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KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live. Well, I hope you're having a good time in the chat. We are certainly having a really, really good time here in the studio. My name's Karen, for those of you who've just joined. And our next session is going to be all about careers. And I've got two fabulous colleagues from the Careers Advisory Service here. We're going to talk about making 2017 the year for your career.

Now, not many people know that when you join up to the Open University, you also get access to a lot of other support. And one of these is the career service, which offer a wealth of support for you in your studies. And it's one of the benefits of being an Open University student.

We also have sessions from the library who are coming along later tonight. And you can find out all about how they can support you. But now let's take a look at careers. I'm joined by Chandni and Emma. Thank you for coming into the studio today.

We're going to look at three key areas in this session. So we're going to look at job hunting and finding relevant experience, networking, things like LinkedIn, and also what careers advice and support are available for OU students. So you'll see some widgets appearing on the screen. We'd like you to fill those in please. Two of those are word clouds.

So if you can think of one, two, or three things, you can enter those into which organisations would you like to work for, what do you want to know from employers. If you can only think of one or two, though, just put a full stop, and then those entries will send. There's also a balance scale there about whether or not you use LinkedIn. So let us know your thoughts on that.

OK. So job hunting and finding relevant experience. I mean, for many students starting studying, this is going to be the beginning of a study journey, and they're going to think, oh, I don't have time to look at things now. But starting to think about how you might use your Open University degree or even employability skills as part of your career can be really useful to do right at the beginning as well as, it's never too late to start, obviously. But you'd argue it's quite important to do at the beginning.

CHANDNI BHANA: Yes. Definitely. You can access our service this right from the beginning of your studies. And there's lots of things that you can actually engage in. So you mentioned about employability skills, starting to think about all the skills that you've gained through studying, whether you're working or whether you do external activities, these are all good skills to sort of recognise and order that so you can transfer them into the workplace.

EMMA LAWS: Yes. I would agree. And also, a lot of our students have indicated that they'd like to start gaining experience in their chosen area of interest from the point at which they start studying. We would say that's another area that we can support with. It's not just what you do after you've gained your degree. It's what kind of experience you can gain while you're studying as well.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Excellent. So what can students do then, in terms of trying to sort of add things into their studying? Identify the skills, you said, and also gaining experience.

EMMA LAWS: Yeah. As part of the career service, we support our students' career ambitions, and part of that has also been demonstrating the fact that we've got an employee engagement team as well, as part of the career service. So I'm just going to demonstrate one area that they can start using to gain experience, and that's something called JobZone.

So that's our own vacancy service, our online vacancy service that is provided by Graduate Prospects. And they can access graduate roles and also graduate schemes, internships, placements, et cetera, using that resource. So they should definitely sign up for that. You can do that via the careers website.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. So I guess you'd enter, then, the areas that were of interest to you. Would you get notifications, then, when things came up?

EMMA LAWS: That's exactly right, yes. And you can choose different sectors or different job titles or types. And then every time something new comes up, you can be alerted to that. So it's also a tracker for whilst you're studying, because even if you haven't fully decided on what you want to do, you can use it as a prompt. You know, that's interesting that those kinds of roles are coming up here, or there seems to be a boom in that sector. You can kind of get market intel by sort of doing this more, easy job hunting, basically.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, and getting an idea about things that are coming up and the frequency, as well.

EMMA LAWS: Exactly. It's a bit more passive. But you're still getting that kind of information as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. I should also mention, by the way, that we've got Lynn and Fiona in the chat who are both from the career service. So do throw any questions at them, and they'll hopefully be able to answer those also for you.

OK. So with regards to, then, the job hunting and finding experience, people might register the jobs. How else might you support them with identifying some of the skills that may be important for their jobs?

CHANDNI BHANA: You can talk to us about the skills that you've gained through your study, but also through volunteering work or work experience that you do. They're, again, important skills that you are gaining through studying as well.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Thank you. So part of this, there's also a lot of other things which we'll come onto in terms of what people can access from the career service. But you've also asked us to look at LinkedIn as well. So we've had the results from the poll. And 56% of people are using LinkedIn. 44% aren't. Why have you asked this question? Why is LinkedIn an important thing to consider when you're looking at careers?

CHANDNI BHANA: When I graduated, I did go into LinkedIn, and I did create an account. But I kind of just left it there. So I do recognise sometimes students can create a LinkedIn account and then think, oh, what do I do with it? But it's a perfect platform to do networking.

We know our students are studying distance learning, but you can start networking from the comfort of your own home. You can do lots of activities on there to support your career.

So things could be company research, finding out updates that's happening to your sector. There's an excellent OU alumni tool on the Open University page. I think about 180,000 plus alumni are on there. Find out what previous students have done. It's just a really, really great tool. Also, you can find jobs as well. So it's another platform to sort of search for opportunities.

So we've also got a really great careers network LinkedIn group. So it would be interesting to hear if current students are registered with us. It is a really great platform. It's a very safe platform to ask questions about your career, anything that is concerning you or a factor that you want to discuss. So a recent conversation we had was about being a mature student and entering the job market. And that's generated quite a lot of interest. So you know, please do come there and share your ideas or even ask questions. So I definitely think it's a really good platform to sort of engage in.

Not only that, we do also share job alerts as well. So there's another platform to find about vacancies. And we just share up-to-date news and topics about our careers. So definitely engage in that conversation because it's really relevant to your studies.

KAREN FOLEY: So this is a closed group. And you would access this, then, from the career service from your student home page. And you could link in and then start feeding into some of these discussions or even just watching what's happening.

CHANDNI BHANA: That's right. Hopefully my colleagues will be posting the link to the group so you can just go onto that link and register or request to join. But if not, you can always contact us and say I'm really interested in this group. How do I find out more?

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Excellent. I'm sure they will do that in the chat as well. So we've asked people as well which organisations they'd like to work for and what sorts of things they want to know from employers. And I'm getting a sense that so many students, increasingly nowadays, are studying with the Open University to change careers and are actively looking at that. And they might have an idea about who they might want to work for or questions and things they want to know from employers.

But my experience also with tutoring is that sometimes people will start and have very fixed ideas about what they may want to do or deliver from their degree, and then they'll start working and think, actually, I really like doing this or things can sort of change and be fluid as they go through. Do students need to have a clear indication of what they're aiming for to contact you? And how much do you support them when things might change?

CHANDNI BHANA: Absolutely. You don't need to have a plan in place. You don't have to have a clear idea. That's what we're here for. We will provide support and guidance whether you have a vague idea of what you would like to do or maybe it's just starting right from the beginning and thinking let's look at your skills. Let's look at your interests and see the potential of what it can do. So don't feel that you need to come with an idea. Definitely not. That's what we're here for. We will provide you that guidance to help you with your career goals.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Before we go and talk a little bit further about that, I'd like to see with Sophie and HJ on the Hot Desk what sorts of things people are talking about.

SOPHIE: We have lots of nice things going on, apart from the obvious quiz frustrations that me and Evaghn are battling over. But people are coming up with some really good careers. So Jordan, he wants to be a film script writer. Davin wants to be a software developer. You've got Noelle who wants to go into teaching, and potentially at the OU. She likes the idea of teaching adults. And you've also got Stuart. He is looking at being a vulcanologist. So I'm hoping he would account for Hazel Rymer later. She is, obviously, a vulcanologist. She'll be on later on today.

HJ: And we've got the careers advisors in the chat, as well. They've been super helpful, as always. And I've gone for advice with CV. And I got so much great help, which was nice. And there's so many ways that's been suggested to help us, which is fantastic.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, that's lovely to hear. Thank you. And do keep those questions coming in the chat. And let us know what you think of careers. I'd like to see which organisations people would like to work for. Shall we see if we can pull up the voting for that and see what sorts of things people are saying? Right. So we've got the National Health Service. The Open University is a big one. Google. Some really big companies, here. Universities, human rights, Oxfam, Innocent, Hollywood film industry. That sounds exciting. Pharmacy, mind.

So some very fixed ideas and some very generic ideas, as well, about particular companies. How much of it, in your experience, is to do with a vocation or even an idea of industry or a particular brand? Some people might want to work for Innocent, for example, and may be less clear about things but will go to somebody because they like the ethos of that company.

EMMA LAWS: Yeah. I think people do have a fixed idea in their minds of who they think would be a good organisation to work with. And a lot of the larger companies have a lot more marketing budget to spend on advertising their graduate schemes and roles to the wider world. So some of these organisations are ones that we are concentrating on working with and trying to promote opportunities to students with as well.

I would take this opportunity just to remind students as well that there is also sort of what we call SMEs or Small to Medium-sized Enterprises, or supply-chain companies, which are also really good options for graduate roles and also work experience and internships. And these organisations aren't as well known of but actually have just as good opportunity.

So looking at your smaller locations, a lot of those large organisations that we saw, they tend to be headquartered in London or down south. So if you're in a more rural location or somewhere not so close to London, then it's worth looking for those smaller companies as well for opportunities. And LinkedIn is a great resource to try and connect with some of those people in those organisations as well.

KAREN FOLEY: It's a really good point you make, because I think sometimes, like you say, you can have these fixed ideas, and what's really useful is sometimes exploring some of those skills or things that you could be doing. And I know when I was looking at the resources that you've got on the website, there's some great things to actually think about. What are some of the things I like doing? And where might those things be best applied?

Because sometimes we can have ideas but actually, often it's not when you're in your dream job that you actually think, I never thought I'd be doing this, but I really, really love it. So it can be important to think about who you're working with, what sort of things you're doing, how much contact you're having to do with various sorts of parts of that role.

CHANDNI BHANA: Yeah. I think it's about reflecting on all the different experiences. If you have worked before, what did you take from that? What did you enjoy? And going forward, do you want to use that? So they're the things that we can discuss with students and find out where would you like your career to sort of go. So that is a valid point.

KAREN FOLEY: I think, if we can turn now to how people might access some of this, because I know that's going to be a question that people will want to know. And while Sophie and Fiona are doing a great job in the chat, it would be great to outline, then, some of the options that students can actually go to seek support and how that support might look.

EMMA LAWS: I'm just going to put my website on there.

CHANDNI BHANA: So this is the shot of our careers and employability website. So you can find our website on the student home page. So you can go there. And what I would like to mention is that our resources are very comprehensive. It's not just all reading material. We have got some excellent interactive tools on there, which we'll just show in a moment. But we have historic forums and webinars and live webinars as well. Cater to all different areas, whether it's thinking about opportunities with your subject as well as looking up case studies as well. Students are very interested to hear what previous students have done. So lots and lots of tools on there.

And as you can see here, I just wanted to point out our CV builder tool. So these tools are more about how do I do something. So it's not just reading advice. But you can go onto this tool and actually create an up-to-date CV and download it in two different formats as well, so whether that's for work experience or for that graduate job. It tailors different learning styles as well. So we've got videos on there and examples, too, audio clips as well.

Another one of our tools is the interview training. So again here, another practical tool where you can actually practise interviews, whether you do a timed interview or you can pick the questions there, again, supporting you along that way. So I think some really good tools that you can actually access there.

EMMA LAWS: Can I just add something as well, Chan? So also you'll see a video hub up there. A lot of the videos in there are from employers as well. So something we're really trying to do is demonstrate what employers are looking for by including their voice in the student journey. So again, that's why we're asking what do you want to know from employers, because we want to take those questions to them and try and find out that information for students directly.

KAREN FOLEY: We'll take a look at that widget very soon. So if you haven't filled out what do you want to know from employers, please do. And if it's only one or two things, just put a full stop in there, and then you can submit your answers. This is such an important thing, because I think so many Open University students aren't aware of how valuable studying with the Open University is from an employer's perspective.

I've heard so many people say it's brilliant time management. You're often dealing with multiple things. You're having to use your initiative. You're having to source various things, digital literacy. There are so many of these skills that people don't realise they're acquiring through their OU study. And so being able to identify and label those is great. But what are some of the things, then, that employees are saying that they're wanting, and how might OU study be important in that side of things?

EMMA LAWS: So we do get a lot of information around this. And again, using resources like LinkedIn are really helpful for understanding what employees are looking for. But they do have a set of employability skills, don't they, Chan?, that they look for. And it tends to be the transferable skills. So I think it is more about a willingness to learn, a growth mindset rather than a specific, tangible skill, because that can be learned.

So if you've got two individuals, one of whom can demonstrate that they're really willing to learn and they want to try their best and contribute and they can communicate and work well in a team, and you've got someone who's got a hard skill, like I can use this computer programme but none of those other employability skills, then it's not that difficult a choice, really, between the two. You would go for someone who's got more potential, say. It tends to be sort of communication, teamwork, interpersonal skills, IT to a certain extent.

CHANDNI BHANA: There's some research which suggests there're certain skills that all employees look for, so that's the ones that Emma was mentioning. And then you'll get sets of specific skills as well, so IT skills, which you talked about, digital skills. So yeah, you can go specific as well as general.

KAREN FOLEY: And those are all very broad things. And what's so nice about OU study is you can actually demonstrate some of those skills by what you've done. So communication, collaboration, you can say, well, I did this as part of a group activity. I was doing this on the forum. I was using my digital literacy to do X, Y and Z. And you can equate tangible examples to some of those skills to demonstrate how you've met them through your OU study.

EMMA LAWS: Absolutely. And I think also in terms of employability skills, OU students rank quite highly amongst employers, which is really encouraging for us as an institution, but also for perspective and existing students to see.

KAREN FOLEY: Let's see what people said, then, in terms of what they want to know from employers.

EMMA LAWS: Yes, this will be helpful.

KAREN FOLEY: So lots of things here. Some things that we might expect, like pay, opportunities, support, flexibility, what experience they're after, I assume that means, conditions. But some other areas here as well that are interesting, ethical policy, working hours. How important are some of these things that aren't so evident in terms of ads that are coming out for people to find out about when they're looking at prospective employers?

EMMA LAWS: I think of all of those are valid points, really. Reviewing them, I think there was sort of a combination of what can I expect when I get a full-time job to what kind of things can employers tell me to look at while I'm studying? But I think all of those are valid.

Some of the larger employers will have policies around things like what's fair in terms of hiring people and,

CHANDNI BHANA: Equality and diversity.

EMMA LAWS: Equality and diversity, exactly, yeah. But I think there's been a huge movement in that sector in recent times. Big employers like PWC and Ernst and Young, they no longer take into consideration A-level UCAS points or degree classifications, because they recognise that that doesn't necessarily dictate what your potential is, so.

CHANDNI BHANA: Sort of increasing the diversity initiatives there. With the ethical side, it's about just exploring that company to see where are they coming from? What do they believe in? So that kind of thing. You can find that out through a variety of methods. And we can support students to research that as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. So the things, then, that students, for making 2017 the year of their career, in particular for students who might be thinking, yes, but I'm six years away from finishing my OU degree if they're just starting out, some of the things that we've talked about are things like updating your CV, having different CVs, then, for different occasions so you've got one that you can use to look out for work experience or other sorts of work and using the skills builder to look at that, looking at the interview training and thinking about which transferable skills you've acquired from OU studies and how you can demonstrate and map those onto your CV, and also thinking about the job market and keeping an eye on that and building profiles and networks.

Those are brilliant things for people to start doing. And I once read this book and he said, unless you're doing one little thing every day, you might as well throw that plan out the window. And it doesn't need to be every day, but it's about slowly moving forward and making steps towards that change. And even if you change tangents, moving forwards is better than staying static, isn't it? What would be some of the key things that people can do right now in terms of accessing things that are going to get that moving on that trajectory to changing careers?

EMMA LAWS: The consultation.

CHANDNI BHANA: Yeah.

EMMA LAWS: So I'm just going to put that out there.

CHANDNI BHANA: Yeah. We do offer individual one-to-one support for students. And the way that they can access that is we do have a web forum where they can ask for a careers consultation. And you can speak to a careers adviser on a one-to-one basis and talking and exploring a little bit more about your situation. So you mentioned things like they're working. They may have children. So there's a lot of factors to consider when you're thinking of making a career change or developing your career. And you may just need some space just to talk that through. So definitely do come to us to discuss those things.

And in terms of your question about one of the things they could do, I would definitely recommend networking, because that's a bit more of a slow process to do. And it can take a bit of time just to establish contacts, to establish a network, and find out who these companies

are and who are some professionals that you can approach. So that's something that I would say is an ongoing thing that students can engage with and not just to leave it to the end.

KAREN FOLEY: Wonderful. Chan and Emma, thank you so much for joining us. That's been really useful. Thank you, as well, to Lynn and Fiona who've been in the chat box doing a sterling job there. I hope that's given you some really useful ideas about things that you can go away and do right now and that the Careers Advisory Service have a lot of ways of supporting you in your study. Sophie and HJ, anything we haven't covered?

SOPHIE: I don't think so. And Davin came up with something really good with LinkedIn, a company that will take your LinkedIn profile and make into a CV, which sounds amazing. It's a good starting point, at least. So there were some good things going on. And we would quite like to put some faces to all of these names, especially the newbies. And our notice board is a little bit empty.

HJ: It is a bit sad.

SOPHIE: So if people could send nice pictures of their study spaces, some study selfies, their study buddies. I know that Noelle has a dog that is currently with her causing her some problems.

HJ: Me, too.

SOPHIE: But yes. So anything that you can send us, send it to an email at studenthub@open.ac.uk. Or you can send it to us on Twitter, [#studenthublive17](https://twitter.com/studenthublive17).

HJ: Well, it seems we are all slightly obsessed by the weather lately as well. Matthew, Noelle, and Ian says it's all raining by them. But she lives in southwest France, so it's relatively sunny there, she says. Perhaps she would like to send us a lovely picture of the sun just to make it a bit brighter for us.

SOPHIE: We can pretend, then.

HJ: We were also talking about all the great resources. So we talked about the careers CV builder. I think we're going to put some up as well, just so we can remember them, because we get so much good advice and stuff. And we're talking about LinkedIn. So if you've got any great study tips or resources you want to share with us as well, we'd like to put them on our board as well.

KAREN FOLEY: I love that idea, Davin, because it's so hard to be objective about yourself sometimes. And to sell yourself is, I think, one of the hardest things to do. So I like that LinkedIn CV builder idea. Be interesting to see how that fits in with the format. And you know, like with all of these things, it's about finding your own way and seeking the support you've got out there.

And don't forget, your tutor is also often working somewhere very interesting. So don't forget to ask your tutor if you're interested in doing something that they may be doing, as well. They might be able to give you some advice also on what those roles involve also.

OK. So thank you very much for joining us today. We're going to have a short video break where Ellen Cocking from the Careers Advisory Service is going to be outlining what the service can offer you. Then we're going to be joined by Peter Horrocks and Hazel Rymer for an update about the Open University and what's going on from their perspective. So we'll see you in about five minutes.

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