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INTERVIEWER: Hi, and welcome back to "Student Connections." Well, this is our last session of today, Saturday, if you're watching in real time. And I am joined with three wonderful people for our final question and answer session.

We know we've got loads of new students out there as well as some of the more experienced ones. More experienced ones, do have a go at answering some of these questions in the chat, too, because we're all a community of learners. All advice is really useful and valuable.

But I'm joined by Georgina, Graham, and Christine. Thank you very much for coming. I'm going to ask you to introduce yourselves and just say briefly what you do. And then this session's all about question and answer for the new students, so I'm hoping we can answer all the questions. Georgina.

**GEORGINA
BLAKELEY:** I'm sure we can. I'm Georgina Blakeley, and I'm chair of DD102, Introducing the Social Sciences Module.

INTERVIEWER: Lovely. We've got lots of students out there doing this one.

**GEORGINA
BLAKELEY:** Excellent.

**GRAHAM
NEILSON:** Hi. My name's Graham. I teach on DD102 and DD103.

INTERVIEWER: Wonderful.

**CHRISTINE
CORCORAN:** My name's Chris Corcoran, and I teach with Graham on DD102.

INTERVIEWER: So you're both associate lecturers, and you're out there with students all day. So you're going to have lots of advice. And Georgina, I guess, from the module perspective as well as teaching, obviously also. Lovely. Let's go to our social media desk. HJ and Rachel, we're going to try to get through lots of questions in this session.

HJ: Yeah. We've got loads coming through, and some from the last session that we couldn't cover because that was quite full. But one quite specific question, which I hope you're all right with, is about dummy TMAs. Some people want to know what they're for and why they're there, and do they have to do them before the course starts?

INTERVIEWER: Good question.

**GEORGINA
BLAKELEY:** OK. Chris?

**CHRISTINE
CORCORAN:** I think dummy TMAs are really good practise. They're just a way for you to get used to using the system and getting a practise about writing online and submitting. That I would say that if you get the opportunity, take it up.

INTERVIEWER: Brilliant. Yeah. Because they're not on all modules, are they? And it's just a way of testing the system so that you don't have that anxiety when you've actually got to submit something.

**CHRISTINE
CORCORAN:** Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Lovely. What else?

HJ: One question was about tutors as well, for the people starting off. And they want to know what they can contact their tutor specifically for, because of course there's lots of different services with the OU. So they're not too sure who to contact about different things, and what specifically tutors are there for.

INTERVIEWER: Lovely. Graham.

**GRAHAM
NEILSON:** Well, you can contact your tutor about anything relating to the course. The module, I should say. It can be a pastoral issue. You might be having an illness. So you might have trouble submitting an essay.

Or it might be something to do with a lack of understanding in a certain area. So your tutor is a very valuable resource to contact in any aspect relating to the module.

**CHRISTINE
CORCORAN:** If I could add to that, that we expect you and hope that you will talk to us and tell us about things. Because if you don't tell us, we don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Wonderful. Georgina, in terms of the pastoral role of tutors as teachers, what can people expect their tutor to do in terms of delivery with the module content?

**GEORGINA
BLAKELEY:** Well, tutors are going to teach you. The clue's in the name, really. So they're going to help you to understand the study materials, to work with the study materials, to find the way around the module website, and to go with any kind of questions about understanding, difficult concepts, things like that.

And, of course, crucially they're there to mark your work. So they're going to be providing feedback on the assignments that you put in. And that's a really, really important relationship to build up because your feedback with the tutor is also about teaching the module as well.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. So they'll run tutorials, do the feedback. Tell me-- both of you use tutors then-- how do you get to know your students? Do like them being in touch with you? How many do you have in a group? What sorts of things are students dealing with on that other side?

**CHRISTINE
CORCORAN:** Well, the numbers that we have in a group varies. But I really like students to keep in touch.

Now, there are lots and lots of different ways they can do it. They can ring us. They can email us. They can go onto the forum. And also importantly, come to the day schools.

**GRAHAM
NEILSON:** Yeah, I think so. I think if I had to offer any advice, I'd say contact your tutor early and often if you have a problem. Because sometimes students are quite reluctant to contact their tutors. And I think it's really important to establish a relationship quite early on and keep a dialogue going, because I think that helps you keep in contact with the module.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Right, HJ. What other questions have we got?

HJ: Well, as we said, there's loads of DD102 students excited and getting ready to go. But when you first start off-- and I think me and Rachel will remember this-- is that there's loads of stuff that you can see on your student homepage. And sometimes it's hard to get through all of it before you start the module, to get a look around.

So people want to know is there anything specific people should look out for, any specific resource that people should click on?

GEORGINA I think for me, the absolute key for students is to use the study planner. It's that central column

BLAKELEY: down the middle of the module web page. And by clicking on any week, that then tells you what you have to do that week. And you can really literally go through it step by step.

And I would also say to students, think of it as a learning journal. We don't expect you to do everything all at once. We don't expect you to understand everything all at once. Otherwise, we'd all be out of a job. So take it step by step, very slowly.

And again, to go back to your tutors. They'll be there to answer all those questions that are in your head. So don't worry if you don't understand things at this point. The module hasn't even started yet, so there's plenty of time to do that.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. Would you two add anything about that side of things? About all this wealth of information there. Do people feel a bit bewildered?

GRAHAM
NEILSON: I think so. I think early on, there's quite a lot to get to grips with. And I think you just have to be patient with yourself. And like Georgina said, just click on the study planner and don't think too far ahead. Just do what you have to do at that moment. And it's all there.

And I think sometimes, particularly early on when students are a bit anxious, they can maybe over-think things. And I think keep it simple and just do what you have to do at that point in time.

INTERVIEWER: But there are a few key things that students have to find, which sometimes can be a bit complicated. Some things like where their TMAs, their tutor marked assignment questions might be. Sometimes the referencing guide. So a lot of stuff is increasingly being put online.

And students, I guess, will begin to navigate their way around that to find those essential bits as well as peripheral bits. And I guess, Christine, I wonder if you could say something about how much additional stuff there is that you don't necessarily have to get through everything on that tutor homepage or all those resources and links. It's about prioritising and thinking about what matters to you at that time.

CHRISTINE
CORCORAN: Well, there is a lot of information. But as you say, you have to prioritise. And I think the key thing is-- we've said it before-- is to go back to the course timetable because that way, that will really help you structure your studies and tell you what to think about and which resources to look at when the time comes.

I think one of the key resources to look at is the assessment because that's always a worry.

And it's when you read the assessment resources and the assessment requirements, that's the time, perhaps, to contact your tutor and say, I'm really concerned about this. But can you help me? And we will always point you in the right direction.

INTERVIEWER: Georgina, I want to ask you this because we were talking earlier. Students were saying they loved lists and we were talking about planning their studies. Being on time and forward thinking. And I was saying, sometimes it doesn't always go that way.

Now, you produce a very helpful guide on DD102, don't you, which is a lovely little audio which I often encourage my students to put on as they're getting settled in their study, just to get them into a nice mindset about what to do that week. But you have very thoughtfully constructed this study planner.

What would you say to students who may feel anxious about that and about wriggling in study. We've been talking a bit about how sometimes we have to fit it in at times we don't necessarily want to.

GEORGINA
BLAKELEY: Well, I think there's two things that I can say there. First all, if students go to the welcome forum on DD102 on the module page, they'll find a document that I've put on there called "Planning Your Time on DD102." And if people like lists, that's the thing to go for.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I love that. So go there.

GEORGINA
BLAKELEY: It's a list there because it tells you exactly what timing's you're going to be spending on each of the different things that they have to do every week. So it's really good to help you to plan your time. Obviously, the timing is only approximate. But it is good as a guide there.

The other thing that I would say will start to appear on the module page once the module starts are the module chair audios. And they're just little two minute audios from me. And what they try and do is to just really give students a focus for that week and say this week, this is what it's all about. This is what you're to focus on.

Because if you look at the study planner, it can be really daunting sometimes. It looks like this 10 or 11 things that you've got to do that week. And, of course, you don't realise that each one might take you five minutes. So it looks quite daunting.

So the weekly audio is, again, quite a good way of thinking, actually it's not too bad. The main focus is this.

INTERVIEWER: Brilliant. Well, Natasha loves the course timetables. So thank you for letting us know that. You'll be pleased you've got at least one big fan there. What other questions have we got, Rachel?

HJ: Well, Rachel's in the chat, because I know she's having a hard time keeping up.

RACHEL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Actually, if you are, you can always pin the chat. So there's different ways of viewing the chat. You can look at the different interfaces bottom right hand corner of the screen. So sometimes that chat can be bigger. Do it to suit you. And you can also pin it as well.

Rachel, have you got a question? Or shall we go with HJ? Because I know he's lining them up.

RACHEL: Yeah. HJ's taking the questions. We've just got comments. Students are sharing some tips about-- we've got this space here to share some tips with each other. And Natasha's saying she loves the course timetable, and helping her to define what she should be doing in a week.

And you've also got some questions as well. People said about nagging about study spaces.

HJ: About study spaces, yeah. Well, we have had a question via email. And we've had some very specific questions via email that if we don't get round to any, remember you can email to us and we will get back to you, connections@open.ac.uk.

But one question was someone's studying an open degree. And they said we've been talking a lot about post-graduate options, and whether or not you have to have a named or specific degree in a certain subject area to be able to study at post-graduate level.

So for example, they want to study psychology Masters level with an open degree. Or should they have to have a psychology degree to be able to do that?

INTERVIEWER: Those are really difficult and specific questions, aren't they? And I don't know. I often find, certainly in my role as a tutor, sometimes I'll get a lot of questions that I think, oh dear. I don't know the answer to that.

And I'm wondering if this is one of them. Do you get a lot of these? And what do you do when students ask you things? I mean, there's a massive network that we all know about and that students might not know about. Do you get a lot of questions from students, and where would

you divert something like this that we might not be able to be specialists in answering?

CHRISTINE CORCORAN: Well, if I don't know the answer, then I will probably know the person who does. And what I always do then is refer to a colleague or other members of the OU at the centre to try and get advice, which I pass on to the student.

But actually doing the open degrees and then going on to the Master is a tricky question. And I would have to consult colleagues about that.

INTERVIEWER: Lovely. Well, I know there's lots of people who are having to go off and do various things. I think that rugby's on or something today, isn't it? Yes. Which is not why we're finishing early. And a lot of people joining as well, so welcome to everyone joining. We're in the last session today where we've got a Q&A session which is all about new students and just starting to study with the OU. So thank you very much for that.

And I see you're also chatting about lots of other things, including my dress. Thank you very much. What other questions have we got to put to our panel?

HJ: One thing a lot of people want to know about is tutorials. So new starters, a bit nervous about going, don't know what to expect. And the other thing is some people are a bit sad that they might miss their scheduled tutorials. And if there's anything they can do about that as well.

INTERVIEWER: Very good questions. Absolutely. Who'd like to take that first?

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Well, as you can see, our tutors are lovely. So there's absolutely nothing to worry about at all. Tutorials aren't compulsory, so don't worry if you miss them. The best thing to do is to get in touch with your tutor and say, what's going to be covered? How can I catch that up?

And we certainly don't expect you to know the answers because there aren't really answers in that sense. At least not one single right answer. So don't worry about coming to tutorials. We don't expect you to have prepared anything, to bring anything other than perhaps paper and pen, that's it.

INTERVIEWER: So what do you do in tutorials? What might a student expect? Where are they? What happens?

GRAHAM NEILSON: Well, in the Birmingham region where I work, the West Midlands region, we run days schools, roughly seven for DD102. And the first one, we keep fairly informal because people don't like

speaking in front of other people. So we realise that it can be quite difficult.

But basically, we focus very much on the part of the course of which is what they're studying at the moment. And we look at TMAs. We look at study skills. So we try and centre it round their concerns.

And we do encourage them to talk about the course, talk about any concerns they might have. Because I think meeting other students is absolutely a wonderful thing to do.

If you can't, there are the online sessions. And if you can't manage those, even, I think it's really important maybe to phone your tutor and say, what did you discuss in this day school? Can we have a chat about it?

INTERVIEWER: Devin's come up with a really good idea about asking if you can attend different tutorials. If maybe you can't get to one. How might students then find out, and is that OK? Do you get students, Christine, coming in from a different tutor group to yours if they're on a different day, maybe?

CHRISTINE CORCORAN: Yeah, we do. It doesn't really matter because it's important you attend the tutorials. And the fact that you tried to make an effort to come to one is really important. The thing to do is to contact your own tutor and ask them which tutor, which tutor groups are available within the region, or perhaps even go to another region.

The other thing you can do, of course, is come back to the OU itself and then ask the staff at the OU which other options there are available for you. But we do welcome students from other regions.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. I also wanted to touch on something that came up before, which is where we were talking about these OU live online tutorials and what might happen in those. Do you two run those?

I mean, I absolutely love them myself. But what are your experiences of running those, and what's the difference, then, between going somewhere or doing something online?

CHRISTINE CORCORAN: Well, the online ones are very different altogether because of the way they're run because they're slightly distant. I shouldn't probably say this, but they are actually quite fun because the way that we do it is I usually work with one other-- can be working with Graham or with members of our tutor group.

And usually one person will take control of the talking, will actually be on video. And then what I usually do, because I can keep up with the conversations-- a bit like you-- is that I will answer the online chats. But it actually works very, very well.

We usually, online, hour, hour and a half, maybe. But they're quite well supported and they're very, very effective for students.

INTERVIEWER: So there's different provisions, I guess, for students, depending on where they are and what they're doing and which module they're on, et cetera. And we might have some face to face and some online tutorials.

There's often an anxiety. I know you said you don't need to prepare anything necessarily for what happens. And that they are a space to engage. What might you say to students who think, oh, I'm not really sure about this whole idea. I'm here to study because I want to be on my own.

What's the role of collaboration, of being with a tutor? And also with other students? How important have you guys found that in terms of people's learning journeys?

**GEORGINA
BLAKELEY:** Absolutely essential because you realise that everybody else is sharing the same hopes and fears, and that you're not alone. And the question that you want to ask isn't a daft one. Any question is a good one because it shows that you're willing to learn.

So it's absolutely invaluable in that sense. And I think what's really important that students don't realise either is that they learn from each other. You can learn as much from the students around you as you can from your tutors, and I think that's a wonderful confidence building exercise.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. But if you can't go, then what do you do?

GRAHAM Phone your tutor.

NEILSON:

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

GEORGINA Yeah.

BLAKELEY:

GRAHAM Phone your tutor. Have a discussion with your tutor, because sometimes students-- keep
NEILSON: coming back to this point-- that they're quite reluctant to contact us.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah.

GRAHAM We're nice people.
NEILSON:

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

GEORGINA But the other thing, as well, is to go on the forums.
BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

GEORGINA We do have forums there. You'll be in a forum at the moment, the welcome forum. But then
BLAKELEY: you'll have your tutor group forum as well. So you can be with other students, even if not face to face. And you can do the forums at any time of day or night, so at least you're part of a community there, too.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. No, it's very important. I know there's lots more questions, so what are they?

RACHEL: There's a lot of questions about tutors and making contact, whether it's the tutor's responsibility or the student's responsibility. One thing somebody wanted to know was, do we need to make our first contact with our tutor? I don't know if I should email her and say a little bit about myself or anything, or just to leave it.

INTERVIEWER: Good question.

CHRISTINE I don't mind that. What we normally do is we send out a welcome email, and perhaps go on
CORCORAN: the forum and talk there, and encourage you to contact us. But I don't mind if you email me. I don't mind at all.

My details-- I think all our details-- are available on the website. And please feel free to contact us, because that, after all, is what we're for. And actually by making that effort to talk to us, you've actually broken your way into the university, and it actually starts your studies.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. And email's a great thing because you can pick it up and put it down. And the one thing I would say, I guess, about students and this whole process is that often, if you're

certainly doing one of the "J" presentations or the October starts, then you're allocated your tutor and you're there a little bit early, and we haven't quite started yet.

So you don't need to worry just yet. But you can always email your tutor and get in touch. Could you say something, Graham, a little bit about what students can expect in terms of contact from their tutor, and how often their tutor's around, and maybe what their tutor's doing. Are they available all the time or not, or does that vary for students? What should students expect?

GRAHAM It does vary. I mean, I'm quite liberal on my approach to students. I say to just phone me,
NEILSON: contact me anytime, really, between up to about 9:30 at night.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

GRAHAM And if you have a concern, contact me early rather than later. Because sometimes students
NEILSON: might have a few problems submitting an essay. There might be other things relating to study they're having problems with. And too often, they leave it too late.

I think if you have a problem, contact early. And most tutors will send out an opening email outlining the contact details. And from there, I would encourage students to email or phone their tutor, just say I'm so and so. We're looking forward to the course.

INTERVIEWER: But I know, Georgina, you and I have spoken about this before in terms of that all tutors are very, very different. And I guess you're overseeing an awful lot.

When should students worry if they haven't had a reply? Because I once went shopping in Swansea and my student was terribly worried because I hadn't got back to her, just because she didn't know that-- I was only three hours-- but--

GEORGINA No, absolutely. Well, I used to work at a conventional campus university and students used to
BLAKELEY: say to me, you weren't there. And I said, well, when did you come? Friday at 10:00 PM at night. I thought, no, I wasn't there.

So no. But I think what most tutors will do in their introductory email or letter is say these are the times that you can contact me. Because often our tutors work elsewhere, too. So it may be that there's only a certain times that they would appreciate phone calls.

Email is usually not a problem, because of course you can send an email any time. But again,

don't expect an instant response because our tutors aren't there 24/7. They might be working at other universities, too.

What you can do, if it's something that you think is quite serious and you really do want a faster response, is to contact the student support team because they are there on the end of the phone throughout the working day. They're there at the end of the email. So don't forget that as a source of support as well.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. No, absolutely. Excellent. I'd like to try to get through a few more questions, because we only have five minutes.

HJ: Yeah. One question is because there is a lot of work to do and sometimes you can get a bit behind, life gets in the way of things, and some people may panic a bit. So what would your tips be if you have gotten behind and you want to catch up and get up to speed?

**GEORGINA
BLAKELEY:** Again, I would say speak to your tutor. I think when you start off, as Graham said, you often tend to over-think things and think you have to do absolutely every activity on the website and read absolutely every word and look at every page. And, of course, you don't.

And part of the learning process is working out what you need to focus on in order to do the assessments. That can be very hard to work out, and that's where your tutor comes in. And they'll help you once you get behind.

But again, what they need to know is when you've got behind. And they need to know that the sooner, the better. Because then they can help out.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. And lovely to see so many tips and so much sharing going on in the chat. Like to try to get a couple more questions in.

HJ: Yeah. One question was about TMAs. Someone's saying that they had a low TMA score and they were a bit disappointed. But is there anything you'd suggest, anything to look at, in terms of being able to improve that for next time?

**CHRISTINE
CORCORAN:** The best thing there is, with all the TMAs, they're not always going to be perfect and the scores will vary. But what you have on your TMA is the feedback from your tutor. And it is imperative that you look at that, because that's what will really, really help you with your next TMA.

If you don't understand it, if there's something that's not clear on it, then please, please contact us. And we will help you.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. No, that's perfect. There's a lot of discussion about the ideas and the differences with online and face to face. And I mentioned before that everywhere is different in terms of what's on offer. If you could choose one, though, what would you say?

I know that you're a bit fan of the OU Live, the online tutorials. But what's the difference between the two? If people do have a choice, what would you say to our students at home? Like if they're thinking, should I go to one, or could they go to both?

CHRISTINE CORCORAN: Go to both. Both are equally valid. The advantage with the face to face is that you get to meet your other students and you get to meet your own tutor, which does help contextualise your studies. But the online ones, of course, they are portable and you don't really have to travel anywhere. So they're both very useful in their own way. So please, please go to both.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent.

GEORGINA BLAKELEY: Yeah. I think the mixture's nice, too. Because if you've been to face to face, it makes the online communication easier because you know that person a little bit, and so your online tutorial works better and the forum works better. So if you can get to a mix, then that's great.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. I'd also like to see what advice people have on the social media desk about that. What are their views?

RACHEL: Oh. Let me pin. Move again.

HJ: So fast.

RACHEL: OK. So there's a conversation here about whether people like online or whether they like face to face. There's tips for if you're attending a face to face tutorial, and sometimes they're quite far away from where you are. To have a look on the tutorial finder and find one that's a little bit closer to you.

We've also shared tips that you should always email that tutor and just ask whether it's OK to attend. Lots of students are saying they like online tutorials because they tend to get distracted quite easily. So having no one around them helps them focus more on what's being said.

Although she did say that she loves face to face and meeting new people and finding out other

people's views on subjects. And another tip for online is to go to the tutorial section a little bit before your tutorial so you can download and setup the online environment rather than attending when the tutorial starts and panic, can't get in.

INTERVIEWER: That's a very, very good idea. All nodding in agreement. Because the first time, of course, you use OU Live, you have to have a launcher, don't you. And then it's fine and very simple. But it takes about a minute or two, which we're so used to everything being just a click away, aren't we?

That nowadays when anything takes more than the two seconds, we panic. So yes, that's a good idea to go in and see the room. And, of course, nothing may be going on there until the tutorial's on. But once you've done that, you at least know how to get in. Bit like a dummy TMA.

**GEORGINA
BLAKELEY:** And if you get stuck, call the OU computing help desk because they're really good at helping you to sort out some of those technical issues that I certainly can't sort out. So they are really good at that.

INTERVIEWER: And they've got really good opening hours, don't they?

GEORGINA Yes, they have.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: Because they're often open quite late at night.

GEORGINA Absolutely.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: So do check that out. That is the OU computing help desk. And they can help you with all things computer related. They're very, very friendly, and they'll talk you through a load of issues. Any other questions we can answer?

HJ: I think some questions about people who've just started. And some people have finished the introductory social sciences. And they are wondering, because there's so much module choice- and with open degrees, you can be completely flexible-- if you've got any tips for deciding what module to pick next?

Because on some degrees pathways, you can-- I had to do three level two modules, so I

wasn't too sure what one to do next. So any tips from our tutors or panel about module choice and where to go next?

GRAHAM

I would say do something you're interested in. You would have found a part of the previous

NEILSON:

modules that you found really interesting, and that should be a good starting point, I think, for what you should do next. And I think that's the best advice you can give any student about what to do next.

CHRISTINE

Yeah, I agree with that, actually.

CORCORAN:

GEORGINA

Yeah.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER:

Excellent. Well, are there any other questions? I know that there's been a lot there, and we will try to get back to the people with the specifics. But are there any other broad questions that we haven't covered?

RACHEL:

Not really. We're now focusing on tutorials and tutors, and then the discussions. But there is one last question Andrew sent in about online tutorials. Is there a recorded session afterwards? Is there a catch-up? Is there a way that they're put into a forum? How can students access that material if they're not able to attend the online session?

CHRISTINE

They are recorded. I think we post on the forum, don't we?

CORCORAN:

GRAHAM

Yes.

NEILSON:

INTERVIEWER:

Well, some of them are. I think some of them aren't.

GEORGINA

Yeah. They're not all, actually. You have to check.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. You do have to check with your tutor. They can all be, but I don't think all tutors do. And some tutors will do a summary. Everything is very, very varied.

But I don't know any tutor who wouldn't give you the notes or a brief precis of what happened in that session if you did contact them. And I'm sure that they could fill you in. Everyone is

different with all of those things, so do make sure you check it out.

GEORGINA I think you're right, that most things, like handouts from things like day schools and tutorials,
BLAKELEY: will go on the forum so students can get the information that way.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Absolutely. No, that's perfect. Lovely. Any other final thoughts before we wrap up this session?

HJ: I think there has been--

RACHEL: Oh. What we do about-- don't allow your computer to do a Windows or an update just as you're attending the tutorial.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I know.

RACHEL: Otherwise, you'll spend an hour trying to tell it not to restart and take half hour instals.

HJ: I had that last time while I was here, so I missed out on some chat. My computer forced me to update, which was terrible.

INTERVIEWER: --automatic restarts.

HJ: But a lot of our seasoned OU students who have done several modules are encouraging people to get into contact with your tutors, because they are absolutely brilliant. My final level three tutor knew that I wanted to do post grad, so he gave me lots of advice and tips for looking at that.

So tutors are always friendly and welcoming. And I wouldn't be afraid of getting into contact with them at all.

INTERVIEWER: Wonderful. Well, we've had lots of people saying thank you very much for coming on. And they say that they would like their tutors to come on to "Student Connections" as well. I hope some of my students are here, because I did tell you all about it. So I'll be quizzing everyone to see what they thought.

But yeah, it is a great way of actually putting a face to a name. And thank you for representing the associate lecture community. Because like you say, they are all very friendly. They want people to get in touch. And they're here to help.

And I guess, I mean, my groups range about 15 to 20 students per module. There is a chance

to not feel just like a number and to be able to have that time and energy to have a relationship, I guess, with somebody who's going to help you with your studying. So Graham and Christine, thank you very much for coming along.

And Georgina, we're going to close now with just some final thoughts. And I'm going to try and reflect on some of the things. We've had so much fun over the last few days. And for those people who have just joined, it will be available on catch-up. So you can check back on all the various things that we've been talking about.

But broadly speaking, we've covered loads and loads of things. We've had a few library sessions. We've had a talk about managing expectations. And I think this is something that really relates to what we were talking about here with the associate lecturers, which is about thinking about what do I want to achieve, and how might I be able to measure that. Which is incredibly important, wouldn't you say, for students starting out?

GEORGINA Absolutely. Yeah.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So we've been doing that. We've been looking at various academic issues. And oh gosh, I forget all of the various things that we've been doing. We've been talking about massive open online courses. We've set up a small nation for Harley Jack to manage with a jelly bean economy.

We've been talking about internet infidelity. We've been talking about loads of things in the social sciences. But the most important thing has been the chat that's been going on. And Georgina, I don't know if you can see the Facebook board here-- well, not Facebook-- the My Face board--

GEORGINA That's fantastic.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: --where we've been collecting all these selfies from all these wonderful people who've come along. All the tips and advice and things that everyone's been sharing whilst we've been obviously adding to that. It's been really, really nice to have so much there from students who are seasoned welcoming new students. So thank you all very much for that.

GEORGINA I think one of the wonderful things about events like this is it makes you see that you're part of

BLAKELEY: a wider community. I think often doing distance learning, students think, we'll, I'll just be on my own, and how will I cope? Well, of course, you're not on your own at all.

You're part of this wider community of learners, of tutors and students. And they're all there behind you, willing you on almost. So you can succeed in your studies. So although it might feel that you're alone at times, you're really not. And there are all these sources of support out there to make you--

INTERVIEWER: No, absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, we've got loads of things in the faculty as well, haven't we? We've got the Facebook page which people can engage with. That's the OU Social Sciences Facebook page. And there's the "Friday Thinker--"

GEORGINA Yep, "Friday Thinker."

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: --on that every week. So you can add to that. And lots of other various bits. So that's a great way of keeping in touch. Could you say something about the qualification sites, and maybe some other sources of support? You've mentioned the module forums and ways that people can keep this sense of community up. What other ways are there?

GEORGINA Yeah. I mean, I don't want to overload students. Because I think sometimes we probably have too many websites at the Open University. So I think you have to be very careful, particularly if you're starting out. So it's almost like trying to prioritise the websites that you need.

BLAKELEY:

So for me, the module website of the module you're doing at the moment is absolutely key. Because, of course, that's where your studies are. But then you do have your qualification website. And there is lots of resources. There's forums. There's really useful videos to watch that are going to help you with your studies.

And again, that's quite useful, particularly between modules. I think sometimes when you finish your module and you're thinking, oh, what next, and you're not quite sure where to go and your tutor might have gone on holiday and marked the last piece of work. But you can go to the qualification websites.

And that's, again, it's the community of learners, of people who are doing the same degree qualification as you. And that's a useful source of support, too.

You've mentioned the faculty Facebook page. And, of course, come back to student support

team. There all the time, all the way through your studies. They're not specific to the module, they're specific to the qualification and area of study.

And they do have that wealth of expertise that we were talking about before about what module to do next. What should I do? What should I take? In what order? They can help you with those questions, too, which tutors sometimes aren't able to do because it might be slightly out of their field.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. So there's loads and loads of support for people out there.

GEORGINA Absolutely, yeah.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: And we hope that everyone stays connected. HJ and Rachel, I want to come to you and get your top bits, I guess, from the last few days of what's been going on over there on the social media desk.

HJ: I think--

RACHEL: Oh.

HJ: It's so much.

RACHEL: We've loved all of it.

HJ: I mean, I think our favourite bit is people sending in selfies and the chat as well. And we've got a few last ones that our postman delivered earlier. Let's have a look here. We've got Zanny via Twitter. Remember, we've got the hashtag #SCC15.

And if you want to use our hashtag or our email address, connections@open.ac.uk, to keep in touch, you can. And we've also had another one from Ellie. And we talked a lot about all our different animals that keep us company. And she's got-- what was it-- Milly with her. That's a very nice name for a cat. I like that. Milly.

RACHEL: I have one as well. This is Natasha's pic with-- unfortunately, we weren't allowed to show this one, but thank you for sending in a picture, Natasha. We've seen what the picture is. Yes. It's a fantastic send in, but unfortunately we've had to say no to that one.

Did we have a little bit of a recap of some of our--

HJ: Our selfies.

RACHEL: --some of our selfies in general?

HJ: Well, there's so many to choose from.

RACHEL: There's too many.

HJ: Let's have a look. We had Shannon. Great contributor. Everyone's been so fantastic in their contributions. It's been absolutely brilliant. And we've loved these selfies and we've loved your tips, and we've pinned a lot of them on our board as well, to save for later.

And if you want to have a go on the catch-up as well, that'll be available soon to have a look at the tips. The library session, I got some great tips from that, definitely. I think that was a good one.

RACHEL: Yeah. We do love the library over here. It was always, always high five in the library.

HJ: Yeah.

RACHEL: Oh, you can't put that one there. I was about to pick the same one and hold it up. Two of our Lauras, we'll do these together. Lauras, Lauras, Lauras. You've been contributing fantastic amount over the past two days. And we're very grateful for your stimulating chats in the chat box.

Especially it's what it's all about. The chat box is there to send questions to the panel, but also to chat with each other and share tips and things on how to study at the OU.

HJ: And Matthew as well. He showed us earlier how his cat always gets in the way, and he always picks the wrong times. I absolutely love that selfie. I think it just sums up what it's like to have cats these days.

RACHEL: And obviously Sayida. Because we were a bit behind.

HJ: It took time for this one to get to us.

RACHEL: Technical issue. But Sayida, she's also been in the chat keeping us going and ensuring that she gives her input to other students and also contributing to the panel as well.

HJ: I think one of my favourite things was looking at the views from home. They were very good as well. We've had lots of different views from home with all these different snacks. And people like some healthier snacks. To be honest, I think as long as I got cola and jelly beans, of course, then I'm keeping happy.

RACHEL: Somebody keeps taking things from the currency.

HJ: I have no idea who that would be.

RACHEL: I heard that while we were over there on the couch, somebody came along and actually stole some jelly beans. I think it's one of the camera operatives behind the camera. Obviously, camera operative behind the camera.

But yeah, I hear that they've been stealing these. So I think maybe we might need to set up a legal system on our island.

HJ: On our island, of course.

INTERVIEWER: Our island now, is it?

RACHEL: I'm chancellor. But we've also got Lee, who was flying from Lagos back to the UK. So we can move Lee-- sorry-- because he must be home by now. He's travelled halfway across the world in the time that we've had this conference today.

We've still got more on the board as well. So many selfies to get through. And we've also had some fantastic tips as well that they've kept up going. Things that you've shared, and we've wanted to incorporate them onto the board with our funky stationary.

HJ: Our funky stationary, of course.

RACHEL: And shall we have a final light change before--

HJ: We should. I think we should. We like the lights on the chat.

RACHEL: Are we allowed to have a little--

HJ: There we go.

RACHEL: Is that OK?

HJ: We're going out on a disco.

RACHEL: Yes. We'll have every colour.

HJ: We'll have every color, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, thank you so much, HJ and Rachel. You have, as usual, been absolutely amazing collating all of that. And building this real sense of community which, as you say, is what this is all about.

We have a survey. We'd love to know what you think. You can do that by visiting the website. If you aren't already on it, Connections.kmi.open.ac.uk. Tell us what you think. We really, really do want to know. And in particular, what sessions you've enjoyed, what you want more of, et cetera.

We're going to keep the chat open for a little while longer, till about 5 o'clock so that you can continue chatting. But we've had lots of questions about what next. Well, when are we on next?

Well, there's good news and bad news. The good news is next week, we're on. We have the Student Hub Live, which is an event from the Open University which is an entire university event. And I'll be hosting that next week. It's on the 30 of September and the 1 of October.

Again, open to everyone. Everyone's welcome. And we have members from the faculty who couldn't make it this time, but they're coming along to that. We have Richard Heffernan, actually, who was on before doing a fantastic talk about politics.

He's coming to have a discussion with some people from arts about the ethics of political morality. That is going to be a really interesting one. We also have Meg-John Barker from the counseling department, who's going to be talking about managing your relationships while you study. And Gemma Briggs is coming along to talk with various people from statistics and from science about natural hazards and risks from the every day to the extraordinary, so and that will be very interesting.

So you'll see members of the faculty engaging in that. Do check out, that's the StudentHubLive.kmi.open.ac.uk. So find the websites. Go and have a look at that. It should be on your home page as well.

But I would just like to thank everybody. And I'm not going to do an exhaust thank you, because there have been so many people involved in creating and making this. Our academic contributors, KMI, the Knowledge Media Institute, LTS, Learning and Teaching Solutions, as well as obviously Andrew Ricks and co who have been managing the fabulous production here.

Our LTS and the music research studios, which is where we're broadcasting. Ray Foley and Sophie Foley for excellent prop building. Social media board, mailbox, et cetera, which have really enhanced our experience. And, of course, the social sciences faculty, all the academics who've willingly come along.

It's no easy thing, is it, to come along and do all of this.

GEORGINA And on a beautiful Saturday.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: Yes. A beautiful Saturday outside.

GEORGINA A sunny Saturday.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: I know. I know. But everyone has been amazing, haven't they, coming along?

GEORGINA It's been great fun.

BLAKELEY:

INTERVIEWER: It has. And I think it's so nice that so many people are willing to share and be part of this community. And I think that's our take home message, is that the faculty of social sciences really do want to engage with students. We're all really lovely, friendly people.

We hope you enjoy your studies. We've hoped that this has given you some food for thought, some support, and some sense of community. We'll keep the chat open. Perhaps see you next week at the Student Hub Live. Check out your module forums, your qualification websites. Make touch with your tutors.

And most of all, enjoy your study. And thank you so, so, so much, everybody at home, for participating, for sending your selfies, and being so willing to engage. We really have enjoyed it. We're going to break the video now. We'll keep the chat open for a little while longer, and

we hope that we can reconnect with you very, very soon.

[MUSIC PLAYING]