

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to The Student Hub Live Faculty for Well-Being, Education and Language Studies Freshers event. Well, we're going to have another interdisciplinary discussion, which means that I've invited colleagues from different schools within the faculty to have a talk about topical issues of the day.

And we're going to talk about digital professionalism now. We've got some widgets, some interactive word clouds, that we'd love you to fill in for us, please. So in one or two words, or three-- you must put three things into these word clouds, by the way, because otherwise the results won't submit-- say some words about what a e-professionality, or e-accountability mean to you.

So what do you think-- what springs to mind when you think about digital professionalism, or being a digital professional? What sorts of things are springing to mind for you about that? We'd like to know that so that we can pick up on some things. There's no right or wrong answer. And we'd also like to know some other things a little bit later on in the session.

So some of those things-- like how do you feel about HCPTG-- may not make sense to you right now. But we'll go through those as and when. And the yes-no ones are super easy to fill in. So much less hard than thinking about a word cloud. Well, to discuss this big issue of digital professionalism, I'm joined by Gemma Ryan, who's a lecturer in nursing and co-qualification director for our Nursing Associate Practise Programme. And she has a special interest in electronic professionalism. So welcome, Gemma. You're a star panellist to have with your spot-on research interests.

And we also are joined by Caroline Tagg, who's a senior lecturer in applied linguistics and English language in LAL-- the School of Language and Applied Linguistics here at The Open University. Welcome, Caroline.

CAROLINE TAGG: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: And we also have Natalia Kurcikova, who is a professor of reading and children's development, working for both a university in Norway and also The Open University in England. Welcome, Natalia.

NATALIA KURCIKOVA: Hello. Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: Hello. So, Gemma, this is very much your particular area of interest. So I wonder if you might frame for us what the term e-professional means, or electronic accountability. What do we mean by this?

GEMMA RYAN (Lecturer in Nursing, Co-Qualification Director FD Nursing Associate Practice): Generally-- so, for example, because my background is nursing, what we've been finding is that we have all this online presence, but we treat it kind of from a personal perspective. So things like Facebook, you post quite a lot of personal things on there. But what we've come to realise is that some of those things might not be considered professional for what a nurse should be doing in the public domain.

So e-professionalism is basically taking the principles of being a professional and making sure that we apply them in the online environment as well. So not just in our daily Practise as nurses, and that can apply across a range of professions-- not just healthcare. I know that I've

had discussions with people from law, and police, and even the armed forces. They have to be very careful about what they post online in the public domain.

So e-professionalism is essentially about taking the principles of being a professional and making sure that we do that online, as well as offline. And it is sometimes termed e-accountability in that we are held accountable to professional bodies. So if we do do something that isn't professional, we could be held to account for it.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's not only what you're saying, but also a little bit about what you're doing, Gemma. Is that right?

GEMMA RYAN: Yeah. Behaviours, as well as content.

KAREN FOLEY: Oh, interesting. I haven't seen it yet, but I've heard a lot, on Netflix-- I don't know if you've seen it-- that programme, The Social Dilemma. So, again, about the extent to which social media is tracking and tracing various things. OK, so it's a big thing. And one of the things that I know many people do-- I guess it's sort of a healthcare professional context-- is, very often, when we've got sniffs and colds, we'll go online and search for information.

And some of this-- this health care professional targeted googling is a new thing, isn't it? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

GEMMA RYAN: Yeah. It's a relatively new kind of concept. So it's healthcare professional targeted googling. So people have started to-- we've all got an online presence. So I know I've got a professional profile with the OU. But what we can do now is actually go and Google if we're going to see a consultant, or if you've got a nurse's name, you could actually type that name into Google and things could actually appear that might not be something that you'd want sharing.

So it could be a disadvantage. But what we also see as well is, we've got things like Google ratings that you can find that information about organisations, or healthcare organisations, and what people are saying about them. So in some ways, that can be a real advantage. So it's basically people, members of the public, or even other professionals googling either people or organisations to find out information about them.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. So this widget, this HCPTG, this is the health care professional targeted googling. So we'd like to know what you think about this at home. Do you think it's useful-- this is the first option on one of our widgets-- for patients to be able to see information about the workers in their organisation? Do think it's worrying? Or do you think it would make you think about what information you would share more publicly-- just the fact that other people have access to this?

Or is it something that you would consider doing yourself? Would you actually think about this, now that Gemma's told us it is a thing? So is it something that you would go about doing? So we'll have a look at that poll in just a minute. And of course, we've got some resources as well on the Student Hub Live website, and The Internet, Social Media, And You, and a scenario on e-professionalism. So if you want to check out those links, I think Kieran will pop those in the chat. You might like to take a look at those a little bit later.

OK. So we've talked a little bit about some of the ways in which we're accessing information, and some of the information that we share, and the potential implications that could happen as a result of that. One of the things that we do encourage students to do is use social media effectively. It's one of the ways in which we can keep very up-to-date about information. And it also allows us to do things like blog and meet other people. So form connections, get information, and figure out different opinions, et cetera.

So, Natalia, I wonder if you can give us a little bit about your own experience about using social media platforms. And what about using those if social media is not your thing? If, for example, you're more of an introvert and don't really like going around showing pictures of this, that and the other on social media?

NATALIA KURCIKOVA: Yeah. That's a good question. Because I self-identify as an introvert, and I struggle with social media. You know, there are many different views on this. But many people believe that the way social media is designed is that it favours the extroverts. For people like myself, it's often difficult to engage in these fast-paced conversations. It literally makes you jittery, and you feel awkward about joining in.

So it take some time to develop your own practise and really accommodate your own introverted lifestyle. I would say that you need to find your own way how you engage with it. So in my case, it was mostly through blogs and commenting rather than posting new things all the time. It varies from day to day, but there are many different ways of engaging.

KAREN FOLEY: And I guess, to some extent, the level of engagement can also vary, can't it? I like certain sites that I want information about so that I can scroll through. Twitter is a great way, again, of connecting where you could just assimilate information. You don't necessarily need to actively participate in it. Is that something that has been a useful, I guess, stepping stone to be able to start commenting on some of the blogs, for you?

NATALIA KURCIKOVA: Absolutely. Yeah. So you're reading-- or as some people say, you're lurking on-- the sites to get familiar with the content and see what people post. And then you can join in the conversation. You don't necessarily have to always respond immediately. Take your time and reflect just like you would in the ordinary, in a normal conversation, in an offline conversation. So I would say don't put too much pressure on yourself to keep up with it all the time.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah. It's tricky, I think. There are certain ways of being-- it's a lot, I guess, easier to navigate things when we've got more cues than just text. And that's something that can be difficult. You know, it's so much nicer to be able to see, and hear, and smell, and feel what's going on around us. Texts can be quite limited, and sometimes misconstrued.

And just reflecting, I guess, on our audience's involvement, at the moment, in the chat. I know lots of people have been meeting and talk about WhatsApp group. There's a whole flurry of activity. And sometimes, it can take a little bit of time to, I guess, almost settle down and start to engage in some of these issues. But once you've said hello and what you're studying, you might then start to share how some of this relates to you.

So, Kieran, I wonder if we could just come to you briefly and see how everyone is at home and if people have anything to say about this issue about what we're sharing online about ourselves.

KIERAN: Yeah. Well, everyone's doing really well, for a start. Actually, there are some interesting pieces here about people writing about, as I've just admitted to, when you're writing a post, and you make a typo, and it goes up because sometimes you're thinking faster than your fingers can type, it's not feeling guilty about that. Do you know what I mean? And you're letting go of that guilt.

Because it's one of those things, on Facebook, it's not formal writing, is it? It's not like, for example, an assignment, or an EMA. And it's worth keeping that in mind. And people are mentioning that too-- whether they're using things like Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest as well, as methods to communicate with each other.

And interestingly-- and I'm just building on something that my colleagues said there-- we're very aware, we've done some work, recently, in Wales, about how students use tutor group forms to communicate with tutors. And there's some free online open learn courses for students that they can engage with if they're interested, or they're nervous about communicating online for the first time.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. I think your colleague's made one about, specifically, communicating on forums. Is that the link you've shared, Kieran?

KIERAN: That's the link I'm going to get now for them, yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Yeah, brilliant. Absolutely wonderful, yes. Do share that-- that'll be great. We're going to be talking about this at our Freshers week on the 28th of February, which, incidentally, you're all very, very welcome to come and join. We'll be showing you all of the basics of OU systems and practises, and meet lots of other people there. So please do to come along.

Before I come to you, Caroline, I just wanted to share to the panel some of the reflections that some people have had at home. Because we've asked them two things. The first is a word cloud. So we've asked them about what e-professionalism means to them. So let's take a look at some of these results. And then I'm going to ask Caroline, you first, but others may want to comment on some of the things that have come up. So let's see what you had to say at home.

We've got lots of words coming up here. Online is the key one here. Communication, integrity, respect, being responsible, being professional, image, accountability, responsibility. So lots of words that are being repeated-- they're very big, where lots and lots of people are saying them. But other people are mentioning other things-- like, Kieran, you mentioned correct grammar, et cetera.

But other things are coming out that sort of have different implications. Things like ethics, equality, security, confidentiality, representing the company, no bullying, public liability, promoting or damaging how accurate the content is. So there are lots of things. I'm not going to sort of pick up on all of them in case any of you would like to. But Caroline, I wonder if we could just come to you and think about what this means from an applied linguistics perspective.

CAROLINE TAGG (Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics): Yeah, Thanks. I mean, I suppose one way that we would come at this is through the idea of communicative norms. And this is something that applies in all situations in our lives. That every time we interact

with someone, any time we do anything with other people, we're following and adhering to certain communicative norms. And these change context-to-context.

So, you know, we would act very differently at home with friends than we would if we were out in the pub, or if we were at work, and so on. And so we follow these rules almost implicitly. You know, it's not something that we're aware of and that we discuss. And so coming online, for example, to tutor group forum, what you're doing is having to learn new communicative norms. So academic communicative norms, if you like.

And the thing to remember is that everyone in the group is learning the same norms. So you're not alone as a student at the beginning of your module. And the other thing to remember is, of course, that your tutor knows very well that you're trying to learn these norms. And I think one thing that's interesting about academic communicative norms, if you like, is that things like arguing is allowed. It's encouraged. You're supposed to debate ideas in academia.

But, of course, you have to do that in a responsible, polite, respectful way-- a lot of the keywords that were coming up in that cloud. So part of it is learning how to do things like argue, but in a way that's respectful. And importantly, I think, a lot of the time, it's to keep the space open. So don't assert your own views, but try to ask questions to acknowledge other people's views. And show your respect by keeping open, what we would call, a dialogic space-- a space for dialogue.

KAREN FOLEY: Natalia, is there anything you'd like to come in with on that, from your perspective?

NATALIA KURCIKOVA: I really like the word integrity in the word cloud. Because, you know, one of your privileges as an educated person is to show integrity. So I think it's really important that, on social media, we don't necessarily always divide the professional and the private self in the sense that we, for example, don't show our vulnerabilities. I think it's important to show the whole self on social media too. So you can be sharing content that responds to current events and how it impacts your own life, as well as your professional life, of course.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Often, my friends will look at my social media-- which I don't use a lot, actually. And they'll say, oh, gosh, you've been busy. I mean, I often have been busy, but I can never quite remember what I'm doing. But I certainly-- I don't know. I guess I don't share some of the downsides of things. And, yeah, I'm just sort of thinking about that whole idea. And I know some people really only share the upsides of life. It's easier sometimes to. But I guess it depends how you view social media and for what purpose you're really using it.

NATALIA KURCIKOVA: Yeah. It does create this false image of reflection, and that puts a lot of pressure, especially, on younger people who might not always have the life experience of experiencing the other side of life so much.

KAREN FOLEY: I've heard many students say, oh, everyone else on my Facebook or Whatsapp group is doing very well. They're getting great grades, et cetera. Incidentally, those aren't moderated by the OU. And they're very Marmite-- some people love them, some

people don't like them. But I know, for some people, that whole side of, I'm doing so well can feel very threatening for people who maybe aren't.

But very often, I'll look at my tutor group, for example, and think, actually, well, you may think that everyone's doing well. Actually, in my group of 20 students, I could see a lot of things happening for people-- lots of struggles and challenges that are really difficult. So sometimes, we can think we're the only one who is struggling, but actually that's not always the case for other people.

Gemma, I wonder if we can come back to you. Because we've been asking students about health care professional targeted googling, which was the topic you started using as an example earlier. And we've seen the results here. So let's take a look at what they had to say in terms of which option they felt after listening to you. So here, we can see that 52 percent are saying that, because of what we've said here, it's going to help them to think about what they're going to share publicly.

The next highest example is, it's useful for people to be able to access this information in the first place. Gemma, what's your response to that?

GEMMA RYAN: I think it's actually quite interesting that people have gone with it's actually raised their awareness about their own footprint. Because it's probably not what I expected in some ways. Because I think we're quite used to just googling something to find information. So I would have thought most people would have gone with that.

But I think that it's really important that people have chosen that option. Because some researchers have found that what we think we're doing online isn't often what we're actually doing online. So raising that awareness is really important.

KAREN FOLEY: And I guess being mindful of your privacy and your settings. I mean, I'm probably as guilty as the next person of, I don't always check my settings. I normally just accept cookies, et cetera, without really thinking through the implications of some of those things. And then I get surprised when I'm constantly bombarded by cycling adverts all the time because I'm always googling cycling websites when I'm not working.

So, yeah, it is really interesting in terms of how people are using that data as well. We've also asked people at home whether or not they think it's acceptable for this to happen in the first place. So do you think it's acceptable for health and social care workers to use social media to find out information about service users in their care? So this is, I guess, where the coin is flipped, Gemma, isn't it? Are there some words you'd like to say before we see the results of this?

GEMMA RYAN: Yeah. So basically, this is the opposite in that this is health professionals googling patients to find that information for them. So it's another quite new concept, to be fair. But we did some research with public groups. And to a general extent, they found it acceptable. But there were conditions by which they thought it would be acceptable. Generally, patient safety was one of the paramount, primary reasons they felt that it would be acceptable.

But they also saw it as, we should really seek consent. The flipside to that is that we've had certain circumstances where people have used it to an entire protection. So it has had some

benefits in certain circumstances. But I suppose it's about, would you like a health care professional googling you to find out information about you? And in what circumstance would it be acceptable.

KAREN FOLEY: Well, let's take a look and see what people at home said. Remember when we asked them about whether or not an end user may google the health care provider. And we saw that 24 percent of them then said that they do think it would be useful for the patients to see information about the service workers or the service provider.

But the other way around, let's see what people at home had to say. 66 percent said, no, they do not think it's acceptable. So does that fit with your way of thinking, Gemma? What is your response to this?

GEMMA RYAN: I think we're still going through a kind of ethical debate on it. There's no real guidance, there's no real professional guidance, on whether we should do this and in what circumstances, it would be acceptable. So, essentially, it's a debate that's still open for discussion.

I can certainly see that there might be circumstances where-- and, predominantly, most of the research has been done in psychiatry and mental health, where they need to find that information about people and there's no other way of doing it. But on the flip side, I'm not sure I would like someone doing that to me, to find that information about me. They should perhaps ask for consent to do that, and document that consent before they do that.

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely. A very, very difficult debate. Gemma, and Caroline, and Natalia, thank you so much for talking to me about this. I know this has raised lots of discussions in the chat. Kieran will come to you next. But before that, we're just going to have a quick ad break.

When we were allowed on campus, when it was the summer, we did some campus tours. And it's really nice for you to see some of the University that, hopefully, we can get back into in the not-too-distant future. And when we do, we would love you guys to come and meet us at the University in Milton Keynes. Everybody is welcome there when restrictions are lifted. So let's take a look at one of our campus tours and I'll see you for our next session very soon.

[Text on screen: studenthublive.open.ac.uk]