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KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live Open Day here at the Open University in Walton Hall, Milton Keynes. The 4th of July if you're here in real time. If you're not, it will be another day no doubt. But we've been covering all the things that we think you need to know as a new Open University student, and we've got lots of friendly current students in the chat and lots of people who are very excited about their studies.

We've covered all sorts of things so far in this morning session-- we've been talking about the virtual learning environment. We've been talking about tutorials and how to contact your tutor. We've been talking to people from the student support teams. We've been talking about disabled students allowances and things that might be helpful for disabled students to know about. And Colin spoke to me about fees and funding, which is very interesting indeed. And Hazel has just been talking about some of her research and about some of the future of digital by design at the Open University.

But in this next session, we're going to have a look at how the Careers Advisory Service can help you. Because you may not have access yet to your module material, or all of your books, or your tutor, but there is one thing that you can do right now, very early on in your OU career, which is start thinking about the direction of your career, what you can do, and what steps you can take along the way before you get to the end of it.

So Lynne, thank you for coming and talking to me about this. So tell us, for new students who may not know about the service, what is it and who can access it?

LYNNE JOHNSON: So anyone who is registered as a student with the Open University can access the Careers Service. And also students who have completed their studies. As long as they completed their studies within the last three years, then they can access, too. And I think that's particularly useful, because we do find that a lot of students are coming towards the end of their studies. So having the ongoing dialogue with us as they're continuing to develop their career or change career can be useful. So anyone who's studying with us, registered as a student, or anyone who's completed their studies within the last three years can contact us.

KAREN FOLEY: Now what tends to happen? How organised are people on the whole? Do they all come to you at the start and say, this is what I want to do? Or do they wait till the end and say, right.

LYNNE JOHNSON: Yes. Sadly people are not as organised as we would all like to be, and I include myself in that.

And I think one of the things I'd like to say is, career planning is not a crisis activity. And I think a lot of people do leave it to the last. I know when I was at University, and that was a long time ago, I didn't see the Careers Service until right at the end. And I think a lot of are students think the same. They think, we'll get the studies out of the way. We'll concentrate on studying-- because often people have got a lot of things that they're managing. Their managing children, perhaps working, a busy home life, and studying part time or full time. So the thought is concentrate on your studies, get that out of the way, and then they'll think about careers.

However, really, do think about it much earlier. Come to speak to us at the Career Service at an early point. You don't have to have a really firm idea in a sense about what exactly you need from us. And I think that's an understanding, but it's almost like building up a dialogue with us. The most useful thing about the Career Services-- you can book an appointment with us, and it's almost like thinking I've got 45 minutes of my week put aside where I'm going to think about my career, and I'm going to talk to somewhere about my career. And it really focuses on where you're at now, what your thoughts are. And we can be a really useful sounding board just for what are you thinking? Where do you think you're going? Have you checked out the reality?

So if you come earlier, we can help you with that all the way through your studies. And you might find that your career ideas really change a lot through your studies. So we can help you kind of consider those thoughts as you go through. So yeah, do come to us early. It's not a one off opportunity.

KAREN FOLEY: Now I know, I teach on a Level 1-- introducing the social sciences module. I go to my tutorial and I say to the students, what are you doing? And they all have a very clear idea about what they're going to go and do. And many of them say, I'm going to be a clinical psychologist, or I'm going to do this, this, or this. And often-- because I teach on some other modules and so I'll meet them along the way-- and often a few years later, they've changed their minds about something.

So students coming in early doors, often OU students are doing this to change careers or for some very specific reason. Like you say, there's not a one off opportunity. So how do you manage that sort of often coming in and thinking, I'm going to be a clinical psychologist to two years later actually thinking, gosh, I really like doing this. How can they work with you sort of as

that process happens, and what do you think-- oh you splitter, you said you were going to do this, now you're off going and doing that. We're not giving you another session. How do you manage all that?

LYNNE JOHNSON: Well Karen, we certainly wouldn't say that. We certainly wouldn't be saying, you came in and you told us two years ago that you want to be a clinical psychologist and now you're saying something else. So you clearly don't know what you're thinking about, so we've spent our time talking to you. Because that's not how career development works. In a sense, it's very much about checking things out, isn't it? I think it's great that when students come to the Open University-- and you're absolutely right, more students are coming with studying with a career idea in mind, whether that's to develop their career or to change careers. So they're starting with an idea that, for example, I might want to be a clinical psychologist.

But as they start to study-- you know, the study in itself sometimes makes you realise that actually I thought I was really passionate about this, but it's not this I'm passionate about. It's this part of the study which has come alive for me in a way I didn't expect. And what does that mean for my career? And I think that's great. We're always learning about ourselves as we continue our career. And continue through our life. I think almost it's misnamed, isn't it? Coming for careers advice, as though it's a kind of one off. I know what my career is, I'm set and I'm off now. I don't need any further help.

Whereas I think finding out what you want to do and planning that throughout the time you study and the time after, it's really about learning those career management skills as you're going along. I think that's what we can help with, of helping you reflect on what your experience has been through either study or checking out the reality of being a clinical psychologist. And that reflection, thinking, what does that mean for me? What have I learned about myself? And where does that put me? Which path is that putting me on?

And rather than your path coming into university being, I'm going this way to be a clinical psychologist. It might be that you're saying, OK, well actually I'm not going this way. I'm a bit this way and a bit this way. Until you get where your path has taken you. So I think that reflection is really key. And what we can help with is kind of helping you through that thinking process of actually getting you to explore what your thoughts are and checking out the reality of those careers.

KAREN FOLEY: Now you've mentioned that students can have this 45 minute appointment type of thing, but

there's a range of things that you do. And also you've got some brilliant, brilliant resources-- not just on careers, but on things like job interviews and doing a CV and all these things that are actually really, really important. So can you tell us about some of those resources and why students might want to tap in on them? Particularly, I mean, being an OU student is something I know employers really, really value. If nothing else it shows massive time management, commitment, and dedication. So it's a great thing to sort of put on your CV and update your CV. What are some of the things that you've got that you think people might valuably pick up on this summer?

LYNNE JOHNSON: Yeah. So in the summer the great thing is that students often have a bit of downtime from their studies. And that's a really good time to kind of reflect on your career planning process and think about what you've done over the last year and what it means for you in terms of where you're going. Now as you mentioned, a careers appointment is one of the options we can provide for people. And that can be really useful in kind of thinking about your own particular situation and some of the barriers and some of the challenges that are particularly pertinent for you. But before that, there's an awful lot students can do to self manage their own careers. I mean, I've got here a copy of the Career Planning and Job Seeking workbook.

I'm not sure which camera I'm looking at, so I'm passing it all around. And this-- you can request a copy of this or you can access it online at our site. And it's good to see a hard copy. I sort of quite like this hard copy. But there's lots of resources online. You mentioned the interactive simulator for interviews, which is great if you've got an interview coming up just to sit there and practise the kind of questions that you might be asked and see how you would respond. There's lots of information on helping you assess what your skills are, where are your interests, what your values are. So all that information is online.

We also have-- we run lots of things like webinars and forums. And if you can't make it to a live webinar, we keep the recordings of those webinars. So if you go onto the Careers space, then you can find a little box that says webinars. If you click on that, you'll be amazed at the plethora of webinars that are on there. And they might be things like how fear can be holding you back from planning your career. It might be working with employers. We've had a number of very high profile employers coming in and talking to us about how they see Open University students and how they want to work with Open University students.

We also have JobZone going on there, which is where employers are posting their vacancies. And they're particularly interested in Open University students. What's really interesting is

yesterday I noticed that one of the new things that's going to be on student home for students on different modules is kind of a careers bulletin. And in that careers bulletin it's all the jobs on JobZone that are coming up perhaps that month or that week that are particularly pertinent for that subject. Which is really good at connecting kind of careers. Helping students be aware of what employers are looking. There's an awful lot out there.

KAREN FOLEY: And just keeping up to speed with the salaries and who's recruiting, even if you're not actively looking at things. That can give you background information, can't it?

LYNNE JOHNSON: It can. And just to see what interests you. It's a bit like, just kind of internet shopping, internet browsing. Just having a look through and thinking, oh that job really interests me. I wonder what you do in that job? I wonder what that employer is looking for? Because you might be surprised that actually when employers are posting a lot of vacancies, a lot of the kind of softer skills they're looking for a lot of our students have already got. Because one of the advantages of being an Open University student is students have often got work experience. They've often already had perhaps even a number of careers and working alongside their studies. So in terms of the transferable skills and things they're already bringing to an employer, employers are really keen. And that's the message that we get from employers. Whereas students are going to interviews and feeling like they have to almost apologise for their age, apologise they're not like a new student at 18, 19.

Employers don't see it like that. They see our students as safe bets who already have the skills they're looking for. And you know, we can help them market that skill.

KAREN FOLEY: That's been brilliant. I'm just looking to see, because we've got so much stuff and there's loads of resources as well on the Student Hub Live website that you can go to, as well as, of course as Lynn says, on your student homepage. I know you're working loads with employers and various things, and I think we've covered everything that's sort of here to include. But is there anything that I've missed that you want students to know about?

LYNNE JOHNSON: Oh, that's a big question-- is there anything to miss? I think just connect with us and connect early. It's never too early to start thinking about your career. And starting thinking about career in a broader term, rather than kind of almost life planning of what you're doing. Too many students are coming to the Open University and thinking, I don't need to see a careers adviser because I already know what I want to do. I work particularly within the faculty of Business and Law, and certainly a lot of students in the Law faculty think I know I want to be a

solicitor. I know I want to be a barrister. So I don't need to speak to the Careers Advisers until the end.

Now we can really help you check out the reality of that, and work out what you need to do.

KAREN FOLEY: And it's all that other softer stuff and the planning and really getting the right career for you. And the right job interviews that are going to get you the best positions, isn't it?

LYNNE JOHNSON: Absolutely.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. Brilliant. Lynn, thank you very, very much. Please do connect with the Career Service. Like Lynne says, great opportunity over the summer to check in, whether you are just starting your OU journey or you're midway through. That booklet looks like a great source of information. So yeah. Nice workbook to work through and spend some reflective time thinking about you.

Thank you very much, Lynne. Right. We're going to have a short break now. I'm going to show you the Cellar Bar, and then we're going to come back and talk about online rooms, which is our new tutorial system for online learning. So we'll see you in a couple of minutes.

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