I just took the OA and passed on my first attempt. Having never touched Python before, I was dreading this course. I usually rely on Chatter comments for help, but since this course changed recently, there weren't many posts. So, I wanted to share what helped me, in case you are in the same boat. I completed this course in just over three weeks.

I went through the entire zyBooks course material and was following along well until I got to the custom functions section and beyond. The material seemed less in-depth at this point. However, for the OA, you need to know how to write custom functions. I quickly moved through it, hoping the practice questions would clarify what I needed to know. Later, I revisited these sections more thoroughly to improve my understanding, but it was still a struggle. Watching YouTube videos on custom functions helped, and I used ChatGPT to break down code from the zyBooks material, which was very helpful. Tip: When using ChatGPT, ask it to solve problems as a beginner would, so the solutions are more relatable to what you've learned in the course.

Another big resource was codingbat.com, which helped me practice Python methods outside of the zyBooks questions. This was crucial as I realized I was only memorizing the zyBooks practice questions without being challenged by new ones, which is important since the OA won't repeat those questions exactly the same.

I found the pre-assessment very close to the actual OA. Expect similar multiple-choice questions. Know your sets, lists, tuples, dictionaries, how to pass variables into custom functions, built-in functions (len(), range(), max(), islower(), isupper(), etc.), operators, and index positions (including accessing the end of a list). I got a question on the socket module, which I forgot to review, so make sure to know the modules and libraries touched on in the material (although they are only lightly touched on in here).

I didn't encounter any indentation errors on the OA, though there were a few on the pre-assessment. I had at least 9 or 10 coding questions, most requiring code to be written from scratch with a basic template. One question involved fixing errors, similar to one of the pre-assessment questions. Only one question involved calling an import from a separate file. I felt confident solving all the code-writing questions except one. They were simpler than I expected, as I didn't get many questions on importing other files. Also, learn how to use the help() built-in function—I used it during the OA, and it helped me solve a question.

If I can do it, you can do it – good luck!