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KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back. OK. That was a great session. And Connor and Sara will be in the chat, answering your questions about cognitive neuroscience and being a PhD student.

But in the studio now joining me we have Kathy and Lynn. Welcome. We're going to be talking about getting your CV up to date, because this is a really important thing. And I thought it would be great to have a session just showing people what's hot in CV writing right now, because the conventions change. And often, some of the things we've been talking about about great skills that people are looking for, you know, I could see people going around and writing those, but it's like how you write it that demonstrates actually what you're studying that matters, isn't it?

So we've got some widgets that we'd like you to vote on. If you're in the Watch and Engage you can engage with those. If you aren't, come in the Watch and Engage. Go back to the website, studenthublive.kmi.open.ac.uk and click Watch and Engage, and then you'll be able to not only engage with the chat, but also see what we're voting on.

There are four things that are going to come up. And we're going to ask you to choose from a range of options which belong on a CV; if you've been out of work for some time and you're looking for work in a sector, which CV would be most helpful; which of these statements is the best way to evidence your skills; and when would be the best time to tell an employer about your disability. So we'd like to know your answers to those questions, and we'll feed those into the discussion here.

Now you're both from the Careers and Employability Services at the Open University, which students can access if they're current students. So how do you engage with CVs? Who's asking you about this and what sort of help and support can students get if they wanted to update their CVs, aside from this session?

KATHY: Well, we have a range of support for people. They can look on our website. We have advice on CVs there. We also have a section on CVs in our Career Planning and Job Seeking workbook. And you can order your own copy from our website, which is www.open.ac.uk/careers.

And we've just moved to Student Home. And we're on the Help Centre there, so it's really easy to find us now. And Lynn, if you tell them about the one-to-one -

LYNN: Yes. So one of the things we often get is actually students don't often come to us just wanting a CV. And a CV is something that sometimes they're quite surprised to find out that actually we will help with CVs, application forms, interview skills. And I don't think they realise that actually that helps there, which is surprising, because that's what you'd expect from a careers advice.

But we can help with CVs. So often if a student's applying for a job, we can have a look at your CV, provide some feedback, and then have a look at another draft later, so actually kind of one-to-one support in doing that. We have webinars as well on CV building.

KAREN FOLEY: That's brilliant. So it's more than just I guess a service in terms of choosing the right pathway and thinking about what you might want to do. You're actually helping students to get there.

KATHY: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Great. So what do students need to look at in terms of CVs right now? What's happening in the world of CVs? Are they still two pages? Do they still have italics and all these various sections in them? What's going on with it?

KATHY: I don't know about you, Lynn, but I always think the most important part of CV is what we call a skills audit. And that's looking at yourself, what makes you who you are, your attributes, your skills, your experience, and making sure that is somehow conveyed in a CV. That's more important than saying I worked for Blogs and Co. from 2010 to 2012. It's getting that feel of who you are over.

And I think that's really important. And on page 24 of the workbook, we have a checklist of every transferable skill known to man. And people can use that as a checklist to help them identify their skills. Is there anything you'll like to add to that, Lynn?

LYNN: Yeah. I think that people who haven't done a CV for some time, they might remember CVs from when they're at school, when they're looking at that very traditional type of CV. And these days profiles are quite important at the start of a CV to kind of capture an essence of who you are and what you have to offer.

And when I'm talking to a student, the most important thing about their CV is if it works. It needs to be tailored to that employer, so really thinking about what that employer wants to

know about you. It's not the story of your life, so it's very much focused on the skills, experience, and attributes that you've got that that employer wants to know. And if you've managed to tell them by the time they get 2/3 down that front page that you have what they're looking for, then it's usually a successful CV.

KATHY: Because that personal profile section, I always think of it as like a trailer for a film. If they see what they want in that personal profile section under your contact details at the top, then they'll read on. Most important information has to be on the first page. And please include the fact that you're studying for a degree with the OU. You'd be surprised at the number who leave that until right at the end of the second page.

KAREN FOLEY: I know. Often people put it in other activities or interests, don't they? But actually, it's so important, because it not only demonstrates the subject area, but that you can do distance learning, you've got a whole host of other skills that go there.

So we asked people which of these belong on a CV. And we have date of birth, nationality, achievements, and contact details of all previous employers. These are changing as we go. But at the last count, we had 82% saying achievements, which was the key section. Now more people are voting for it, you see, because the widgets are open. We also had 12% saying date of birth, 4% nationality.

How do you feel about those answers? Are they right?

LYNN: Yeah. They are. They're really, really good, really good to hear that people -

KAREN FOLEY: They're conscientious.

LYNN: Yeah. Absolutely. That people are aware that it's achievements that we want to see. It's very much skills and achievements. So when you are thinking of achievements, things that make you stand out, things that are result-focused, that's on the CV.

People think that they need to put information like date of birth, sometimes marital status, nationality, that kind of information on a CV. But it's really not necessary. And these days with age discrimination legislation, we'd advise people not to put their date of birth on their CV?

KAREN FOLEY: Really? Yeah. You see, when I last did a CV, I was putting things like that on it, because I thought that those were important. This, of course, is a distinction between CVs and forms, because so many employers are asking for forms often instead of CV. And that whole process

is quite a different one. But there are times, I guess, when you might have to put those details on if they're in a form, isn't it?

LYNN: Absolutely. There is a real difference. So sometimes you're applying for a job and they want an application form. And I think the difference in why employers sometimes want an application form is they want to be quite specific about the information they need. And in that case, you really need to answer all the questions that they actually ask you. So if they ask your date of birth, you need to put that information in. So there is a big difference.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. The next question we asked was about being out of work for some time. So if you're looking to work in a sector you haven't been in before, which I guess is probably an issue for a lot of our students, because they're often looking to retrain, which type of CV would be the most helpful?

So in the lead, we have out of the choices of a chronological CV, a targeted CV, a skills-based CV, or an educational CV, we have 64%, it's fluctuating as we're getting all the data. 64% saying a skills-based CV, closely followed by 38% with a targeted CV. No one's gone for a chronological or an educational CV. Are they right?

LYNN: Yeah. I'm really pleased to see that.

KAREN FOLEY: They don't need your help. You can go, ladies.

[LAUGHTER]

LYNN: That's really impressive, because I see a lot of people who they are still providing that chronological-based CV. And it's that very traditional CV that is very good if you've had a career that has progressed well and it shows that career progression. But if you've had gaps in your CV and thinking about what employers want, it is targeting it to the needs of the employer and thinking very much in terms of the skills that you have and the achievements that you have. So well done.

KAREN FOLEY: OK. Great.

LYNN: Well done, everyone.

KAREN FOLEY: Yes. We would have our applause, but that's only for the quiz, unfortunately. What's the difference then between like, OK, so I get the idea of a skills and a targeted CV. But do they

look different?

LYNN: They can look quite different. And there's some difficulty in knowing is it a targeted CV or a skills-based CV. If you saw a typical skills-based CV, it would perhaps lay out all the skills you have. So it might have them in sections, and the first page might be your perhaps people skills. It might be your administrative skills, and going through all the skills.

Now, I would say all CVs, if it has a purpose, an employer you're sending it to, it does need to be targeted. So it's therefore getting that skills CV, which is a really good draft you've got already, and targeting which of those skills are relevant to that employer. So there is a slight difference in the fact that not all the skills that you have may be relevant for that job application.

KAREN FOLEY. What about people who write these woolly things, like I'm great at working in teams and also on my own, woolly things that maybe are things people want, they're desirable characteristics, but how do people assess them? Can you say anything about actually being specific or quantifiable when you're identifying some of these skills?

KATHY: Well, I think that brings us to our next question quite nicely.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Lovely. OK. Because we've only got five minutes, so we asked which of these statements is the best way to evidence your skills. So we have a choice, I'm a dynamic person, I have strong communication skills, I've developed my organisational skills by studying and working at the same time, no comment. Right. Let's see what our audience said.

91% say, I have developed my organisational skills by studying and working. They're good, aren't they? They really are.

KATHY: They are. 10 out of 10. Top of the class.

KAREN FOLEY: They are. So I guess this is about being specific.

LYNN: Yes.

KAREN FOLEY: Giving examples.

LYNN: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: And giving examples of things that are accurate.

- LYNN:** Yes. I have seen, those statements I gave as options I've seen on CVs. Don't say things like I'm dynamic or I'm a good communicator. Says who? You need to provide examples, brief examples, which show you have that skill.
- Now, these examples don't have to come from paid jobs. They could come from your OU study. Every OU student has fantastic organisational and time management skills. I'm sure we can all recognise that.
- KAREN FOLEY:** Even if they don't submit their TMA right until the last minute, it's still a process. It still shows a commitment, doesn't it?
- KATHY:** Absolutely. Yes. Absolutely. Balancing all these balls in the air the way OU students do. And so you need to give examples. It could be from your study. It could be from your previous job. It could be from responsibilities or voluntary work outside work.
- You could be a carer. You are developing skills as a carer. So any walk of life, you still develop that skill, but we must give an example. Otherwise, we can make it up as we go along.
- KAREN FOLEY:** Yes. And I think people do. And sometimes you do get these sort of empty-based sentences that don't really mean a huge amount, which I guess would demonstrate to an employer that you weren't maybe addressing the question or identifying their needs. So they could do more harm than good, couldn't they?
- KATHY:** I always think of it, it's the same as doing a TMA. If you do your TMA, you've got a question. You do your research to answer it. And you give your argument and you back it up with evidence.
- I'm sure every student recognises that process. It's the same thing with a CV. Make a statement, but back it up with evidence.
- KAREN FOLEY:** OK. Great. So we've talked about some of the skills and content and being specific. You mentioned earlier things about nationality and age, and I guess the legalities of things, which brings us to our next question, which is about disability. So it's about when would be the best time to tell your employer about any disability that you may have?
- So we've said on a CV, on an application form, on an interview, or a covering letter. So let's see what our students say about this. 50% are saying at an interview, followed by 23% on the application form, and 19% on a covering letter. Only 8% say that it should be on the CV.

Where should it be?

KATHY:

Well, the issues regarding CVs are exactly the same for people with disabilities as if you haven't got a disability. But the additional extra point you may need to consider if you have a gap in your employment record or a gap in your study record or a lack of work experience, you may feel the need to convey that somehow in a form. I agree with all the respondents, the best way is to have a conversation with someone, because many people feel uncomfortable disclosing something personal to a complete stranger. Sometimes on application forms, you have to disclose. You don't have a choice.

So I agree ideally in an interview, but it may be you need adjustments for that interview. You may be hearing-impaired. You may have dyslexia. And you may want to express that beforehand.

So there's no hard and fast answer. People have to do what they feel is right for them. And don't forget that having a disability can be a real bonus. Give you an example. If someone has dyslexia or if someone experiences chronic pain, there may be students now watching with these issues, they have developed strategies in their OU study to overcome those issues, which proves the abilities and determination, resourcefulness they have. So your disability can be evidence of your skills, as we were talking about just now.

KAREN FOLEY:

Wonderful. Thank you. Well, that's all we've got time for, so Kathy and Lynn, thank you so much for joining us. You've given us some great information on what's current and what should and shouldn't be on a CV.

And there are lots of links Kathy and Lynn have given us for the CVs on the website. So if you go to the Resources section on the Student Hub Live home page, you can check those out later. And as they say, there are links to the Careers Advisory Service now on Student Home, and so you can also search the OU website and find out how to access the range of support if you do want to update your CV or, as they say, have advice on an interview or discuss career potential more generally.

Thank you both of being here now. We're going to have a short video break, and then we're going to talk about languages. So we'll see you in about five minutes. Grab a cup of tea and see you very soon.

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