

[MUSIC PLAYING]

INTERVIEWER: Jonquil, thank you for coming back to the *Student Hub*. Now, you're a bit of a regular here, aren't you, which is fantastic.

JONQUIL LOWE: Always a pleasure.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes. And you're going to come to our discussion next week about Brexit, aren't you--

JONQUIL LOWE: I am, yes.

SUBJECT: --which I'm really looking forward to. But in this context, we're going to be talking a little bit about employability and how that links with the faculties. Now, you're a representative from Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. And we've had a lot of students here from FASS, but there are also a lot of other students. So the qualifications and various things that you can look at will all be supported by your faculties. And indeed, the open degree also have a lot of support for students as well.

But we really wanted to talk about the OU Careers and Employability Service. And we've asked students a couple of questions about whether or not they've heard about the OU Careers and Employability Service. So if you could select yes or no to that question on the widgets, which will be changing on your screen-- have you heard of them before? And also, what is your main motivation for studying with the OU?

Now, that Wordle needs three things in it. But you might not be able to think of three things. If you can only think of one or two, just put a full stop for the others. And then you can submit your answers and we can collate them in a lovely big word cloud.

So Jonquil, David was talking-- when we opened this afternoon's sessions-- about goals and being able to identify them. We often have a goal which is a qualification. Is that the right goal? Is that a broad enough goal for the purposes of employability and careers?

JONQUIL LOWE: OK, well, there's nothing wrong with that, certainly. We do ask new students why they're studying. And over 2/3 say they are studying for their career. And of course, a lot of our students are already in work. So they may be looking at career progression or changing career, not simply those students who are at the beginning and looking to their first career. So

career certainly does loom quite large.

But there is absolutely nothing wrong with doing a degree because it's a subject area that you're passionate about. Because you're going to be in work for a very long time, and so it's far better to find an area that you enjoy. And all degrees can lead you to all sorts of different types of employment. So it may be that when you start you're not quite sure what you're going to do with your degree.

But that's fine. And the Career Service, of course, is there to help you sort out what you might do, both to make the most of your degree, but also set yourself on a path that you're actually going to enjoy. There's nothing worse than doing a job you hate.

INTERVIEWER: No, no. Absolutely. And partly, we get these ideas in our head about what qualifications we might want to look at. And in fact, a little plug I must tell you about is on the 16th of May, we're taking three qualifications and we're taking a look at what is actually involved in those qualifications and how we teach them.

So if you're interested in criminology or business or sports science, do tune in for the *Student Hub Live* special on the 16th of May. And we'll fill you in on all of that with some experts as well from the Careers Service. Now, Jonquil, we've just seen with Helen and Peter that there's some great tools that can help students assist with these, And the Careers Service also supports students. Why is it important to consider these things, especially early in your career?

JONQUIL LOWE: OK, well, let's actually look at what we've got available. I'm hoping that I'm doing something here. I'm not sure I am. Yes, I am.

OK, so the Careers Service has a host of tools. I love the tool that you were looking at with Helen and Peter-- really, really useful. And that's all part of it. When you're thinking about your pathway through your degree, then-- the first thing is it's really important to be clear about your goals. And one of the things I like particularly about the Careers Service website is that it's got a lot of help there to help you sort out your goals, where you are at the moment, and how to get from here to where you want to be.

So the first step, obviously, is to find the Careers website. It's really easy to find from your student home page. And there are two ways of getting there. You can either go through the Help Centre or you can just click on this tab up here, Careers.

So I'll show you that one first. That just takes you to a front page with various choices for

things you want to look at. And I think this page is really useful if you've already had a look at the Careers Service and you just want to navigate very quickly to the area that you know that you need to look at.

But if you're new to using the Careers Service, I would go through the Help Centre. And what you get then is a supported journey which will help you find the things that are most relevant to you at the moment. So this is the Help Centre.

You can see Careers and Employability is the second choice down under Step 1, so really easy to find. Step 2, these are actually the categories we saw in the previous screen. But what you've got here, as well, is Step 3, which has got lots of suggestions of the particular areas that you might want to drill down to.

So if you're just starting out thinking about what your goals are, what you might do is select Plan Your Career and click on Career Planning Process. What that will do is take you to this really helpful page, I think. So this has got a model here, a process, suggested process to help you sort out what your goals are.

And the first is know yourself. Now, part of that is taking stock of what skills you've got already. So that tool that Helen and Peter were demonstrating is exactly where you want to be.

INTERVIEWER: And these are the questions that David was encouraging us to ask as well in the first of the afternoon sessions.

JONQUIL LOWE: Yes, very much so. And this page actually-- this is just a screengrab. But this is a really excellent page, because if you scroll down, there's also a really helpful video from one of our careers advisors who takes you through each of these steps.

So it's partly about knowing yourself-- what skills you've got, what it is you want to do. Explore opportunities-- what can you do that falls into those areas you want to-- what I really like about the video, as well, is it stresses be realistic. Because not all of the things that we'd want to do are actually things that will earn you money. And we've all got to survive. So you've got to be a bit realistic about that.

There also may be constraints on your choice. So if you have children and they're at school in the local area, you're probably not going to move to Scotland or Canada for your career. If you've got a mortgage, there's probably a threshold level of earnings that you're going to have

to meet. So it's a little bit balancing up the opportunities with where you are yourself.

Part of that knowing yourself is identifying gaps and thinking about how you might fill those gaps in order to get to the opportunities that you want. And of course, all of that process is partly about deciding what to do. There will be a range of choices open to you. And sometimes making the decision is the hardest part, I think.

And the next bit is to take action. Obviously, if you've decided what you want to do and you're not quite there yet, then what steps have you got to take to get yourself there? And it's a circular process, as we all know. We go through life reviewing where we are, how we get to the next thing that we want to do. So that's a really good process.

And it's also formalised at the OU in something we call Personal Development Planning, PDP. And there are lots of resources, and these are increasingly being built into the modules that you study as well. And PDP is very much the same kind of process. It's identifying your goals, identifying where you want to be, what skills you've had, making a plan. Actions to actually get to where you want to be, but also recording both your goals, the gaps that you've got, how you might fill those gaps, your achievements. And that's really important. I think it's important for a number of reasons.

One is that our goals are often very big goals, and that can be daunting. So in your PDP, you can break those goals down into something more manageable. By recording your achievements, that's really motivating.

We all get down days, don't we? But if you've got this record of what you've achieved so far, go and look at it sometimes. Give yourself a pat on the back and a gold star. You're doing great. And I think that's really important.

What you're also doing when you're recording what you've done-- and this can be a Word document, some other document that you prefer, or you can write it by hand. It doesn't matter. It's what you feel comfortable with.

But when you've got all those achievements in one place, you're also really well placed to write them into a CV or a job application. And you're also practicing articulating the things you've done. And that's really important, making sure that you can express these things in a way that an employer is going to understand. Yes, you've got these skills. It puts you a bit head and shoulders above the other candidates.

INTERVIEWER: We asked people whether they'd heard about the Careers Service, and most of them had. That was at 62%--

JONQUIL LOWE: Brilliant.

INTERVIEWER: --at the last count. People are aware of them. But they may not necessarily be aware of exactly what's on this. So it's really, really helpful to go through it. And we'd also asked about why people studied with the OU.

Now, a lot of these things are about changing careers and directions. But sometimes it's about restoring passion and learning new skills and loving learning. So how relevant, then, might it be for those students who maybe don't have that sort of career drive to start looking at some of this personal development planning? Does it apply to other areas of life that may be useful to look at even if you don't want to change career?

JONQUIL LOWE: Yes, it does. And I think Helen and Peter touched on this as well, that these kind of processes are not just about careers. They're also about your personal goals. This can help you in exactly the same way. And it may be also about unpaid work that you do, volunteering for example. So there are all sorts-- really, any aspect of life where you have a goal and you know you're going to have to work towards it a bit, the PDP process can really, really help. Can I show you some of the other things--

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

JONQUIL LOWE: --on the Careers site? We said earlier that, often, you do start studying because you're passionate about that subject and it isn't necessarily about jobs. But for many, we will have to go out and get a job or we are using the degree to maybe try and get into something we enjoy a bit more, we're a bit more passionate about. So if you're not quite sure at the moment what you're going to do, there's this really useful section which goes degree subject by degree subject, guiding you to what kind of career opportunities you have, who your potential employers might be.

And I don't know how well this one-- so if you clicked from that previous screen onto Social Sciences, then you get a list here of suggestions, of things you might do-- education, central and local government, finance, health and social care, law. So there's a whole host of things.

Now, the Careers site also-- so there's a little link here-- has an arrangement with another

group, a separate group called Prospects. And that also has these great sections. What can I do with my degree? And it's broken down by subject.

So I've put some up here, economics, geography, history, psychology. So you're getting, then, down to quite fine detail about the type of subjects you're studying with all these suggestions of jobs that you might go into. And I think that's a really useful part of the site that you might look at.

Now, a lot of these areas are actually open to the public as well as students. So even when you're not a student, you can come back forever, basically, and have a look at these sections. But there are some parts of the Careers Service which are just for our students. And one I would highlight is you can ask for a careers consultation.

So this is a one-to-one session with our careers advisor. Well, we've got lots. But you would just have a one-to-one session with one advisor who will help you go through this process of making decisions about your career, whether that's looking for your first career or developing the career you've got or changing. It doesn't matter.

You can have this one-to-one session, and you can come back and have another. You might need another later on. Now, that's available if you're registered as a student, but also for three years after you graduate. And I don't think that's always realised, that for up to three years you can come back and use these kind of facilities, which could be very useful.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. What about these webinars and forums? They sound helpful.

JONQUIL LOWE: They are. So the forums in particular-- they're run on a regular basis. They're usually subject-based. They're often quite wide subjects.

So you might have a psychology forum, but you might also have a social sciences, more general forum. Or occasionally there have been forums that are more around particular types of careers, so like teaching. And they typically last for a couple of weeks.

So they're what we call asynchronous. You don't have to attend at a particular time. But you, along with all the other students-- you can post questions and careers advisors, sometimes employers as well-- all kinds of experts-- will answer your questions. So that's a really useful way of exploring particular careers, particular subject areas leading to careers.

INTERVIEWER: I know that within the Faculty of Business and Law there are a lot of webinars. It seems to be a

really key way of doing things, and often a great way to upskill if you've been doing something and you want to find out the latest on something that's changing rapidly. So they can be very useful too, can't they?

JONQUIL LOWE: Yes. Yes, they can. So they are at set times, but they usually record it as well. So you can go back much later. But yeah, absolutely excellent. Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. All right. HJ!

HJ: I need just one for Stewart. Was it-- Jordan wanted a brownie? Sophie, while I'm here being told off and getting a look, I'm just going to-- I'll be back, maybe.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry, Jonquil. The reason I didn't show the widget was because some people had put, "Why do I want to study with the OU?" and they said "cake."

JONQUIL LOWE: Ah, [INAUDIBLE]. It is very good--

INTERVIEWER: And I suspected something was up.

JONQUIL LOWE: --isn't it, HJ?

INTERVIEWER: Then they all hate me because I'm mean. It's our cake.

[LAUGHTER]

Right. Anyway, back to the serious business. So other things that can be found, then, on this career section of the website?

JONQUIL LOWE: Well, what I wanted to do was actually take you just a wee bit beyond that, because the Careers website is not the only resource available to you as a student. There's also your tutor, and very important, your Student Support Team, your SST.

One of the things you'll find is-- as you're doing your degree-- a few degrees have a really set concrete pathway. You just do one module, next module, no choices, whatever. But most OU degrees, many of them, have choices. And so the choices of modules you make can help to support your career or your goals.

So I've put up here-- this is-- I think it's R23. It's the BA in social sciences. So everyone starts off with a general introduction to social sciences. But after that, you can either drill down into

the social sciences generally, or you might go off to psychology. Or if you're thinking more down the economics line, you might start doing maths with some personal finance.

So those kind of choices that you make are really quite important in building your degree and deciding where you go next. And if you're not quite sure what modules you should be choosing, then your student support team is a really good place to get advice. Sometimes your tutor will be able to give you advice, but have a try. Because if he can't, he or she can't, they'll always direct you to the student support team.

INTERVIEWER: So this is really about having the goals there in the first place, and then choosing the modules that will really support those goals, isn't it? And I know that there are a lot of new developments in the qualification sites that will be launched, some of them in the autumn as well. And those will be great resources for students.

But sometimes there's a lot. I mean, you've mentioned some brilliant resources. And I know that people have EMAs and exams to study for and there's a lot to do. How would you recommend that students tackle some of this? I mean, Peter and Helen showed us the tool beforehand and said you could come back to it. This is a little bit more of a-- maybe "think in the summer" type activity, isn't it?

JONQUIL LOWE: That's right. Well, as I say, you can talk to your SST. But the other thing you might do is have a look at the OU's free resources. So OpenLearn, we've got-- I think it's over a thousand free courses. So you can try little tasters of subjects to see if it is something that you want to do.

The other thing you might do is brush up your skills. So if you're about to go on to a module that you're not sure you're quite ready for, might be a mass module, say, then you'll find there are free courses that help you just review the things you probably learned way back at school and can't remember anymore, all those kind of things.

So I think OpenLearn is a really useful site. There's also FutureLearn, the MOOCs, the Massive Online Open Courses. Those are not just OU courses. There are also courses from other universities-- huge, huge range. So there's a lot of things there that you can try.

What I'd also just flag up is that some of the OpenLearn courses are what we call Badged Open Courses, BOCs. And with those, you get a badge. It sounds a bit like the Boy Scouts. You got an arm full of patches. They actually talk about a backpack full of patches.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I know. But these are virtual ones, aren't they?

JONQUIL LOWE: They are. The way they're very useful is-- I mean, they don't give you credits towards your degree. So they are extra.

But what they do is they're very useful for showing on your CV, for example, or on your LinkedIn site, wherever you might want to communicate to employers or clients or colleagues that you have got a set of skills, that you've been interested in the subject, you've been interested enough to go and study it and acquire some knowledge and skills about it. So those badges are evidence of that.

And some of these are specific to employability skills. So there's one here, developing career resilience. But there's another on team working. There's one on knowing your sector, so this business and customer awareness.

And there are also courses on here about volunteering. Because another thing Peter and Helen were talking about was the value of work experience. And sometimes it may not be easy to go off to a conventional employer to get that experience, but you might be able to volunteer with a charity, a local charity perhaps. So there are a couple of really useful courses on there about volunteering, about how to go about it, what kind of skills and experience you get out of it.

INTERVIEWER: And of course they don't just demonstrate the skills. They demonstrate you put the initiative to go off and do something and learn and upskill on your own as well. HJ, are you going to go and get some work experience in a cake factory?

HJ: I might do. I haven't-- well, I think I need experience in a cake factory. Because my only experience this far is eating it and stealing it.

SOPHIE: You'd have to try all the cakes if you went to the cake factory, so--

HJ: Oh, that's a good point.

[INAUDIBLE].

HJ: I need someone to test them.

[INAUDIBLE].

HJ: That will be my role. Yeah, I could do that.

SOPHIE: Proof tester.

HJ: So if anyone knows about an opening, just let me know. I'd appreciate that.

SOPHIE: You have to keep checking the OU website and see what they've got for voluntary work.

INTERVIEWER: So Jonquil, HJ's been doing a politics degree before this revelation about the cake and the importance of perhaps considering his options. What if he has made a massive mistake with his career choice and needs to now realign his plans?

JONQUIL LOWE: OK, I'm just going to flick back through these slides to the Help Centre here. And just underneath Careers and Employability, there's a link called Changes and Problems While You Study. So that would be the first place to go and look.

Now, there's nothing to stop you changing your degree once you've started to a different subject, no problem at all. But it might have cost implications, particularly if you started studying with the OU before 2012. So you probably want to talk to your student support team, your SST, before you make a decision if you're in that group.

It's also easier to change, really, if you're early on in your degree because you'll have done a certain set of modules and they're leading in a particular direction. So if you want to do a named degree in another subject area, you may find that some of the modules you've done aren't relevant and you might have to do extra modules that you hadn't really planned on doing.

Having said that, the OU, of course, is unique. We have our open degree. So there's no reason why you shouldn't say, OK, I've got these modules. Now I'm going to add these others and have my own tailor-made degree that is perfect for where I'm going.

INTERVIEWER: Excellent. Now, I love the open degree. And so many students like to have something that's suited to them and do that as a deliberate strategy, but of course a useful one as well if indeed you wanted to change. So being mindful of what you enjoy doing and perhaps how that might inform your module choice is really important so that you can make the right choices early on and you don't end up like HJ, in trouble.

JONQUIL LOWE: I don't think we have a degree in cake at the moment, but maybe in the future.

INTERVIEWER: Don't worry. Devin will find one for us.

[LAUGHTER]

Excellent. And we've listed a lot of resources on the website as well that students might want to go to, including the ones that Helen and Peter have shown before. Other than that, have we covered, in our whistle-stop tour, all of the aspects that you wanted to show us right now?

JONQUIL LOWE: Yes, I think so. I mean, what I would stress, though, is obviously you come out of the OU with your lovely, shiny degree in a particular subject area showing you have expertise in that area. But along with that, you have acquired all these wonderful skills and experience in employability as well, all the things that employers value, the things like the communication skills, the problem solving, being able to work in teams, being a critical thinker, all kinds of things that you've acquired during your degree which are transferable across any career whatsoever. And it's quite likely that in today's labour market you might have more than one career. And the OU sets you up for that long and varied and really enjoyable career that you're going to have.

INTERVIEWER: Aw. Thank you so much, Jonquil. That's been absolutely brilliant. And we'll see you next week for our Brexit discussion.

JONQUIL LOWE: Looking forward to it.

INTERVIEWER: Indeed. No, so am I. Thank you very much--

JONQUIL LOWE: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: --for coming along and filling us in on all of this.

JONQUIL LOWE: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I hope you found that useful. Let me just take a trip to the Hot Desk. Sophie, have you got anything that isn't about cake?

SOPHIE: Well, I have had to have quite a delving to something that's a little more serious. We've had some conversations about alumni access, and things like LinkedIn. So obviously OpenLearn, FutureLearn, you don't have to be an OU student ever to access those. So they'll be open to you forever for a nice little guide. But mainly, to be honest, it's a lot about cake and HJ's Cakegate. I'm very impressed with you, though. Thank you.

HJ: You're welcome. But no, we've been having-- we had a chat about the Careers Service, and it's not just careers. I mean, we had help with-- I had help with an application from the Careers Service. And they're all very lovely and helpful there. And you did too as well?

SOPHIE: Yeah. So if you're not necessarily planning to go straight on to a career, they will also help you with your post-grad, all things like that. Basically, to guide you after studying. So although they're called the Career Service, it's basically post-study. They are very good and they're very lovely over there.

HJ: And you can go to them after you've finished, as well. So I think it's for up to two years they say you can visit them after you finish your modules or qualifications for help, which is really good. And we posted some links in the chat box about the personal development plan and using the degree to change career.

But all of that will be available on our resources page as well, which I suggest having a look at. I found the one where you take off all your skills and see how confident you are in each one very good. Because sometimes you just don't think about it, do you?

SOPHIE: No, I find it really helpful for writing a CV. Because it's hard to really talk about yourself. It's almost like an essay plan for your CV, is how I'm going to describe it. But yeah, it's very helpful. If there's anything that we have missed or if you have any questions or if you think of something after the session, just drop us an email-- studenthub@open.ac.uk-- and we will get back to you.

[MUSIC PLAYING]