

OpenMINDS

2020 NEWS FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY



THANK
YOU FOR
50 YEARS

We wouldn't be the OU without you

OPENLEARN

Your latest free online learning
from the OU

CELEBRATING
SUCCESS

Sharing stories and
magical moments from
your OU family



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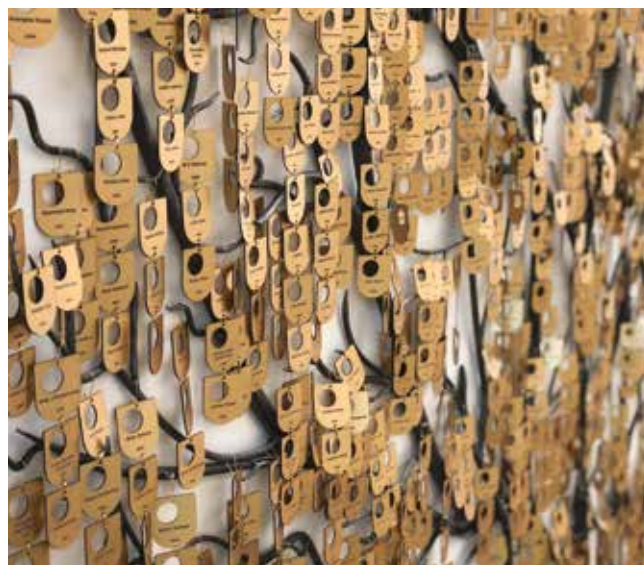
HOW WE LOOK AFTER YOUR DATA

We are extremely proud of our global alumni community and the lifelong relationship we have with each one of you.

The Open University is committed to taking care of your data and privacy.

The privacy policy clearly explains how we will manage and use your data to communicate with you as either a member of The Open University Alumni Association, or as a valued donor, or friend of The Open University. If you would like to find out more about how The Open University manages and takes care of your data please visit www.open.ac.uk/privacy to view our latest privacy policy.

We believe that our global alumni community play a crucial role in helping to shape the future of The Open University and delivering our mission of being open to people, places, methods and ideas.



Cover image: *Tree of Learning*

The Open University's Tree of Learning sculpture is now fully grown and standing proudly at the OU's Milton Keynes campus. The incredible 22-foot sculpture includes over 7,000 gold-coloured shields to recognise our OU family who donated in 2019 to the 50th Anniversary Scholarships Fund. Find out more on page 15.

What next?

Social media is a great way of keeping in contact. Why not join the OU social media community to share news and ideas?



Alumni website

alumni.open.ac.uk



Giving website

giving.open.ac.uk



LinkedIn alumni

linkedin.com/groups/2385051



Instagram [/theopenuniversity](https://www.instagram.com/theopenuniversity)



YouTube [/user/TheOpenUniversity](https://www.youtube.com/user/TheOpenUniversity)



Twitter

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A WARM WELCOME

I am delighted to welcome you to this edition of OpenMINDS – my first as your new Vice-Chancellor.

It is my tremendous honour to be part of the OU family – an institution I firmly believe is one of the UK's best creations, bringing the opportunity to learn and study to anyone, whatever their circumstances.

PAST AND PRESENT

Last year marked fifty years since the OU began and I feel lucky to have been able to share in the celebrations and reflect on the millions of lives the OU has touched since 1969. On pages 4 and 5, you can look at just some of the ways we marked our big anniversary year.

I am a passionate believer that education has the power to transform lives and make the impossible, possible – something which you, our wonderful alumni community, have proven since the beginning and continue to show us again and again.

As we celebrate the achievements of all OU students past and present, the commitment to make education open for all is more relevant than ever. In this issue, as well as news from around your University, you will learn more about the people and projects we are supporting and how you can get involved.

You may have seen that we've recently launched a new campaign: 'Your ambition. Our mission.', which I hope will inspire many more people to embark upon, or indeed continue, their journey of lifelong learning. Ultimately though, it's you, our alumni, who are our very best advertisement. Your passion, drive, and determination to learn new skills, further your careers and broaden your horizons – are living proof of what makes the OU such an incredible institution. So, thank you, and, no matter how long it has been since you graduated – congratulations!

SHARE YOUR STORY

It has been a joy to hear so many inspiring stories of how the OU has touched your lives over the past fifty years. You will find plenty of inspirational stories throughout this issue, including one from pioneer students Brian and Jeff on page 19, who both graduated in 1973 and returned to the stage at one of last year's degree ceremonies.

You can read more stories and even share your own on the alumni website, which you can explore by visiting

alumni.open.ac.uk

Finally, I would like to say thank you for giving me such a warm welcome to the OU family. I look forward to hearing from many more of you over the coming year. To me the OU is not just a great university and community, it is a movement for a better world. Together, I am confident we will continue to change many more lives to come.

Tim Blackman

Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor



Read the annual report

www.open.ac.uk/annual-report



THANK YOU FOR 50 YEARS

Throughout 2019 we celebrated fifty years of The Open University. It has been fantastic to hear from so many of our OU family on how the OU has and continues to change lives through learning.

Whether you have been with us from the very beginning or are one of our newest alumni, we would like to offer our heartfelt thanks for being part of our story. We wouldn't be the OU without you!

This is how we celebrated our 50th Anniversary year...



Happy birthday OU! Honorary Graduate Sir David Attenborough celebrates at a 50th Anniversary event



The Gift, a bespoke sketch by Sir Quentin Blake in honour of the University's 50th Anniversary



“

You are one of the marvels of the academic world and a hope for the future. Congratulations on your birthday!

Sir David Attenborough
Honorary Graduate

”

“

50 years on, the OU matters more today than ever before – supporting millions of students to be curious, to believe in themselves and to develop. I can't imagine a more important institution to support and love.

Martha Lane Fox
OU Chancellor

”



The OU was proud to co-host the 9th Pan-Commonwealth Forum with the Commonwealth of Learning in Edinburgh

“

I'd like to wish The Open University a very happy 50th birthday. Achieving my OU History degree whilst studying on tour between gigs remains one of my biggest achievements so far. I'm proud to be part of the OU family!

Joan Armatrading
OU alumna and Honorary Graduate

”



We enjoyed 26 OpenTALKS from fantastic speakers, including Honorary Graduates such as Prue Leith and Marcus Du Sautoy, and professors including Monica Grady. There were also 11 inaugural lectures from our new professors.

You can watch some of the latest inaugural lectures on a range of fascinating subjects at

www.open.ac.uk/research/inaugural-lectures

“

It is a tremendous honour and privilege to be appointed as Vice-Chancellor of The Open University. The OU is one of the UK's best inventions. It ranks with the NHS and National Parks as a visionary idea, bringing the opportunity to learn and study to anyone, whatever their circumstances.

Tim Blackman
OU Vice-Chancellor

”



OpenTALKS at Hay Festival



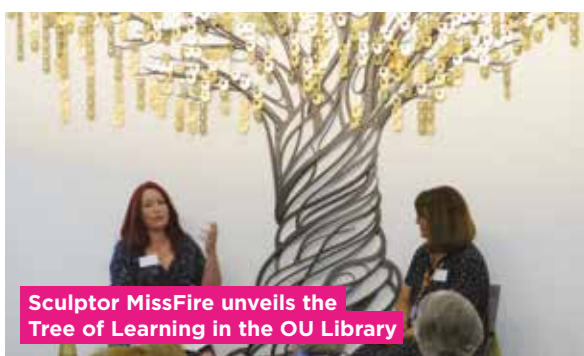
OU in Ireland celebrate Charter Day



OU staff and students celebrated at Pride events across the country



Honorary Graduates Prue Leith and Val McDermid host a special OpenTALKS event



Sculptor MissFire unveils the Tree of Learning in the OU Library



Zahra is just one of the wonderful alumni whose stories we've shared through the year

FUN FACTS IN OU HISTORY



2 million OU students taught since 1969 – that's enough people to fill Wembley Stadium over 22 times!



The OU's youngest ever graduate was **13 years old** and the oldest was **93**.

OU students have **won University Challenge twice**.



You can find OU alumni spread across **157 countries** – that's over 80% of the world.

In 1970, **over 43,000 students applied** for just 25,000 OU places.



In 1973, the OU's first graduation ceremony was broadcast live on BBC2 from **Alexandra Palace**.

During 2018/2019 we were involved with **over 30 OU/BBC co-productions** which reached over 270 million people worldwide thanks to our unique partnership with the BBC.



One of actor Julie Walters' first major film roles was portraying an OU student opposite Michael Caine in **Educating Rita**.



The OU was responsible for the **9th human-made object on Mars** (Beagle 2).

In 2013, the University created the beautiful **Legacy Garden** to pay tribute to those who have so generously left a gift to the OU in their Will.



In 2006, the OU launched **OpenLearn** – a free online learning platform, since then it has attracted more than 70 million learners.

Milton Keynes, home of the OU, was **just two years old** when The Open University was created in 1969.



There are currently **168,000 current students at the OU** – that's equivalent to two thirds of the population of Milton Keynes.



What's your OU story? We'd love to hear about your experience and what you've been up to since you qualified.

You can share your story by visiting alumni.open.ac.uk

FASS FORWARD



“ We have seen many exciting new developments in the Faculty recently and I am delighted to share some of them with you. We have further refreshed our curriculum and developed new qualifications including degrees in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics and in Criminology. We are so proud of our innovative research culture, covering subjects from Byzantine Art and Greek poetry to contemporary issues such as migration, sexual citizenship and climate change. Our Faculty members' work remains cutting edge, topical and often award-winning. We have also been busy providing evidence to Parliamentary Committees, holding conferences on the ethics of protecting culture or human life in war, and working with schools. ”

Professor Ian Fribbance, Executive Dean

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences comprises three schools:

- Arts & Humanities
- Psychology & Counselling
- Social Sciences & Global Studies



For more information

fass.open.ac.uk



LIVING LANDSCAPES

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), *Sounding Coastal Change* is an exciting two year project exploring environmental and social change on the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty of the north Norfolk coast.

Led by the OU's Senior Lecturer in Geography Dr George Revill, the team of geographers, musicians, composers, sound artists, radio producers and filmmakers brought together human and non-human 'voices' to deliberate the future of coastal areas, where natural and social worlds are inextricably intertwined.

The project team described the area as a 'living landscape', observing how a barrage of frequent storms has resulted in rising sea levels and an increasingly changing and volatile coastline.

To explore these changes and the future impact on human life, the team worked with a variety of listening, sound and music techniques. They also brought together residents, young people, institutions, local groups and visitors for a 24 hour broadcast from Blakeney on World Listening Day 2018, which was featured on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. Other creative efforts produced as part of the project include an audio documentary made by school students, Gair Dunlop's award-nominated research film *Soundings*, sound artist Lona Kozik's *Blakeney Postcards*, a performance of *Matters Arising* by Sam Richards, and a Sound Ark from Cley Marshes.



See more of the team's work

www.soundingcoastalchange.org

MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME

Patrick McCormack left school when he was 14 years old and had always felt ashamed of his lack of formal education. Determined to finally achieve his degree, Patrick enrolled with the OU aged 67 and has now successfully completed his BA (Hons) in English Literature.

"My only regret is that I wasn't brave enough to pursue this course of action 30 or 40 years ago when

the achievement would really have enhanced my prospects," said Patrick. "I still find it incredible and I'm sure I'll wake one of these days and find it's all a dream. The OU really is a wonderful institution."



Tell us what inspired your OU journey

alumni@open.ac.uk

IT'S A LOCK-UP!



What's a 'lock-up'? At one point, there was one in almost every parish and town across the British Isles. These small, often domed and strangely-shaped buildings were historically used as temporary prisons.

As part of the PrisonHistory project, Dr Rosalind Crone, Senior Lecturer in History, has created a new searchable database resource with detailed records on around 850 penal institutions and over 600 lock-ups. It's an invaluable tool for researchers transforming knowledge of the practice and experience of imprisonment in the British Isles between 1500-1999.

As well as searching for lock-ups in your local area and learning about their fascinating history, you can be part of the PrisonHistory project by submitting details of lock-ups near you.

 **Delve into your area's local history**
www.prisonhistory.org

ARE YOU A FOCUSSED DRIVER?

Is talking on the phone while driving ever really safe? This is one of the questions Dr Gemma Briggs, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, explored while working as an expert witness for the Transport Select Committee last summer. Her work was widely reported across the national press and supports the view that hands-free phone use is equally distracting to drivers as hand-held phones.

"The current mobile phone laws are outdated and not fit for purpose," said Dr Briggs after the report was released. "They also, by implication, suggest that hands-free phone use is a safe alternative to hand-held use despite compelling research evidence, including our own, which disputes this."

To bring these recommendations to life, visit OpenLearn to test how alert you are behind the wheel while listening to a phone call. The results may surprise you!

 **Take the test**
<http://bit.ly/driver-focus>

AWARD NOMINATION FOR OPEN ARTS OBJECTS

The Open Arts Objects project was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education Award for Knowledge Exchange/Transfer Initiative of the Year. Led by the OU's Dr Leah Clark with colleagues from across Art History, the project is an open access platform with over 50 free films which tell the story of artworks and objects through the ages.

These films shed light on some of the unsolved mysteries of material objects, exploring what is left out of standard Art History textbooks and teaching viewers how to look closely – a critical tool for Art History. So far, the films have been viewed over 13 million times and even led to changes in museums' educational programmes.

 **Discover Open Arts Objects**
www.openartsarchive.org/open-arts-objects

DOUBLE GOLD FOR POWERFUL GRENFELL TOWER FILM

Grenfell Tower and Social Murder, a film by Dr David Scott, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, has won further awards during 2019.

The film, which is dedicated to the continued struggle for truth, justice and recognition for all those who lost their lives, gained Gold Awards in two categories – Education and Training, and Social Welfare – at the EVCOM (Events and Visual Communication Association) Clarion Awards, which celebrates the best in Corporate Social Responsibility focussed live and film work.

Speaking about the project, Dr Scott said:

"To have been involved in the making of this film has been a real privilege. The tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire, where 72 people lost their lives and 70 people were injured, has shone a spotlight on some of the deeply ingrained problems haunting contemporary society."

 **Learn more**
ounews.co/arts-social-sciences/double-gold-for-powerful-grenfell-tower-film

FBL FOCUS



“ In the last year, our world-class Business School which has the sought-after triple accreditation, and our growing Law School, have continued to deliver high-quality teaching and research. It's fantastic to showcase just a few of the Faculty's notable achievements and successes alongside some of our high-profile alumni. Here's to 2020!

Professor Devendra Kodwani,
Executive Dean



The Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) comprises two schools:

- **The Open University Business School (OUBS)**
- **The Open University Law School (OULS)**



For more information

business-school.open.ac.uk
law-school.open.ac.uk



The OU has been awarded a contract of circa £2.5 million by North Yorkshire Police to deliver its Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) and Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP).

From 2020, under new College of Policing requirements, all new police officers in England and Wales must join the police via three distinct routes, each of which require or lead to a degree level qualification – the PCDA, the DHEP, or the Pre-Join Policing Degree. These form part of the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (or PEQF) which is a new professional framework for the training of police officers and staff.

The OU's Policing Organisation and Practice (POP) team is working in collaboration with North Yorkshire Police to design and deliver both degree programmes from July 2020.



Read the full story

<http://bit.ly/policing-education>

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ALUMNI STORY

SUPPORTING OTHERS TO SUCCEED



"I took my refugee status as an opportunity, not a disadvantage," says OU graduate Shabnam Nasimi, who was just eight years old when her family fled Afghanistan.

After settling in the UK, Shabnam became inspired to help others and continued her volunteering work while studying for her Open University Law degree. "I liked that I could study in my own time and had independence to solve difficult tasks myself without distractions," she told us.

Passionate about education, Shabnam is now studying for a Master's at Birkbeck University of London and was recently named one of 2019's top ten most inspirational women in Public Affairs.

OPEN JUSTICE ALUMNI GET ON BOARD

The Law School's Open Justice Centre has appointed 12 alumni to support and develop its public engagement work. This student panel will help shape the development of legal outreach projects and enable current students to connect with their predecessors.

The Centre, launched in 2016, offers law students the opportunity to undertake voluntary projects to apply their legal knowledge and skills in a way that furthers the OU's social justice mission.



Learn more

law-school.open.ac.uk/open-justice



Gerard McGurk, a career Foreign Office diplomat with 30 years' foreign policy and leadership experience, won the Business School's Alumni of the Year Achievement Award. Based at the British Embassy in Madrid, Gerard graduated with his MBA in 2012 and is a member of the Business School's Alumni Council.

Three other Business School alumni who have made an outstanding contribution to an organisation or to society were 'highly commended' – Marianne Fennema, Gwyneth Letherbarrow and Carlo Stasi. MBA alumnus Tillmann Henssler also received recognition for being named as one of the 2019 Class of Influential Leaders by AACSB, the world's largest business education alliance.

Well done to Gerard and all of our students and alumni who were recognised - we are exceptionally proud of the FBL family!

MBA MARKS 30 YEARS WITH A MAKEOVER

A redeveloped version of the MBA (Master of Business Administration), the largest postgraduate degree in the OU, hit the market in November 2019. As the prestigious qualification celebrates its 30th anniversary, the existing MBA has been transformed with new and updated content.

Dr Michael Ngoasong, the Teaching Director for the Masters Programme in the Business School, said: "The OU is still the largest UK provider of both part-time and distance learning MBAs. With the existing MBA programme overall already having high satisfaction rates, it is important for our reputation, and our income, to have an attractive MBA for the market."



Discover more about our MBA
www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/qualifications/f61

BUSINESSES OPEN FOR GROWTH

For many businesses across Ireland, taking that next big step to significantly expand, or perhaps become an exporter, can be a daunting challenge. Thanks to a major donation from Lord Haskins, one of the OU's former Pro-Chancellors, The Open University in Ireland has been able to establish a new collaboration with business agencies to produce a team-based business development programme *Open for Growth*.

Working with Enterprise Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland and the Executive Education team within the OU's Faculty of Business and Law, *Open for Growth* has been developed as a unique online programme designed for small and medium-sized enterprises who aspire to grow but are not quite sure where to start. For managing directors and senior managers of such enterprises, *Open for Growth* is flexible and can be completed entirely at the pace of the participants.

LOOKING AFTER LAW PROFESSIONALS

The OU has partnered with charity LawCare to support wellbeing for legal professionals with *Fit for Law*: a suite of free, online resources.

With long hours, demanding clients and an often poor work-life balance as standard, there is still a stigma around wellbeing within the law profession. The first course, *Emotional Competence and Professional Resilience* is available now, supporting individuals and employers to promote psychologically and emotionally healthier ways of working in law.



Find more news
law-school.open.ac.uk/news

SPOTLIGHT ON STEM



“ Welcome to my first round up as the Executive Dean of the STEM Faculty. In the coming months we look forward to rolling out a number of new qualifications, from a BSc & MSc/ PgDip in Cyber Security to an Integrated Masters in Environmental Science. We are actively planning to continue refreshing the curriculum we offer to OU STEM students at undergraduate and postgraduate degree levels and we are exploring exciting new formats for professional lifelong learning. ”

Professor Nicholas Braithwaite, Executive Dean

The Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) comprises:

- Computing and Communications
- Engineering and Innovation
- Environment, Earth and Ecosystem Sciences
- Life, Health and Chemical Sciences
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Physical Sciences
- Knowledge Media Institute

➔ For more information
stem.open.ac.uk



The Open University has an international reputation for space and planetary sciences research, and a recent investment from the UK Government is helping to further grow our capabilities in addressing the fundamental question: 'Are we alone in the Universe?'

AstrobiologyOU emerged as a research group in 2015 from a collaboration between researchers from the schools of Earth, Environment and Ecosystem Sciences and Physical Sciences.

Focussing on understanding the science behind how and where life may be found beyond the Earth, AstrobiologyOU have investigated potentially habitable locations on Mars, and the growth and survival of micro-organisms in extreme environments on Earth.

With a £6.7 million award from Research England, the group are now able to expand their scientific capabilities – moving their focus to understanding other extra-terrestrial environments, such as the moons of Jupiter and Saturn. As part of the project they will bring together researchers from FBL and FASS to address the ethical and governance challenges associated with the search for life.

➔ Search for life
www.open.ac.uk/research-groups/astrobiology

SUPPORTING SPACE INNOVATION

The £4.8 million SPRINT (SPace Research and Innovation Network for Technology) programme provides unprecedented access to The Open University's space expertise and facilities to help businesses develop new commercial products for space and other key sectors.

SPRINT has awarded Total Carbide, a hard metal product manufacturer, a place on their business innovation support programme. The project will enable Total Carbide to reduce the weight and increase the strength of its throat nozzles for rocket and space propulsion systems by replacing the tungsten-based alloy with a new material.



Felix Asare-Donkoh, 31, joined the Armed Forces soon after completing his A-levels in Cardiff, but realised he was still keen to continue his education. Usually, this would mean leaving the Army to study full-time, but by choosing to study with The Open University in Wales, Felix was able to study for his Engineering degree while continuing to serve. There are currently 2,000 active, or former, service personnel studying with the OU.

“Taking on a degree with the OU was the best decision I could have made – it gave me the best of both worlds, allowing me to continue doing the job I love, while studying at the same time.”

Felix has gone on to become an aircraft technician and is currently working towards becoming a sergeant in the military.

➔ **Read more about Felix**
50.open.ac.uk/photography/felix

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

A team of academic and commercial partners, funded by the Science & Technology Facilities Council's Food Network+ (STFC FN+) is using the knowledge gained from the Rosetta space mission to find solutions for sustainability. Led by the OU's Dr Geraint Morgan, the team is working on a range of projects including sniffing fungal infections in avocados, determining the shelf-life of bagged salads and developing sniffing methods to detect *Campylobacter* on chicken farms – the bacteria that causes the majority of food poisoning cases in the UK.

Outside of the STFC FN+, Dr Morgan's group have also received funding from the SPRINT programme to develop new methods for sniffing fake and fraudulent Scotch whisky.

➔ **Learn more**
open.ac.uk/research/news/ou-space-expertise-applied-detect-counterfeit-whisky

REACHING FOR THE STARS

The OpenScience Observatories operate a collection of telescopes in the Observatorio del Teide, Tenerife, which can be operated remotely by staff and students as part of their research or qualifications.

Ten pupils from Falkirk, Scotland, recently saw galaxies and planets up close at The Open University's observatory on the island of Tenerife. The pupils have been helping Dr Alan Cayless, an astronomer and tutor at the OU, develop a new, open access astronomy course.

Over the past year, the pupils have been testing bespoke software that will let people around the world order the OU's Completely Autonomous Service Telescope (COAST) on Tenerife to take pictures of deep space.

“Actually seeing where COAST is and watching it do its work was amazing and it proved to us that we could do astronomy as a job in the future!” commented one student.

Dr Cayless intends to have the new open access course available in spring 2020, and to set up subscription access to the telescope software so that more people can direct the telescope to the object of their choice.

➔ **Explore space from your own home**
open.edu/openlearn/science-maths-technology/astronomy/astronomy-online-telescope

CALLING ALL ARTISTS

The OU's Floodplain Meadows Partnership will be running an art competition throughout 2020, based around species-rich and now very rare, floodplain meadows. We want to encourage you to find your nearest floodplain meadow and create an artwork inspired by your visit. Your artistic creations will celebrate and help to raise the profile of these special habitats so we can ensure their future protection.

➔ **Find out more and discover your nearest floodplain meadow**
www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/content/floodplain-meadow-arts-and-crafts-competition-2020

WELCOME TO WELS



“ Our students and our alumni aren’t ordinary people; they’re extraordinary. For all of us working at the OU, seeing our students achieve their ambitions and go out into the world to do great things brings to life the purpose of our job; why we work in education, and why we work for a university like the OU. ”

Professor Fary Cachelin, Executive Dean

The Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS) comprises three schools:

- **Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport**
- **Health, Wellbeing and Social Care**
- **Languages and Applied Linguistics**

➤ **For more information**

wels.open.ac.uk



BOOSTING NURSING NUMBERS ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

The OU is working with the Isle of Wight (IOW) NHS Trust to deliver a three-year apprenticeship programme to increase the number of registered nurses and nursing associates on the Island. With over 120 nursing vacancies, the programme will widen access and address the skills shortage by providing crucial training and employment.

The OU will be the sole provider in the delivery of the apprenticeship-standard qualification and will help the IOW NHS Trust to develop their workforce and keep skills local. Dr Sally Boyle, Head of School for Health, Wellbeing & Social Care, said, “Nursing students and apprentices are often recruited locally, with established roots in the community and generally remain with their local hospitals once they have qualified as nurses. The apprenticeship programme is vital to the retention and expansion of the nursing workforce on the Island.”

Training more health and social care staff than any other education provider, the OU has strong credentials for delivery in England, working collaboratively with employers and achieving high rates of completion (92%) by staff at other NHS Trusts.

➤ **Read the full story**
<http://bit.ly/iow-nhs>



HELPING GIRLS AIM HIGH

Girls from some of the poorest districts in Zimbabwe are now able to study materials co-developed by our education specialists at the OU as part of a UK Aid funded Girls’ Education Challenge. SAGE (Supporting Adolescent Girls’ Education) will offer more than 21,000 girls aged 10-19 the chance to catch up with their education at one of 132 community-based Learning Hubs being established in Zimbabwe over the next five years.

➤ **Find out more**
open.ac.uk/about/international-development/sage

OUR DEMENTIA CHOIR HITS THE RIGHT NOTE

Our Dementia Choir, which aired on the BBC in 2019, followed *Line of Duty* actor Vicky McClure as she undertook a deeply personal journey to discover the true extent of music's power in helping to address the challenges of living with dementia.

Vicky met with scientists exploring pioneering techniques and cutting-edge scanning technology to reveal how music can stimulate a brain damaged by dementia. The OU in Ireland's Senior Lecturer in Health Dr Geraldine Boyle and Honorary Associate in Music Dr Terence Curran acted as academic consultants to help shape the OU/BBC co-production. The series and its presenter have been nominated for several awards.



Go behind the scenes

open.edu/openlearn/ourdementiachoir



WILDLIFE WATCH

We have joined forces with the British Trust for Ornithology and BBC Two's *Springwatch* to organise the biggest citizen science project the series has ever undertaken.

The OU's nQuire site recently hosted the *Gardenwatch* survey, which asked the public to undertake nature-related missions to collect data to map the health of the UK's wildlife. Professor Mike Sharples, from the OU's Institute of Educational Technology, said, "It's an exciting way of carrying out large scale science. nQuire allows expert scientists to run investigations that involve tens of thousands of people."



Visit www.nquire.org.uk

STUDENT STORIES

BEATING THE BULLIES



Charlotte Bailey from Wales was forced to leave her school due to severe bullying, losing out on a scholarship to Yale University. Through studying with the OU Charlotte has regained her confidence and has gone on to start her own business and work as an international anti-bullying speaker.

Commenting on her OU experience, the exceptional Charlotte said, "It allowed me to build my own business which is something I've always wanted to do."

LOVING LANGUAGES



A degree in foreign languages with the OU enabled Donna James to flourish both personally and professionally. "My greatest success was passing my degree with first class honours on my 25th birthday – I practically screamed the house down when my result came through," said Donna.

"I'd sacrificed so much of my time and cried so many tears of stress and frustration over the six years of studying and to get that result was just fantastic!"

Donna gained a BA (Hons) in Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish) and believes studying with the OU was one of the reasons she landed her current job, where she uses her newfound language skills to communicate with customers and distributors all over the world.



What's your OU story?

Tell us alumni@open.ac.uk

YOUR NEXT STEPS TO SUCCESS

THE OU CAREERS TEAM ARE HERE TO HELP

Just because you're no longer studying with the OU doesn't mean we can't help you progress your career. Are you looking for advice or support with turning your OU qualification into everyday career confidence?

Careers and Employability Services can help you reap the rewards of the hard work you put into your study with access to a full range of services, events and resources during your studies and for three years after you qualify. After that, you will still have access to a wide range of useful careers advice.

Two ways we can help

1

Watch our free 10-minute webinar *The Journey Continues* for bite-sized career advice.

▶ bit.ly/NextStepsAfterStudy

2

Or dive straight into the careers website and start discovering how we can help you achieve your goals. You can use our online CV builder and interview simulator to help you prep for interviews, get inspiration from fellow students, access practical information about different careers and much more.

▶ open.ac.uk/careers

ALUMNI STORIES

Stuart, aged 37, applied for an internal promotion at his workplace after graduating from the OU in 2018.

"I had not applied for a job for a long time and felt more confident interviewing than being interviewed," says Stuart. "I contacted the OU careers service. Without their advice I am pretty certain that I would not have been appointed to the role."



The story doesn't end there. Soon after his promotion, Stuart was approached by another employer and offered a higher-level role. This time he needed help with his out-of-date CV. After using CV resources on the careers website and consultation on his interview rounds, he was successfully appointed as Operations Director in June 2019.

"Since graduating, the OU Careers and Employability Services helped me to achieve fantastic rewards twice in quick succession."

Dafydd Llywelyn is the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys in Wales and a proud member of the OU alumni community. Now he's giving something back to the University by helping current OU students in Wales to develop their employability skills.

"I found myself in a job where I had a qualification that was nothing to do with my role," Dafydd tells us. "I was working for the police as a crime and intelligence analyst and felt I had no academic credibility, so I came to the OU to further my studies. I studied a *Diploma in Social Policy and Criminology*, which gave me personal credibility and would serve me well years later when I applied to become a lecturer in Criminology."

"When elected as Crime Commissioner, I wanted to give young people some kind of work-based experiences and began working with the OU."

"So far, we have given lots of opportunities to OU students via the GO-Wales work-experience and Santander internship programmes. Working with the OU has been a huge success. Offices can become quite stale and by having this programme in place a student becomes part of the tapestry of an office and enriches the experiences of existing staff, who are exposed to new challenges and ideas."



"As an alumnus, I'm biased, but the OU really is fantastic because of the flexibility it offers employers to explore opportunities to bring OU students to our workplaces."

YOUR TREE OF LEARNING IS FULLY GROWN

We are thrilled to announce that The Open University's Tree of Learning sculpture is now finished and standing proudly in the Betty Boothroyd Library at our Milton Keynes (Walton Hall) campus.

This incredible 22-foot sculpture includes over 7,000 gold-coloured personalised shields to honour our OU family who have donated to the 50th Anniversary Scholarships Fund. With almost 1,900 branches in total, this towering tree took sculptor Clare McHugh (known creatively as MissFire) 94 days of work to complete. She says she is amazed by the generosity of everyone who has donated, and we couldn't agree more.

Thanks to the generous support of alumni, supporters and friends, over £480,000 has been raised for the Scholarships Fund, through which carers will be given the opportunity to study with the OU for free. The Tree of Learning has played an incredible role in this success. Every day another 6,000 people in the UK are taking on caring commitments – that's over 2 million every year. Juggling this care with work, life and school can seem impossible and we know that young carers are twice as likely to miss out on education. With your help, at least 24 carers will now receive a scholarship to access life-changing higher education and careers that may otherwise have been impossible.

The generosity of our alumni is helping to change lives and we cannot thank our wonderful supporters enough. We hope you will have the opportunity to see the Tree at future events and we would love to thank supporters in person – so please ensure we have your email address so we can stay in touch about new opportunities to visit our campus.



Over **7,000**
personalised shields

1,900
branches

total weight
215kg

31 individual
sections

6.72m
high

6.1m
wide

40°C
next to the forge

94 days
in the workshop

Over £480,000
raised for the
50th Anniversary
Scholarships Fund

24
Scholarships
funded

OPENING UP THE FUTURE

In 2015, The Open University proudly launched its first ever fundraising campaign: Open up the Future. Based on the OU's founding principles – to open up education for all – we set ourselves the target of raising £50 million linking to our 50th Anniversary.

This will help us to change more lives, to offer more opportunities to those who need it in the UK and overseas, to continue our world-leading research, and to allow more students to follow in the footsteps of our fantastic alumni community. The target was ambitious but thanks to our most incredible alumni and partners, we have successfully raised over £52 million and the efforts continue. We look forward to sharing more with you in the coming months.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW WITH OPENLEARN

Have you explored the wonderful world of OpenLearn? The home of free online learning from The Open University is packed with over 950 courses waiting for you to explore.

Finding the course for you is now even easier, as we have new collated sections for work, study or to simply explore the site for your pleasure!



www.open.edu/openlearn



SKILLS FOR STUDY

This brand-new category includes useful advice to help even the most 'experienced' student learn something new! Free courses include:

- **Talk the talk** – a course that'll help you to create and deliver confident presentations and speeches.
- **Presenting information** – learn how to use your computer to clearly interpret and make your own charts and tables.
- **Cyber security** – feel more confident online by learning the basics of protecting your digital information.

SKILLS FOR LIFE

In this area you'll find skills for your professional life, as well as resources for health and wellbeing. Free courses include:

- **Personal branding** – learn what a 'personal brand' really is in this badged course and discover tactics to help you present yourself effectively to get ahead in your career.
- **Career mentoring and coaching** – explore how a mentor or coach can help you develop your career and how you can use your own experiences to support others.

NEW CONTENT TO EXPLORE

Here are some of the latest free courses that you can take part in:

- **Exploring economics: the secret life of t-shirts** – within 15 minutes you'll learn more about the resources, markets, people and incomes involved in the humble t-shirt.
- **What is democracy?** – This online video explores whether democracy really is the best way to get good leaders.
- **Primary education: listening and observing** – a new badged open course is perfect for those looking to work or volunteer in primary education.

UBER DRIVERS TO BENEFIT FROM FREE OPEN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The Open University continues to expand its work with employers to address skills gaps across multiple sectors. One of our most significant new partnerships is with Uber, the multinational ride hailing company.

As part of a new programme of driver incentives, Uber has partnered with the OU to offer free higher education courses to qualifying drivers and their family members.

Under the scheme, UberPro drivers are able to study over 900 courses at degree, diploma or certificate level, completely free of charge.

Furthermore, a qualifying driver can choose to pass this benefit onto a family member, partner, child or sibling across the globe, providing an opportunity which may have previously been unaffordable or inaccessible.

Melinda Roylett, Uber's UKI General Manager, said: "We know that drivers take tremendous pride in the work that they do and we want to do more to help them and their families build towards their future. I am thrilled to be partnering with The Open University, to offer undergraduate degree-level qualifications."

 [Find out more open.ac.uk/business/contact](http://open.ac.uk/business/contact)

THE BEST OF THE BBC & THE OU

The OU/BBC partnership has continued to evolve since it began in 1971, finding innovative ways to reach audiences to support the University's social mission and provide unique resources for OU teaching and learning.

In 2018/19 there were 30 OU/BBC projects, which produced more than 264 million viewing and listening events, over 800,000 visits to the broadcast-linked pages on OpenLearn and over 1.5 million digital and social media engagements.

Short films for curious minds

We created an OU playlist on the BBC Ideas platform featuring 14 short-form videos to challenge and explore the ideas that shape our world. You'll find videos on everything from memory and storytelling to top tips on spotting conspiracy theories.



Watch them online now

bbc.co.uk/ideas/playlists/made-in-partnership-with-the-open-university



On your screens and radio

We had a diverse range of television series through 2019. Following on from the huge success of *Blue Planet II*, we co-produced the *BP Live* series, which was broadcast last March. Space was explored in our series, *The Planets* and we commemorated the first Moon landing with the documentary *Eight Days: To the Moon and Back*. Returning to Earth, we went behind the scenes in the series *School* and explored the power of music in *Our Dementia Choir*. On radio we covered wide-ranging subjects on *Thinking Allowed*, *A History of Music and Technology*, *The Bottom Line* and *All in the Mind*.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2020

The unique relationship the OU enjoys with the BBC has exciting plans for 2020 and will continue to create innovative ways to reach and engage the public, delivering a new generation of assets for teaching and learning. Here are two titles for 2020:

Cornwall: This Fishing Life

BBC2, January 2020

For many, fishing is not a choice, it's a way of life. This series follows the fortunes of a new generation of young fishermen as they fight to secure a future for their traditional way of life, at a time of enormous change. The OU has produced a free poster to accompany the series.

Our Coast*

BBC2, Early 2020

Britain and Ireland's majestic coastline helps to define who we are. It's where you can unearth the secrets of our past, but most importantly, where you can discover the fascinating people, stories and industries defining our nation today. *Our Coast* journeys to the Irish sea to uncover coastal conservation projects in South West Scotland, the technological regeneration of Liverpool's Royal Albert Dock, the rugged coastline surrounding Belfast, and the Welsh island of Anglesey's intriguing connection to the weather.

*working title





CREATING MAGICAL MOMENTS SINCE 1973

In the summer of 1973, the OU's very first graduates walked the stage of Alexandra Palace to collect their degrees in a ceremony which was broadcast live on BBC2.

Since then, we've had the pleasure of welcoming thousands of new graduates each year in ceremonies across the UK and Ireland. Each day is slightly different, but one thing remains the same: the absolute joy that fills the room as new alumni and their guests clap, cheer, cry happy tears and raise a glass of fizz to celebrate their success.

So what exactly goes into creating these incredible occasions? We spoke to Steve Cooper from the OU's Ceremonies Team to give us a look behind the scenes.

"From the moment a new graduate receives their invitation to a degree ceremony, it's always about making sure the day is as special as it can be for that individual. Our mission statement is to create a ceremony experience that's worthy of our graduates' success, so there is a lot of work that goes into making everything seamless and perfect.

We have a team of 11 who deal with everything from the logistics to supporting students on the day. Between us, we organise up to 30 ceremonies every year and will begin booking some venues up to three years in advance.

There are so many things that make OU degree ceremonies unique, but for me, the thing that is extra special is the diversity of the graduates. You've got people crossing that stage who are all different ages, have come from different backgrounds and all walks of life. They've all been on their own journey and each have their own story to tell.

You see so much support inside the auditorium as each graduate crosses the stage, with the whole room clapping and giving so much enthusiasm to complete strangers! It's because each graduate has gone through something similar to get to that point. Seeing what this achievement means to people is so special, you can't really describe that feeling."

Celebrate good times

You've done it! You've completed your qualification and now you're ready to collect your degree – but how will you celebrate? For some new graduates, simply walking on stage with a smile and hearing applause is enough, for others, it's time to strut their stuff! We've seen plenty of memorable celebrations – from selfies and cartwheels, to dancing, including a memorable 'worm' (pictured) where someone wriggled across the stage floor!



If you attended your degree ceremony, we would love to hear about your memories and see your photographs. How did it feel when you crossed the stage? Do you have any lovely photos to share?

Email us at alumni@open.ac.uk

The ceremonies: facts and figures

Up to **30** ceremonies a year
from Belfast to Brighton

Up to **7,000**
new graduates

30,000
glasses of bubbly on standby

with **20,000+**
proud guests every year

Countless
selfies and family photos



FRIENDS AND PIONEERS

Friends Brian and Jeff were among the OU's first pioneer students, starting their journeys in 1971 and graduating together at the first degree ceremony in 1973. With a friendship that is almost as old as the OU itself, they joined us again in our 50th Anniversary year to welcome our newest graduates to the alumni family at the 2019 Cardiff degree ceremony.

"I always wanted to be a teacher," says Jeff Robinson, who began studying with the OU while working as a teacher at a comprehensive school in Barry. Though Jeff had already completed teacher training, he realised that many of his colleagues now had degree qualifications.

Brian McCann found himself in a similar situation after completing his teacher training in Cardiff and beginning work as a physical education teacher. "I found myself at a disadvantage, but help was on the horizon." Brian and Jeff both chose to study a Social Sciences Foundation course with the OU in Wales in 1971 and would begin their lasting friendship after meeting at a Summer School the same year. Over the years they would learn the unique skill that all OU students come to experience of balancing work, study and family life.

"My first son arrived during my course, but I managed – thanks to my wife Anne – to spend all my spare time (plus a full-time job) studying with the OU," says Jeff. "It was the most stimulating learning experience of my life, for which I shall always be grateful."

A love of learning and teaching

Brian describes his memories of his study days: "My recollections of study with the OU relate to early morning television programmes, tutorials in Llandaff College, the bump of heavy envelopes arriving in the post and thoughtful written responses to assignments, some completed late at night in the struggle to meet the competing demands of work and study."

After collecting their degrees in 1973, Brian and Jeff continued their

love of learning and both went on to study for a Master in Education at Cardiff University. Brian and Jeff also collaborated to edit and publish 'High on Hope' based on the writing of Welsh author Gwyn Thomas.

"I had a wonderful and happy career which, quite simply, would not have happened without the extraordinary Open University. My sincere thanks to you all," says Jeff, who became Principal and Chief Executive of the third largest further education college in the UK.

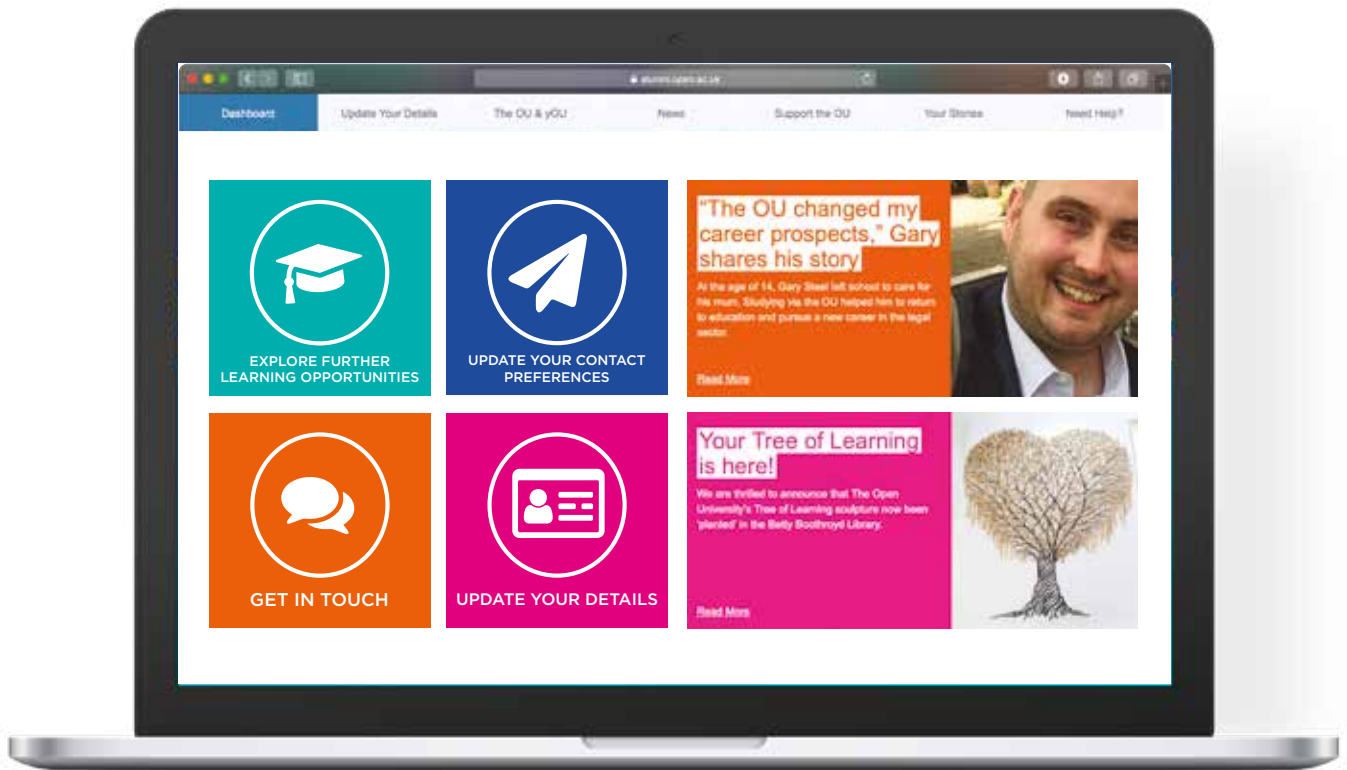
Brian spoke of his appreciation at the level of support and encouragement he received from his wife Dilys, as he also went on to enjoy a varied career in education. He was Deputy Head of a large comprehensive school for several years before working as an Ofsted and Estyn inspector in both England and Wales.

"With the support and encouragement of my wife Dilys, I have enjoyed a rich and varied life in education," says Brian. "The OU helped both Jeff and me to have excellent careers and a lasting friendship. Quite an achievement. I am pleased to have been part of your hugely important story."

Pioneers
Brian McCann
and Jeff Robinson



OPEN UP YOUR ALUMNI WEBSITE



Read inspirational
alumni stories
(and share
your own)



Read the latest
news on events,
appeals and
projects



Update your
details, view your
qualifications
and much more



Continue your
learning journey
with The Open
University



Get started today
alumni.open.ac.uk

To those
disabled or
with **life-changing injuries**.

To those dedicated to
caring for others.

To those who feel
vulnerable and neglected.

To those who think
higher education is
beyond their reach.

To those who feel **their
chance has gone**.

WE SAY WELCOME!
DON'T YOU AGREE?

See inside for how we will acknowledge
your fantastic support with a prestigious,
personalised, hand-finished certificate.





Please give a life-changing chance to those who might otherwise miss out

As part of our greatly valued OU family, you hopefully share The Open University's cherished values of social justice and social inclusion. Perhaps you even recognise yourself amongst the groups of people referenced on the front cover of this leaflet. Or maybe the OU's flexible learning structure was the best fit with your career or personal interests, and this is why you chose the OU.

Whatever your own individual reasons, right now there are people just like you who would welcome the same opportunity to study with the OU. However, through personal, often extremely challenging circumstances, they simply have no means of affording it themselves, or they may face other barriers. **We believe passionately that these people must not be forgotten and overlooked.**

Will you help give them the opportunity of higher education they deserve, by sending your special gift today towards funding more life-changing scholarships? Your gift today of £50 could literally help change someone's life forever.

Our aim is to create even more scholarships

As part of our 50th Anniversary celebrations, we launched an ambitious programme to break down barriers to higher education, providing scholarships to those wanting to unlock their potential and realise their dreams. Thanks to the amazing kindness and generosity of alumni like you, there are already 105 students who have started their journey, with another 100 due to begin study in 2020. But there are many more who desperately need the opportunity and we urgently need to raise the necessary funds.

We can only achieve this with your support.



Opening up education for all

In line with the OU's mission of being open and inclusive, the people we most want to reach and welcome to the OU are those who may not get a chance of further education elsewhere – disabled veterans, carers, care leavers and those with very limited incomes.

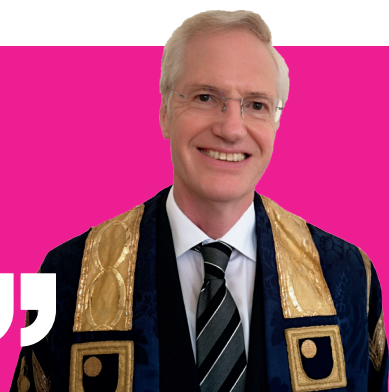
The OU is unique in doing this on such a wide scale and has become a powerful force for positive change rooted firmly in our values. **Together, by welcoming more people to the OU, we help benefit all our lives by creating far-reaching, sustainable ripples of change throughout our society as a whole.**

“

The OU is not just a university, we're a whole movement for change

Professor Tim Blackman
OU Vice-Chancellor

”



Do something amazing today and help change someone's life!

Please can you give £50 to help fund more student scholarships?

The sooner you send your gift, the sooner we can welcome more students who might otherwise not get the chance of the further education they would love to have. **Thank you so much!**



As a special thank you for your kindness and generosity, we'd like to send you a prestigious, personalised certificate. Please see back page...

Our special recognition of your gift

It's only thanks to the wonderful and greatly appreciated support of alumni like you that we can reach out and give scholarships to more students, who might otherwise not get the chance of higher education.

In grateful recognition of your kindness and generosity, we'll be delighted to send you a prestigious, personalised certificate of recognition, individually hand-finished.

We hope you will take pride in displaying it and knowing what a life-changing difference you are making not just to individuals' lives, but for the benefit of our society as a whole.

Please be as generous as you can and send your best gift today – thank you so much!



In special and most grateful recognition of

Your name here

for your kind and generous support in helping to fund more scholarships awarded by The Open University.

Thanks to you, together we can welcome more people into higher education, helping them to realise their dreams and unlock their potential.

Thank you for standing with us in being a positive force for change!

Tim Blackman

Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor



The Open
University

YES, I WANT TO MAKE A DONATION TO HELP FUND MORE SCHOLARSHIPS AND WELCOME MORE DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS TO THE OPEN UNIVERSITY



You can donate online at alumni.open.ac.uk/donate



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or by calling **01908 655044**