**Research on student collaboration**

This piece of research explains why I strongly encourage you to come to face to face tutorials, ‘chat’ on the online student forums and get together with other students as much as you can.

*Research by Treisman (1992) cited in Steele (2010, pp. 100-102) describes how students from three different ethnic groups in America tended to study. One set of students studied in groups, a second set was sociable and a third set of students tried hard to succeed as individuals. The study shows how important group work is: what we call student-student learning.*

*The students were doing a first year calculus course. Asian (Chinese) students on the course made little distinction between study time and leisure time, they counted time in the library working on assignments together as social time. White students studied more independently, however they were relaxed about getting help from fellow students or teaching staff and would chat about their assignments while out in cafés and bars. Black students were much more private about their studies. They spent long hours working hard on their own with the books. Figuring out problems on their own took much longer for them than for the other students, who were able to capitalise on each others’ efforts.*

*The Asian students did best, then white students. Black students did poorly in assignments. As they knew they were working hard, they felt discouraged and tried to work even harder. They concluded that they were just not good at calculus and many of them gave up. Treisman describes one student who spoke angrily about seeing white students in the class reading Playboy and drinking beer hidden in paper bags. When they got As and he got a C in the class, he gave up calculus.*

Reference

Steele, C. (2010) *Whistling Vivaldi: how stereotypes affect us and what we can do*. New York and London: W.W. Norton.

OU students don’t have lectures, or a campus library or cafés (or bars!) to meet up in and chat about your studies. We provide an accessible equivalent with the tutorials and the online forums. Each year I see students who attend face to face tutorials and chat and joke about their work in the forums do much better in their studies, and I strongly recommend you make good use of both these resources.