

KAREN FOLEY: Good morning and welcome to the Student Hub Live. This is our career special, and we've selected three of the careers that you might be doing if you're an OU student. What we're going to do is talk about those careers, talk about how we teach them, and we've got some of the careers advisors here and in the chat, who are going to give you lots of helpful advice about both these qualifications and also advice more generally.

My name is Karen Foley, and I'll be hosting the show. And it's live, online, and interactive. Audiences participate exclusively through the widgets that we've got coming up on your screen and also the chat. And that is all fed into our conversation through Sophie and HJ, who are on our hot desk.

Now, there are a variety of ways that you can engage with us-- so the Watch and Engage option, which I hope a lot of you are in, logging in with your student details to that. And then you'll be able to see the chat, participate in the chat, and also see the video widgets. If you aren't in that and you're live stream only, then there's also a chat function there, and we're going to try today to include some of that in the discussion as well. So feel free to type and chat along there as well.

Anything goes. You might have a question. You might want to talk about how nervous you feel about your EMA that's coming up. You might want to talk about study options or what it's like to be an OU student-- or cake.

Anything goes in that chat option. So just feel free to talk to other people as part of our OU academic community. You can also tweet. Our hashtag is #StudentHubLive17 and our handle is @StudentHub. And we've got an email box as well. So if there's a question that we don't cover and you'd like us to get back to you, then email us studenthub@open.ac.uk.

Now, briefly, for those of you early birds who logged in, you'll have seen a little video about how to use the interface. But for those of you who haven't, you can change the layout in the Watch and Engage option. So at the bottom right-hand screen, you can click and have a different layout there, depending on how large you want the chat to be.

You can also pin the chat if it's moving too fast and you want to go back to something, and there's a little pin button at the top right-hand of that screen that you can click on and then move down. So we hope you find those useful. But let me introduce Sophie and HJ, who will

be chatting with you in the chat and feeding all of your questions into discussion. Sophie and HJ, how are you today?

SOPHIE: Good morning. Yes, very excited. Feels like we've been here loads lately, which is really nice. So yes, and I see quite a few of your new chats at the moment. So please introduce yourself, say hello, and any questions, put them through to us.

HJ: Yes, and the chat, apart from questions, is pretty much for everything. I think Max already got into saying that he thought there would be punch and pie, that we might have to have a bit of a hunt down for that-- yeah, but anything you want to chat about, any thoughts, comments, questions. And we've also got some experts from the career service, some educational advisors, and Kieran who's a tutor at Sports and Fitness, joining us in the chat. So if you have any specific questions like that, there's lots of people who want to help you, and any question goes.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. Well, thank you for that. So fill these widgets in for us, then, if you're in the Watch and Engage. We'd like to know where you are in the country, which level you're studying, how you're feeling today, and whether or not you've been to one of our events beforehand. That just gives us a feel about who is out there.

Now, if you are having any technical difficulties, also, we have our help tab. So if you'd like HJ or Sophie to try to help you with anything technical, like how to engage with us, then do put a question in there, and that should hopefully mean that we can answer and respond to that. Let's see what we've got lined up today.

The first session we're looking at is the BSC sports fitness coaching, and I'm joined by Jess Pinchbeck, Karen Howells, and Roz Johnson, who I'll introduce in just a second. In the middle of the show, we're looking at business and leadership. We have Maria DeSilva and Owan Slovmik Jones. And then we're going to take a look at criminology last at 11:20, and we have Deb Drake, Siobhan Flint, and Steve Teams taking us through that session.

So three key qualifications here for you today, so do let us know the questions that you'd like to ask about those. Well, let me welcome you guys to the studio. Thank you for joining us today. And of course, some of you have been on before.

We had an Olympic special earlier in the summer, wasn't it? And today, we're going to be talking about the BSC sports and fitness coaching. And I have Jess and Karen, and Roz from

the Careers Advisory Service with us. So, Jess, I wondered if you could start by talking about the team and who's involved, basically. Because you are a really lovely and quite small and specialist team, but also, there's a lot of diversity in terms of the areas that you're covering.

JESS
PINCHBECK: Yes, so when you enrolled on the sport and fitness modules, they are produced by a group of academics based here at Milton Keynes. And Karen is on the team with myself, among some of the others. And we will have a range of passions and interests in different areas of sport and fitness.

So on the team we have psychologists, we have biomechanists, physiologists. We've got Olympic coaches. We've got people with a whole wealth of experience within the fitness industry, and these diverse interests and research areas is what really makes our modules unique and really relevant to sport and fitness students. And so what we do is we try and use our expertise in our research to produce really lively and engaging module materials for the students.

And we do this through written materials, such as some of the textbooks that you can see on the table in front here, and we also do this by making some bespoke AV resources for our modules. So for example, two of our team have worked with Channel 4 on a production called "Chasing Perfection." So if anybody has seen that, that was presented by Michael Johnson and featured athletes such as Chris Hoy.

And so within our modules, we draw upon certain aspects of AV to really bring our module materials to life for students. We've recently been to the English Institute of Sports and worked with the England women's hockey team to produce some exciting footage for one of our new modules. So we try and make things really lively and engaging for students.

KAREN FOLEY: And also, I guess, using the academic common knowledge to actually generate things that are going to help athletes in the real world.

KAREN
HOWELLS: Yeah. Karen is an applied sports psychologist, as is Caroline Heaney, our programme leader. Ben Langdown, who has just joined us from the PGA-- there's a lot of work with youth-level golfers in strength and conditioning. So there's a real mix of expertise within the team.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. And of course lots of ALs, the associate lecturers who teach students. So the students basically who are studying this sort of thing-- because some students may be studying sports, but some may be interested in-- some may not know anything about the OUL,

how to study. They get these books and then they have this tutor, who, again, will be an expert in their field. And they'll have these, and then they'll use some of this stuff on the VLE, the virtual learning environment as well. So you've mentioned some of the innovative things that you do there.

JESS PINCHBECK: Yes, so some of our modules are purely online, so everything is done online, including the study materials. And sometimes you will get hard copy books as well. So it depends which model you pick as to the amount that's online and the different things that you will use. We've created a new module at level one where students get issued a fitness tracker, so something like this device here.

So students will be using the fitness tracker throughout the module and looking at their own data and comparing that to other students on the module as well. So we try and make things exciting and obviously developing skills that they will use in real life. Most personal trainers now will use fitness trackers and devices with their clients, so it's really trying to make it industry relevant.

KAREN FOLEY: So the students must all be pretty fit. They will have a really genuine interest, then, in sports and exercise.

JESS PINCHBECK: Well, the beauty of our qualification is that you don't have to be really fit to be able to do it. It's for those who are working in sport and fitness, but also for those that just have an interest in sport and fitness or want to gain knowledge for their own development or if they're a spectator or they just have a general interest. You don't have to be working in sport and fitness, and you don't have to be super fit and healthy yourself to do the module.

KAREN FOLEY: Can we have to look at the structure, then, of the degree?

JESS PINCHBECK: OK.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. So we're going to show you a slide on the screen now so you can have a look at what the actual physical degree structure looks like. Get that for you in just one second. I mean, broadly speaking, there are these three levels to the degree, as there are with all degrees. I guess just before we go into that slide, more broadly, we've got the options at level one, two, and three, but this degree is a little bit more constrained in terms of some of the choices that students have.

So whereas if you're doing something very broad, you could go off and maybe do a bit of history or classics or this, that, and the other, there are a few levels-- so level one, two, and three-- which obviously have the sort of key skills in terms of being descriptive, slightly more evaluative, and then slightly more applied, I guess, towards the end of the module. Broadly speaking, then, what are some of the skills and stages that we have at each level. So if you could talk us maybe through the sort of things that might happen at level one.

JESS PINCHBECK: Yeah, so level one really is for building students' confidence in terms of academic and employability skills, really. So we don't expect students to come to level one with everything in place and be able to write a perfect essay, reference perfectly. What we do is we're looking to develop confidence and develop these skills as we move through the module, and that's where the tutors are key. We have some excellent tutors within sport and fitness.

And as well as working within activities in the module materials to help and guide students, the tutors, through their feedback and through their tutorials, will really look to work with the students and develop these academic skills. So yes, it's a good place to start. It's building confidence, and it's really developing those academic skills in the early stages.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. What about level two, then? This is a bit more about physiology and psychology, so these might be things Karen--

KAREN HOWELLS: Yeah, in the same way that we appreciate that the students have very different interests coming in, that first year is very much about introducing them to sport and fitness. As they come into the second year, we start to look in more specialised area-- so, as you say, the psychology, the physiology. We go into more depth in those. We really try and bring those areas to life.

So we use case studies, a lot of AV. Students engage with the AV, look at them as a case study, talk about them, relate it to the theory. So the content is far more specialised than level one, and in terms of the skills they're developing they're being introduced to, perhaps, more academic sources, looking at where to find them, and really to engage with that, whilst, at the same time, having that AV and bringing it to life. So yeah, it's building on those skills from level one, but putting it in a more specialised context, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And then level three, then, is more theory-driven, but this is quite interesting because students get to specialise now, don't they?

KAREN

HOWELLS:

Yeah, this really is the first opportunity that students can choose what they want to specialise in and what area they want to look at. So in terms of their academic skills as well, we encourage them to go outside the module materials. We try and develop in them the skills to look elsewhere, to look at different sources.

So they draw on media sources, but they also draw on the academic sources and learn to really critically analyse them, look at them with a little bit of a more critical view. But they can do this in an area that they're interested in. So I'm module chair on one of the level three modules, and the students can choose from around about 10 different contemporary topics that they want to look at.

So there are some that draw on psychology and sociology, such as body image or homophobia in sport, but there are other areas. So if they're a little bit more interested in the physiology, they might look at HIT. If they're a little bit more interested in sleep, they can look at sleep, they can look at pain. So they can identify certain areas and explore that in more depth.

So really, we've got a progression from level one where it's very general into level two, where we introduce them to some specific areas. And then they can bring in their own interests within a kind of contemporary framework at level three. That's fabulous, because it's so rare, especially in an undergraduate degree, to have that level of choice.

Because normally, one would specialise post-graduate. And I guess this isn't really specialisation. It's more about doing something that really applies to you, but also to be able to do something in such detail is really, really unique.

JESS

PINCHBECK:

I think as well, all throughout our assessments, so in level one and level two, what we try and do is give students choice. So sometimes within the module materials, there's options that they can study. So students who want to be fitness instructors, they will do maybe a different reading or different activity to those students that want to become sports coaches or PE teachers.

So we try and build that into our model materials, because we know we're catering for students with quite diverse interests. And also, what we try and do with our assessment is to let students pitch their assessment towards their own activity of their choice. So it might be looking at how we develop certain components of fitness, but we let them pick the activity. So if they're interested in football or if they're interested in netball or endurance running, they can

pick their own athlete that they want to apply the theory to. So it makes it just more interesting, and students become more passionate about their assignment if they're focusing it on something that they're really interested in.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, thank you. Let's take a quick trip to the hot desk. Stuart Gettis, the Help tab is for people who have genuine technical problems, not burnt toast. Sophie and HJ, how's everything going?

HJ: Very well, yes. There's a quick comment from Kieran, our sports lecturer who popped up. He's popped off, but he's left a really lovely message. But he said before I go, I want to say that the OU have a great sports and fitness department. I have studied at several universities, and the quality of the teaching materials is amazing and unparalleled in quality-- in my opinion.

Also, the opportunity to explore employment-based qualifications is very unique and not common in university degrees, but is at the OU. The advantage of a sports degree is that it crosses the boundaries between science and arts. I think that's a lovely comment to sum it up-- very supportive of the department.

But Dee actually has a great question that you might be able to help us with. Dee's wondering whether to keep on the BSC health science or move to BSC psychology of counselling. Maybe you've got some advice about choosing modules in general?

KAREN FOLEY: Very good question. Yes, module choice-- and in particular with the OU, because we do allow students to make changes at any point. And I guess you guys wouldn't be specialists in that, but, Dee, you might want to pop along later because we have some sessions among the faculty of arts and social sciences where we're talking specifically about some of those modules.

So that might give you an idea about choice. But motivation, choice, decision making-- these are all areas that come into sports very broadly. Any advice that you guys would have more generally about how students might choose the right pathway for them?

JESS PINCHBECK: I think something that's quite unique within us as a team is a lot of us have actually completed OU qualifications ourselves, so we know what it's like to be an OU student. Personally, my advice would be just pick something you have a real, genuine interest and passion in, because that's half the battle. If you're studying something that you're truly interested in and engaged with, then I think that's 50% of it already there.

- KAREN** And certainly on the sport fitness and coaching degree at the moment, we don't have choice.
- HOWELLS:** So if there are two modules at level one, two at level two, and two at level three-- so if they're enrolled on that qualification, then those are the modules that they will take. But within there, as Jess has already said, there's lots of choice. But obviously, as I'm sure you'll talk about later, there are opportunities for students to take one or two of our modules in a wider open degree. But certainly with within the degree, as it stands, we don't yet have any choice.
- JESS** I think, as well, our sport and fitness students find it really useful to speak to other students. So
- PINCHBECK:** we have induction forums and we have career forums throughout the year, where students across different levels can talk to each other and say, this is a great module, this assessment was really good. So perhaps my advice would be to try and find some students that are doing that particular pathway and have a chat to them and make your decision based upon some other student input as well.
- KAREN FOLEY:** And also, Dee, ask people in the chat, because we've got some a lot of people from STEM and FASS in the chat today, as well as various other levels and a lot of people at level one. So you might all have some advice for Dee that you can contribute in the chat.
- But I guess, Roz, we must introduce you at this point, because whilst you are aligned very specifically with this particular qualification, you're also a careers adviser more generally. And so you must get students coming to you a lot of the time saying, I really don't know what to do with my career and also then how my qualification and pathway are going to support that.
- ROZ JOHNSON:** Absolutely. And certainly, we have sports students coming to us who think that they're doing that qualification because they have a particular career in mind. But in fact, perhaps, they have their eyes opened whilst they're doing the qualification and actually think more broadly and come and say, what can I do with this degree?
- And there's lots and lots of careers they could go into. They could choose to do something that's fitness instruction or sport coaching or, indeed, PE teaching, as we talked about. But there might be other things that they are interested in, or it might be something that's not sports related at all.
- But the degree that they've got and the fantastic employability skills that they've developed during their degree will help them move across into maybe something within the financial sector-- or it might be marketing. They might move into something marketing to do with sport.

So yes, people often come and say, what can I do with my degree? And that goes for every subject.

KAREN

HOWELLS:

If I could just add to that, one of the things that we do in the modules is build those employability skills. So for example, in the third year they give their first presentation. Now, it doesn't matter what career you're going into. See we're looking at it in a fitness or fitness instructor or coaching context.

But it doesn't matter what career you go into. At some point you're going to have to stand up in front of somebody and present the material, whether it's sport related or whether it's fitness related or whether it's management. So even though we've got that sport and fitness context, we're developing those skills. And, as with everything that we put together, it's progressive from level one, level two, level three, with a slightly different focus at each level.

ROZ JOHNSON:

And that's absolutely key for employability. Because it's not just the knowledge you've got from your degree, but it's how you present yourself and it's the skills that you can bring in from your degree, but from the rest of life and other things you do outside, which are going to be really the keys to getting that job that you want. So yeah, it's great that time keeping and independence are part of your course, aren't they? And they are key skills that employers are going to be looking for.

KAREN FOLEY:

Well, we asked people what sorts of jobs they thought would be useful to come out of this degree or even jobs that they're interested in going into, and we do have a whole range of students here who are after a lot of different sessions. But some of the things that have come up are things like a fitness lecturer, research, which I thought was a great one, teaching, personal trainer, coaching-- so all of the things that I think we would very much expect. This must be one of the qualifications that is slightly more vocational in terms of the sense that it's unlikely that you would do a sport and fitness degree if you just wanted to be in personal finance, for example, or do something sort of more broad.

Whereas some other degrees are useful to have a degree. And of course, all degrees are useful to demonstrate these key skills that you've talked about, and they do teach us more than the qualification. But I guess there's some element of passion here and wanting to actually work in this field.

JESS

PINCHBECK:

Yeah, I think that's really interesting. And particularly with the qualification, we have a unique module at level two, and this is where the vocation element really comes in. Because to pass

one of the level two modules, students have to gain a level two external coaching or fitness instructing qualification. So that really develops their employability skills because they come through the module being a qualified sports coach in a particular sport or a qualified fitness instructor.

So that's really useful, and therefore it demonstrates that they have the skills and abilities to lead a fitness session or to lead a coaching session, which is obviously key for employers working in the sport and fitness industry.

KAREN FOLEY: And I guess something that might be difficult to do on your own on the kitchen table just in isolation-- how important, then, is community and sort of tapping into all of these practitioners-- the module teams, the ALs, and these various other things that you set up for students?

JESS PINCHBECK: I mean, our ALs really complement. We've talked about the expertise of us as a central module team, but to be honest, our ALs really compliment that. And they have a whole wealth of industry experience. And when we come to produce modules, often we have ALs that come in and act as consultants if they have particular areas of expertise. So we look at developing the employability skills there.

And the tutors are, I would say, on the front lines. So they're the ones with the students, that have the day to day contact with the students. And often, they're a wealth of knowledge. So our students do tap into the knowledge that their tutors have, and they give lots of advice and guidance, as well as directing them to Ros when they need to.

KAREN FOLEY: Because you've had a careers forum, and the career service often have these forums or specialist places where students can go and post questions. What came out of the most recent one that you did?

ROZ JOHNSON: Well, it was an interesting forum, and all the classics came up, which we expected, in terms of PE teaching and coaching. But there were other career areas that came up. There were things like clinical exercise physiology. And of course, some of those career areas need additional industry-specific courses on top of their degree, or it may be that people need to go and do a master's programme.

And so there were questions around postgraduate study and where to go and how to access that, how to put an application together, what was going to be the most appropriate course, or whether in fact people could tap into industry-specific qualifications through their own work.

Many students have already got that, and so they were talking to each other on the forum about where they might access those extra qualifications. A lot of that, of course, is also around their networks, and you alluded already to the fact that students have got very good ALs.

And we would strongly encourage them to use the networks that they build up during their degree with each other, within their work and their placement, in their coaching qualification, but also with their ALs and to keep those relationships warm. Because they will be useful to them in working out where they are going to move on to next.

KAREN FOLEY: And I guess a lot of ALs-- because you do build up a good relationship with your students, and like you say, they're very diverse. So it would be very common, I guess, for students to maybe say, could I keep in touch with you and email them the next year if they've got specific questions.

KAREN HOWELLS: Just building on that, the final module that the students do, we allocate them a specialist tutor in the area that is of their choice. So in terms of keeping those networks going in terms of the topic area that's of interest to them, they are allocated to a tutor who has some either industry knowledge or specialist knowledge in terms of their research or their background in that particular area. So whilst they've had their tutors all the way through their degree, at the end they then start to engage with somebody who has far more specialist knowledge on that topic. So that gives further opportunities for that building of that networking.

JESS PINCHBECK: Something we try to develop as well is the visibility of us, the centred academics-- so trying to be more involved within the modules, that students know who we are, so audiovisual material within the module featuring us and they get to know a bit about us and our backgrounds. We're very active on social media. So we have a sports fitness blog where we maybe react to contemporary issues within the news and post our academic perspectives on things.

So we get quite a lot of interaction with students and ALs there and so just developing this community. So we have the OU Sport and fitness Twitter, which our students are really active on, and we get some good discussion going there. And recently, we've held a contemporary issues in sport conference which was open to students. So students very rarely get the opportunity to come and talk to us face to face, and it was fantastic.

We had some level-three students there, and they came and they were able to meet us and talk about things in the module materials that they really liked, things that they didn't like so

much, and how we could look to develop and change. So watch this space, because we're trying to do more and more stuff where they can come and meet us as centred academics, as well as their ALs.

KAREN FOLEY: And we've got links to the blogs which are on the resources pages of the website, so do check those out. Blogging is a really nice accessible way to have byte-sized chunks of information and to pick up these topical issues as well. And you mentioned that students really love it. How do they get involved? Do they feedback comments on it?

JESS PINCHBECK: Yeah, comments or either actually at the bottom of the blog or Twitter feed, or we have a sport and fitness research page where all our email addresses are on it. So sometimes students might contact us by email to ask us particular questions about something that we've written.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent.

KAREN HOWELLS: And recently we've had a student who's contributed to the blog in terms of his experiences. So although that's not a regular occurrence, we can get the student's story through that blog as well.

KAREN FOLEY: That's really lovely. Now I wanted to sort of go back to this idea of the skills. Because we talked a little bit about some of the areas that people might study, and we started talking a little bit about some of the skills that we were developing throughout the levels as well. And we also made this point that, again, you are generating a lot of skills that have employability value-- so the presentation, et cetera.

And time management was one that we mentioned earlier as well. And we asked people what skills that were most sought after in terms of employment. So if you haven't filled that in yet, do click on that button to select the widgets. And for these ones that are word clouds, you need three things.

So if you can't think of three things, that's OK, but just put a full stop at the end. And then you can submit it to send your results, and we'll take a look at that in a little minute. But talking about the skills, then, at level one you'd mentioned the time management and communication and confidence issues.

And then at level two, you've got the EXCF coaching and fitness instruction and then the independence at level three. Translating these, then, into employability aspects, Roz how

might students begin to recognise some of the areas that they're developing? Sometimes you're in the thick of it, and you think, oh, I have this presentation to do or whatever.

And you don't sort of realise, hey, actually, that's a great thing to put on my CV. I've done x or y or z, or I can manage my time and I've submitted these. I've met my deadlines, et cetera.

How do you encourage students to recognise and capitalise on some of these skills that they're picking up?

ROZ JOHNSON: It's a really good question, because students, we find, really struggle to see the wood for the trees, really, when they're studying or working. And they don't always recognise that they've got the skill set they've got, and so we spend quite a bit of time talking to students both in groups, on OU live sessions, but also one to one if they come to us for individual consultation about how to articulate what it is that they've got. And I think they go away very surprised at how much they can put on their CV, about the things that they can offer to an employer, which are going to be really valuable. And they're not necessarily the obvious things.

And they might be around their commercial awareness. That's always something that employers are looking for. Do they know how to operate in a commercial environment? And of course, a lot of them do, but they don't necessarily recognise that-- but then other things like, perhaps, resilience and their adaptability and those things that they have in shedloads as an OU student because of all the things that they're juggling at the same time that they also have through their course.

But it's finding ways to say that, and they find that difficult. So it's great when they come to us, and we can begin to unpack some of those things with them so that then they can translate them into application forms and into their CV and so on to present really the whole picture of who they are to an employer.

KAREN FOLEY: Because, of course, as we said, they're developing these skills from level one. So it's not just on completion of the degree, all of a sudden you have these skills. Sure you do. But you're getting them, aren't you, as you're going through.

ROS JOHNSON: Yes, and students could do with noting, and it is a great thing to do to actually keep a bit of a log. And we all talk about it, but not many people do it-- to keep a bit of a log, really, of the skills that you are picking up as you go along. I don't know whether they do that within their degree in terms of--

- JESS** Interesting, actually, because we've just redesigned our level one module. So this is the introductory module that students come to, and what they do in there now is, as part of their assessment, they look at their academic skills and employability skills right at the beginning of the module. And they look at which skills they're confident in and which they need work on. Then they revisit that again at the end of the module after all the activities and everything that they've done. So hopefully they'll be able to measure their progress, and we continue that throughout level one.
- And level two, they reflect upon their skills at each TMA, for each assignment, that is, with their tutor to start a dialogue with their tutor as to what they're excelling at and what they need to improve upon. So within the assessment, we've tried to build that in throughout, which hopefully, by the time they get to the end of level three and they're filling out cv's and employability skills, it should be a little bit easier for them these days.
- ROZ JOHNSON:** Yes, because it's really important that they plug those gaps whilst they're doing their degree, and they might be able to do that through getting some additional work experience or going and volunteering and doing some additional activity, which perhaps they haven't had the opportunity to do before.
- KAREN FOLEY:** So you're building a lot of these skills and opportunities to reflect on the skills into the production of the module and the assessment. But, Roz how often do students come to you? I mean, it's this cohort of students who are studying this particular qualification. Do they tend to come to you right at the beginning? When do students tend to approach the careers service for help and support?
- ROZ JOHNSON:** Well, it's very mixed-- very mixed, indeed. I mean, we would encourage them to come quite early on in their OU career, because at that point we can actually help them to build on what they are doing within their degree. And then they've got a bit of time before they graduate to plug the gaps if there are gaps in their profile. So they do come at various stages. It's often when they feel a bit insecure.
- But because a lot of our students are working, it's also when perhaps they're changing jobs, or they've suddenly realised that they've studied something that they're really interested in which they haven't even had their eyes opened to before. And so they'll come at that point. So they come at various stages through their journey, and we would encourage that.
- KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Well, that's good to know. I'd like to take a look at the widget that we asked you

about at home. What are the most sought-after skills in employment?

So let's see what some of the things that came up were. Communication is a massive word that's coming through here. Work ethics, honesty and reliance, analytical ability, motivation, adaptability, independence, application skills, enthusiasm, resilience-- something you've mentioned there already-- team playing, human interaction, and knowledge. So lots of wonderful key skills there that you can see automatically how these might apply, but they're also very general, aren't they?

KAREN

HOWELLS:

Well, if I can just jump in there, we are redesigning one of our first-year modules. And a lot of those actually came up as some of the key themes that we're looking at. So communication, for example, not only are we looking at the students' communication skills, but they're reflecting on the communication skills of a fitness instructor or of a coach. So they'll look at case studies of those individuals within the industry.

So there is an engagement with, what does communication look like in a positive way in the environment that I want to be in? So it's interesting that those things came up in the word cloud-- teamwork, leadership, and communication and resilience, I suppose, in terms of self-awareness and reflection. Those are all coming up in our level one module that we're rewriting at the moment.

KAREN FOLEY:

Excellent. And, Roz what, then, are some of the sorts of things that you might then help students with in terms of some of these key skills? You sort of spoke about commercial awareness earlier.

ROZ JOHNSON:

Yes, so students who perhaps are looking to go into something where they will be in a bit more of a commercial world or they want to be self-employed, say, are going to have to have some kind of business nous and understanding. And so we might encourage them to look for a mentor who can help them to develop those skills and to find experiences that are going to offer them something extra. So we may look at that.

We may just be looking at how they articulate the things that they're going to say, because they may think, well, yes, actually, I've got good communication skills. These skills are coming up, aren't they? I've got those.

But they can't think of the examples to offer, so we might help them with that process. We may help them with job vacancies. We have a vacancy service within the careers and employability

service, and it may be that they want to access that. So that could be helpful.

KAREN FOLEY: We also talked briefly about changes over time, so things becoming more interesting. And I guess, like with any qualification, there are these trends. I'm just thinking around competitions and sports funding and various things that are more hot right now than others. How influential, then, are some of these trends in terms of students' abilities to practise some of those areas throughout their degree and also maybe go into them for a career?

ROZ JOHNSON: I mean, they are key, aren't they? And I think students need to be very aware of the sports industry as a whole, and it may be their particular sport is something which is very heavily funded. And therefore there are going to be opportunities in those areas. Other areas of sport are perhaps underfunded, and so there will be less opportunities. And they need to get the picture of what the labour market looks like within their sector.

KAREN FOLEY: And of course, there will be geographical differences as well.

ROS JOHNSON: There will, yes. And if they live in a very rural area, then they may well struggle to be working in particular careers. In a more urban area, then, there'll be more opportunity and a broader base, possibly, of opportunity.

Equally, they need to be able to travel, perhaps. And so they need to think about their circumstances-- whether they can drive, where they live, what their constraints are. And we will talk to them about those things in our one-to-many activities and in our one-to-one activities.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. I'd like to just look into the future to sort of conclude the session, and I'm hoping that we can show one of the apps that you've been developing as part of your virtual reality and some of the module materials that we can have a look at. So we'll know if that's ready in just a second. But before we do that, Karen and Jess, any ideas about what might be big areas if students were thinking about a thing to go into? Any sort of tips or suggestions about things that are going to be interesting and get bigger?

JESS PINCHBECK: I think with the health agenda at the moment, physical activity is huge, isn't it, particularly with children-- so getting more children more active more of the time. So we're already seeing, obviously, the funding going into primary schools, so that's where sports coaching has really taken off in terms of children's coaching and children's activity and lots of initiatives coming up. So if you're interested, obviously, in coaching or fitness with young children, I think that's certainly an area that we're going to see growth in over the next few years.

**KAREN
HOWELLS:**

For me, if we look at some of the big events-- the Olympic games, Commonwealth Games, things like that-- what we find is that increasingly the performance of these athletes at the other end of the scale from the participation-- they're supported by a big team. And that team is not just about coaches, but it's about strength and conditioning coaches. It's physiologists, it's physiotherapists, it's sports psychologist, it's nutritionists-- so really, that multi-disciplinary coming at performance from lots of different areas.

And I think one of the things that our degree allows students to do is to tap into some of those areas and really to look at. Actually, sport and physical activity is quite a big area, and there are lots of opportunities in that area to follow your interests.

KAREN FOLEY:

Now, I'd like to have a look at this app that you've got, and I'm going to show you at home a picture of it on the screen. We may not have time to show all of it, because it's about three minutes. So we can show as much as you'd like to, but we need to talk people through it because they're going to stay on their screens. And we can see it here as well and tell people about it. Briefly, what's it all about, then?

**JESS
PINCHBECK:**

So what we've been doing is we've been working with KMI at the Open University to develop a more interactive way of learning. So we're using some augmented reality technology to help students learn about the muscular system and the digestive system. So when students come to enrol in our new level one module, to help them learn they will download an app onto their smartphone or tablets.

They point it at a trigger image, which generates an augmented reality model of the muscular system, which they can work through and they can tap on the pins. And it will show the muscle. It will tell them the muscle name and the actions that the muscle does. We've also done the same for the digestive system.

And what students will be able to do is to walk through that to learn the names of the muscles, and then there's a little self-test at the end. So they can test themselves and see how much information they're retained, and if they've not done too well, they can go back and play with it again. So it's just trying something new and trying something a little bit different to see-- obviously some students learn differently-- whether this augmented reality will help.

There is also a desktop version available. So for students that don't want to use the augmented reality, that's fine. They don't have to. They can still get a similar experience. But

just really for some learners that are more stimulated by-- visual and kinesthetic learners-- that might help a little bit more.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. That sounds so exciting. KMI, by the way, is the Knowledge Media Institute, who do lots and lots of very clever things. And of course, at the Open University we're very interested in how to encourage the best distance learning experience.

And as you said, people learn a different-- I love that sort of thing. Because I like being able to interact and see things over again. And it just helps to make sense of things relationally to me.

KAREN HOWELLS: We've all enjoyed playing with it in the office, that's for sure.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. Well, thank you for that. That's all we've got time for. We're going to have a little bit more of an exhaustive session about what the career service can do generically for students in the next session. But just to end this session, Roz in terms of ways that students can connect with your area and the more specialist side of things as well, can you tell us just about the forums, webinars, and various points of contact that they can get to from Student Home?

ROZ JOHNSON: Yes, so if you go onto Student Home, about 2/3 of the way down on the left-hand side, you'll find a link to Careers and Employability Services. And that link will take you to our website. So there's lots of information to help you on the website, with lots of links to professional bodies and to other organisations that you might want to research.

But then also our webinars are all on that website, and so you can come and join us for live webinars. You can view them, and they sit there for a year after they've been recorded. There's also the opportunity to request individual consultations there.

Our forums are on that website, too. I think there's one on at the moment actually open, an access forum. And so, yeah, that's the place to go, and that's the link to use to get to the help that we can offer you.

KAREN FOLEY: That's wonderful. And we've put those links in the chat as well for you, so you can follow those. And they're also on the resources page of the Student Hub Live website if you're watching this on catch up.

Roz thank you so much for joining us, and, Karen and Jess, thank you so much for coming along. It's really interesting, and you guys are off for a run now, aren't you, as part of the OU

relay team. So it's good to see practitioners in action. Thank you very much for joining me this morning.

KAREN Thank you for having me.

HOWELLS:

KAREN FOLEY: Well, that's the end of our first session. Our next session is going to look at business and leadership-- so something completely different. But let's have a check in with HJ and Sophie to see what you've all been talking about and how everybody is.

SOPHIE: Yes, it's been lovely. Thank you so much to our advisers in the chat. They've been really helpful. We've had Mark on, who is doing his sports and fitness degree, along with work in the military, with the funding, everything.

He says he's really got a good work-study-life balance, which is really nice, actually. You'd think it would be super busy in the military and studying, but it sounds like it's all going well for him. So good luck, Mark, and let us know how you get on. You'll have to keep in touch.

HJ: Actually, there's quite a few students that are in the military and studying with the OU, isn't there? I remember when I went to my graduation there was-- quite a few of them had done their degrees, and they were graduating in uniform, which was really nice to see. So it's always good to see a really nice mix of students that you wouldn't normally think would be at university, but with the OU it's quite mixed.

SOPHIE: It's nice. So good luck. We've got quite a lot of business people as well looking forward to the chat, which is really nice. If you've got any questions for our next session, put them in the chat, and we'll pop them forward as soon as possible. That would be great.

HJ: Yes, and remember to follow at @OU_Sport on Twitter. We posted it in the chat. They post lots of great things about what they're doing-- so things like blog posts, news for you students.

It is always useful to follow their Twitter. And as we said before, if we missed anything from that session that you are raring to know, just email us studenthub@open.ac.uk, and we'll get back to you on that one. And we'll give you well-informed answers.

SOPHIE: Yes. So we have actually got one question for our next guest already. I know that they're being helped already in the chat. But Beatrice has said that she is about to finish her business degree, and she's finding it difficult to get an industrial placement due to her age.

So she's trying a few supermarkets and things like that. So she would like some advice in this session about some placements and how she can maybe go about that, which is nice. So hopefully our experts can help you out there, Beatrice.

KAREN FOLEY: Lovely. How old is Beatrice, Sophie?

SOPHIE: I didn't want to ask. It's rude to ask a lady her age.

KAREN FOLEY: It is rude to ask a lady her age, but young or very old or whatever sort of the issue is with the age could be useful. Because we've got so many very young students now who are studying with the Open University. So it's difficult to make assumptions, I guess, about what that is, but, Beatrice, you might want to let us know a bit more.

And we can certainly ask Marie who's on with us next in the next session. So we've got lots of students that are studying business with us, Sophie. Any sort of questions that people have got already, or are they just talking about the morning more generally?

SOPHIE: Morning more generally at the moment. I'm surprised that lunch hasn't come into it just yet. I mean, we're on course to 11:00. I assume in the next 20 minutes we'll have some lunchtime discussion. And, Bea, if you do have any other questions, any careers-- it doesn't necessarily have to be business related-- but anything you've got, pop it in the chat, and we will pop it for you to our experts.

HJ: We had some people pop in who are on creative writing. So yeah, any general careers advice, I'm sure all of our guests will be happy to help because it applies across the board. And on that point, we are actually looking at some creative writing modules later today, some of the new ones that are coming out. So that will definitely be of interest.