Malika: Good morning and welcome to the studio from Conference.

Graham: Morning.

Malika: Good morning everyone. I'm Malika Steed, one of your regular hosts and to my right I have…

Graham: My name's Graham Rimmer, I'm also a studio host.

Malika: And?

Sheila: I'm Sheila Cameron. I'm a business champion, the DSG Chair and a caucus rep on PLEXUS. And I'm doing my MA in online and distance education.

Malika: And to our right?

Emmanuel: I'm Emmanuel (inaudible), I'm a business champion. I'm studying psychology. I've been with the Open University for 12 years.

Malika: Brilliant. So thank you for joining us today, thank you for watching from home. Hello to our digital delegates, a big hello.

Graham: And it’s so early.

Malika: It is. I mean I was just going to say that. We are beside ourselves because this is quite early isn’t it? We had to stroll in from the Kents Hill accommodation onto campus.

Graham: But we’re here for a really important reason, that’s why we’re here so early.

Malika: We are, we are.

Graham: So over the next 20 minutes or so we’re going to have a chat with Sheila and Emmanuel and kind of talk about why we’ve dragged ourselves out of bed, over to campus, this early.

Malika: And this is really important actually, because today out of all days at conference has got to be the most important one in terms of work we are going to be doing. And it is about doing, it is about discussing business.

Graham: So before we do all of that shall we talk about something fun?
Malika: Yes.

Graham: So obviously conference started yesterday, so we had a lot of students, 400 of us, arriving from across the UK and Europe to come and meet other people. So, Sheila, if I can come to you first, what did you do on campus yesterday?

Sheila: Well yesterday was the Disabled Students Group 15th anniversary.

Graham: Happy birthday. (applause)

Sheila: Yes, so we had a celebration, we had a cake.

Graham: Cake?

Malika: Oh, cake.

Sheila: Cake, yes.

Graham: Candles?

Sheila: If you’re still on campus today we’ve still got cake and some other goodies.

Graham: Oh, I love cake.

Sheila: So yeah, we had a very good celebration and we were also at the OU’s Expo and we met a beautiful big red robot.

Malika: Oh.

Graham: What did said robot do?

Sheila: Oh, he does lots of things. That’s one of the things you need to come to campus some day and have a look at.

Graham: Absolutely.

Malika: Yes, so hopefully that will be still on today and we were saying perhaps I could go to that.

Sheila: Unfortunately he had to go home last night.

Malika: Oh, missed it. Boo.
Malika

But nevertheless, there’ll be plenty of things to do around campus today.

Sheila

Wonderful things to do.

Malika

What about you, Emmanuel?

Graham

Emmanuel, what did you do?

Emmanuel

Well, yesterday I just popped in and I registered and I decided to walk around the campus and see things myself. I went to the art gallery and they had two other workshops. And I mingled with some of the students and then we met together and had a chat, what you’re studying. And then there’s a guy taking pictures. Then we went and put our stickers on the student thoughts and stuff like that. Then after that I decided to go down to the hotel to chill out.

Graham

Get plenty of rest for today.

Emmanuel

Yes.

Graham

Malika, what about you? What did you do?

Malika

Well yesterday I arrived on campus around half six, quarter to seven, because I came straight down from work. So when I got there obviously I got my registration pack and everything I needed and headed over to dinner, met a lot of friends on the way and socialised a lot. I love my socialising.

Graham

Great isn’t it? We can all come together can’t we?

Malika

Yes.

Graham

It’s not often we’re all together in a room like this. Well, not in a room, but together on campus.

Malika

Yes, in the same place, so there was a lot of, you know, “Hey, how you doing?” and it was really, really good to catch up with people, and then we all headed back to Kents Hill after the reception here so carried on there.
Graham  It was really nice wasn’t it?

Malika  It was really lovely.

Graham  I must admit, yesterday when I got onto campus we set up our stall ready on the Mulberry Lawn I want to say? Yes.

Malika  Yes, that’s right.

Graham  Outside the hub, so that’s all ready for later on. And then it was really good meeting students, because, “Oh, you’re Graham, you’re PLEXUS, you’re online.” And to be honest it’s really good to kind of put those names to faces and to have a conversation rather than texting away which is good. So, we’d best crack on hadn’t we?

Malika  Yeah, we have some work to do. We can’t keep our guests waiting without talking about the things that matter. But the first thing I’d like to check though is digital delegates, if you make sure today that you have your access codes at the ready because you are going to need them. And we’ll talk about it a little bit more throughout the show. And you should have a copy of this programme as well that you can see online. Us face to face delegates have got this one, but you’ve got everything online, so do make sure that you have everything ready so that you can take part. But let’s kick off with business.

Graham  Yes. So Emmanuel, what…? No, not Emmanuel. Sheila. I’ve got it in front of me, I still can’t remember what I’m doing. It’s ten past eight. (laughter)

Malika  It’s too early.

Sheila  But you have to be up at ten past eight ready for half past.

Graham  So why have we got to get up so early, Sheila?

Sheila  We’ve got to get up early because this is our business part and it’s very important, because you do remember, we only get to the business part every two years. It’s not every year now, it’s biannual now. And everybody will say, “Oh, I didn’t want that in my community,” or, “I didn’t bother voting.” “How did I end up with that councillor?” Oh dear. But it’s the very same thing with our Association.

This is the part where we can make a difference. You read your motions and you’ve got your pack, you look at it online, you get your code ready. If
you come to the face to face and you’re here at campus you’ll get a vote because we’re digital. We’re even digital, you don’t put your hand up anymore. You vote with a little box which you’ll get, your little handset, and they’ll be handed out, and us business champions are helping to hand them out.

Graham: Oh, okay.

Sheila: So when you come you’ve got a little yellow bit on the end, if you’ve got one of those we’ll give you one. And then you look at your motions and you choose. And that’s where you have the power.

Graham: Okay, so can I ask questions in the motions or do I just kind of wait and…?

Sheila: Oh yeah, Graham, it’s not a done thing.

Graham: Okay.

Sheila: Oh no, it’s just like at any election, before the election you get a chance to ask a question. So you can do it online, you don’t have to be here.

Graham: Oh, perfect.

Sheila: Oh no, you can go online and you can type it in and then someone here will ask a question for you and then you’ll hear what the answer is.

Graham: Perfect.

Sheila: So, oh no, no, no, it’s up to you.

Graham: To have a chance to talk about it and…

Sheila: Yes, right until you vote.

Malika: Yes, there’s opportunity for debate throughout I believe and although we’ll have some breakouts with some speakers, obviously we will as delegates, as you stated, be allowed to take part fully. And to challenge perhaps anything that we feel needs challenging. And that’s important.

Graham: That’s what we’re here for isn’t it?

Malika: Online and here, face to face.
Graham: Yes, there’s all the fun, but actually this morning’s really, really important.

Sheila: This morning is the serious bit.

Graham: Okay, then more fun I hope.

Sheila: And then it’s fun!

Graham: Excellent, excellent. So, Emmanuel, Sheila said that you’re business champions, so what is a business champion?

Emmanuel: Actually the business champion, we are there to help out because we volunteered to do it online and we were trained how to handle this business champion’s role, like emotional and stuff like that. So if someone has any question to ask the business champion is there to help and to hand out the handset and if there are any questions online then we can be able to bring it out to really powerful people. So we are there to support any question people might have asked. Because today is very, very vital to everybody as a student and it is actually the day I call a day of all days, so it is very, very important to us.

Graham: Oh, okay.

Malika: Very true, very true. So the business champions will be there supporting, helping out, and I sense there’s a relationship there that you have built over a certain amount of time? Have you been involved very much with other partners throughout the Student Association stuff, or I assume to become a business champion what sort of things have you done. Have you gone through some training? Did you have to apply?

Emmanuel: Yes, I think we had our training online, which we were connected from our homes so everybody was connected and listening to the speakers and there they can ask a question if you don’t understand anything. And every question you presented to the speaker then it will be elaborated and whatever I may have, a lot of people then the section will discuss it and they would tell you how to handle issues and how to attend to people and how to help people, both emotionally, psychologically, but not financially. (laughter)

So however, it is quite a good training and I like volunteering. So if you want to join to be a business champion come and volunteer because we need a lot of people on these issues so we can help out. And the decisions
we’re going to make today are going to influence whatever we are doing for the next two years. So come and join us and be a business champion.

Malika Yes, and that is it, that’s the key isn’t it? What we are going to decide today folks is going to be…

Graham The future.

Malika Yeah, the direction that the Students Association, the community, will take. And I think that’s pretty, pretty important. And again, I can’t stress enough how important it is that we all listen, scrutinise, and take part.

Graham And vote.

Malika Vote, vote.

Sheila But this time you’ve got to do it live if you’re at home. You can’t sit at home and decide to have a cup of tea because you might reach motion two and you wanted to ask a question on motion one.

Malika Yes, so you’ve got to sit through…

Sheila So you’ve got to be live at the time.

Graham Okay. So a couple of years ago I remember last time we discussed business you had time to vote, so actually this time it’s got to be at the same time.

Sheila You will have time to vote, but if a motion comes up and you’re doing motion three then that’s the time to ask a question for motion three, you can’t go away for half an hour and then decide you’re going to vote. So you’re a wee bit late. So this morning is the time that you sit and you listen and you decide for yourself and either you vote when you’re here live or you vote online, and then we move to the next one. Yeah, there’s breakouts and we’ve got all different things, so you’ve still got time to go and make the cup of tea.

Graham Okay, when we have a brew, everyone else can have a brew.

Malika That’s right, so that’s good. In terms of the speakers that we are welcoming today, obviously we’ve got Nicky Simpson, who’s going to make an address. I can see that we’ve got Mary Kellett as well, acting Vice Chancellor?
Malika: A personality turning up today.

Graham: Oh, absolutely.

Malika: Well, I should know, I was on the steering committee that day. I’ve got to give that sense of surprise, surprise. Look, look who we’ve got today. And yes, closing word will be from Mary Curnock Cook OBE which actually is quite nice to close the conference with.

Graham: Well, I’ve actually heard Mary speak before and she’s quite inspirational, so I’m really looking forward to what she’s going to say because she has a background in education. She used to be the CEO of UAS which is where people in the brick, kind of traditional universities, that’s how they apply.

Malika: Yes.

Graham: So she’s very familiar with the sector and I’m looking forward to kind of hear and get some inspiration hopefully by the end of that.

Malika: I think that’s what we need.

Graham: So we’ll have lunch, which is important. So what’s going to happen after lunch? Does anyone know what’s happening after lunch?

Sheila: Well, there’s lots of activities here and there’s going to be lots of activities online isn’t there?

Malika: Yes, yes. I think what we tried is to give a balance for the online delegates, so digital delegates, so hopefully they’ll take part in a lot of stuff that we’ve put on for them, including tours, virtual tours…

Graham: Perfect, yes.

Malika: We’ve done some podcasts. They’re probably going to be sick of hearing the sound of my voice, but…

Graham: No, they won’t. (laughs)

Malika: But also we obviously have got the programme to follow and there’s quite a few workshops going on this afternoon. So what do you reckon you will be…? Well, I know what you’ll be doing.
Graham: Well, I know what I'm going to say. (laughter)

Malika: I know.

Graham: So I'm delivering a workshop about identity and intersectionality, so I recommend coming to have a view of that one.

Malika: That would be amazing, however, I believe, Emmanuel, you were interested in the psychology one weren't you?

Emmanuel: Yes, actually I will go to the psychology one, but I'd also like to go to Meet Your Reps.

Malika: Oh yes, I've seen that as well. Two o'clock. Yes, Meet Your Reps. Because that's really important as well that you get to talk to reps and see that they're doing.

Emmanuel: Yeah, I want to know who my rep is so that if anything happens I'm going to know the person responsible, yeah. (laughter)

Malika: Yes, brilliant. Sheila, what's your afternoon going to be like?

Sheila: Well, I'm going to be in the ambient room for anyone that wants a quiet time, because on campus can be very busy so we do have a couple of quiet rooms as well. But as well as that I'm going to Meet Your Reps and then of course at five o'clock, where am I coming, Graham?

Graham: You're going to be in the Jenny Lee Building with me.

Sheila: Yes.

Malika: That's brilliant. But apart from that there'll be loads and loads of things going on. University Challenge, Creative Writing. I can see the conference choir, pop up choir everyone.

Sheila: Association shop.

Graham: The shops, buy all the branded stuff and what's also going to be here is all the societies, so we'll have lots of clubs and societies where people can get involved more. So we have Write Club, we have Fusion, Alchemy, Ballet and Opera, there's so many.

Malika: There's so, so much.
Graham And obviously online delegates, obviously you’re not going to be able to meet the societies here this weekend, but if you go to the website, so that’s oustudents.com, I’m hoping to say forward slash societies, obviously you’ll be able to see all the list of societies that are in there and the clubs as well, but if I’ve got the link wrong just go to oustudents.com and you’ll be able to find them there won’t you?

Malika Everything, yes.

Sheila Yes.

Malika Yes, everything’s online. So we’ve got an exciting…

Graham And…

Malika Sorry.

Graham We haven’t opened the hashtag have we?

Sheila No, we haven’t.

Graham We’ll open the hashtag up to 15 minutes, so obviously if people are wanting to find out what’s going on and want to keep up to date with everything that's happening this weekend if you use the #oustudents18, so you use oustudents, just add your little 18 on and you’ll see all the conference business taking place.

Sheila And the digital delegates can upload the pictures etc as well, it’s not just us. We want to see these selfies when they’re listening, when they’re doing their motions as well.

Graham I want to see selfies and I want to see.. Have you seen the mugs?

Malika Oh yes, I have. Brand new. I’m jealous, I want one of those.

Graham So they’re very much part of it aren’t they?

Malika Yes absolutely. There’ll be plenty of stuff to do, plenty of stuff to share online and here on the campus. We will be back tomorrow for another broadcast, in the meantime and I think we ought to go and see what the day offers.

Graham Yes, we’ll get our packs.
Malika  Yes. We're entitled to a good cup of coffee now.
Sheila  Oh, I think so, yeah.
Graham  Yes, I think we've earned it.
Malika  I think we've earned that.
Sheila  The first cup of coffee of the day.
Emmanuel  We really do, yes.
Malika  Put the kettle on at home and get ready.
Graham  Get ready and we'll see you all later.
Sheila  And get ourselves ready.
Graham  Settled, comfy and let the show begin so to say.
Malika  That's it.
Graham  So thank you very much for joining us this morning.
Malika  Thank you.
Graham  Enjoy the rest of your day and we'll see you all very, very soon here on studio right in the campus. Thanks very much.
Malika  Back tomorrow.
Graham  Bye.