

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to Student Connections. Well, it's been a fantastic afternoon. And before our next session, where I'm going to be talking to Sue Hemmings about open educational resources. I'd like to go back to the social media desk. HJ and Rachel, where have you been?

HJ: [LAUGHS]

RACHEL: We've been on a magical mystery tour. [LAUGHS] Been on the other side of the studio.

HJ: It's good to be back here, though. It feels odd on the other side of the studio.

RACHEL: It doesn't feel the same, does it? It's not our corner, is it? We don't have our My Face board social.

HJ: Our lovely social network, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Have you had any mail?

HJ: Oh. The flag's up. I think he is. But he was a bit sneaky with that. We haven't heard our little bell. But we can have a little look. I think he wanted to be quiet, because he was so intrigued with last session.

KAREN FOLEY: That was probably when you were out.

HJ: Yeah. [LAUGHS] That always happens. Postman never comes at the right time. Let's have a look though. What were we-- oh, brilliant! It's more selfies. Let's have a look. That's-- oh. We got little Noah there. That's a lovely one. I think--

KAREN FOLEY: Who's that from?

HJ: That's from Katrina. And Noah was our mascot for today, wasn't he? He was team SCC. So that's really cool. Lovely selfie there. We've also got Angus as well. That's the name of the little hamster from Elisa. We love the pets, because we all have our study pet somehow, don't we? [LAUGHS] But they'll always chew things and eat things and sit on keyboards, which is always inconvenient. They never catch up to you at the right times, do they? They always pick when you're busy, don't they?

RACHEL: Especially when you've got a dog as well. You think, the dog's just gone to sleep, I'll sit down, and I'll do some studying. And then the dog wakes up, and he thinks, play. Play, play, play. But keeping the theme of students and pets, this is another selfie from Laura, and she's got her very furry companion there with her. So it's lovely to see all your selfies. And we'd like students to send some more in as well, wouldn't we, Karen?

KAREN FOLEY: We would, absolutely.

RACHEL: So we have the connections@open.ac.uk or the hash tag #SCC15. So still send them through to us, and hopefully, we'll have another mail delivery before the end of the day.

HJ: Oh, I hope so. That would be fantastic. Always excited for your mail.

RACHEL: Oh. When I was over there-- Davin's right.

HJ: Oh, the cu--

RACHEL: Davin's right about the plush cushion. And I've stolen the cushion from the other side. So now we're getting some furnishings over here. We've got some plants, mailbox. We're going to just-- we're going to knuckle in. We're going to be stuck here forever.

HJ: Make it very clear-- just don't tell Karen you took that. She might not be too happy-- from her sofa.

RACHEL: Do you think she'll even notice?

HJ: No, she'll be fine. [INAUDIBLE]

KAREN FOLEY: Sorry, we've had a bit of a report. There's been a mix-up in pets. It is not a hamster. It is a rabbit.

HJ: Oh, it's a rabbit. Oh, OK.

KAREN FOLEY: So someone needs to tell--

HJ: Oh, because I was holding it the wrong way. I couldn't quite see what animal it was.

KAREN FOLEY: Sorry Elisa. [LAUGHS] [INAUDIBLE]

HJ: [LAUGHS] It's a very lovely rabbit.

KAREN FOLEY: Especially cats. [LAUGHS] All right, you two. Back to the chat, then. And we'll see what questions we've got. Because I am joined now in the studio with Sue Hemmings. Thank you for coming along to our mad world, Sue.

You're here to talk about Open Education resources. And I'm gathering from-- we've got a lot of level one students out here. And also I'm getting a sense that other people are being railroaded into this conference as well. Maybe some people are watching with their children at home, and husbands and things.

So I just wanted to talk a bit about some of these various options that people could have. Because, of course, The Open University has a lot of material that's available on OpenLearn, and I wanted to talk to you about what that was and how people could do it without getting too sidetracked, because there is so much content there. So tell us a bit about what your role is in terms of all of this, and what your top ideas are.

SUE HEMMINGS: Well, my role, my official title is Open Media Fellow for the Faculty. And that means that I work with the unit in the OU that's responsible for our connections with broadcasters, like BBC, and for producing material for OpenLearn, and also developing-- everything's got an acronym now. So we're going to be talking about BOCs, which are Batched Open Courses, and MOOCs, which are Massive Open Online Courses. So bear with the acronyms.

And it's interesting, because what it is is kind of informal education. It's not part of your course. It's not part of your modules. It's other stuff that we do, a lot of which is aimed at the general public. But I'm increasingly interested in how it also helps students as well by just making the environment you're studying in that little bit richer, really.

And this week has been a big week for me, because we had broadcasts go out on BBC Two on Wednesday evening. Which, I don't know. If you have a look on OpenLearn, which is our website, you'll see that it was a programme on BBC Two by Hans Rosling, who's a Swedish academic who has this enormous reputation for making social statistics painless.

Now, some people love numbers anyway, but other people, meh. But this programme, we're really pleased to be involved with it, because this week in New York, they're discussing at the UN the Millennium goals. Did we meet them? What are the goals for the next 15 years?

And this programme absolutely ties in with all of those debates about is it possible to end

absolute stupid poverty, as Bono likes to call it. Is poverty always relative? What can the world achieve in the next 15 years? And that programme went out on Wednesday evening.

It's available on the BBC iPlayer. And we've got some materials on OpenLearn to support it. So that's how we tend to operate that part of what we do.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. I hear you had an excellent session. It was really, really engaging. I just wondered, before we talk a little bit about this and what materials are on OpenLearn, touch on that idea of broadcasts, because I think so many new students aren't really aware of the OU's role in the-- I mean, we all remember the OU broadcasting late at night and video. But it's always had that affinity with broadcast. Can you tell us if it's about that?

SUE HEMMINGS: Well, The Open University, in the early days, was made possible by broadcasting. So the founders used to talk about the University of the Air. And that was very special and very important. And people used to get up at ridiculous hours of the day and night. And then people used to set their video recorders to record programmes at ridiculous hours of the day.

And those programmes were actually part of your course materials. There's one on infinity, called "The Hilbert Hotel," which, I think if I watch it another 10 times, I would eventually understand. But I used to watch that in the middle of the night, when I was studying myself, not that.

Now things are slightly different. Because everything we do with our students now is structured around the VLE, the Virtual Learning Environment. And so your module materials, you go onto your website, and you've got your embedded videos, embedded audios, as well as written materials.

So what's the problem left for broadcasting, then? Well, we've also got this commitment in the OU to reaching out. To reaching out to the population as a whole, as an educator, as a communicator. And also reaching out to say to people, come on. Come have a look. Come see what we do.

And so we have arrangements with-- a lot with the BBC. You'll find a lot of our programmes on the BBC. But also with other broadcasters as well. We've made programmes with Channel Four this year. With Sky this year.

Different faculties produce different things. So those are what I would call absolutely informal. They're not part of your module. They're what you might like to do as displacement activity

when you can't be thinking about studying properly. Or they might just keep you interested.

And I still phone my mom up. I say, I've got one on tonight, mum. Because my sister's an OU graduate. She likes to see the OU logo, thinking, oh, yeah. They're still doing it. So we have programmes on all manner of things.

KAREN FOLEY: And they're so prolific, aren't they? I mean, even *Frozen Planet*. And the videos involved with just so many areas. What's the point, then, of academics getting involved with things like this? I mean, there's this whole idea about knowledge being accurate, and we'd be talking about various sources and things. What's it like then for somebody-- for an academic at the OU to get involved with some aspect of programming. Because it's happening a lot, especially in social sciences.

SUE HEMMINGS: It's really interesting. It's really interesting. I was in a meeting just this week with some programme makers and three academics. So we had three people from the BBC, three academics, myself, my colleague, Chris Martz, and it was really interesting. It was a bit like a seminar, because we were genuinely discussing ideas and the shapes that the series might take.

And that was fascina-- I've really enjoyed it, because I had not looked at the subject that way before, and it was that combination of academics in that room with a group of programme makers. Oh, yeah. That might work. You know. But of course, the programme makers go away, produce the scripts and do all of this.

We have an important role in checking it. Nothing goes out with the OU logo on it that we don't think, yeah. I might not agree with it absolutely, but academia's full of disagreement. It's reasonable, it's well-argued, it's well-evidenced, and we can put our name to it, and it will stir interest. That's what we want. We want people to be interested.

KAREN FOLEY: So the whole idea, I guess then, is that both some of the module materials and some of the broadcasts are then supported with stuff, and that all goes onto OpenLearn. Tell us what OpenLearn is and how people can access it and who can access it.

SUE HEMMINGS: OpenLearn is openly available. So it's outside the fa-- so it's not just students, it's the general public can get into it.

KAREN FOLEY: And we're seeing it on the screen here.

SUE HEMMINGS: And we're seeing it on the screen now. And I think we've got the Hans Rosling page up.

KAREN FOLEY: They do, yes. So you just Google OpenLearn, and then this will come up.

SUE HEMMINGS: And actually getting into it-- sometimes Googling is better than trying other routes that you know, really. Hans Rosling, this week, we put some additional material on OpenLearn to support the broadcast, give people a bit more information. Then they link it to other resources we've already got in there about the same issue. And then we link it through to modules you might like to study. So it's a way of funnelling people in to see what we've got and exploring that range of issues.

KAREN FOLEY: So why would somebody then be interested in doing this, as opposed to just googling generally around the subject? What's the benefit of having some structured contents that are supporting this?

SUE HEMMINGS: Well, I think because it's on our site, we know we can trust it. We know that it's been checked. It's reasonable stuff. And that's not always true for the internet. So that's one of those things.

It's also that sense of enabling, certainly, our students, to see how it fits in with their degree, and maybe-- I know you were talking earlier to people from the student support team about how modules fit together. And sometimes there's a lot of choice, and sometimes there isn't. But it's interesting to have a look around and see how these things relate to what you might be going on to study. So there's a lot of international relations stuff, for instance, associated with that one.

KAREN FOLEY: And also we were talking about how they're so much into the disciplinary content in the social sciences. And so sometimes it's really important to think, oh, that's interesting. I might be interested in just finding out a little bit more about that. So maybe OpenLearn then is a good place for people to to.

SUE HEMMINGS: Yeah, people were talking earlier about DD102, which is the first port of call for many, many people, which is an interdisciplinary module. And so that sense of building up a broad picture of how the social sciences work, not just the bit of social sciences that you're going to end up loving and spending your life doing or whatever, but how it all fits together. And I think that's always been the case.

I mean, my degree-- in our first year, we did six disciplines, because it's only when you've

seen all of those things you can see how it fits together. And these kinds of resources that you can-- that are aimed at the general public. So you could watch them, you can enjoy them just as programmes, but then you can go a bit further, are a good way of building up that sense of how it all works and how it all fits together.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. But it could be a minefield. I mean, you could be lost in here and never get started. What are your top tips, then, for navigating this and knowing, I guess, when to start and when to stop on all this free material that's out there.

SUE HEMMINGS: My top tip is when in doubt, do what's on your study calendar.

[LAUGHTER]

KAREN FOLEY: So this is additional.

SUE HEMMINGS: This is additional. This is additional. This is-- I'm particularly interested in how people might use OpenLearn in between modules. Because there's that bit of the year, in between, when some people just want to swim, do a marathon, do the garden, anything that isn't study. But other people really quite want to keep going. And I think-- I'm really interested in how we could use it.

So have students actually-- it would be interesting to hear from our students, actually, how they actually keep studying in that gap between. It depends what you're looking for. There's some stuff on here on OpenLearn which is about study skills.

Now, a lot of students-- we encourage students, especially at level one. but throughout the study, to reflect on their learning and write little reflective pieces at the end of their assignment. And then tutors might say, I really think you understand this. You can do with a bit more work on how you structure your essays to get your ideas over better. Those sorts of things.

Now, there are some resources on OpenLearn which are about study skills. And so in that gap between, it might be a time to think, gee, I'm going to have a look at some of that stuff about English for study, or improving your maths, or whatever it is that you think might be your bit of a gap. There's stuff on here also about studying successfully.

And that asks you to go back and think about, well, why am I doing this? And I think I tend to stick on my fridge things about why am I doing this. I am doing this because-- so in those bleaker moments, or when you're feeling tired, or you've got to do it, it's there. And you-- so no

matter how experienced a learner you are, you might want to go back and look at these things as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. There's lots of confusion about what these badged open courses are in the chat. And I know that was something you wanted to mention. And I also am aware that there's a lot of talk about MOOCs, and that we only have about five minutes left.

So can we wriggle around that. What are these batched open courses? I've got that shown on the screen here. So this, again, is on OpenLearn. And you were talking very much about how OpenLearn has a lot of this content that's that. Batched open courses are a bit different now, aren't they?

SUE HEMMINGS: Batched open courses are a new development on OpenLearn. The people in the media unit have been working on, primarily with our widening participation, widening access specialists. This idea of batch courses is catching on the internet. You will find a lot of American universities, for instance, doing it.

You get an electronic badge. Sadly. Sadly, unlike the Scouts, you can't sew it on your arm, which I personally think we should be able to do. But in fact, no. You get an electronic badge, which you then-- the idea is that people who are building up portfolios or CVs can attach it to that to demonstrate their completion of one of these modules.

KAREN FOLEY: So what sorts of things can people do on these badged open courses, because they're very skills-based, aren't they?

SUE HEMMINGS: They are very skills-based. All the ones that are on OpenLearn, notionally, are three hours a week for eight weeks. But in fact, they're there all the time. So you binge it in a weekend, or you could spend six months dropping in and out and doing it.

KAREN FOLEY: So I guess the key difference between these and MOOCs is that MOOCs have a start date, and you are with the community of learners, and you're going along. Badged open courses, you can dip in and out, and they're very skills based.

SUE HEMMINGS: Yes and no. Most MOOCs are like that. Not all are. More of that in a minute. But these-- yes. These, you can drop in and out. And that's really important. You can do them when you've got time. And you get a badge if you-- all the way through, they have interactive quizzes as a way of testing yourself. And if you complete most of those, in essence, you get a badge, which you can then put on your CV. You don't have to wait until the end of your degree or the end of a

module to say, look, I've achieved something. You can say, look, I've achieved this already.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Brilliant. Instead of me asking the questions, I'm going to get the social media desk, because I know there are a lot of questions. So what are the top things people want to know from Sue?

HJ: Well, there's lots of great chat. A lot of people are talking about what you said about doing MOOCs between modules to keep them going, to keep interested. Maybe to try a different topic altogether, which is really good. But some people haven't done or tried a MOOC yet, so hopefully we can encourage them get on and give it a go. I mean, Rachel's got a really good comment that picked up on.

RACHEL: Yeah. It's actually a question. Davin would like to know, he likes the idea of the badge. It's like a certificate that you get on other MOOC sites. But he wants to know, are the badge courses linkable to your LinkedIn profile like they are on other free.

SUE HEMMINGS: Oh. Now, that I don't know.

KAREN FOLEY: Davin, email us.

SUE HEMMINGS: Email us. We will find out. We will find out.

KAREN FOLEY: Connections@open.ac.uk. That will be our challenge for next week that we will find out.

SUE HEMMINGS: Yes. Thank you. Thank you for asking that one.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. So lots of questions there about the variety of MOOCs and things. And in fact, social sciences have a couple of big ones. The forensic psychology MOOC I know is very, very popular, isn't it?

And also there's a new one that Jonquil and Jerome are running very shortly, actually. And there's a link to that on the website. So if you're interested in doing a MOOC-- what's the experience like of doing MOOCs? Of being in a community of learners? How does it work?

SUE HEMMINGS: It's really interesting. There's different ways it is. Both of our MOOCs run on a platform called FutureLearn. And in FutureLearn, there's a start date, you could study at your own pace, but if you follow their timetable, you will be part of chat rooms with a community of MOOCs. I love them as a student. I study them.

And the thing I love is you're getting comments from Malaysia, and the United States, Germany, and you're part of this international community of learners. And I just love that sense of being part of something that big. You've got a lot of flexibility over when you study and how much time you spend studying.

And that, broadly, on MOOCs, is the kind of experience-- a lot of people are MOOCs-- a lot of people sign up for MOOCs and never, ever finish them. And the great thing about a MOOC is that is absolutely fine. It's based on the assumption that most people will never finish it. It's informal learning. It's not formal learning. It's not like your degree studies, where you need to keep up to date as best you can and make sure you complete it. It's there to dip in and out of.

KAREN FOLEY: And a lot of people who tend to go on MOOCs are people who have done a lot of higher education and want to know a little bit more, maybe about something specific, isn't it? But you mentioned before the OU's position as part of FutureLearn. Could you just briefly mention-- because we've got these two massive MOOCs which are very, very popular and successful. How does it work in terms of a university being a lead educator? Because there are obviously lots and lots of other MOOCs, aside from the ones that the OU and social sciences are involved with.

SUE HEMMINGS: FutureLearn is a separate platform, and you get stuff from lots of different places. There's one MOOC that I love about academic integrity. And it's quite a small MOOC. It's only four weeks. And it comes from one of the New Zealand universities.

And that's there on FutureLearn, that people can sign up for. And that's when I say to people, have a look at that in your gap between, actually. Because that-- there are other ones about writing academic English that University of Reading have done,

University of East Anglia. They're also there. And that also-- it's important to maintain that sense that we're not just part of a module, or our qualification, or even The Open University. We're part of this much bigger enterprise about education, globally.

So I would say, do have a look on the FutureLearn ones. Do notice how much time they're suggesting you spend on them. Don't get distracted from your module studies. I'm going to have to keep saying that.

KAREN FOLEY: Exactly. But do encourage your friends and family, I guess, as well too, to have a look at these things. Sue, there's so much to talk about and so little time. But thank you so much for coming

on. That's been so insightful. I know there's been an awful lot of chat. Do have a look at OpenLearn at FutureLearn. You can plow your way through all of that. But as Sue says, don't get distracted.

And also we would really like to know how you've experienced this event. And there is a survey tab. So if you would like to, during the break or after the event, click on the survey and tell us all about your experience.

You can do that by going back to the website and filling in the very short questionnaire. We really do value it. I hope we've shown you, with all the selfies on the board and things, how much we listen to what our audience is saying. But we'd love to hear about your experience, so please do fill that in.

And to reiterate the purpose of all of this, we're going to show a short video now about polls and why they're important. And so hopefully, that will encourage you to take the survey as well. But we'll be back in five minutes for our last question and answer session. We've got loads of questions that we still haven't covered, and this time, we're going to be specifically aiming this at new starters. So stay with us, and we'll be back in about five minutes.

[MUSIC PLAYING]