

[MUSIC PLAYING]

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to the Student Hub Live. Thank you for helping me confiscate all these biscuits, Lynn. I think HJ was just going to eat them all.

LYNNE JOHNSON: We do need to make sure that there's some left for us, don't we?

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Anyway, he can't get them now.

So careers. Now Lynn and Marie, you're both careers specialists, for My Careers Advisory Service. And we've got a lot of new students here who may not know how helpful you guys are. So we've been introducing you to some of the key people who are going to be supporting you through your studies. And we've just spoken to the lovely student support.

Now the Careers Service are a very, very hidden gem. A lot of students contact them towards the end of their careers with the OU, and they're like, right, let's get cracking. But you guys actually think that we should encourage students to start right from day one about thinking about their careers. And very relevant, because with the Open University law school and the Open University business school, many students are indeed starting to change careers.

So we've asked you at home what you're studying for. So if you can have us know whether or not you're planning to change careers, yes, no, or you're unsure. And whether you thought about what to do during your studies to enhance your career prospects. So again, yes, no, unsure.

And then there's a word cloud. And remember, with these ones you need to put three things in, or the results don't send. So if you can only think of one or two things, just put a full stop at the end. And the question this time is, in terms of my career, I think that achieving my degree will- what will it do?

OK. So there are new spaces that students can go to to find out about how careers can support their qualifications. Can you tell us about them?

LYNNE JOHNSON: Marie you've been more involved with this side.

MARIE DA SILVA: Yeah. So we've got a brand new qualification site space for undergraduate law and

undergraduate business. And there's a wealth of information there for students. The career-specific information is on the qualification site under the tab for Succeed. So if you have look at Succeed tab, you'll find everything there that you need to know about careers.

So just to give an example, on the law site we've got a section for the students who are thinking about pursuing careers. So if they're thinking about becoming sisters, barristers, legal executives, everything they really need to know about getting relevant work experience, the routes into those professions, tips and advice in terms of applications, et cetera, all of that will be there for them.

And then there's a section- non-lawyer careers we've called it. If students are still exploring their options, and thinking about, well, maybe what could they do with a law degree, that will give them lots of really good ideas there.

So, similar on the business site we've got tips and advice there about getting relevant work experience, whether you're looking to develop a new career, or change career, or starting out- some tips and advice there. And again, lots of ideas on things that you can do with your degree.

KAREN FOLEY: So when should students ideally connect with you, and what sorts of things can you help them with as they're progressing?

LYNNE JOHNSON: That's a really good question. I think one of the big problems, in a sense, that we have in Careers is that our students see it very much as a crisis activity. They think oh, I've got a problem with my career. I'm going to lose my job. Do I need to find a new job? Or I'm at the end of my degree, and now I need to think about getting that new career that I've been thinking about. And so they come to see us at that point. And I'd really say to them that manage that process at a much earlier point.

So, right from the beginning of registering as a student with the Open University, you've probably had to think about why you were studying. And there's a point where you need to indicate are you studying for career purposes. And we know that a lot of us students don't fall into that kind of perhaps that traditional career starter that you see at traditional universities. Students might be career developers. They might be in work looking to develop into perhaps more of a management role, or a different role within their business. Or they might be career changers.

So I think especially with the law students, they're likely to be studying because they think, ah, I want to change from what I'm doing at the moment. Maybe they're working in retail, and they think, actually, I'd really like to work as a solicitor or a barrister.

And I think one of the problems is those students might come to the Open University and see it very much as I'm going to start my studies. I'm going to get my degree. And then I'll speak to them in Careers. Why would I speak to them in Careers at an earlier point? Because I know what I want to do.

And it's kind of thinking back to that sense of what is careers advice? And if people think back to when they're at school, they might have seen the careers advisor at that time very much to think about what is the career you want to do.

So they come to the Open University. They think, I know what I want to do. I want to be a solicitor. I want to be a barrister. Or perhaps they're in a job and they want to move into management. I don't need to see a careers advisor. I'm on that path. I know what I'm doing.

However, the reality is that their degree is only likely to be one part of that- a really important part, and they really need to concentrate on their studies. But it's only one point, part. They need to do a lot more career thinking.

They need to think about why they want to study, what they've already bringing. Have an audit, really, of what they've done so far. What sets them apart from other students? Think about where their skills lie, where their strengths lie, and perhaps what kind of competencies they might need to develop.

Now I would say link in with us at Careers at an early point. That might not be necessarily having a one-to-one consultation at that early point. It might be looking at some of the resources on our careers site, or perhaps coming onto a forum or webinar. But be aware that those resources are there, and start thinking about where you want to go at that early point.

KAREN FOLEY: So almost what you're saying is that there's two things going on here. One is that people might choose a vocation or qualification, and they have that endpoint in mind in terms of their career. And what you're saying, really, is that there are lots of other aspects that you can use, maybe to support yourself in your studies along the way to enhance your employability, so that even if you are very determined to get to this certain point here, there is still stuff you can do to help students on their journey. And equally, maybe if they're not sure about that end point,

then you can help them decide. But really, it's more than that, the deciding of the end point.

LYNNE JOHNSON: Absolutely. And I think there's a realisation that that end point might change as well throughout their studies. And we see that a lot with students. You might start your degree with a really clear idea of at the end of my studies I'm going to be an accountant. I'm going to be a barrister. I'm going to be a solicitor. You might have an idea.

But that might change whilst you're studying. It might be that you've gained a bit more knowledge about what the reality of that career is, and find that it doesn't actually fit with what your skills are, what your ethics are, what it is you want to do in your life.

So, in a sense, thinking about that as you develop through your studies is a really good point. And how we can help is perhaps by having that conversation with us to develop those ideas, to understand where your thinking is taking you, rather than having that kind of ostrich head in the sand, OK, this doesn't feel like I'm in the right place on my studying, the right degree for me. Perhaps I don't want to be what I want. But I'm going to ignore that. And we'd say come and talk it through with us, and we'll help guide you through that pathway.

Let's see what students at home said. We asked whether they were planning to change careers. So the question is, I am studying to change my career. And let's see what you have to say. So 60% have said, yes, they are. No is 0 per cent. And 40 per cent are unsure.

And this is a really interesting question, because often, once you start engaging with something, you don't know what it's like to be in that career. You don't really know a lot about what it's like to even study that. It might be that there's more text-based reading. It might be that there's more maths. It might be that there's more this or that to do with something that you haven't really factored in when you were watching something on TV that looked very, very glamorous, for example.

So to some extent, students are learning a lot about what that career involves as part of their training. And it's that point that should lead to questions about is this something that I can see myself doing in 20 years' time. Do I want to be sitting around doing these maths, for example. I said- [LAUGHS]

MARIE DA SILVA: Well, that's what we'd really encourage, particularly, I think, with law, getting relevant work experience is absolutely essential. And so that's where, again, there's lots of advice on our website, and also on the law qualification site about the different ways in which you can gain

that experience. Because we can appreciate an awful lot of students might be working full time, or might have a range of commitments that make gaining experience for a couple weeks over summer not maybe the ideal, sort of, for them. So there are lots of ways to look at that, and get that experience. But that is a really key part of actually speaking to people in the profession, seeing what they do, getting your questions answered, and thinking about the realities of that career path that they're considering.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I know that the students want to ask some questions about this sort of thing. And so I want to go over to the Hot Desk.

But just before we do, we asked whether or not students thought about what they needed to do during their studies to enhance their career prospects. And 60 per cent of them said, no, they hadn't. And we know we've got a lot of new students here today. So it's very usual that they won't have, and, as you say, very common for people to think about this very late in the day. But I want to sort of ask for some ideas about how they can go about getting some of this experience in a minute.

But let's just go to the Hot Desk quickly. Kristin and Mychelle.

MYCHELLE: Yes. We've got two questions here. One's from Petra. In regards to careers, and this might be a bit of a strange question, but Petra, you'll find it's not a strange question. Many people ask this kind of question.

LYNNE JOHNSON:Very much so.

MYCHELLE: How realistic is it to change to a law career in your 50s?

And the second question we have is, how difficult is it to actually speak to a careers advisor? Or maybe I'll flip that around and say, how easy is it to speak to a careers advisor?

LYNNE JOHNSON:So if I take the one on age first, and Petra. So that is a really common question we get asked, how feasible is it for you to have a career change. Petra mentioned law in particular, but across the board of all subjects, how easy is it? Is it realistic to consider a career change in your 50s?

And I think the thing that students don't realise is that they're probably already been in a work environment. It might not have even been what they see as to be a related work environment, but they will have built up a bank of competencies and skills that are really important for that

employer.

If you imagine yourself as an employer in the future, and you're sitting in front of them, and they're choosing between you with your degree, having completed that, and a student who's just come straight out of university with very little in the way of work experience, you, in the bank of experience, and wisdom and knowledge about yourself, and the competencies you're bringing, are a much safer bet for that employer as a starting point.

And if you just think, from the employer's perspective, the cost of training someone, the costs of actually advertising and recruiting for the right person, you are someone who's actually considered. You've been in one career. You've had awareness of your strengths, and where your skills lie. So coming into that career, you are already bringing an awful lot to the table.

And when I'm speaking to students, often they see themselves [INAUDIBLE] massive disadvantage of that interview. And at an interview, they may be almost trying to hide the fact of their age and their experience they're bringing, whereas in reality they need to be at that interview saying, look, I am bringing all this to the table. I have this wealth of experience that you can build on already.

And some of those might be the softer skills- the teamworking skills, the organisational skills, the prioritisation skills. So, the customer service skills.

I was speaking to one student who really didn't understand that the skills he was gaining working in Tesco's, in terms of those customer care skills that he had developed, he was making nothing of them in terms of his application for a career in law. And yet they're really important. His awareness of commerciality was really great, as compared to someone who didn't have that. So it's really about taking a thorough audit of what you've got, and being confident at what you're bringing to the table at that time.

KAREN FOLEY: And what you and your department do so well is help students to identify some of those, and give them a value. And it's this whole employability thing that's so important right now in terms of transferring skills from one context to another, showing how you might be a safer pair of hands.

And we were talking earlier today about how the OU, it's not a lesser degree, and how there's been a lot of stuff on Facebook lately about students saying actually the OU is much better. And in fact we've been learning today why it's so much better in a number of ways, and in

particular for business and law students.

How do you then work with students to identify some of these skills, and say actually, this is how you can enhance your CV, or this is how you could maybe flip that around in an interview? Because you give very practical advice for students in some of these consultations, and with some of the materials that are online.

MARIE DA SILVA: Yeah. I mean, I think the key thing is helping to appreciate that there are lots of transferable aspects from different areas of work. But I think sometimes what we hear a lot from recruiters that we speak to is that particularly students with work experience, considerable work experience behind them, sort of think sometimes it's easy enough just to say, this is the job I'm working in, or these are my previous jobs, this is what I've done in these roles, and then expect the employer to join up the dots.

And I think that's the key thing, that we work with students to help them see, actually, OK, if the employer that you're applying to is looking for x, y and z, how can you demonstrate from what you have done, and the experience and skills that you have gained, that you meet those requirements. So it's sort of trying to speak in the language of the employer. And that's very much what we're sort of helping students to do, to really sort of decode what the employer is looking for, and how to actually present what they have in a way that helps that employer see exactly what they can offer that's relevant to them.

LYNNE JOHNSON: I'm going to point people to this workbook.

KAREN FOLEY: You literally are.

LYNNE JOHNSON: I am! I am! This career planning workbook, it's available on our website. But you can also get a lovely hard copy that looks like this. And I'm hoping I'm holding it for long enough to people to see.

So all students, I'd recommend getting this at an early point. I mentioned earlier that a careers consultation, that one-to-one, is one of the ways that we can help you. But also in this career planning workbook, this is a really good starting point. The first part of this workbook is called "About You." And it's really about auditing all those skills.

And what I particularly like in this workbook, and send this to so many students, is on page 23 of this workbook there is a really comprehensive skills audit. And where students might think, oh, I've got really good communication skills, this skills audit, it breaks down the skills of

communication to actually what are you good at in that communication. And it puts it very much in business language.

So some of the work that students might be doing, perhaps before starting their study, or in a break between their studies, is getting one of these workbooks and starting to work through it themselves, thinking about where their achievements or where their skills lie, what kind of work they're looking for in the future. It's a lot of the thinking that can't be skipped, really, when you're thinking about careers. It's the hard work you need to do to work out what it is about you that you're selling to that employer and bringing to the table. So careers workbook.

KAREN FOLEY: And when you're not plugging your careers workbook, Lynn, you've been involved in a BOC, haven't you, with employability?

LYNNE JOHNSON: Yes, I've been involved in a number.

KAREN FOLEY: Tell people what a BOC is, because it might sound a bit boxlike.

LYNNE JOHNSON: It does sound a bit strange, a BOC. A BOC is a badged open course. And if you go on to OpenLearn or FutureLearn, you'll see lots of MOOCs, which are massive open online courses.

KAREN FOLEY: Both of which are free.

LYNNE JOHNSON: Yeah, they're all free, and they're all short courses. Now in the Careers Service, we have developed a number of these to help people with their career planning. And these, again, thank you for bringing attention to those, are really good points.

There's a really good BOC out there at the moment that's just been released on resilience, thinking about resilience, and developing resilience. And perhaps signing up for one of those, it will cost you nothing. You don't have to hand in essays at the end of it. But you can start thinking through what resilience means to you.

KAREN FOLEY: And you get badges at the end.

LYNNE JOHNSON: You do. You can get a badge at the end of it. You look like you really like the badge aspect.

KAREN FOLEY: I do like the badge aspect at the end of it. Yes. So something to do while you're waiting for your tutor and your module to start, maybe.

Now we do have quite a lot of questions. And I want to go to the Hot Desk in a second. But

we've had quite a few about how to make CVs sell you effectively I guess. And we've got two things I wanted to talk about.

One is Syreeta, who's got a lot of further education on her CV- a lot more, in fact, than jobs. So how does it look when you've got that imbalance? We all know what it's like to start studying, and then keep studying, and then all of a sudden you can sometimes think, am I appearing overqualified, for example, or does it look like I'm studying too much and not working enough? How do you sort of manage that presentation of those two important components of the CV, when maybe there's a disparity?

LYNNE JOHNSON:[INAUDIBLE] with you.

MARIE DA SILVA: Well, I think one approach is to sort of do what we call a skills-based CV. So you start by outlining your skills. And then you draw on either your work experience, your studies, whatever is relevant that you've done to demonstrate that you have the skill.

LYNNE JOHNSON:That's a good plan.

MARIE DA SILVA: And then sort of after that you are sort of detailing your work experience and your education. So it's not sort of leading with your work experience, maybe, if that's not the biggest area. So again, it will all depend on what you're applying for and what's relevant. Because I think that's always a tip to give to students is whatever is most relevant to that you for what you're applying for, that has to be on the first page. Because obviously that's what the employer's going to look at first. So you've got to capture the most relevant things about you for the application.

KAREN FOLEY: Because that's what they care about. It's what you've got, as opposed to where you've got it. And I love that idea of breaking down that distinction by focusing on skills, and literally what you're bringing to the table, instead of where you necessarily got that, whether that was from paid for, or setting.

MARIE DA SILVA: Oh, you refer to where you got them from, but not in the same way-

KAREN FOLEY: Not in the same context. So it doesn't look so imbalanced. Excellent. Kristen. I wonder if I could pick your brains, because I know you've been doing a lot on some of the sort of stuff around CV lingo, and how to sort of sell things in the best way possible.

KRISTEN: Yes, yes. Well, actually the workbook that Lynn put up is a really excellent resource for finding out about these different skills, and putting it into the business lingo. Because I think that's probably the hardest part, isn't it? You have all of this experience.

But there's another question that I wanted to highlight here, that what happens if you don't have that work experience? What do you do then? Are there resources available to start to get that kind of experience?

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, because this was something we sort of started with. And I know Laura's been having issues with this, because she's got children, and has been finding it difficult to actually get some of the work experience. And you'd mentioned earlier that you could point people in the right direction. But what if they can't?

LYNNE JOHNSON: Hmm. I know for some people it can be difficult to get the work experience, especially if they're thinking in those traditional terms of kind of I need an internship or something, or I'm in my current job, and I really don't have time, or can't change jobs. How do you get that work experience?

I think that what I would recommend is working out what competencies you'd need first by really- and I'll go back to doing a clear audit of what you have, and how that matches against what the employer is looking for. Once you're aware of where those skills gap lies, then it doesn't feel so big. I need to get some work experience, once you have a clear idea. Perhaps you're moving into a career that's related to accountancy. And what you don't have is experience of perhaps dealing with money managing finances in that sense.

Now you might have some experience of your own that you can talk about managing household budgets. Or perhaps you have children at school, and you could get involved in the PTA. I'm not sure it's called PTA any more.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

You can get involved in that, and be involved in the kind of budgeting of that. Or the school governors. There might be ways that you can get that experience. I think once you're kind of aware of where you're lacking skills, it's much easier to come to us and talk about, well, how can I realistically gain that skill.

KAREN FOLEY: But does it depend on what you're doing? Is experience more important for some vocational areas than others?

MARIE DA SILVA: I think in some it's essential. Law, for example, you have to. You've got to get some legal experience on your CV- because everybody else is going to. And so it's, in addition to your academic qualifications, it is the other key area that employers are looking at.

So we also say, I mean, you mentioned volunteering is an excellent way of doing it. And that's sort of gaining that experience. But I think it's also thinking of the sort of longer term. So I'm thinking, OK, if I'm studying for the next couple of years, what could I do this year? What could I do the year after? So not putting yourself under pressure that you've got to do masses and masses in a short space of time, but taking that sort of longer term view, and thinking what little things can I do over those next couple of years that will make that difference and build up the CV to where I want it to be when I'm actually going to start then applying, and, well, maybe trying to look at other career options.

LYNNE JOHNSON: That's really good advice.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I hope that's helped you, Lyra. But if it hasn't, do contact the Careers Advisory Service. So just remind students where they can find you. On the Success, is it?

MARIE DA SILVA: That's on the qualifications site. You can find careers-related information there. But we do have our own web site. So literally just above, when you're looking at the qualification site, there's a tab above there for careers. That's the easiest way in. And our home page looks like this.

You did ask a question earlier about making appointments to see a careers advisor. There is a link down on the bottom to booking a consultation. So that's the easiest way just to get in touch with us. But we have regular forums, webinars, et cetera, as well, all of which are advertised on our web site. And all the resources that we've referred to are on there, too. So hopefully that will be the easiest way to get in.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, there's loads going on. You guys certainly have a busy year ahead, connecting with students and helping them in a really wide variety of ways. And Marie and Lynn, thank you very much for joining me, and explaining some of what you do.

LYNNE JOHNSON: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, I hope you found that useful. I'm feeling a bit guilty now. I think I'm going to take a packet of these biscuits back out for HJ, and see if I can convince him to come in in the afternoon.

What do you think?

Now we've got an interview with some people from behind the scenes. And in fact, one of the things will be very familiar, because it's about Mychelle and Ron. Mychelle won't like this, but you have to watch it. I'm sorry, Mychelle. And it's about Mychelle's other job when she's not doing the host desk. So stay tuned for us for that.

And then we're going to have a conversation about some big ideas in business with Michael, Heda and Prithby. So join us in a second to discuss communication and enterprise after this short video.

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