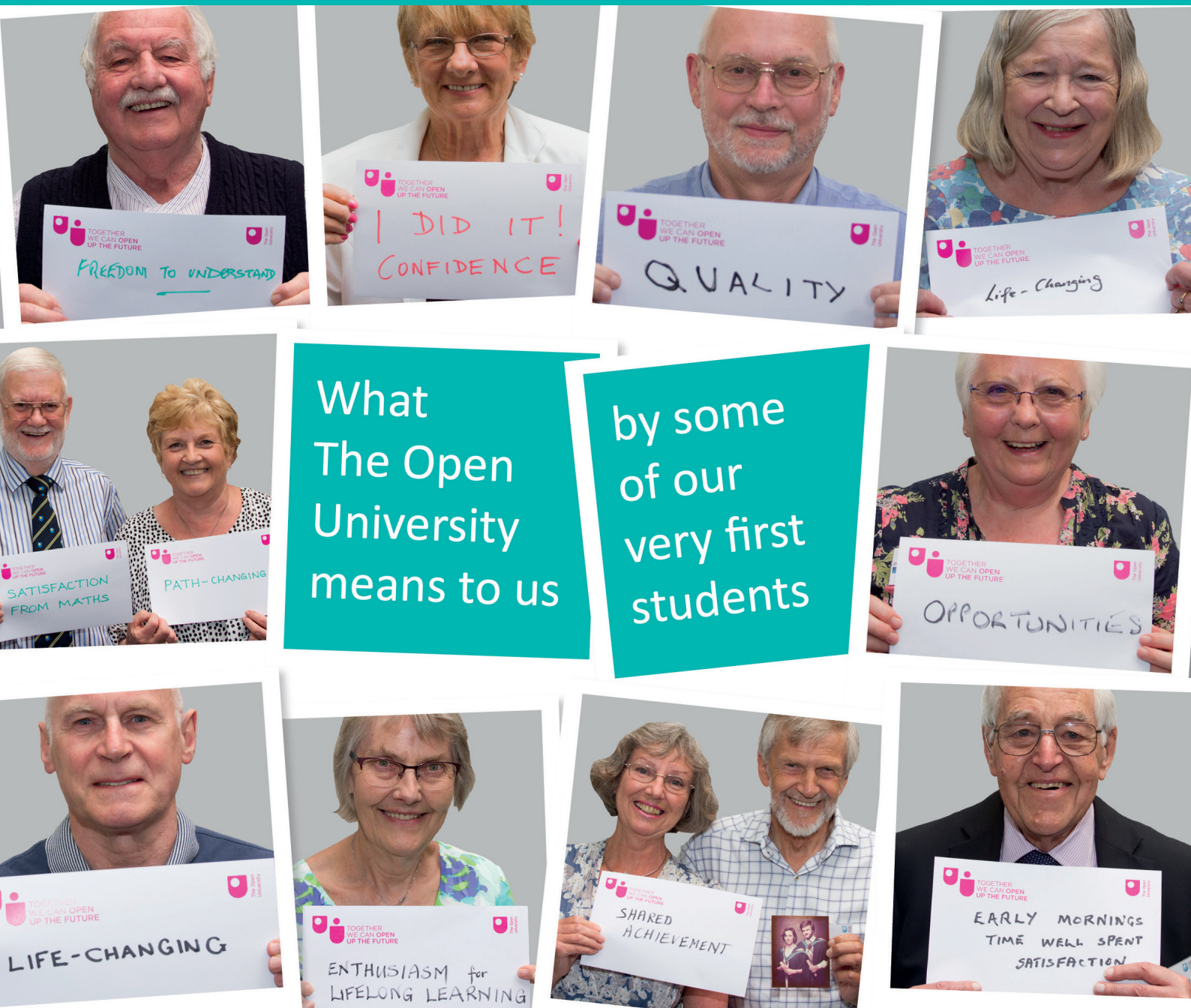


# Open Door



The magazine for supporters and friends of The Open University

March 2017



What  
The Open  
University  
means to us

by some  
of our  
very first  
students

## Bringing learning to your screens

How the OU and the BBC created lifelong university education

## A University across the nations

News from OU students and courses throughout the UK and Ireland

## Living well with dementia

New research into dementia and those who care for them



TOGETHER  
WE CAN OPEN  
UP THE FUTURE



# Inside this Open Door

- 3 Bringing learning to your screens**  
The past and present of the pioneering Open University and BBC collaboration
- 5 Towards the future together**  
The OU joins the crowdfunding revolution
- 6 News in the nations**  
OU stories from across the UK and Ireland
- 8 A better life with dementia**  
Dr Geraldine Boyle's research on the experiences of people with dementia and on child carers
- 9 Empowering teachers in India**  
How learning transforms the lives of children in some of the poorest parts of India
- 10 Harold Wilson's centenary year**  
Honouring the OU's founder with a new professorship and a digital exhibition
- 11 The benefits of supporting mental health**  
How Richard and Diana Delbridge's support will make the case for mental health care in Ethiopia
- 12 Alumni legacies help defy expectations**  
How gifts in Wills make a real difference to the lives of OU students



## Welcome and thank you for all your support



The Open University is unique in being a four nation university, with national centres in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. When reading this issue of Open Door, I hope you will be inspired by the stories of your fellow students, the words of some

of our earliest pioneer alumni (our cover stars) and the innovative projects happening across the UK, many of which are made possible by the generous support of people like you.

Your help makes an extraordinary impact way beyond the UK. I want to thank you for the support of so many of you who donated a total of over £29,000 for our TESS-India programme, bringing the power of learning to teachers in the poorest parts of India, empowering them to free their pupils from lives of poverty.

**On behalf of the University and the students you support, thank you so much for your generosity. Your gift makes students' dreams possible.**

**Karen Hart**  
Head of Alumni Engagement



# Bringing University learning to your screens: the OU and the BBC

Learning doesn't only begin when you formally register as a student, or end when you graduate. Learning is a lifelong experience and at The Open University, we believe it should be open to everyone.

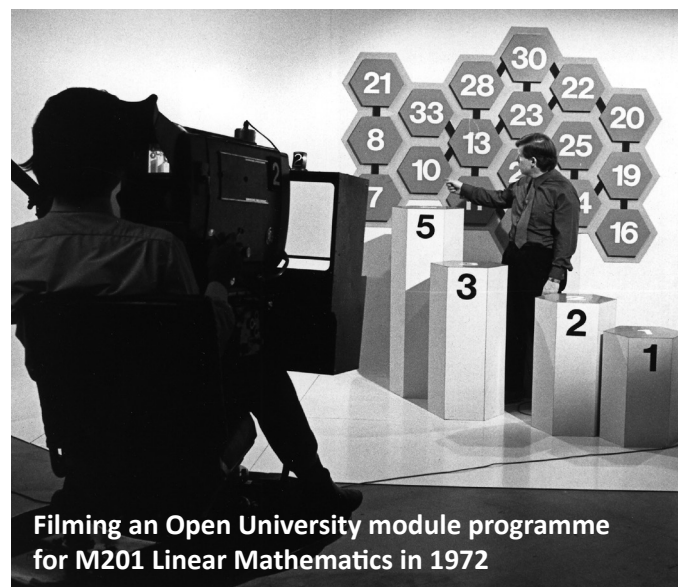
For nearly fifty years, The Open University and the BBC have worked together to create hundreds of imaginative and creative educational programmes on television, radio and online. While the ways we produce and schedule programmes may have changed since the 1970s, the goal remains the same; to make learning accessible to all using high quality content and a creative vision.

The UK's national broadcaster and national University have always been a natural fit. The BBC's mission to "enrich people's lives with programmes and services that inform, educate and entertain" is a perfect match for the OU, resulting in programmes that inspire and enable inquisitive minds to engage with a huge variety of topics ranging from the arts to new technologies.

## Learning from your living room

When The Open University received a Royal Charter in 1969, the BBC set up a studio in Alexandra Palace, London, producing educational programmes that addressed key parts of the curriculum in partnership with the academic expertise of the OU. Broadcasting through the night, the BBC Learning Zone helped create a university for all learners, a lecture hall with front row seats in your living room.

We can sometimes forget how, before video recorders and iPlayer, television viewers would have to watch the show at the time it was broadcast, otherwise it couldn't be seen. Annabelle Hancock, a student in the 1970s, remembers how much these early broadcasts meant to her and the lengths she would go to in order to see them.



Filming an Open University module programme for M201 Linear Mathematics in 1972

"In 1975 my husband went to the USA for sabbatical leave and I went with him for a year with our family. I was doing "The Victorian Novel and its Legacy" as my third level course and needed to do the exam in the spring of 1976."

"My mother and father in law in the UK would get up in the middle of the night to record lectures on videotapes for me and then post them to Texas for me to play there." Her tutor was understanding about the complications of international mail, and Annabelle's degree led to a rewarding career as a headmistress.



Annabelle Hancock





Andrew Marr, presenter of *Sleuths, Spies and Sorcerers: Andrew Marr's Paperback Heroes*. © BBC

## Promotion to prime time

As technology made it easier to send students course recordings on CD, DVD and through the internet, the OU began to explore new ways to widen access to learning through the BBC.

This millennium, OU programmes have reached out to an even bigger audience at prime time. Award winning programmes such as *The Hunt*, *Frozen Planet*, *Child of our Time* and *Coast* have proven the high quality of both film-making and academic content, resulting in over 240 million views in 12 months between 2015/16.

We are proud that a number of high-profile presenters have chosen to work repeatedly on OU programmes, including Sir David Attenborough, Liz Bonnin, Brian Cox and Richard Hammond, all keen to share their knowledge through accessible, academically rigorous programmes.



Richard Hammond  
© BBC

## The next step: taking your interest further

At the end of all OU/BBC programmes, we invite viewers and listeners to take their interests further by visiting the OU's free learning website, OpenLearn. At OpenLearn you can explore the subjects and topics from OU/BBC programmes in many ways; ordering free booklets and posters, using interactive online activities, quizzes and exclusive content from the productions. You can also find out about related OU modules and qualifications or try a free short course. Celebrating its tenth birthday this year, OpenLearn hosts a wealth of free material, accessible to all at [www.open.edu/openlearn/](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/)

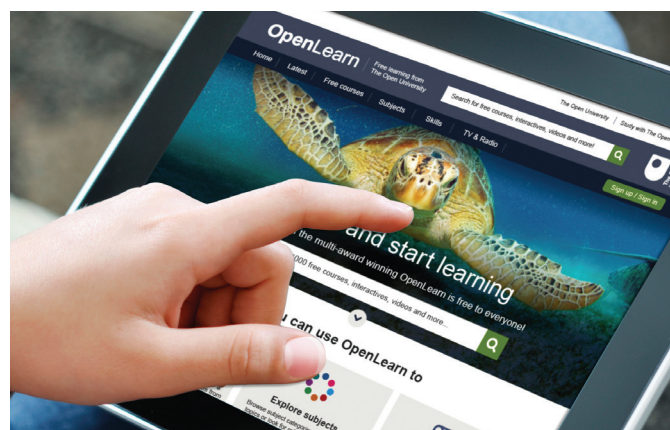
For example, Andrew Marr's latest OU/BBC series, *Sleuths, Spies and Sorcerers: Andrew Marr's Paperback Heroes*, unpicks the vital rules of fiction from *Game of Thrones* to *Miss Marple*. After interviews with leading authors from Neil Gaiman to Ian Rankin on how they create their gripping page-turners, Andrew invites viewers to visit OpenLearn to learn more. Exclusive bonus interviews, quizzes that help you create a fantasy realm and short free courses give you the tools to find your next read, gain a deeper understanding of your favourite book or even begin to write your own.



## Start learning for free with the OU

No other UK university has the enormous reach to share learning with everyone on this scale. OpenLearn has a huge impact on people wanting to keep up with the latest developments in their core subject, those wanting to develop a broad understanding of a range of topics and even those studying to improve their employment prospects. Many learners have told us how OpenLearn helped them through redundancy, helped them change careers and helped them gain the extra skills they need to fully support others.

We're grateful to NSC for generously supporting the development of OpenLearn and OpenLearn Create, our free platform for open learning. NSC believe in supporting the next generation of business talent by opening up opportunities to everyone. This is why they're supporting OpenLearn to address the skills gap through open, free, online learning.



To see what new OU/BBC programmes are coming up at [www.open.edu/openlearn/tv-radio-events](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/tv-radio-events) and follow the links to discover a world of learning.



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# The OU joins the crowdfunding revolution

Crowdfunding has boomed in popularity recently as an easy, exciting way for donors to help bring the ideas you care about – big and small – to life. Crowdfunding makes more projects possible by enabling lots of people to make small contributions online.

From this spring, our new crowdfunding website will build on the power of collective giving, empowering Open University (OU) alumni, students and supporters to raise money for OU students or their project and see progress towards their target. By sharing your interest with friends and family through social media and email, you can encourage more and more people get involved.

One of the first projects to feature on our crowdfunding platform will be TESSA (Teacher Education in sub-Saharan Africa). Over a decade ago, the OU began using its expertise in distance learning to provide high-quality teacher training resources to teacher educators and teachers across ten African nations.

By supporting TESSA, you can help the programme reach more teachers and positively enhance classroom teaching and learning experiences for children across sub-Saharan Africa.



Please visit our website [theOUCrowd.hubbub.net](http://theOUCrowd.hubbub.net) when we go live from 19th April to help spread the word. New projects will be added all the time.



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# NEWS IN THE NATIONS

The Open University is unique in being the only higher education institution which works across the UK and Ireland, with thousands of students based in England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The fantastic achievements of over 30,000 OU students studying in these areas show the extraordinary contribution the nations make to the University as a whole.

The National Centres play a pivotal role in liaising with their individual governments, and advocating for the OU, especially as each nation has its own, distinctive characteristics. For example, The Open University in Wales operates as a bilingual institution, offering students the option to complete all of their assessments in Welsh. Despite their unique features, the nations are all joined together by their commitment to the OU's mission to be open to all.

## Discovering Wales and Welsh

In January 2016, we launched Discovering Wales and Welsh, an online course designed for anyone interested in gaining an insight into Welsh culture and developing basic Welsh language skills. Through 100 hours of interactive study activities, this non-accredited course enables students to study five themes (People, Culture, Place, Language, and Nation), each divided into two units; the first focused on language learning and the second providing key knowledge about Wales as a nation today. The formal course is accompanied by a free short course on OpenLearn and a unique online portal called 'Hafan' which uses quizzes and videos of people living and working in Wales (including Rugby referee Nigel Owens and musician Kizzy Crawford) to introduce learners to Wales past and present.

Try the free taster course to learn about Welsh identity and language. Go to [www.open.edu/openlearn](http://www.open.edu/openlearn) and search for Wales and Welsh.



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An Open University graduate outside the Wales Millennium Centre (Canolfan Mileniwm Cymru)

## Fifty years of Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes, the home of the OU's main campus in England, is celebrating 50 years in 2017. To celebrate, the OU Digital Archive launched a new online exhibition featuring a wide range of images, video and audio clips about our connected history, available at [www.open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive/exhibition/83](http://www.open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive/exhibition/83)

The exhibition reveals why Milton Keynes was chosen. Walter Perry, the first Vice Chancellor, supported the relationship with the BBC; "Our permanent home must be within one hour's commuting distance of Alexandra Palace, for it was here that all the television and radio production was going to take place..."



# A solution to the nursing shortage in Northern Ireland

The Open University in Northern Ireland saw the number of students triple on the pre-registration nursing programme in 2016, putting the OU in a strong position to address the nation's critical nursing shortage.

Over the years, the University has partnered with the government and the statutory sector in Northern Ireland to increase the number of trained nurses, helping many healthcare assistants expand their knowledge and skills by studying for health and social care qualifications.

Participants of this scheme have not only transformed their own lives, but also have a huge impact on society. We are especially proud of the achievement of BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing student David Ferran, who won the Student Nurse of the Year Award at The Royal College of Nursing's Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards in

May 2016 and the Northern Ireland Degree category in the first British Education Awards in London in 2017. David started his OU journey in 2011 and studied part-time alongside working as a healthcare assistant. For his final year project, he developed an advice leaflet *Undergoing skin biopsy*, which provides patient-friendly advice through the use of pictures and a clear, logical format.



David Ferran

John D'Arcy, National Director of The Open University in Ireland said: "We couldn't be more proud of David. He is an exceptional role model for his fellow students at The Open University and is developing the qualities of an excellent nurse."

# Life-changing learning in Scotland

OU study opened up a whole new world for 18-year-old Karis Williamson from Inverness, Scotland.

Karis has congenital muscular dystrophy; the lack of support with her condition made primary school a very negative experience, so she left mainstream education at the age of only 11. Five years later, following her parents' recommendation and determined to 'achieve a more equal and higher quality of education' than she had experienced at school, she registered for an Open degree with The Open University.

Karis uses specialised equipment to access module content, including an eye-gaze computer, special software and a bookstand. Supported by her tutors and the University, she is studying a programme of modules in the arts and social sciences. Talking about her favourite class, Arts past and present (AA100), in which she gained a distinction, she says: "It opened up new worlds for me and it gave me confidence to tackle things I never imagined I would, such as studying the ancient world, Buddhism and Seamus Heaney." Karis is currently completing a Level 2 Creative writing module, motivated by the thought of graduating and the support of those around her.

"My Arts past and present tutor really encouraged me to explore things academically and in my own way. I also felt that the team who supported my entry to the University were really behind me and wanted me to succeed."



Karis Williamson

Help support students like Karis and open up opportunities for people with disabilities. Visit [giving.open.ac.uk](https://giving.open.ac.uk) to find out more.



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# Living well with dementia

The number of people living with dementia is rising. More than 800,000 people in the UK have dementia and as we get older, dementia becomes more common - 1 in every 14 people aged 65 and over now have a dementia diagnosis.

So how can we help people with dementia, and those who care for them, live more fulfilling lives? Dr Geraldine Boyle, a Senior Lecturer in Health, is undertaking vital research to understand how to better support those living with this condition.

Geraldine says, "In my early career, I worked as a nurse during a time when dementia was poorly understood. I saw how people with dementia were underestimated and undervalued and I wanted to help do something about it. I chose to come to the OU because of its values and founding philosophy, and because it is dedicated to giving everyone a voice."



Geraldine's current work particularly focuses on two groups of people who are neglected by much of the existing research: people with advanced dementia and child carers.

## Advanced dementia

Many people with dementia are now living longer, partly due to better diagnosis, treatment and care. So we need to know more about how to support people with advanced dementia, who particularly rely on families and staff for everyday care.

"By understanding their experiences, we hope to learn how to improve their quality of life. And by finding ways to help people communicate when it is difficult to speak, they can preserve relationships with family for longer.

For example, I worked with a lady I will call 'Marion', who could not easily express verbally where she wanted to go, but could use gestures, and could express her love for her husband."

The goal is to avoid narrowly defining people by dementia. Geraldine says, "Someone with dementia is not just a 'service user' - they are a parent and spouse, a friend, perhaps a former teacher or a gardener. They are not their condition."

## Child 'carers'

There are 200,000 child carers across the UK. Many support grandparents and even parents with dementia. At a time when they should be focusing on school and friends, many children are putting aside their own needs to support those they love. Their school work can suffer and they can even be bullied.

"Children offer practical support and emotional reassurance, often at great cost to themselves. We want to help them to enjoy being a child and to prepare for their own futures too. We want to restore their childhoods to them."

## Practical outcomes

The Open University hopes Geraldine's research will help focus attention on those in vital need of support and understand how to help them most effectively. The goal is to positively influence everything from making everyday life more manageable and fulfilling, to making decisions about the home and finances and future.

See how your support for The Open University helps make a wide range of healthcare research possible at [giving.open.ac.uk/projects](https://giving.open.ac.uk/projects). Thank you.



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# Giving the power of learning to children in India

Over 650 donors have supported a major OU project in India, raising more than £29,000 to help bring vital educational resources and the power of learning to teachers and children in some of the poorest parts of India.

Our TESS-India (Teacher Education Through School-Based Support) programme aims to help address the need to improve teaching standards, supporting teachers with essential skills to deliver engaging lessons. Evidence indicates that classrooms with quality teaching and learning processes remain a problem across many parts of India. Addressing this empowers teachers and supports children's educational achievements and engagement with school life.

TESS-India's freely available education resources and videos are already empowering over one million teachers to deliver high quality education and ensure a better future for their pupils. Thanks to the generosity of so many of you, we can continue to expand our programme, helping even more teachers empower their pupils to fulfil their potential.

Bibek, a little boy from Odisha, had been continuously absent from school; today, he is one of the many children whose life your support is helping to transform. People in his community started talking about the new, interactive way of teaching in his classroom, which reawakened his curiosity about going to school.



Bibek with his classmates

Bibek's teacher Lopa knew that he was very fond of fishing and she gave him creative tasks related to his personal interest; as a result, she saw him getting deeply involved in classroom activities. Now he attends school regularly.



Lopa uses the waterpump to teach mathematics

New partnership to take learning further in India



We are committed to ensuring that many more children like Bibek fulfil their potential. In November last year, the OU established a new partnership with Save the Children, the leading child's rights organisation in India, to deliver a new and exciting phase of TESS-India.

This partnership brings together the strengths of each organisation, combining the OU's academic expertise with Save the Children's programme experience, extensive delivery infrastructure and policy influence in India. Founded on co-operation and collaboration, the partnership will ensure the longevity of TESS-India, in line with our vision to develop 'better educated and more highly skilled teachers across India by 2025'.

Thank you for your support.

Find out more about TESS-India and how you can support the project at [giving.open.ac.uk](https://giving.open.ac.uk)



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# New Chair in honour of Harold Wilson to help reduce inequality

Research increasingly suggests that the happiest nations are not the wealthiest, but the most equal.

Inequality doesn't just have an impact on our wallets. By reducing inequality, we may reduce crime and ill health, and improve educational achievement and life expectancy, as indicated through research by British social geographer Professor Danny Dorling.

Harold Wilson, the founder of The Open University and himself a distinguished economist, was passionate about giving people more opportunities in life. One hundred years since his birth, the OU is launching a new three-year Chair in Economics, in which a Professor and PhD student will seek to explore the impact of social and economic inequality on individuals, communities and nations.

Speaking at the launch event in November 2016, OU Vice-Chancellor Peter Horrocks explained that the Chair will further embody Wilson's vision to empower people to change their lives through knowledge and education. The launch brought together leading researchers in economics (such as Danny Dorling) with Harold Wilson's political colleagues and successors, including Jeremy Corbyn and former OU Chancellor Baroness Boothroyd.

Harold's son Professor Robin Wilson, who taught at over 70 summer schools as an OU Professor of Mathematics, told guests that his father said, "the OU had become more successful than he had ever dared to hope. He always regarded the OU as his greatest achievement."

Robin reflected on how the OU has empowered so many alumni to work their way into better jobs, as they were "quickly recognised for their motivation and self-discipline as they earned their degrees in the hardest possible way – part-time, while often carrying out a full-time job and bringing up a family."



Professor Robin Wilson, at the launch event for the Harold Wilson Chair in Economics

The Harold Wilson Chair in Economics is the first in a series of named Chairs which will be funded through the OU's Open Up The Future fundraising campaign. These Chairs will celebrate individuals who have played an outstanding role in our history, and strengthen our academic and research leadership.

Find out more about The Open University's fundraising campaign and the many ways we are support students together at [giving.open.ac.uk](https://giving.open.ac.uk).



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## Online exhibition celebrates Harold Wilson

The Open University also celebrated Harold Wilson's centenary year with a special online exhibition, Harold Wilson and the OU, available on the Open University's Digital Archive (OUDA). OUDA is a freely accessible resource, which includes a selection of materials from the University Archive. Collections include historical OU images, OU graduation ceremony videos, clips from archived OU course programmes and other online exhibitions and featured items. Visitors can also view early programmes featuring some of the first students and their hopes and ideas about studying with The Open University nearly 50 years ago.

Within the Harold Wilson exhibition, visitors can watch a clip from Wilson's famous white heat of technology speech, where he proposed his idea for a "University of the Air", as well as an interview with Harold Wilson's son, Robin Wilson, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at the OU.



Harold Wilson (right)  
visiting The Open University

To find out more about  
Harold Wilson and The  
Open University's history,  
visit the OU Digital Archive  
at [www.open.ac.uk/  
library/digital-archive/](http://www.open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive/)



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# The benefits of supporting people's mental health

Open University Treasurer Richard Delbridge believed in the power of financial knowledge to improve people's lives. Now his widow Diana is continuing his legacy through research into the benefits of detecting and treating mental health difficulties.

Richard Delbridge's long service to the OU as Treasurer and on the University Council embodied his passionate belief in equipping people with the knowledge to manage their money well, from everyday budgets to coping with major life events. Before he passed away in 2015, Richard endowed a doctoral studentship researching trust in financial services, and created a prize for OU finance students.

Richard's wife Diana Delbridge is continuing his legacy through a financial essay prize (to be launched later this year) and a PhD Studentship in Mental Health Provision and Financing Systems in Ethiopia. Worldwide, mental health services are often underfunded, but in low-income African countries diagnosis of conditions such as depression is worryingly low.

PhD student Esubalew Assefa will analyse the costs and benefits of improving mental health services. He will compare the investment needed in medical devices and training (which is easier to measure) with the hidden benefits of supporting people experiencing mental health challenges, and the best ways to do this.

Find out how supporters  
of The Open University  
are making more research  
into vital healthcare  
issues possible at  
[giving.open.ac.uk](http://giving.open.ac.uk).



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# OU alumni legacies help students defy expectations

Many OU alumni are generously responding to a recent appeal to support OU students of the future through a gift in their Will.

Over 1,200 OU alumni to date are supporting the OU in their Will, to help students overcome the extra challenges they face – financial hardship, disabilities and the lack of confidence to get started. Your gifts can help support future generations of students like Janet Ogden, whose confidence was shattered at school. She left school at sixteen thinking she had little to offer, and gradually worked her way from a factory to a GP's receptionist to help support her family.

Then without warning her husband became the one in need of urgent care. Janet says, "He was suddenly paralysed and diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Overnight, my role changed to that of carer, as my husband became a wheelchair user. We began to struggle financially as we both had to give up full-time employment. We sold our home and downsized to a one bedroom flat for the four of us."

Janet saw how much medical experts helped him and became inspired to learn to do the same for others. "I wanted to be a paramedic, the first face people saw when they were experiencing a healthcare crisis like my husband's paralysis - a calming and knowledgeable professional, able to help people at one of the most frightening times of their lives."

As a mother, carer and full-time worker providing for her family, Janet couldn't go away to university, but the support of donations from OU alumni helped her make the impossible possible and inspired her to keep going. Today, Janet is a fully qualified paramedic.



If you have made a gift to the University in your Will, please accept our heartfelt thanks on behalf of the students of the future like Janet. Your Will is very personal, but if you would like to let us know your intentions, we would love to hear your story, invite you to our special events and keep you up to date on how your legacy will help change students' lives.

If you'd like to talk about what your gift to the University could achieve, please contact Sophie Hoyle on 01908 659141 or find out more at [giving.open.ac.uk](https://giving.open.ac.uk).



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If you would like to give a gift to help **open up the future** to all learners, please fill in the donation form enclosed with your magazine, or give online by visiting [\*\*giving.open.ac.uk\*\*](https://giving.open.ac.uk).

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