

OpenMINDS

2021 NEWS FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY



LOOKING AHEAD

The inspiring OU alumni, scholarships and research projects that are shaping the future.



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OpenMINDS 2021

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Cover image: Hannah Sargeant © Chris Floyd as part of the University's 50th Anniversary collection.

Planetary scientist and PhD student Hannah is fulfilling her childhood ambition of exploring the universe. She shares her exciting research into discovering water on the Moon on page 12.

Stay in touch

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HOW WE LOOK AFTER YOUR DATA

Our 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.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

It was one of the most marvellous things to happen in my working life to return to the OU as Vice-Chancellor in October 2019, when the University was still riding high from celebrating its 50th birthday.

But I could never have imagined then that within a few months we would be in a global pandemic.

The pandemic has meant a lot of changes for our staff and students, and the strain on many has been considerable. Their wellbeing has been my first priority. Yet the OU has also been at its very best during this time; #OUfamily has not just been a hashtag but a symbol of caring deeply about each other's welfare.

Even before COVID-19 saw the world pivot online, it was becoming more and more digital in every sphere, which is why the OU has not just been a university for our times but is a university for our future too.

The design of our courses, their flexibility, the research and employer insight that informs them, and the personalised support from our associate lecturers and student advisors still put the OU in a league of its own for the quality, accessibility and sheer enjoyability of the education we provide.

We are now bigger than at any time in our proud 51-year history, a pride that comes from what our students and graduates achieve for themselves, their families and their communities, inspiring others to follow.

I came to the OU because it breaks the mould and keeps breaking the mould by discovering ever better ways to teach and reach more people with life-changing learning – as well as making important research breakthroughs that you can read about in this issue.

As Jennie Lee – the Minister to whom Harold Wilson gave the job of establishing the OU – said, 'the very

essence of the OU is that it should not be a university for the rich or the poor, for black or white, for men or for women, but it should be judged on its academic standards and be available to all'.

The OU's mission has never been more important. The world faces many serious problems which cannot just be for a few experts or politicians to solve. They need highly educated publics, understanding and engaging with the issues and creating the solutions together.

We need your help to continue our mission, from championing the OU with colleagues and friends, to supporting our Open Futures Fund and the scholarships and bursaries provided through it to students who would not otherwise be able to study with us. Do please consider giving and adding your name to our 'Open Futures' book.

A scholarship recipient from our Disabled Veterans' Scholarships programme recently told me that his OU study gave him hope and purpose. Your friendship and support gives us all at the OU hope for the future and the difference we can make together.

With warmest wishes for a safe and healthy year.

Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor

Visit the alumni website
alumni.open.ac.uk

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The Development Office, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA
Tel: +44(0)1908 653 815

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CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES

CLASS of 2020

From makeshift mortarboards and garden graduation parties, to special messages from the likes of Sir Lenny Henry, last year's celebrations were certainly memorable for the OU graduating Class of 2020. Though we couldn't come together in person at degree ceremonies as hoped, it was incredible to see how the OU family rallied together to congratulate the newest members of our alumni community in a special 'Class of 2020' social media takeover in September 2020.

Thank you to everyone who shared photos, messages and inspiring stories of what it means to be part of the global OU family – you make us so proud!



“Congratulations Open University graduates! You have done a great thing and I hope it means the start of a really terrific career. Well done!”
Prue Leith
Honorary Graduate

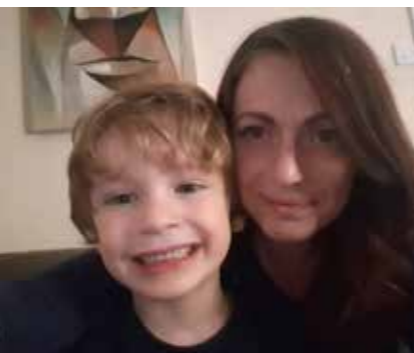


“As a graduate of the OU myself, I know how much hard work goes into achieving your qualification. Not only have you juggled your studies with busy work and family lives, you've also battled a global pandemic! And still you've succeeded. I'm going to send you all the very best wishes for the future. Well done and here's to you.”

Sir Lenny Henry
OU Graduate



“The only thing I love more than The Open University is Open University students! You do it because you're passionate. Congratulations to you all, you deserve it. Stay strong but stay creative.”
Benjamin Zephaniah
Honorary Graduate



“I'm wishing you every success on your graduation from The Open University. You should feel really, really proud, congratulations!”
Joan Armatrading
OU and Honorary Graduate

“Congratulations, we've done it! To be an OU student means balancing work, home, family life and studying. To reach your goals is a super-human feat! Underneath your clothes you all wear superhero outfits. Your accomplishments just overwhelm me with pride; congratulations and please stay in touch!”
Sarah Jones
Graduate and OU Students Association President



“You've managed to get a degree from one of the most special places in the world. People talk about part-time learners, but we know at The Open University you're double-time learners. You may be managing a big family, you may have a job, you may have two jobs, but what you've also achieved on top of that is quite remarkable. Massive congratulations!”
Martha Lane Fox
OU Chancellor



“I never thought I'd have a degree!”

When Carla from Clydebank was kicked out of the house at 14 years old, she felt that her life went 'completely off the rails' and never believed she would one day be a proud university graduate. After returning to college as a single parent, Carla says she 'scrapped by' with jobs in pubs and butcher shops to fit in with caring for her son. After meeting her new partner and having her youngest son, Carla felt she had the support to embark on her degree journey with The Open University in Scotland.

After years of hard work, Carla has achieved a *BA (Hons) Open Degree* and says the flexibility of the OU gave her the edge in landing her role at MND (Motor Neurone Disease) Scotland. She now has plans to study for a *Postgraduate Diploma in Global Development*. She says:

“I feel really validated by gaining a degree. It's changed how I feel about myself. The confidence boosts it's given me are amazing. If there's anyone out there who thinks it's an insurmountable obstacle, then please don't. The Open University is open to anyone. It's the greatest journey of my life so far.”



“We inspired each other to keep going”

For Pembrokeshire couple Laura Barrett and Jon Thrower, completing their OU qualifications is cause for a double celebration. After meeting in 2015, the pair realised they were both studying for Open degrees with the OU in Wales and soon a friendship, romance and study partnership began to blossom.

Laura and Jon both grew up in different parts of the UK, and neither have what they describe as a 'standard trajectory' into higher education. The flexibility of the OU was key in allowing the couple to study and follow their aspirations while juggling their other commitments. After graduating in 2020, the pair now plan to continue their OU journey together by studying for a *MSc in Psychology*.

“Jon has been a huge inspiration throughout my studies. I can honestly say that without his influence I would not have reached this point,” says Laura. “And the person who inspired me most is Laura,” adds Jon. “She's faced tremendous difficulties with her mental health throughout her journey and what she has achieved is truly remarkable. Her story and achievements embody what the OU stands for.”



“Studying helped me during difficult times”

After facing extreme adversities as a child, Michelle from Lisburn knew that she wanted to turn these challenges on their head and use her experiences to help others. Her passion for helping children led her to become a special educational needs classroom assistant, which is when she decided it was time to return to her own studies and enrol for a *Health and Social Care* degree from the OU in Northern Ireland. Despite facing many challenging times during her qualification – from family tragedy to contracting COVID-19 just before her final TMA – Michelle

never lost sight of her goal and is now a proud graduate. She says:

“No matter where I went or what I was dealing with, my OU studies came with me, and therefore will always be an important part of my life. It gave me something different to focus on during difficult times, and for that I will always be grateful. I will never forget my OU experience and I will always be beholden for the career opportunities and personal quietude, this has afforded me. Thank you.”

Read more stories and share your own
alumni.open.ac.uk/classof2020

“ WE CAN CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY ”

Honorary Graduate **Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE** on the importance of flexible learning, staying curious and inspiring the next generation of learners.



When it comes to breaking the mould, Honorary Graduate Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon is an expert. As a child prodigy, she passed two GCSEs while in primary school and became the youngest person to graduate with a Masters from Oxford University at just 20 years old. Now 30, Anne-Marie is supporting the next generation of learners through Stemettes, a social enterprise encouraging young women to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects. Her work in widening access to STEM subjects has led to an MBE and established Anne-Marie as a respected thought-leader across the tech space. We caught up with her on the back of her most recent achievement – being named Computer Weekly’s Most Influential Woman in Tech 2020.

“I was fortunate with my education journey,” Anne-Marie tells us. “I was quite disruptive in class and had teachers who were supportive in their own way, so I’ve always known that it’s not that there’s something special about me, it’s just that I had that opportunity. I’ve always wanted to prove that hypothesis and grow the next generation of young people who would benefit from similar opportunities that I had.”

“Stemettes can give girls those formative experiences, those positive STEM experiences where they get to see themselves as future innovators in an overtly female environment.”

Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon
OU Honorary Graduate

That’s where Stemettes comes in. After a few years working for the likes of Deutsche Bank and Goldman Sachs, Anne-Marie attended a Women in Tech conference and was inspired to champion the next generation of ‘Anne-Maries’. “I had this feeling of ‘wow, this is what it feels like to be in an all-female technical environment’. I wish I knew that places like this existed or that this was possible when I was starting out! I wonder how different my journey would have been if I had that identity and had felt proud of being a woman in these spaces earlier on.”

Launched in 2013, Anne-Marie created Stemettes to provide girls, young women and young nonbinary people aged 5 to 25 with opportunities to explore STEM subjects through events, workshops and programmes – all for free. So far, over 50,000 young people have taken part in Stemettes experiences across the UK and Ireland. As a trailblazer in her field, Anne-Marie wants to break down the stereotypes of women working in STEM so that more young people have the opportunities that she did. With women making up only 24% of the UK’s STEM workforce, the Stemettes team aim to boost this to at least 30% and hope that more young

people will become inspired to be the coders, scientists and problem-solvers of the future. “Stemettes can give girls those formative experiences, those positive STEM experiences where they get to see themselves as future innovators in an overtly female environment,” says Anne-Marie.

Recently, the OU teamed up with Stemettes as part of the Institute of Coding initiative to enable 50 girls and young women to complete Python programming certifications for free. As Anne-Marie explains: “I’ll be really proud to see what happens next for all of them as they are getting the same opportunities that I did, but they are getting it as part of a group. It’s definitely been a highlight for me, especially that even during a pandemic we’ve still been able to give such positive STEM experiences to girls and young women and even more so, to do that with the support of the OU.”

In an age where many more people are juggling caring responsibilities with conference calls, Anne-Marie believes flexibility is the key to unlocking a more inclusive workforce.

“Flexibility is the most important thing and I think that we can see this from the phenomena that we observed when lockdown was first announced and the number of academic papers submitted by women fell off a cliff. Lots of people have caring responsibilities, lots of people are human beings that have lives outside of their jobs. So the more that we can build flexibility into academia, but also into industry, and into all parts of life, the better people we can have, the more diverse set of people we can have working on these problems, doing this research and contributing to our body of knowledge within academia.

“I think there’s definitely the opportunity now as we rebuild, to rebuild better for more people but I’m not convinced that’s going to happen by default. As hard as it was before the pandemic, it’s even harder to do anything now. Budgets have been slashed, lots

of people have been made redundant – women and young women in particular – and so I think we need to be really intentional about what happens next in order for us to not double down on the problem.”



“To me the OU means more flexibility and a more inclusive set of graduates moving forward.”

Fascinated by the capabilities of tech from an early age, Anne-Marie describes dismantling her parents’ VCR player and *Lion King* tape on a quest to understand how and why things work. It’s this curiosity to learn that still drives her, especially at a time where we need technology more than ever to connect, educate and help us solve problems.

“A lot of people think a dystopian *Black Mirror* type scenario [for the future] is inevitable and I don’t think it is. So for me, I wake up every morning and think, well there are things that we can do now to make sure we have tech that works for people, tech that solves problems, and that we build a future that we are proud of, and works for a lot of members of society. It’s all about making sure that we are building the kind of space, that even if I’m not here for it, that my descendants or my best mate’s descendants are having a good time and they are

not in the *Black Mirror* or *Terminator 2* future. It’s not too late to change the course of history, it’s not too late to get the right people building technology.”



Learn more about the Stemettes
stemettes.org



Learn more about the
instituteofcoding.org

3 ways to get ahead

Here are Anne-Marie’s three top tips for excelling in your career:

1 Find your tribe!

Don’t do things alone. It’s more fun and you go further when you club together with others.

2 Know your learning style

Understanding how you learn best is such an important skill as there’s always more to learn, whether it’s a new widget or a new element of cyber security.

3 Keep caring

People that can tap into the needs of others and can understand others will do really well in tech. Empathy and understanding are skills we don’t prioritise as much as we should.

FASS FORWARD



“It’s been a year of considerable change. As we continue to live in a state of flux, I have been astounded by our Faculty’s ability to find solutions and pull through with agility, determination, and compassion. Academics worked tirelessly to provide expert advice and support to their students, and this is reflected in the student numbers for 2020/21, which exceeded our ambitious growth targets. We welcomed two new professors from the wider FASS ‘Invest to Grow’ programme and expanded our curriculum with the addition of innovative new qualifications including *BA (Hons) Art History and Visual Cultures*, *BA (Hons) Geography*, and *MSc in Global Development*. Looking ahead, we’re hoping to enhance the online learning experience with our partners, including the BBC and FutureLearn, including finding new ways of making education more inclusive and accessible.”

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



EXPLORE MUSEUM MASTERPIECES FROM YOUR SOFA

With the pandemic making it more difficult to visit many museums and galleries, OU Art Historians have been providing much needed cultural resources for people to enjoy at home. The Open Arts Archive (OAA) collaborates with museums and galleries across the UK and internationally, including the Tate, Baltic, V&A, and the National, with free films to enjoy as well as talks, seminars, podcasts, interviews, and exhibitions.

Each week, experts share historical treasures from around the world, including Renaissance paintings to retro 1970s wallpaper designs and everything in between. You can explore the history and stories behind these fascinating artefacts from the comfort of your home.

Do you have an object with an interesting history? The team are encouraging the public to make and submit their own curator videos, so please visit Open Arts Objects to make your own.

If you’d like to discover the world of art more formally, we’re pleased to have launched our new *BA (Hons) Art History and Visual Cultures* degree, which is the first of its kind. The qualification is for everyone, not elitist, and offers a new and exciting way to discover the rich diversity of visual, material and spatial cultures.

Discover more
openartsarchive.org

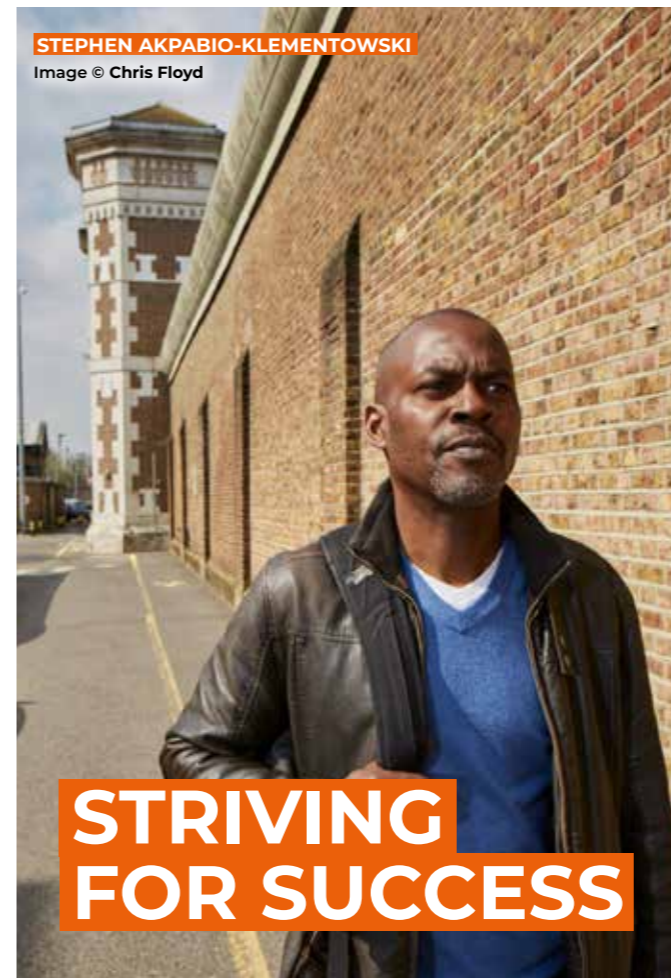


REFUGEE EXPERIENCES

During Refugee Week 2020, Professor of Sociology Marie Gillespie curated *Understanding Refugee Experiences* on OpenLearn.

It’s the first time that such a collection of rich materials has been curated, ranging from personal stories and useful resources to support refugees, to research on how COVID-19 is affecting asylum seekers and refugees.

Read more
bit.ly/openlearn7



STEPHEN AKPABIO-KLEMENTOWSKI
Image © Chris Floyd

STRIVING FOR SUCCESS

Stephen Akpabio-Klementowski (pictured above) has taken a long journey from prison to becoming a doctoral student. Stephen started studying *BSc (Hons) Social Science* with The Open University while serving a 16-year sentence, then took two Masters at Oxford Brookes University, before his release and starting his PhD with the OU. As well as undertaking his doctorate, Stephen is an Associate Lecturer in Criminology, and a Regional Manager for The Open University’s Students in a Secure Environments programme, managing the University’s relationship with prisons and secure hospital units. Stephen says: “I thank the OU for doing what they alone do best, widening access and participation to higher education, which in my case means facilitating the successful reintegration of prisoners back into society.”

Hear Stephen outline his experience in a BBC Ideas video

bit.ly/prisonertophd

Did you know?

The OU has provided education to students in prison for over 40 years as part of our mission to open up education for all. Since the 1970s our Students in Secure Environments programme has spread to over 150 prisons, 50 Secure Hospital Units and supported countless students in realising what they are capable of.

“DONE IS BETTER THAN PERFECT”

These were the words of wisdom from Dr David Morrison, Practitioner Psychologist and OU Associate Lecturer who was a worthy winner of one of five Recognition of Excellence in Teaching (RET) Awards in 2020. The awards were created as an OU collaboration with the OU Students Association to celebrate teaching. As an OU Psychology graduate and lecturer passionate about giving OU students as much support as possible, winning one of these awards feels all the more rewarding when you know that the nominations come from OU students.

“They are the most determined, hardest-working, people you will ever meet, and it’s an absolute privilege to support them with their studies,” said Dr Morrison.

More recently David has been developing a Relationship First Aid course for OpenLearn in partnership with a counselling service in his base of Glasgow. Anyone currently weathering the stress of the pandemic on their own relationship will appreciate just how prescient the timing is.

Explore courses
openlearn.com

SUPPORTING EVERY PUPIL TO SUCCEED

The OU approach to research is framed by real-world impact; the chance to make a difference, as evidenced in the Youth Violence Commission Report, co-authored by Criminologist Dr Keir Irwin Rogers and published in July 2020.

“Young people have potential, no matter who they are, what they do or what they look like.”

This quote from the front page of the report embodies its intention, calling for long-term, sustained financial support for 18 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) across the UK and for an ethic of care to exist throughout our schools for every pupil.

Keir, his co-authors, and the young people they’ve worked alongside, make a clear case for the need for a less punitive approach – a public health approach – to supporting children, young people and families living in situations that often lead to violence. As Keir explained:

“For far too long we have been shining a spotlight on the violence committed by young people, while downplaying or overlooking the serious violence and mistreatment inflicted on these very same young people.”

Read more
bit.ly/openminds8

FBL FOCUS



“ The high-quality teaching and research of our world-class triple-accredited Business School and our excellent Law School has never been more relevant. We take our responsibilities seriously as a signatory to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) and fully support the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Please enjoy just a few highlights from the last 12 months and meet our deserved Alumni of the Year Award recipient. ”

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

DESERVED ACCOLADE FOR ALUMNA MAGGIE

Maggie supported International Women's Day 2020 by naming Jennie Lee, who played a leading role in the foundation of the OU, as her most inspirational woman.

MAGGIE MILLER

We're delighted to announce that the Business School's Alumni of the Year Achievement Award winner is global business technology leader and CIO Maggie Miller. She has more than 30 years' experience during a long and distinguished career in the technology sector in the UK and overseas. Based in both the US and the UK, Maggie has been an exceptional ambassador for more than a decade through her commitment to the OUBS International Advisory Board (IAB), most recently as its chair.

The MBA alumna, who graduated in 1993, has consistently supported OUBS with her significant professional experience and OU knowledge. Maggie is now also a Practice Tutor on the Senior Leader Master's

Degree Apprenticeship (SLMDA) to reaffirm her support and commitment.

Maggie said: "Having left full-time education at 18, the OU MBA gave me the knowledge and confidence to build my career in multinational organisations in the UK and the US. I owe the OU a huge debt of gratitude for my success. Receiving this award makes me even more grateful to the incredible staff and academics of this organisation that I'm so proud to be associated with."

➤ **Find out more**
business-school.open.ac.uk/alumni/community-network/awards

DRIVING SOCIAL CHANGE AND JUSTICE

Students from the Open Justice Centre continue to drive social change through a range of fascinating projects, including offering free legal advice and guidance through the Open Justice Law Clinic. Since 2019, this unique student-led service has provided the equivalent of £230,000 worth of free legal advice to those who need it. Though the pandemic has seen the pop-up clinics close, the virtual Law Clinic has increased its capacity to support a rise in employment and family cases.

Students have also collaborated with the *Support Through Court* charity to launch a free open online resource themed around domestic abuse. This received Parliamentary recognition following a timely launch which coincided with the UK's first lockdown and a rapid rise in domestic abuse situations.

➤ **Learn more**
www.open.ac.uk/open-justice

GIVING THE SELF-EMPLOYED A VOICE

Professor Liz Daniel is part of a collaborative 18-month research project studying the impact of COVID-19 on self-employment across UK regions. The project will include quantitative analysis and in-depth interviews of a wide range of the self-employed, including some OUBS alumni, in response to an alumni volunteer call-out, to understand the varied impacts of the crisis. Professor Daniel is leading on the panel of experts who will provide feedback on the ongoing research. It is intended that the findings will inform national and local government support for the self-employed. The £178,000 project funding is via UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Economic and Social Research Council.

➤ **Learn more**
bit.ly/openminds10



FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR ALL AGES

Two short course collaborations created by Senior Lecturer in Finance Martin Upton are proving popular on digital learning platform OpenLearn.



The OU partnered with the UK's biggest consumer website, MoneySavingExpert.com (MSE), to give the nation the skills and knowledge to master their finances. The free six-part course has proved hugely popular, with thousands signing up.

➤ **Visit openlearn.com and search 'MSE'**



Launched ahead of Pension Awareness Week in September 2020, this short course was financed and produced in collaboration with Legal & General. At a bite-sized three hours, the course includes films, activities and a quiz to help you understand your options for retirement and prepare your finances for later life.

➤ **Visit openlearn.com and search 'Retirement'**

THANK YOU

Many alumni have kindly supported the Business and Law Schools during 2020 and a massive thank you goes out to each and every volunteer. They include MBA alumnus Simon Wallace, founder and managing director of The Whole Thing Group, who teamed up with George Frynas, Professor of Strategic Management, to co-host the C-19 Innovation and Leadership Webinar Series. Each panel comprised leading, international board level executive leaders discussing business critical themes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the key points from the series were highlighted in a blog from George which forms part of the successful *Business and Law in the time of COVID-19* online series.

➤ **Find more news**
business-school.open.ac.uk/research/news/covid-19

SPOTLIGHT ON STEM



“ We have been working hard to make our activities COVID-resilient wherever possible. Thanks to all the hard work of Julia Barkans and her laboratory staff, we have been able to welcome researchers back to the labs. Our teaching of practical topics has continued through the OpenSTEM labs, providing access to real data through authentic interfaces. There are plenty of highlights from around the STEM Faculty, including new qualifications such as a *Master of Environmental Science* and a new *BSc in Physics*. ”

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

TO THE MOON AND BACK

As a planetary scientist and PhD researcher at the OU, Hannah Sargeant is fulfilling her childhood dream by exploring the universe. She recently completed her PhD during lockdown and is passionate about inspiring the next generation of scientists.

“My PhD research is focussed on finding and/or forming water on the surface of the Moon. With access to local resources such as water, long duration missions to the Moon and beyond are possible. I may be biased but I think it’s so exciting and I’m always keen to get involved in outreach opportunities wherever possible, sharing my passions for space exploration and the amazing work of The Open University.”

“Initially I was involved in local talks with schools and astronomical societies, and I entered a few outreach competitions like I’m a Scientist, Get Me Out Of Here! and The Institute of Physics 3 Minute Wonder. Over the years I’ve gained experience and delivered talks to bigger audiences and adapted to online outreach during the COVID-19 crisis. One of the most daunting experiences was when I delivered a TEDx talk about my research, but it was a great challenge and I learned so much about science communication. For those interested in STEM outreach, and don’t know where to start, I would highly recommend becoming a STEM ambassador. As an ambassador you are notified of outreach opportunities in your area and you can begin to inspire the next generation!”

See Hannah’s TEDx talk
bit.ly/spacesargeant



HANNAH SARGEANT
Image © Chris Floyd



PATRICE BELTON

SPREADING SUNSHINE

“My whole ambition is to build a better community,” says Patrice Belton, who recently completed her *BA (Hons) in Design and Innovation (Business)*. “Being a community is having a voice and having a voice is everything.”

Patrice joined the OU after she found mainstream university too rigid and stressful for her mental health. She studied alongside her husband, who is also a STEM graduate, and says the flexibility made all the difference. “I couldn’t have done it any other way. It was fantastic to have taken this journey with him. Having the OU’s flexibility meant we could both work and study at the same time.”

Throughout her study journey, Patrice has seized opportunities to support others; becoming the STEM Faculty representative for the OU Students Association and then earning the prestigious role of Vice President Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. She is passionate about empowering people from minority groups to succeed and feel valued, something she wants to continue in the future. “I want to spread sunshine everywhere,” Patrice adds. “I try to leave places better than I found them, no matter where I go.”

THROUGH THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

In response to the pandemic, OU professors are leading a new research project to develop technology to help older adults manage and better understand loneliness and emotional wellbeing. The UKRI-funded project, led by the OU’s Blaine Price, Daniel Gooch and Amel Bennaceur aim to produce an app to support those affected by ongoing social distancing. Academics from the Knowledge Media Institute (KMI) are also supporting the OU’s collective pandemic response by developing the world’s first privacy-preserving verifiable digital COVID-19 vaccination/antibody test certificate and continuing to track and inform policymakers of false information being spread around the virus.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- >> **Blue Planet Live**, a four-part series for BBC One showcasing marine life from all corners of the globe, while also exploring the health of the planet’s oceans, won a BAFTA for Best Live Event. Two of the academic consultants who provided scientific expertise across the series – Dr Carl Boardman and Dr Toni Gladding – are academics from the School of Engineering and Innovation.
- >> Congratulations to astrochemist **Dr Helen Fraser**, who was a member of the team which recently announced the discovery of phosphine in the atmosphere of Venus, suggesting that it may be home to life of some sort.
- >> Our **international leadership** across the STEM portfolio has been recognised through four professorial promotions this year. Karen Olsson-Francis promoted to Professor of Geomicrobiology leading the understanding of how and where life might be found in space; Clare Warren promoted to Professor of Metamorphic Geology and Matt Balme promoted to Professor of Planetary Geoscience reflecting their excellent portfolios of research, international impact and outstanding teaching, and Stephen Peake promoted to Professor of Climate Change & Energy reflecting excellent leadership in communication and education on global energy use and climate.
- >> **OPITO** (the global not-for-profit skills body for the energy industry) continue to generously support the OU in improving educational outcomes of young learners around the world. Thanks to a multi-year commitment, OPITO are helping us to enhance STEM education through our pioneering OpenSTEM Africa initiative. Through innovative virtual labs, pupils gain hands-on STEM learning – which is critical when many schools lack physical equipment. The initiative aims to improve educational opportunities for all young people, especially girls, so they’re able to pursue STEM-related careers.

50 YEARS OF STiP EDUCATION

Did you know that the OU was an early pioneer of systems thinking in practice? Over the past 50 years, the ASTiP (Applied Systems Thinking in Practice) group in the School of Engineering and Innovation have broken new ground in how to teach systems ideas. We are hoping to run events throughout 2021 to celebrate 50 years of STiP at the OU and those educators and researchers who created some of the first systems education in the world.

Learn more
open.ac.uk/courses/choose/systemsthinking

WELCOME TO WELS



“As Executive Dean I am extremely proud of the immense contribution WELS makes to society.

We are home to the OU's expertise in the fields of health, social-care, education and cross-cultural communication, which means that in the midst of a global pandemic we have continued to make a difference.

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



TEACHING VIA WHATSAPP IN ZIMBABWE

Messaging platform WhatsApp has proved to be a useful tool in continuing the work of the OU's Supporting Adolescent Girls' Education (SAGE) project. SAGE, funded by UK Aid through the Girls' Education Challenge and led by the OU International Development Office and Plan International UK, works with highly marginalised and out-of-school adolescent girls in Zimbabwe to improve their learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy and support them as they transition to education, training or employment.

COVID-19 restrictions in Zimbabwe meant a return to the isolation and barriers that have prevented these young girls from accessing learning. As a result, a series of live workshops were introduced using the text facility of WhatsApp enabling volunteers to continue to engage with their learners at a distance. The low-resource context of Zimbabwe makes WhatsApp a perfect tool for quite large-scale workshops – the largest up to now has had 74 participants, each joining in from their own homes.

➤ Learn more about SAGE and other International Development projects

www.open.ac.uk/ido

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Dr Kristina Hultgren, Senior Lecturer in English Language and Applied Linguistics, has been awarded a prestigious UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Future Leaders Fellowship for over £1.1m to explore why the use of English as a teaching language in non-English-speaking European countries is increasing, despite students struggling to understand it.

Dr Hultgren's team will be seeking to create policy change in European higher education to ensure that programmes delivered in English do not have an adverse effect on nations, institutions and individuals.

➤ Read more
wels.open.ac.uk/news



“THE OU CHANGED ME”

Jo left school after her O-levels to begin working and supporting her family financially. Though times were hard, she always wished she had been able to take her education further. Years later, a work colleague recommended The Open University to Jo and she hasn't looked back since.

“I wanted to prove to myself that I could go back to education and pursue my dream of obtaining a degree,” says Jo. After her colleague suggested the OU, Jo was relieved to realise her lack of A-levels wouldn't stop her from achieving her dream and she could start an OU Access to Higher Education course.

“The bonus for me was that, because I was on a low income, I didn't have to pay for the Access course. This was a game-changer for me. Most of my life has revolved around watching the pennies so to be able to study part-time and for free was just unbelievable.”

The Access course led to a degree in *Health and Social Care*, and in 2020 Jo graduated with first class honours, whilst bringing up a family as a single parent of four. “I do feel like the OU has changed me,” says Jo. “It was worth every bit of sacrifice I made.”

“I was offered a part-time role as a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support worker, based on my degree studies. I enjoy this very much as it's both challenging and rewarding, and I may grow my career in this area in future, so the experience is invaluable. And, since finishing my degree, I've been appointed to an executive role with the Department for Education working with schools, which will give me further opportunities to develop.”

➤ What's your OU story? Tell us
alumni.open.ac.uk/stories



Image © Chris Floyd

CELEBRATING HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE THROUGHOUT 2020

When the World Health Organisation declared 2020 Year of the Nurse and Midwife, little did we know the impact the pandemic would have. Despite the challenges, we've been incredibly proud to see the dedication and resilience of our health and social care staff and students; persevering through disruption to their studies, signing up to the temporary nurse register, stitching laundry bags for key workers – and now delivering vaccines.

In July 2020, our new Future Nurse curriculum received Nursing and Midwifery Council approval. Our nursing programme and new partnerships provide flexible routes into nursing – key to growing the workforce. We've seen the first graduates from our new *Postgraduate Certificate in Non-Medical Prescribing*, which along with our Advanced Clinical Practice programmes, will enable registered healthcare professionals to take on additional responsibilities and enhance their practice.

➤ Keep up to date with news on health and social care
wels.open.ac.uk/news



NEW CENTRE FOR LANGUAGES OPENS

The Open Centre for Languages and Culture, from the OU's School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, has begun teaching its new short courses in modern languages and cross-cultural communication. Officially launching in Spring 2021, the Open Centre aims to be a one stop shop for communication in an interconnected world.

They will be leading the way in high quality short courses for academic research methods and pre-sessional English with the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

➤ Read more
wels.open.ac.uk/ocl

DISCOVER A NEW WORLD WITH OpenLearn

2020 is a year that will be remembered for some time. For OU education platform OpenLearn, the home of free learning, it has been a year of change, of adapting, responding quickly and welcoming more learners than ever before.

We were delighted that several OpenLearn courses were selected to be part of the Department for Education's National Careers Service Skills Toolkit – a collection of tools and resources to help those in England affected by coronavirus (particularly furloughed workers) improve their digital and numeracy skills. Similar schemes featuring OpenLearn courses were also very successful in the Nations: My World of Work in Scotland; Working Wales in Wales; and NIDirect in Northern Ireland. More than 100,000 visitors have accessed OpenLearn via these schemes – and counting.

2020 in numbers

69,000
digital badges awarded

1.7 million
course enrolments

790,000
course completions

See what else is coming soon
www.open.edu/openlearn/get-started/coming-soon



TIERNÁN EVISTON

11-year old completes 11 OpenLearn courses during lockdown

11-year-old Tiernán Eviston from County Meath used his time in lockdown very wisely completing 11 online courses from OpenLearn ranging from *An introduction to sustainable energy to Square roots and*

powers. Clocking in at over 40 hours of additional study, Tiernán shared his success with his teacher who told him how proud she was and that she was "glad to see he was keeping his lovely mind exercised during lockdown." While Tiernán's mum told us: "To have resource like the OU and have free access is amazing."

ENROL

Free courses and resources



THE RACE AND ETHNICITY HUB

A collection of free resources that explore the themes of race, racism and ethnicity across the core faculty areas within The Open University, through free courses, articles, interactives and audio/visual materials.

Visit openlearn.com and search 'Race and Ethnicity'



CYBER SECURITY

Gamified Intelligent Cyber Aptitude and Skills Training' (GICAST) has been developed by Cyber security experts from The Open University and is funded by innovation foundation Nesta and the Department for Education. Successful completion will earn you an industry recognised "badge" and an opportunity to get certified in Cisco's Cyber Essentials and CyberOps training taking you one-step closer to a job in the growing cyber security sector.

Visit openlearn.com and search 'Cyber Security'

Educating the next generation of business talent

With technology becoming even more important in connecting us and keeping businesses running efficiently, NSC Global has partnered with OpenLearn to provide free courses and training to anyone looking to boost their technology skills or change their career path. Thanks to their support, everyone from IT professionals to those wanting to upskill will be able to expand their knowledge of the industry for free.

Find the course for you
bit.ly/openlearnsc

FutureLearn is a digital education platform where you can complete online courses and degrees in hundreds of topics. Co-owned by the OU and SEEK, FutureLearn lets you study with hundreds of top international universities anywhere and anytime.

Future Learn

SUPERCHARGE YOUR CAREER SKILLS



TIM PLYMING
MANAGING DIRECTOR
MICROCREDENTIALS

In a world where online learning is more needed than ever, the OU's Tim Plyming introduces microcredentials: the industry-endorsed short courses that help you quickly upskill.

"It's a great honour to join the University at a time when our mission is more vital than ever. I've been moved and inspired by the many stories I've heard about our remarkable alumni community – people with diverse backgrounds and different goals, yet sharing the same passion, drive and determination to learn new skills, further your careers and broaden your horizons.

An exceptionally talented, 500,000+ alumni community, spanning 157 countries – yet another feature that makes the OU a unique institution, a true national treasure and something special to be part of.

We are all aware that the coronavirus pandemic is having a dramatic impact on the economy and on jobs and widening an already worrying skills gap. Our research indicates that organisations are struggling to find new employees with relevant experience while the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) predict that 9 in 10 workers in the UK will need new skills by 2030 to support the economy.

Responding to the changing needs of learners remains central to our mission. You may be aware we launched our first set of microcredentials in March 2020 on our FutureLearn platform. These short, industry endorsed online courses allow learners to quickly build in-demand career skills. Upskilling through microcredentials is a great way to continue professional development."

Calling on our alumni community – we need you!

2021 will see us start to scale our microcredential offer to learners worldwide and develop a range of exciting new courses. We would love our alumni community to be part of our microcredentials and bring your industry and workplace experience to help us deliver world class relevant learning. I very much welcome the opportunity to connect with many of you over the coming months. Make sure you sign up to receive your alumni newsletter for all the latest updates about microcredentials.

To make sure you are kept up to date with latest microcredentials news make sure we have your email address!

Find the microcredential course for you

We currently have nine courses available to learners globally through FutureLearn, in a variety of subjects, including:

Management of Uncertainty: Leadership, Decisions and Action

Build the skills and capabilities required to manage and lead in the face of radical uncertainty.

Cyber Security Operations

Develop the skills needed to confidently respond to, and prevent, cyberattacks and crimes in this exciting collaboration with the OU and Cisco.

Online Teaching

We have various microcredentials to help you develop your online teaching skills, create engaging online courses and enhance how your students learn remotely.

Explore more courses
open.ac.uk/courses/microcredentials

HELPING YOU SUCCEED IN UNCERTAIN TIMES



You worked hard for your qualification. The OU's Careers and Employability Services are here to help make it work for you. For three years after you qualify you'll have access to all our services, including one-to-one guidance, the exclusive careers platform OpportunityHub, and employer events. After that, you'll still have access to a wide range of useful resources on the OU Careers website in the help centre.

Your OU experience means you're ideally placed to take advantage of the new opportunities that will emerge in a world changed by the pandemic. You're experts in remote collaboration and self-management, along with digital skills and resilience, which is what employers are now looking for. We can help you present your unique strengths in ways that make employers take notice, from CV building to interview techniques.

We'll continue to do everything we can to support you, so if you'd like to discuss your career options with our experienced Careers Consultants, please don't hesitate to get in touch, whatever your ambitions, abilities, disabilities or background.

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

OU careers platform OpportunityHub can be your secret weapon when landing a new job or advancing your career.

- » Connect to 100s of new job vacancies, placements and volunteer opportunities
- » Find exclusive opportunities from our partner employers – open to recent OU graduates
- » Book careers events and consultations with our experts
- » Advertise your own vacancies. If you're an employer or work in recruitment and would like to advertise your vacancies with the OU Careers and Employability Services, go to 'Advertise your vacancies'.

Find your next opportunity help.open.ac.uk/opportunityhub



It's thanks to exploring OpportunityHub that I found the job advert. The advice and insight into how to tackle the interview, which I was very nervous about, completely changed how I went into it and this played a crucial role in me getting the job.

Nalini
OU alumna



I like how personal the service is. You care about me as a person and my life experience and gave me a plethora of information that was all helpful and will continue to help.

OU student



THE IMPACT OF YOUR OU IN NUMBERS

As OU graduates, you'll know better than anyone how important and life-changing flexible learning can be. We asked leading policy and economics consultancy London Economics to conduct a landmark report into the economic and social impact of the OU – and our incredible graduates – in 2018/19. The figures place the total yearly economic impact associated with the OU's activities across the UK economy at £2.77bn. Here's a snapshot of the results:



The Open University had an estimated £2.77bn impact on the UK economy in 2018/19



That means for every £1 of investment, OU activity put £6.20 back into the economy



Those who begin their studies with GCSEs, completing a part-time degree aged 37 are estimated to earn an average of £252,000* more in real terms over the rest of their career
*NPV (Net Present Value) = £135,000



86% of respondents said that their study at the OU had contributed to an improvement in their personal wellbeing, including increased confidence, self-esteem and general quality of life

SHARE YOUR OU STORY

What's your OU story? Every graduate has one and we'd love to hear yours. You might have a special memory of studying with us, of the friends you've made along the way or want to share that incredible moment you realised you'd qualified. Or maybe your qualification has helped you to achieve your ambitions – personally and professionally.

We regularly publish stories from graduates just like you so please get in touch today and help to inspire the next generation of OU students.

Get in touch alumni.open.ac.uk/stories



Those who begin their studies with A-levels, completing a part-time degree aged 37, are estimated to earn an average of £164,000* more in real terms over the rest of their career
*NPV = £84,000

See the full report bit.ly/openmindsreport

“ABSOLUTELY GO FOR IT”

How an OU degree apprenticeship is helping Tom unlock his potential at Unilever.

OU degree apprenticeships can open doors and take you places you never expected – and Tom Amer, aged 20, is proof. Two years into studying his *Digital and Technology Solutions Professional Degree Apprenticeship* with the OU, whilst working for Unilever, Tom has helped to deliver million-pound savings, taught hundreds of young people to code, and been flown to New York to talk about it.

Not bad for the boy who broke the mould – and surprised his teachers – by opting for in-work learning instead of the traditional university route.

“I couldn’t find any information about degree apprenticeships when I was looking into them,” says Tom. “Everything was orientated towards applying to university. So, I’m really pleased to be able to talk about degree apprenticeships as an alternative for people like me.”

Tom chose the degree apprenticeship route as he wasn’t ‘traditionally’ academically-oriented, preferring the application of learning above just ‘sitting and being taught’. The idea of three-years in lecture theatres just didn’t appeal to him. The promise of earning while learning was also very attractive, and Tom is delighted to be getting a degree with none of the associated debt.

Now halfway through his OU degree apprenticeship, Tom works full-time for Unilever, with 20% of his time ring-fenced for study. This means Tom can pursue a degree while gaining vital on-the-job experience and embracing every opportunity Unilever have offered. “Unilever have been amazing. They value apprentices as employees and give us real projects. I can hardly believe it when I get to say, at 20 years old, I’ve worked on a project that has delivered around £2m in cost savings for the Cyber Security team, as well as saving time and reducing risk.”

Unilever support iamtheCODE, a movement to enable 1 million young girls and women to be coders by 2030. After taking part in a two-day ‘hackathon’ hosted by his employer, Tom jumped at the chance to help run a weekly coding club for girls aged 11-18. He speaks at schools to promote the opportunity, recruits mentors and delivers classes.

In September 2019 Tom was invited to New York as part of the UN General Assembly, to present the work that iamtheCODE have delivered with Unilever.



TOM AMER

A UNIQUE WAY TO EARN AS YOU LEARN

OU degree apprenticeships are an exciting alternative to full-time University study. We work with over 770 employers around the UK to train the next generation of Cyber Security Analysts, Registered Nurses, Software Engineers and so many more professions.

The benefits for learners:

- Acquire the skills needed to get ahead in your chosen career through a real, paid job that combines on- and off-the-job training
- Gain a nationally recognised degree qualification without the tuition fees
- Available at any stage of your career – from existing staff wanting to boost their skills, to school leavers wanting to climb the ladder

The benefits for employers:

- Train new or current employees to plug skills gaps and ensure you have the talent your business needs to succeed
- Learning is delivered flexibly to fit around your organisation’s demands and can be scaled for consistent training across multiple sites
- Apprentices can flex learning around their schedule – reducing time away from the workplace

See how degree apprenticeships can help you or your business

www.open.ac.uk/apprenticeships

THE BEST OF THE BBC & THE OU

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the University’s unique partnership with the BBC and we will be celebrating in style with some amazing new series. So, if you want to find out more about our planet, history, society, health and culture, we have a range of OU/BBC content waiting to inspire you. At the same time of course, we will also be creating some fantastic assets for our teaching and learning.

Despite the pandemic, we were able to deliver a range of projects in 2019/2020, which reached millions. We asked the public to become citizen scientists and explore their local area as part of the *Springwatch* Gardenwatch survey in 2019 and our *Pollinatorwatch* in 2020. Over 230,000 people visited the University’s nQuire platform to submit their findings, which crowned bumblebees as the most common pollinators spotted in the UK.

Our diverse range of television programmes continued throughout the year. We went behind the scenes at the Victoria and Albert in *Secrets of the Museum* and explored the *Age of the Image* from past to present. Twenty years on we re-visited the children born at the start of the millennium in *Child of our Time* and series five of *Hospital* gave us a window into personal stories unfolding daily in the NHS. *Our Coast* offered some escapism whilst *How to Make* gave us an insight into the creation of some of our everyday items. With Brexit taking place, *What Britain Buys and Sells in a Day* provided an insight into our import and export industries and we travelled with *Ed Balls to Euroland*. On radio, *Green Originals* assessed some of the work of the early scientists, campaigners and influencers. We have continued to add to our BBC Ideas playlist which features OU academics’ research and to date has over 2 million views.

WHAT’S NEW FOR 2021

*working titles

A Perfect Planet BBC1, January 2021

© The Open University

This new, landmark five-part natural history series, presented by Sir David Attenborough, shows how the forces of nature – weather, ocean currents, solar energy and volcanoes – drive, shape and support Earth’s great diversity of life. In doing so, it will reveal how animals are perfectly adapted to whatever the environment throws at them.



The OU has produced a stunning free poster to accompany the series, visit [OpenLearn](#) to find out more.

Trump on the World Stage* BBC2, Early 2021

This major, new three-part series will go behind closed doors to tell the story of what happened as Trump’s election pledges became America’s foreign policy.

Patrick Kielty, My Nation, Its Border and Me* BBC1, Spring 2021



Patrick Kielty explores the story of Northern Ireland in this one-off, authored documentary for BBC One.

To mark 100 years since the creation of Northern Ireland, Patrick Kielty will explore its story, from partition through to present day. With his inimitable style and a strong dose of humour, Patrick will embark on a journey to uncover some of the turning points in Northern Ireland’s history, meeting people whose stories have an intimate connection to some of the key moments and discovering how their remarkable stories intersect with those of his own family.

Surrogates BBC3, Early 2021

This new three-part series will take us into the morally complex and endlessly fascinating world of surrogacy, featuring powerful, personal stories of surrogates and intended parents as they embark on the extraordinary journey to make a baby. Through access to the main UK surrogacy agencies the series will aim to follow the process from the matching up of surrogate and intended parents, through fertilisation and pregnancy, to the birth itself and the moment the surrogate gives the baby to the intended parents.

Don’t Exclude Me* BBC2, Summer 2021

This two-part documentary series will examine the rise of exclusions in primary schools by looking at behaviour in school children in a British primary school. We will follow training expert and ex-pupil referral head teacher, Marie Gentles, as she seeks to remedy behavioural concerns by working with staff, parents and students, in order to keep the pupils in school.

OPENING UP THE FUTURE FOR ALL

We believe that where you start in life shouldn't limit where you go. As a member of the OU family, you will know better than anyone that when someone has the ambition to learn and the support to succeed, impossible dreams can become a reality.

Thanks to continued alumni support, the University's five-year Open up the Future fundraising campaign concluded in July 2020 and was an overwhelming success. Together, we raised over £60 million and launched life-changing scholarships for carers and disabled veterans, whilst using our world-leading research to continue making learning more accessible in the UK and overseas. We are delighted to introduce you to the **Open Futures Fund** – a unique range of OU scholarships and bursaries – which will continue the legacy of the Open up the Future campaign for generations to come. The Fund encompasses our initial scholarships and will build on the campaign's success to support even more students who feel education is out of their reach. Here are just some of the important causes being supported through **Open Futures**:

DISABLED VETERANS' SCHOLARSHIPS FUND

Adjusting to civilian life with a disability can seem like an impossible challenge for many disabled veterans. The OU's Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund (DVSF) ensures that veterans injured during or due to service are empowered to rewrite their own futures. Through the Fund, these brave servicemen and women receive the opportunity to study with the OU at undergraduate and postgraduate level for free, with specialist disability and careers support, so they can reskill for the civilian jobs market and rebuild their lives.

- >> Launched 2018
- >> 160 scholarships so far
- >> 50 scholarships planned for 2020/21



“ You've given me the chance for a fresh start ”

After being badly injured on a top-secret rescue mission, ex-Para Steven (pictured below) was discharged from the military and battled depression, eventually ending up homeless and sleeping in shop fronts.

“As an ex-Para, I could certainly survive on the streets, but I knew my life was going nowhere,” says Steven. His family and friends encouraged him to apply for the DVSF and he's now in his third year of a *Health and Social Care degree*. Steven says he's inspired to use his experiences and his OU qualifications to support others who may also be in a similar situation.

“The DVSF has given me the chance to get a fresh start and achieve something positive from the rest of my life: a fresh start, a new house and hopefully a new career doing something worthwhile. This is an amazing opportunity, it gives others a light at the end of the tunnel, the chance to retrain for a job that would bring meaning and brings a sense of purpose back to their lives. Thank you.”



Student Assistance

To help support our students when they need us most, the OU has extended its Student Assistance to provide vital financial support to students who would otherwise have to give up on their studies due to the prolonged effects of the coronavirus pandemic.



So far, the generosity of OU alumni has helped provide urgent support to hundreds of students, offering up to £500 each to cover household bills, IT equipment and module fees or costs such as home schooling. When so many students are facing the agonising decision of having to give up their studies and ultimately, their dreams, alumni support has made all the difference.

- >> 1,500+ students already supported
- >> Student Assistance extended through 2021 to support more students in need

Carers Scholarships Fund

Life can be extremely challenging for unpaid carers, who selflessly give so much of their time and themselves to look after their loved ones. The Carers Scholarships Fund offers carers the opportunity to study with the OU for free, so they can develop their sense of identity outside of caring and retrain towards seeking employment.

With at least three out of five of us in the UK likely to become a carer at some point, this unique scholarships fund is designed to support those who would otherwise simply miss out on higher education and the chance to invest in themselves. We are so grateful for continued alumni generosity, and our first two corporate partners – CareTech Foundation and Hallmark Care Homes Foundation – this support has already made a huge difference.

- >> Launched 2019
- >> 50 scholarships provided
- >> 10 scholarships planned for 2021

Open Futures Bursaries

The OU is open to all – that means we want to do our best to ensure that the OU reflects the whole of society. We launched new bursaries in 2020/21 for students who identify as being from a Black, Asian or other minority ethnic background.

So far, 50 new students have received a bursary of £1,000 (£500 in each of their first two academic years) to support their studies or other living expenses. We're committed to improving the representation of these communities at the OU and with your support, hope to provide further bursaries in 2021/22, so that even more students can fulfil their potential and succeed.

The Open Futures bursaries were made possible due to the generous support of Mr Howard Brown, former treasurer of The Open University and our alumna Mrs Elizabeth Brown BA.

Help us to change more lives

The Open Futures Fund is truly at the heart of the OU's mission to make education accessible to all and relies on the continued generosity of our incredible alumni and supporter community.

Any support you can give today will help open up education for students who would otherwise miss out. We would love to recognise your support in a very special way by adding your message to our 'Open Futures' book, which will be housed in the OU's historic archives.



See how you can support the Open Futures Fund

open.ac.uk/donate

“

There are an estimated 8.8 million unpaid carers across the UK. Even though caring can be rewarding, carers often have to make the kind of personal commitment that can take over much of their lives and means they are often always putting others' needs above their own. The Carers Scholarships Fund – the first in the world to be developed – is one way the OU can help to give back to carers, who otherwise wouldn't have the means or the support to focus on themselves or their futures. It's a helping hand for those who spend so much of their time looking after others, day in and day out.

”

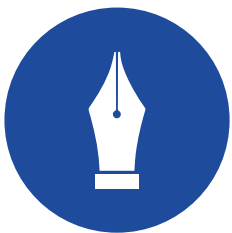
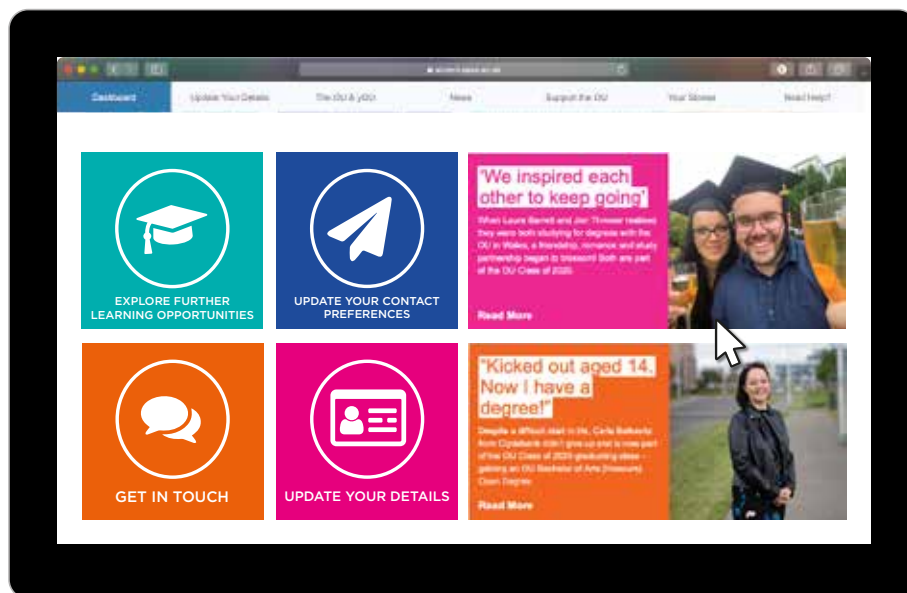
Professor Mary Larkin
Professor of Care, Carers and Caring

KEEP IN TOUCH

**DON'T
MISS
OUT!**

Make sure you never miss a thing. One of the best ways to keep in touch with your University is by email. It's easy, just email alumni@open.ac.uk with 'Keep in touch', and we'll make sure you receive information about the latest news, events, fundraising appeals, campaigns and ways to get involved.

YOUR ALUMNI WEBSITE



SHARE YOUR STORY

Read inspirational alumni stories (and share your own)



NEWS AND EVENTS

Read the latest news on events, appeals and projects



UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

Update your details, view your qualifications and much more



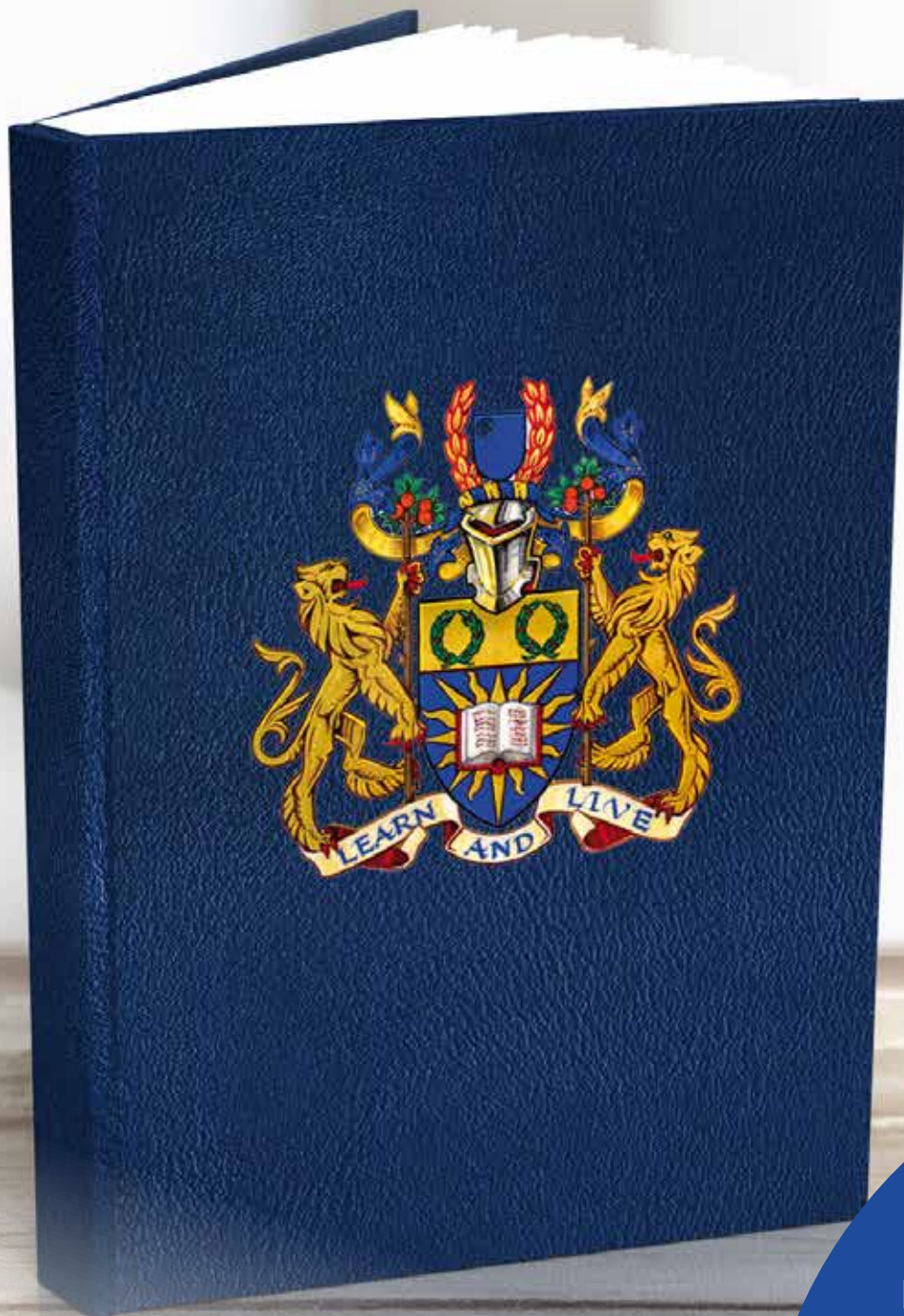
FURTHER LEARNING

Continue your learning journey with The Open University

 **Get started today**
alumni.open.ac.uk

You're already part of the OU story. Now help us write the next chapter..

You're a unique part of the OU's history. See inside how you can help open up education for students through the Open Futures Fund and be specially honoured in a commemorative book in our historic archives.



You can help to shape the future for so many who feel education is out of their reach.

For over fifty years we have made it our mission to make education open to all. This belief lies at the heart of everything The Open University stands for and that's why we have launched our Open Futures Fund.

Now more than ever, it is vital that no one misses out on the opportunity to transform their life through the incredible power of education. Will you stand by current and future students by sending a life-changing gift to the Open Futures Fund today?

With your support, the Fund will provide a range of transformative scholarships and bursaries to break down barriers to education and stop potential going to waste. So that anyone, regardless of age, background or circumstance, has the opportunity to pursue their ambitions and write their own futures.

For many students, the OU could be their only route to accessing life-changing, flexible education. These include disabled veterans, carers and those who are disadvantaged by circumstances, limited opportunities or other barriers. Many are now struggling even more **and the need for this Fund has never been greater.**

We simply must keep their dreams of studying alive so they can build a better future for themselves, their families and indeed our society as a whole. Will you please help do this today?

Your special gift to the Open Futures Fund will help change someone's life forever.



“

This is an amazing opportunity, it gives others a light at the end of the tunnel, the chance to retrain for a job that would bring meaning and brings a sense of purpose back to their lives.

”

Steven Wilson
Scholarship Recipient



“

The Open Futures Fund is already making a life-changing difference to many students who might otherwise miss out on an education and the chance to better their lives.

I hope I can count on your support today so we can continue to help transform people's lives in the years to come. Thank you so much.

Professor Tim Blackman
OU Vice-Chancellor

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The OU archive sits at the heart of the University's Betty Boothroyd Library



A treasure trove of OU history

The OU's archive is home to some of the most important artefacts that form your University's rich and internationally significant history.

Treasures include the all-important Royal Charter from 1969, the historic broadcast of the very first degree ceremony, along with a record of almost every module your University has ever taught.

There are thousands of images, printed course materials, audio-visual items and objects to discover. Some of the items even go beyond the OU's official beginnings, including correspondence which outlines Harold Wilson and Jennie Lee's vision for a 'University of the Air', where education is open to all.

By becoming part of our 'Open Futures' book, you will take your place within an archive which marks the most important moments of your University's history so far.

Take your special place in the OU's historic archives!

We would love the opportunity to recognise your valuable support in a very special way.

By making a gift to the Open Futures Fund, your name and message will be added to a beautiful, specially crafted book to recognise the life-changing opportunity our alumni and supporters have created for current and future OU students. The book will hold pride of place in the OU historic archives, building on the OU's story so far and giving our graduates a place in the annals of the OU's history for future generations.


- Your messages will be printed along with your name in an 'Open Futures' book which will be preserved in the University's archives in the Library.
- A copy of the book will also be publicly displayed at the University for present and future alumni, students and visitors to view, and online for all to see.

It's a great way for alumni like yourself who've played such an important part in making the OU what it is today, to help inspire the students of the future.

In supporting our Open Futures Fund through a donation today and completing the form overleaf, we'll be delighted to include you in our impressive 'Open Futures' book. This will become a proud part of the OU's historical archives that future generations of students can view and become inspired by. Just think, by sharing your message and giving a gift today, you are helping a student begin their own OU story and rewrite their future!

The Open University Charter



 Please click here to make your donation and be specially recognised in our historic 'Open Futures' book

