

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Hi, and welcome back to Student Connections. Well, I am sorry if any of you got kicked out beforehand. Someone said something very naughty-- no, I'm only joking.

[LAUGHTER]

We had a little technical problem. So those of you who are watching the live and interactive option, it may have dropped out from the live stream. Hopefully everyone's coming back in now. And don't forget, if that does happen to you because of the internet and various things, do just log back in, and you should be able to join in and reconnect with the room.

And I should just mention that we know a lot of you are watching on the Watch Only button. If you would like to see what we're talking about in the chat and how you can get your comments into the studio, do go on and choose the Live and Interactive red button. You can get an OUCU, Open University Computing Username. That's just basically like filling in your name and details, and they're free and very, very easy to get.

So you can see that on our Frequently Asked Questions section of the website. It does make it a lot more enjoyable. You can vote on the widgets and, of course, put your comments in the chat-- and most interestingly, see what everybody else is saying. So do give that a go, if you haven't already.

Right. Now, because we dropped out and we had some amazing selfies, before I'm joined by Siobhan from the Career Service, I'd like to just go back to the Social Media Desk. Because we had some fabulous selfies that are coming through, and I just-- sorry if you've seen these before. I'm so chuffed, and I wanted to see them again. And if you haven't sent one into us and you would like to, let us know how you're watching the conference and send that us on Twitter, #SCC15-- we'll see it on the board in a second-- or connections@open.ac.uk. HJ and Rachel, what's happening?

HJ: Yeah, well, we did show some selfies earlier, but the postman had to redeliver them because of our technical problem.

KAREN FOLEY: Let's do the joke again.

[LAUGHTER]

[DING]

HJ: Ah, there you go. There's the ping. There we go. Let's have a look in our-- oh, hang on. There's a little note there. It's not--

KAREN FOLEY: Not another technical hitch?

HJ: Oh, what-- oh, he said he had some problems earlier getting it to us.

RACHEL: Must be-- "left the password in a safe place."

HJ: And apparently "safe place" is a plant pot these days, so--

RACHEL: So you're going to have to go and find it?

HJ: Yeah. Oh! Well, there's one right here.

[LAUGHTER]

Magically appears.

KAREN FOLEY: Ah, there. Lovely.

RACHEL: I wish he wouldn't.

HJ: This envelope here, let's have a look, though. At least they got to us. That's the main thing. We might have to talk with our postman, though, about his definition of a safe place.

RACHEL: Who have we got?

HJ: Let's have a look. Well, we've got Gareth. Great to see Gareth. He has been chatting a lot, which is absolutely fantastic. And he's very good at encouraging other people to chat, and he's got a lot of thoughtful input into a lot of these sessions, so we appreciate Gareth. And we popped him up on our social network for our update. Where's Gareth popped through on MyFace? There we go.

RACHEL: We don't have the pointy stick.

HJ: We don't have the pointy stick. There we go. Who else have we got? We've got Rowena,

who's been popping up, as well. It's good to see Rowena there, and she sent in a lovely selfie, as well, for MyFace. And who have you got there?

RACHEL: And I have Claire from Weymouth. So Weymouth is down there. So fantastic. We're not going to give [? Leigh ?] too much publicity, are we? We've been sharing selfies all day.

We've had some lovely comments coming through from you guys at home about watching the Live Stream version of the event. It just wasn't the same without the chat. So it's great to see that everybody is at home, engaging in some chat.

And just to let everybody at home who is at home, we have some careers advisors in this one, answering your questions. So if you see somebody come along and answer your question, it's going to be some handy advice for you guys.

HJ: The professionals have come in and know their stuff. So yeah, we're expecting some great questions.

RACHEL: But still send us your selfies, please.

HJ: Oh, yes, we love them. Or selfies of your animals. Some people-- I've been told some people aren't shaven, so they're not all proper for selfies. So if not, we've got all our study buddies, which take the form of cats and dogs and all other things, so yeah.

RACHEL: Anyway, we'll let you get on with it. Otherwise, we'll be talking all day.

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you. Well, it's great to see all of those. Thank you for sending those in. And I think we're trying to get a picture of that on the faculty Facebook page, which I should mention as well. We have a Friday Thinker going on there-- which incidentally, I've invited Eddie to come along tomorrow to Student Connections to talk about that very topic.

So if you get bored after we've finished this session, you might want to go and have a look at the faculty Facebook page-- that's the Open University Social Sciences Facebook page-- and have a look there. And we'll try and get a picture of this MyFace map up there, so you can all see yourselves.

Well, without much further ado, because we've got an awful lot to get on through, thank you for joining me, Siobhan. And thank you for Roz and Kathy at home, who as Rachel says, are going to be answering your questions. I want to talk about what the Careers Service do

generically. But if you've got questions at home, do put those in the chat box, and HJ and Rachel will collate those. And the ones that aren't answered or that are coming up a lot, I'm going to ask Siobhan if you can try and answer those as well.

But could you just introduce the idea? What does the service do? We've heard about the library and what fabulous things they do. What do Careers do?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Yeah, well, basically we offer a range of support services to students, no matter what stage of your career planning and what you're thinking about. That can really help you, thinking about what your skills and your strengths are so, therefore, how you can present that best to an employer or for further study. We can give practical advice and help preparing a CV, doing an application form.

So in terms of where you can get that help, we have a Careers Advisory Service website that students can access, which has got loads of resources and information and links. We also have customised careers content on your qualification site, which, as I say, has been adapted according to your particular qualification. So it really shows the kind of careers that you might go into from your qualification and the employees that are specific to the area, and so on.

But in addition to that, we also have a range of forums that we run and OU Live sessions that are obviously run, and they're all recorded. And they range from things like how to prepare for interview; again, CV; how to get into teaching, and so on. So there's absolutely loads out there for everybody, whatever stage you're at in thinking about your career planning.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Because in the chat, everyone's feeding in their career aspirations and what they want to do. And we know, of course, that many people choose to study with the OU while they're working, to change careers. And I guess that's why it's so important that the OU have this service there for people.

Tell us, then, from a social science perspective, people-- you know, we've got a lot of new students out here, as well. When should people be starting to think about this whole thing?

SIOBHAN FLINT: I think the sooner the better, really. I'd say one of the top tips is really start your career planning as early as you can. Because it's important, as they say, to really take the time to use the tools to identify your skills and your strengths. Maybe there's some gaps that you have that you might need to work on a little bit.

But allow yourself time to do that research, explore, perhaps using our site and the Prospects

graduate site, as well, what different careers involve. What's the entry requirements? What's the training? And also, with that, it will allow you time, perhaps, to gain some work experience, which a lot of employers want, as well. So it allows you time to explore that option and to gain that, so that you can offer that when you apply for jobs and for other study in the future.

KAREN FOLEY: Tell me, then-- because I remember when I first started studying psychology a long, long time ago, I thought, I'm going to be a clinical psychologist, as I know many psychology students do. And I thought, right, that's fine, and I knew what I had to do, and then I did all of that.

And then life happened and stuff, and then all of a sudden, when I told my friend about it, he said, but you're old now, Karen. And I was like, oh, yeah. And I calculated, and actually a lot of years had gone by since I was trying to do X, Y, and Z.

But I remember myself thinking there was something very, very definite I wanted to do. And whilst I had all that careers advice and support there around that, actually, the reality of it was being a clinical psychologist wasn't what I really wanted to do. It was something I thought I wanted to do and I built up.

How does the Careers Service manage those sorts of things, where maybe people think, well, this is what I want to go about doing? How do you make sure people are happy in that sort of role? And what about when there's flexibility and changes going on?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Again, I think it's really-- we do offer one-to-one advice and support as well. So you can contact a Careers advisor for one-to-one help. But I would recommend, before you do that, as I said, to really use the tools that we have on our site to think about your skills and your strengths and research the different career opportunities. Some ideas that you have already, but by doing Adult Directions, for example, on the website, that may throw up some careers you haven't thought of before.

So we all sometimes maybe stick with what we know or what we've heard about and so on. So again, it's making sure you take the time to explore the range of options that are out there. We have, for example, done an OU Live on what you can do with your psychology degree, which kind of really shows that yes, there's professional psychology positions you can pursue, but there's also a range of careers, like IT, marketing, HR, finance, that really, the majority of careers are open to graduates of any discipline. So that's the kind of key thing to remember, I think.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, we're going to the Social Media Desk, because there's all sorts of-- I know people are talking about their various qualifications. And work experience, like you're mentioning, is one hot potato at the moment. HJ and Rachel, tell us what people are saying. And then Siobhan, maybe you can give us a steer on how people might then go and find out where they could look for work experience.

HJ: Yeah, yeah, there is a lot of questions coming up about work experience. In order to still get that practical aspect of what they're studying in theory and actually apply it-- which is always a great thing to do, to see what you're learning being put into practise.

So some people are wondering if there's sort of a good time during the degree that you would start to get some work experience, maybe when you've got a bit of knowledge behind you. And other people are going, well, where do I start with finding work experience? Because I just don't know. I want to do it, but I just have no idea where to start.

SIOBHAN FLINT: Sure. They're great questions. So yeah, I would say, again, the earlier, the better, when you've got an idea. It allows you time to explore that career further, and then obviously to think, well, is this something I really want to pursue and take further study in, and so on? Or actually, maybe it's not quite my thing. There might be something related to that that I might pursue instead. So it allows that bit of time for exploration.

But again, the key with work experience is sometimes developing a range, of breadth, of work experience in different settings. For example, if you want to do clinical psychology, it's best to get experience in a range of different environments, rather just focusing on one. Or again, if you want to be a teacher, for example, and in terms of how to go about setting up work experience, that could be as simple as approaching, perhaps, a local school to where you live, in terms of being accessible for you to get to on a regular basis, to get some experience, to see what it's like in the classroom and to get some real experience working with teachers and children. But the important thing is that you're able to then reflect on what you've learned about it and what you would do in teaching, and so on.

So besides approaching, perhaps, employers or schools or whatever is appropriate to what you want to do, there is also website called Do It that you can look on, in terms of voluntary work and work experience. And there's also-- and we have, on the Careers Advisory Service site, called JobZone, which is our online vacancy service, which has paid opportunities but also some voluntary work and work experience, as well. So again, there's lots of different ways

you can go about it. But I know it's sometimes hard to know where to start, isn't it.

KAREN FOLEY: Exactly, and I think especially in things like clinical psychology, where there's a really rigorous criteria, a lot of competition, just to even get the free work placements and things like that. What's your sort of taken, then, on people going and talk to people in the profession and maybe seeing where they can offer some of their skills and things? How would you advise students maybe look at that, talking to people who are actually in the roles that they aspire to doing?

SIOBHAN FLINT: I would definitely encourage people to do that. Because again, it's another way of finding out exactly what the job involves and talking to a range of people. For example, it could be a counsellor, if you want to be a counsellor, for example, who may work in a college, for example. That may deal with different, slightly, kinds of clients, if you like, for those who deal with drug rehabilitation. So getting that kind of knowledge of the breadth of different places that people might work. So I would definitely encourage people to do that as much as possible, alongside, as I say, researching things online to find out more.

KAREN FOLEY: And of course, networking is so important. Because whilst you can do the work experience, things like counselling require very specific skills. So you may not be able to go out and do that, as such. But maybe being in those networks, or volunteering for things like the Samaritans or various things, where there are skills and support levels there, might be very useful to people, as well.

SIOBHAN FLINT: Definitely, yeah. As I say, the key thing is often being able to do the experience or gain the knowledge and so on, being be able to reflect on that and being able to explain, in an application form or at an interview, what you've learned and what you've gained from that work experience.

KAREN FOLEY: And that's a really good point. Because one of the things I really love about the materials-- you've mentioned the Careers Advice Service and how people can access that. The thing I like is that it's got this whole toolkit. I mean, as a psychologist, I love filling in all these forms and reflecting on things. And it's really nice, the way that you've structured a lot of this, so that you are asking people. Because they can go and see someone who can tell them what to do.

And actually, like you say, reflection and thinking, OK, I may like that job title, but do I like doing that particular work? Do I like doing those behaviours that would constitute that role every day? It's really important.

So talk us through some of those forms or those templates that you sort of guide people through, in that way of thinking about their career.

SIOBHAN FLINT: Again, there's different ways. As I said, there's Adult Directions on the site. Again, that is really asking series of questions about what you would and wouldn't like in a job. And then it brings up a list of job ideas that might suit you. Not to be taken as the only jobs you could always ever do in your life, but they're often a starting point that might confirm some ideas you have. Might help you to think of other ideas you haven't thought of before.

But besides that, I would-- again, on the qualification site, there is on there-- we have mapped employability skills, which are the kind of key skills that employers are looking for, like teamwork, communication, time management, and so on. We've mapped them to your learning outcomes.

So I think trying to make it more explicit to students that from your studies, you are developing these skills that employers want. Yes, you're getting your degree, but the other aspect is that you're developing a wide range of skills which are transferable to lots of possible different career areas. But it's making that connection, really, between the two, I think, is sometimes-- and that they can use different aspects of their studies as evidence that they've got those skills.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. A lot of people online are talking about volunteering and that whole idea of actually getting in and doing something. What's your take on that? How useful is that, in terms of seeing how you might fit in a career?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Again, I think it's a fantastic way of getting experience and seeing actually what an industry or a particular job is like. Again, for some people who may not have, for example, worked for a period of time for different reasons, it's a good way of getting an up-to-date reference, as well.

And I think another aspect-- it gives a real confidence booster, usually, to a person, in terms of, you know, I'm contributing something, but I'm getting something back. And by doing that, it's going to help me to move forward into whatever next step I want to take, as well. So there's quite a lot of different aspects to it, I think, but I would definitely encourage people to take it up and pursue it as much as they can, so.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. We've spoken a lot about people changing careers and how they might move from

here to there. And I'd like to talk a little bit about what people can do, in terms of maybe their transferable skills at the moment. So we've been talking earlier today about how we pick up various things-- being able to structure an argument, how the social sciences help you think differently. And you learn all these skills that you might be able to apply in your current role and add value where you're at, at the moment, before you end up changing career.

Can you tell us a little bit about how people might sort of sell those skills? Because I think one of the problems with these things, CV writing and all that sort of thing, is we're often our own worst salespeople. So how can Careers help people recognise what skills they have and realise how marketable they are?

SIOBHAN FLINT: It's interesting you say that. As you say, one aspect is career changes or starters. But actually, one [INAUDIBLE] people have gained from their studies, obviously, is developing within their career. I'm just recently researching some case studies of OU students and graduates. And one person in particular that I'm putting some information together has told us a fantastic, very inspiring story, that within the short while that they've been studying at the OU, the last two years, within that time, I think they've moved up their position like five levels or something. So in terms of an actual higher-level post, if you like, but with that has gained more confidence and knowledge in report writing, communicating in terms of managing a meeting and so on, and working with colleagues.

But again, I think the way we can help-- we have, as I say, the resources to help you to think about that yourself. But in terms of taking that a stage further, I would recommend perhaps taking up the offer of a one-to-one appointment with a Careers advisor. Which again, you can do that by looking at our website to contact a Careers advisor. And that could be face-to-face or by Skype or by email, whatever works best for you. But with that, we can give individual, tailored advice to you and help you to really explore and identify what you've done, what you can use as evidence, as skills, and how that may apply to different jobs you're interested in, and so on.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. So in addition to all the forms and things you can do, you can also book a one-to-one on the phone with a Careers advisor, and then they can help talk through those things. And that's open to all students and also those who've studied in the last year, is it?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Yes, it's open to all current students and for up to three years after you graduate.

KAREN FOLEY: Three years, brilliant.

SIOBHAN FLINT: So, yep.

KAREN FOLEY: That's an excellent service. I'd like to go to the Social Media Desk. I know there's been a lot of chat going on. Where's everyone at?

RACHEL: Well, firstly, there are so many links being shared. Kathy and Roz are doing a fantastic job at directing students and answering questions in the feed.

It's just one thing that we wanted to say-- if you're watching via the Live Stream rather than via the Connections website, get yourself over to connections.kmi.open.ac.uk, particularly if you're an Open University student. Because you're missing out on all of this advice that's coming through, and it really is a packed stream. So you'll be able to scroll back and look at those links.

HJ: Yeah, and we have got a lot of questions coming through, and of course, they're answering them really well. But one good question, I think, that came up-- because there's lots of different options, in social sciences, of what to study. And Diana brought up a point earlier which links to what benefits can you get from doing different subjects with a degree-- so combined subjects, or doing social science with an Open degree? And how do employers view that?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Again, I suppose the important thing with your studies is always pursue something you're interested in, because you're going to obviously do better in that, obviously. I think it would be important to check out-- do you need certain elements for a particular career? That is usually quite, I suppose, specified, if you like, particularly something like psychology. It has to be BPS-accredited, and so on. But overall, I think the main thing is to do things that you're interested in, you're good at, and check out what's appropriate to your chosen career, so.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, thank you very much, Siobhan, for coming on.

SIOBHAN FLINT: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you for all the chat and the Social Media Desk. And a big shout-out thank you to Roz and Kathy, who've been doing a fantastic job answering people's questions.

I hope that you found this session really useful. And I think the take-home message is there is a lot of support. It's obviously best to enable yourself to think things through on your own time

and to go and download some of those resources, and spend some time reflecting on what might suit you. But also, there's lots of other interactive options available for you, should you want to discuss those. And it's never too early to start thinking about your career and changing that.

Well, Siobhan, thank you very, very much for coming along.

SIOBHAN FLINT: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: So what we're going to do now is we're going to go have some food. Ravenous! We're going to have a little break.

But before we do that, I'm going to play a PodMag, which is an audio. We're going to leave the chat open for a little bit longer, and then we're going to cut it. And we're going to come back onto the live chat about half past 5:00, for our evening session tonight, where we've got a really interesting talk on online internet infidelity, and also a big conversation about public spending, which I'm really looking forward to.

So that's on this evening. But as part of the Student Connections initiative, we have an audio magazine called a PodMag, which I present with a range of people in the faculty, and we talk about lots of news. And this was the June edition, which I particularly liked.

So we're going to play that for you now. So please do chat. Remember, questions, send those to us in the chat. Email us-- connections@open.ac.uk. I Remember to tweet us your pictures and selfies so we can update our social media board, and that is at #SCC15.

Don't forget there's an online Friday Thinker going on on the faculty Facebook page this afternoon that we'll be talking about tomorrow, as well. So you might like to get some ideas for that. But that's all from HJ, Rachel and I, and Siobhan, and we will see you tonight at 6:00. See you then.

[MUSIC PLAYING]