

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Hi, and welcome back. In this short session, I'm talking to Terry O'Sullivan, who is an associate lecturer, a full-time academic, and a student at the Open University. And currently he's looking after the Faculty of Business and Law's groundbreaking programme of Massive Open Online Courses, otherwise known as MOOCs.

So Terry, you tell us that your favourite thing about the Open University has to be inspiring students that you get to meet past and present. How, how did they engage in MOOCs, and what's going on with the MOOC programme?

TERRY O'SULLIVAN: Well, I guess if they've got time to engage with MOOCs, I think it's well worth the investment of their time. MOOCs are available for anybody to study. You don't have to be a member of the Open University, but we have a part of the Open University setup is we own an organisation called FutureLearn, which is a MOOC platform. And we have a lot of MOOCs on that platform playing sort of throughout the year.

KAREN FOLEY: Now, how does FutureLearn defer to OpenLearn?

TERRY O'SULLIVAN: OpenLearn is also something that's very much part of the Open University. OpenLearn has been going 10 years this year, in fact. And OpenLearn is where we house our Open Education resources, which aren't necessarily MOOCs. There are things called Badged Open Courses you can do on OpenLearn, which are a bit like MOOCs.

But the main difference is that with a MOOC it's like a course. There's a beginning and an end, and you do it with a number of other people, moving through the weeks, whereas a Badged Open Course or another resource like that on OpenLearn, you can do it really whenever you want to.

KAREN FOLEY: So there's a timeliness--

TERRY O'SULLIVAN: That's right, yeah.

TERRY O'SULLIVAN:

KAREN FOLEY: --with a MOOC and also a sense of a community of learners going across something with some leads. Now, tell us a little bit about Route to Credit then, because this is something that's

quite different in terms of some of the MOOCs that are available.

TERRY

O'SULLIVAN:

Well, this is an innovation we have been working on and launched this year. We're the first university in Europe to do this. And basically what it involves is taking a pre-selected programme, as they're known, of MOOCs on FutureLearn, so you can either do a series of MOOCs that are based, if you like, at a undergraduate level or you can do a series of MOOCs that are based for a postgraduate level.

And the learning that you acquire through these MOOCs is then assessed by a module that you'd register for with the Open University, because the way that things like quality assurance works with the credit framework for the UK is different from the way that MOOC learnings work. So if you want to bring your learning into a credit framework, then you have to basically do it this way. You learn through the MOOCs, and you bring that learning to be assessed at the Open University.

KAREN FOLEY:

OK. And so what are some of the financial implications then in terms of how this might work?

TERRY

O'SULLIVAN:

Well, in a sense, you pay as you go with the MOOC route. For each MOOC that you take, you are assessed in the MOOC itself, and you get something called a Certificate of Achievement, which shows that you can demonstrate a certain amount of learning, and you've also engaged with a minimum amount of the MOOCs content. And for each of those for the undergraduate level, for example, it's 49 pounds per Certificate of Achievement. For the postgraduate level, it's 59 pounds per Certificate of Achievement.

And you bring those, as I say, into the Open University's assessment vehicle, which you also pay a fee for to register, as you would with any other module, and it basically spreads the cost of your learning that way.

KAREN FOLEY:

OK. Excellent. Now, some of these, in particular from the Faculty of Business and Law, would be really useful in terms of boosting employability.

TERRY

O'SULLIVAN:

Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY:

So can you give us an example of something that students might look at that would really help their skill level?

TERRY

Certainly. I think we do have to emphasise as well that you can do the MOOCs individually

O'SULLIVAN: without any credit implications at all. But a very, very good example, I think, of a MOOC that gives you a very quick payoff in terms of employability skills is the one that's currently playing on networking. It's not actually too late to join it. We're in the third week, but it's still not too late to join it.

And the feedback we've had from the learners on the MOOC so far has been that they have found it really, really useful. For example, in helping them to develop a better LinkedIn profile. Some of them have been reporting vastly increased number of hits on their LinkedIn profile through following the kind of advice that we've been providing in the MOOC.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. So some real impact there in terms of networking.

TERRY Absolutely.

O'SULLIVAN:

KAREN FOLEY: Thank you very much, Terry. That's all we've got time for today. But thank you for filling us in on the MOOCs. That sounds really exciting.

TERRY Thank you very much, Karen.

O'SULLIVAN:

[MUSIC PLAYING]