

Careers in Criminology – 15 June 2021

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to Student Hub Live. In this session, we are going to look at careers and criminology, something that I know that so many Level 1 students are really, really interested in. So I'm joined by Dale Ransberger, who is a student-facing careers and employability consultant within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. And we also have today Siobhan Flint, who is also a careers and employability consultant, but she specialises in learning and teaching within the faculty. So big welcome to you guys today. Well, let's start with thinking about what kinds of careers that you could go into, say, if you have a criminology degree. So Dale, what are some of the roles that people may end up in?

DALE RANSBERGER: Absolutely, thank you. Well first of all, thank you for having us. It's a pleasure to be here today to talk to everyone. Yeah, so some of the directly related roles to a criminology degree are things like - they may seem fairly obvious - so things like being a police officer or a more specialised role like a detective, probation officer, prison officer. As well as working with young people, so maybe a youth offending team officer or youth justice worker, which is a very similar role, but depending on the area you're in, they may use slightly different job titles. So those are the very directly related roles certainly specific to a criminology degree, but there are many of the roles you could consider, as well. Yeah, so -

KAREN FOLEY: So lots of scope, but one of the things that I do know that the students that can struggle with is that there are very often common misconceptions about what those terms mean. I mean, just thinking about things like, you know, criminologist and forensic psychologist, often people will sort of say they want to do those, but may not really understand what they mean.

DALE RANSBERGER: Yeah, absolutely. So a criminologist - I think sometimes when I've spoken to students who are thinking of a criminologist, they may think of someone like Cracker, if you can remember the old detective show on TV, or someone who is doing criminal profiling. So just to be clear, a criminologist, technically speaking, is actually an academic role. So someone whose main line of work is probably either lecturing or - and/or conducting research. So you may on occasion consult with police forces, if you like.

And we have a, it's a policing - criminology and policing research faculty - or part of our faculty is involved in research. So they give direct advice to police forces, particularly with training, but I'm not sure how often they get involved in specific cases. But generally that criminal profiling and related work is actually carried out by a detective. So just to be clear on that. Sometimes people don't realise when they say criminologist what that role is. And actually, it's probably a detective sometimes is what they're thinking about.

KAREN FOLEY: - important that we sort of get those misconceptions, I guess, sorted and end up in the right place. So Dale, what might then - as a careers as employability consultant, what might you advise students to consider, you know, if they're thinking about these sorts of areas? What's important?

DALE RANSBERGER: Well, depending on the individual, it could be various things that they may need to think about. A good thing to wonder, certainly first of all, is what kind of client

group they want to work with. So do they want to work with offenders, to either help them re-enter society, reduce the risk of reoffending? Or do they want to work with victims of crime as an alternative? What kind of setting do they want to work in? So do they want to work with ex-offenders in the community, if you like, or, you know, those on probation, for example, or they prefer to work in a prison environment, so, or a court environment? So there's many different roles and environments and client groups to think about. So, that's what I would encourage them. But initially, it's always good to work out what your main interests are and what your strengths are and then try and match that up to what you're finding when you start exploring roles that are out there.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Now we've asked people at home what sort of ideal careers they would like to consider. Things include things like: being a teacher, a social worker, youth worker, lots of things that I can imagine you could do with a criminology degree. Siobhan, can you tell us about some of the other sort of closely related roles that people may consider if they had a criminology degree?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Yeah, sure. Thanks, Karen. Yeah, I mean, you've touched on a couple already, so it's great to see that students are interested in those areas. So other kind of closely related careers to the, like the field of criminology, if you like, would be social worker, youth worker, as well, and a community development worker. But also just to bear in mind for a lot of careers, you do need to perhaps do some further training and study and so on after your degree in various areas. But it's really important, as well I think, to get the message across that the knowledge and skills gained from studying criminology can open up into many careers, basically.

The vast majority of graduate opportunities are open to those of any discipline. So it really is - Dale, I think, touched on earlier - it's thinking about what do you want to do. What are your strengths and your interests? What kind of environment do you want to work in? And that kind of thing. But other things, just to give examples of the criminology perhaps graduates have gone on to, just to show I suppose, that the variations, if you like, would be things like a data scientist or a social researcher or political risk analyst. So it's, it's fairly broad. But those things are still fairly, you could say, closely related to the kind of area of criminology.

But as I say, the majority of graduate vacancies are open to those of any discipline. So, you know, whether that's marketing or HR or accounts or whatever it might be, it's employers are more looking at what skills you've got to - and how you can evidence those and articulate those. That's the key, really.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. OK, so brilliant. So it's good all round qualification. You're getting lots and lots of skills. But career planning is really important. And I think particularly with criminology in mind, it can make sense for people to start thinking about this earlier. We've asked everyone at home at what stage they're at with their career planning. Twenty per cent not really sure where to start. Forty per cent say that they're exploring ideas to see what would suit their interests and strengths. And then another Forty percent say they're ready to join in or start looking at opportunities. So with that in mind, Dale, I wonder if you could sort of talk to us

through, about the typical stages of the career planning process. And also, how you guys in the Careers and Employability Service can help our students.

DALE RANSBERGER: Absolutely, yeah, so I think I alluded to this earlier, so there's no set, you know, set process that everybody needs to follow. And I think, you know, what stage somebody is at can vary as well. So - but in a nutshell, if we're going to put it very, very basically, it would be to know yourself, first of all, then start exploring options that seem to match, you know, your strengths and your interests. And then it comes to making a decision. And that's no easy task either, but for some people, it can be easier than others. And from there, it's to take action to, yeah, to start exploring opportunities. So it was a nice split we just had there, I thought, twenty-forty-forty. So -

It's important to, to actually, you know, really know what stage you're at. But if you're not sure where you're at, you can take a very structured process through that. And we have a very detailed Career Planning Guide, which hopefully the link will appear tonight in the chat box, where you can actually just start from the process from scratch. It'll take you through a series of activities to help you. You know, say for example, if you can't identify your strengths, not quite sure how to go about that, there's some activities to help you take you through that process.

And it's important to note, as well, that this process isn't linear. So, you know, these different stages can overlap. So for example, you may feel like you've made a decision and then you get to the point where you think, ah, I really need some work experience here to strengthen my application, because these are competitive positions. And then throughout that work experience, it may take you back a step. Because you may think - let's say, for example, you wanted to be a prison officer, so you started gaining some volunteering in prison, which is extremely common and quite easy to arrange. Lots of charities involved in that and offering such opportunities.

But throughout that process, you may think, not quite what I hoped or expected. So then you may take a step back and try and identify other areas of interest. So, it's not necessarily an easy, you know, linear process from start to finish. You may jump around a little bit and some of those stages may overlap. But it's important to - So I think for some people to have a bit of a structure just to help them, you know, be clear on how they're moving forward, if that makes sense.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And you've got some amazing resources, as well, that can be used. Some of them are really specific for students interested in criminology. Siobhan, can you tell us a bit about them?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Yes, so we've be doing loads of work to develop, as you say, some specific resources for students that's customised to their qualification, which is brilliant. So a really good one - it's called a starting point, literally, criminology and related careers. So I think, again, perhaps a link should appear to that in the chat box in a moment. So that really gives a brief summary, if you like, of, kind of, some of the main careers that you could consider, explore. It's not an exhaustive list, but a starting point, as the title suggests. But also what are the typical employers and where you can do further research and so on.

But there's also lots of - and I would encourage you to really look out over the time - some customised careers content on your study site. Again, the link should appear for that soon, hopefully. And that's under both the discover and succeed tab. And then that goes through quite a lot of detail in terms of what careers are related to - or that you could also consider in a wider kind of scale if you like, what skills you're developing from studying criminology, what perhaps, suggested organisations and things you could approach for work experience and so on. So there is actually really loads and loads of brilliant content in there.

And just to highlight as well, on the study site, there's also under the - let me get it right, sorry - connect tab. That's it. So many tabs. There is a qualification forum that's running throughout the year. And on that, we do have an enhancing your career thread, where students can post queries, share their experiences to learn from each other, which is brilliant, and also I do post on there regularly about perhaps upcoming events that we're running or external events or different resources that we've developed and so on.

But we're going to be running loads of particular live sessions, I should say, over the summer - summer months, in terms of different live sessions that - I think, like, CV and covering letters and networking and so on. So there's loads going on. But just to highlight as well, in case students aren't aware, Careers and Employability Services, we're here to support you while you're a student, so while you're studying at the OU, but also up to three years after you finish your studies. So that's really important to bear in mind, as well, because you might still want to access the support as you change your mind or things develop and change and so on. But we're there to help you, by all means, so.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Now those events can be booked, that Siobhan was talking about, through something called the OpportunityHub. Dale, I wonder if you can sort of briefly tell us what is in the OpportunityHub, in terms of vacancies and volunteering opportunities that may be of interest to students.

DALE RANSBERGER: Yeah, absolutely. So we regularly have vacancies going up there all the time. So OpportunityHub is our vacancy platform. So you'll find jobs, internships, graduate schemes. Some of these can be virtual opportunities, as well, which is something we've seen an increase of, as you can probably imagine, since the pandemic started. So that's always one to keep an eye on regularly is what we'd encourage. But also on OpportunityHub, you can book yourself a one-to-one consultation. So if you'd like information, advice and guidance, that's where you can book that.

And that's available via telephone, Skype, if you've got dodgy reception or you just feel - or you'd rather have a video call like we're doing here, because you feel that's more personal. It's absolutely fine, as well. Or you can have a conversation over email, if that's more convenient for you. So - And just to be clear information, advice and guidance is a very open discussion to help you work out what your next steps are. So we can give you some suggestions and some information, but ultimately it's helping you figure out, you know, things for yourself really, rather than just telling you what we think you should do.

And just, Karen, can I just quickly say, I stumped myself earlier, because I couldn't remember the name. It was the OU Centre for Policing. So if anyone out there is interested in research, please check out the OU Centre for Policing. You can see what they're, what they're researching and how they work with police forces to improve training, et cetera. So hopefully, that'll be a really interesting one for any students interested in research and perhaps doing further study themselves.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And I think Louise is very involved in that, also, so that's fab. Brilliant. You've told us so many different things about what you guys can offer. There's just one thing that I know - in fact, I've got one. And it's the Careers Planning Guide, which I loved. I like the book format, even though I really do like online things. But I found it really useful as a sort of reflective tool, in terms of thinking about my future career. And this is available to students also, isn't it, Siobhan?

SIOBHAN FLINT: Yeah, definitely. Your Career Planning Guide, as I think Dale has mentioned earlier, is a brilliant resource, in terms of whatever stage you're at. But, as you say, you can go back to different activities to help you reflect and think through things. There's examples of CVs and self-reflection exercises. There's information, advice about application forms, interviews, the whole, the whole works, basically. So it's a really, really good starting point. Not that I'm you know - I didn't write it personally, but yeah so -

[LAUGHTER]

Fair enough. But no, it is a really good - yeah, brilliant resource.

DALE RANSBERGER: Just to - Sorry. Just to add to that as well, that's available via a PDF, but if students do want a hard copy, because I know some of us are old fashioned - I do quite like a proper book - and you can order one, as well, and we'll post one out to you.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant, yes. No, absolutely. So lots and lots of resources, information, advice and guidance, as well there. And one of the things I think the key take-home point is that OpportunityHub is a key source of space for those, but the students can access the Careers and Employability Services to find out more or just get in touch and be pointed in the right direction. Because where there are lots of resources, sometimes there can be confusion about what to look at first. Angela's put the Centre for Policing Research into the chat, so you might want to take a look at that. And I know that Vanessa has also been putting in a little survey into our chat. We just like to know what sort of time suits you guys for these events, what sort of days are best for you, and many other questions. So if you could fill that in, it's really, really quick and easy. We would be ever so grateful, if you haven't done that already.

Well, Dale and Siobhan, that has been fantastic. Thank you. It's nice to see some friendly people. And I'm sure that students will want to get in touch with you to find out more about how the OU can support them through that career choice, as well as other things, like, you know, making their CVs nice and swanky and getting those covering letters off to a good start. So thank you both very much for being on today. And Damon, that's all we have time for. So how are you bearing up? You've been talking about lots of stuff today. You've been working very hard.

DAMON MILLER: It's been a very long day. Yeah, no, it's been really good today. Some really, really good sessions. Yeah, really, really enjoyed it. I think the people have engaged with it really well today. Yeah, got lots out of it, particularly this last session. So some really good, good pointers. I think people are already going in and opening up the links, storing them for later to explore. So yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Perfect. Well, thank you, Damon. And thank you so much everybody at home. You never surprise me with all of your incredible comments and insights. And that's what we love so much at Student Hub Live is being able to have those discussions with you. I hope that you've got some new things to think about, that you've met some wonderful people here, and know a little bit more about some of the areas that perhaps, you know, you were less keen on finding out about and hopefully that have sparked your interest. It's always really good to be able to look at things from different lenses, but many of these issues here have been very relevant.

So with that in mind, I'd like to say that's the end of today's show, but we are planning other Student Hub Live events in this broadcast format like today. We're working with each of the faculties to create something there for you. So from the Faculty of Well-Being, Education, and Language, and Sport, we're going to focus on resilience. So there's something there for everyone. We're going to, again, think about the effect that the pandemic's had in terms of education and well-being. So please do join us for that session.

The Faculty of Business and Law are also going to be looking at various things with COVID in mind. And particular things like, you know, the whole notion of vaccination passports and the ethics around some of those issues. So even if you aren't a student in those faculties, but have enjoyed discussing some of these things today, I think you'll definitely enjoy those other sessions. So please do make sure that you get your tickets to them. We also have our study skills workshops. We also have a packed programme to gear you up for module start in September, when most of you will be sort of picking up your studies again.

But for now, I hope that you can enjoy what is left of a summer evening. Thank you for being here today. Thank you for all our wonderful production team, who've helped put this on, and for the faculty for getting involved and making it such a fabulous event. Bye for now, everybody. Please do check out the website and sign up to other things for the future. And thank you so much for being here.

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