--

JEFF HORNER: Yes, it's difficult.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, what do you tell them?

JEFF HORNER: I think two things. One, do a first draft of an es-- Well, can we go that one?

When you start a new block in any molecule, look at the assignment first. That helps in terms of preparation for it as you're going through the block. Your mind will be switched on to stuff that's relevant to the assignment.

When you've done the assignment, write your first draft. Put it away for three days. Come back and read it. And ideally, read it to somebody else because very frequently you think you're being absolutely clear. And in fact, you're not being clear at all.

And if you read it immediately afterwards, it'll be perfectly clear to you because you know exactly what you meant. Come back to it three days later. And preferably, read it to somebody else.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, Nicholas has a question. Can I go to the Social Media desk and see if we can answer it?

HJ: I think just going back on one of your points though. I think one of my tutors had a great analogy about level one modules and then going up to level three is that when you're on the level one modules, you've got these big chunks of main things that you need to get right. It's essay writing, making sure you're drawing from the materials, and they show you how to reference.

And as you progress, it's like salami slices. You're fine-tuning different points to build up your skills. So by the time you get to level three, it's a lot easier.

RACHEL: Well, you don't notice that happening as much. It's quite seamless, isn't it, sometimes? All of a sudden, you're debating arguments that you didn't think of before. You think, oh, wow.

HJ: You get those realisations about, oh, I actually know quite a bit. I didn't realise that.

RACHEL: And Davin also says, well, the higher you go, you tend to become more focused. And you're expected to have developed your study skills. So it's beginning to repeating what you've said. So there kind of is a consensus.

I know we're doing level one to level two, but Debra had asked a question about going between level two and level three. And just to try and understand what the process is there, whether it was difficult, and whether there was more of a step-up between level two and level

three. But Davin sort of said that they're similar.

HJ: Yes. But I think the jump between level one and two, for me, felt like quite a bit of a jump. But between two and three, I think level two prepares you really well. I think it is a bit more challenging going into that jump. But by the time you get to level three--

RACHEL: Of the two levels, you would say level one is more of a challenge? The step-up between level one and level two is more of a challenge than the step-up between level two and three?

HJ: I would say from my experience.

RACHEL: I would say because it's more kind of confidence, isn't it? You become more specific about things. I think for me it was confidence more than anything.

JEFF HORNER: I think level one to level two is the biggest jump in The Open University. Level two to level three, you move into honours level. So the demands in the middle of marking exams for level two course and the thing that the course team leader says every time is remember this is not honours level work. We're not asking honours level work of these people. But as HJ said, by the time you've done the level two, I think you feel much more confident and capable.

KAREN FOLEY: Confidence is such a massive thing, isn't it? And it's mind over matter. I think at the end of the day, it's never going to be as bad as being in a boxing match on the Student Hub Live. So there is that.

But Nicholas wants to know about guidance notes. So at level one you're getting very good guidance notes. Do, I mean very broadly, do those guidance notes then change at level two? In your experience, are you noticing a difference from some of the teaching you're doing on A100 to a second-level religious course?

JEFF HORNER: It's the guidance notes in the assignment book that he's talking--

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, the student notes that they're given for the assignments.

JEFF HORNER: Not on the courses I do. No. I actually wrote the assignments for the course I'm doing this year. We did fairly- in fact, some people thought I wrote too long guidance notes. One of the most important things I always try and do is put in some examples of material they can look at in the library, in the OU library.

KAREN FOLEY: So there's still the guidance notes. But I guess it's just the complexity of that. So you're still

getting the same level of direction in terms of where you might want to look and what sort of skills you might want to use.

JEFF HORNER: What you'll probably have less, I'm not sure, but I think what you'll probably have less of is tutorial support. There is likely to be less tutorials, I think, at level two than level one.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. I mean the other important thing, I think, to bear in mind. We've been looking at some new modules and some very, you know, some modules that have been in presentation for quite a number of years.

But these are all constructed together to form pathway, aren't they? And so whilst this jump from level one to two is a little bit of a jump, I think we need to be honest about that. The degree whole classification has been structured so that from A100 you're looking at things very broadly. A105 is very much about refining and getting those skills to a really good solid state so that you are then able. So this is often being thought through in terms of both the skills and content that people can get.

But the beauty I get of level two is that you're suddenly starting to be able to explore things in a lot more depth that you've probably been really aching to do for the last few years. And I know that's a very exciting thing for students. How would you recommend they curb their enthusiasm in that respect?

JEFF HORNER: I'm not sure I'd want them to curb their enthusiasm. I think, as you say, the big difference is at level one everybody feels at level one, I'm sure, why on earth are they making me do whatever? Philosophy, music, I'm tone deaf, whatever. I've no interest in that whatsoever. Some people end up changing to that subject because it becomes so fascinating.

At level two you do have a chance. You've chosen your discipline. You've got a chance to go to it in some considerable depth.

They have to remember that they're talking 12 to 15 hours a week. You don't end up spending every night doing 12 hours of work because you've suddenly got hooked on it. But that apart, go with it. Get your enthusiasm. That's great.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. But I would chirp in and say but also remember to read those student notes because often while that subject matter becomes so exciting, and you want to rush off, which you should do in terms of your study. But in terms of the assessments, I guess, it's really

bearing in mind that often you're then including those things with some of these critical skills that we're looking at. So it's about being very mindful.

JEFF HORNER: Yeah, that's why I think it's a good idea to look at the assignment before you start that block because if it's not going to come up in the assignment, it might come in the exam. But if it's not coming up in the assignment, you can say that was really interesting, but I'll come back to that when the course is finished. I need to concentrate on what I'm going to be assessed on here.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Jeff, I want to thank you so much. It has been a really useful session. So are you going to come back for the quiz this evening?

JEFF HORNER: So I'm told.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. And what are you most looking forward to about that?

JEFF HORNER: I'm hoping there'll be some wine which manifestly is missing here. So I'm hoping there'll be some wine.

KAREN FOLEY: I don't know. The Classics Department brought this one. It grew on me towards the end, I'll be honest. But, yeah. Well, maybe. We'll see. We'll see. Thank you very much for that session.

Thank you for watching. We're now going to have a short audio break. And then we're going to be back to discuss art and visual culture.

[THEME MUSIC]