

OpenMINDS

2022 NEWS FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY



Meet some of
the OU family
making a difference

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OpenMINDS 2022

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Throughout the magazine you will discover students, staff and alumni making a difference to the lives of their families, communities and beyond.

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The OU family, making a difference

As I write, the uncertainty to which we have grown accustomed endures. Although COVID continues to bring difficulties, at the start of 2022, being part of the OU family means that inspiration and moments of joy, both now and over the last year, are never far away.

Many of our staff, students and alumni have made extraordinary contributions and progress; alumni like Anthony Brown who has been fighting passionately for those affected by the Windrush scandal (page 16), and many more who have been serving their communities, their learners and the environment (see page 6). The ability of OU students to keep going despite adversity never ceases to inspire me – the story of many, throughout the home nations, and across the world, studying together (whilst physically apart) as one community.

This edition reflects that spirit and how we, and you, are making a difference. We have so much to be proud about. The University family grew very significantly, seeing a surge in new students in 2021 who we've supported into their studies, and welcoming a lot of new colleagues to the OU community. I also want to say a very personal "congratulations" to all of those who qualified, and became OU alumni, over the past year.

We've also stepped up with a whole range of initiatives across all four nations to help the public through the pandemic - hosting a vaccination centre on our Milton Keynes campus; advising the media and policymakers about impacts on mental health, jobs and the economy; making available free courses on OpenLearn to help people reskill and look after themselves and their children, and helping new students prepare for higher education, in any university, in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Our research has continued too – with many new projects responding to the pandemic and others continuing to focus on the huge societal challenges we face, such as climate change, ageing and migration. Some of these are reflected in our incredible BBC programming and in this edition.

We start 2022 with a very special birthday – a happy 50th to The Open University Students Association, another landmark in the history of our unique institution. The Association was founded by our pioneer students as an independent voice for all OU students

and has since become a part of the fabric of how the OU works, feeding into decisions, raising issues and providing a range of important services with student representatives sitting on committees across the University. Sarah Jones, President, has a year of celebrations planned, and shares this rich history with us on page 19.

This year is also when we will be launching the new five-year University Strategy, Learn and Live, built upon our enduring mission which is more relevant today than it has ever been. In times when we face environmental and social problems of an unprecedented scale, there is more need than ever for an informed public, engaged in solutions and lifelong learning that empowers us all.

I look forward to telling you more as your University, and the social movement we are all a part of, continues its march forward in changing millions of lives. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this edition of OpenMINDS.

With my best wishes for the year ahead.

Jhumar Johnson
Chief of Staff to the Vice-Chancellor
and Director of Development

 **Visit the alumni website**
alumni.open.ac.uk

“

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How OU academics help **bring learning to life for millions**

For more than 50 years, the OU's unique partnership with the BBC has brought learning to life for millions. During this time, the partnership has co-produced thought-provoking content that inspires, educates and sparks debate – and today, this sentiment is stronger than ever.

OU Academic consultants play a vital role in shaping programmes and bringing them to life.



Professor of Botany, David Gowing, shares how his passion for environmental science has informed the new BBC series, *The Green Planet*. David has lent his expertise on a variety of programmes including *The Nature of Britain*, *British Isles: a Natural History*, and *Countryfile's Plant Britain*.

In this Q&A, David talks about how his expertise in botany and environmental science has helped inform some major OU/BBC co-productions including *The Green Planet*, airing from January 9th 2022 on BBC1 and iPlayer.

Why do you think the OU/BBC partnership is so unique?

I think a huge part of the partnership's success lies in the fact that it's complementary. Each co-production pulls in specialists and creatives from both the OU and the BBC to create something original.

For this particular series the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics faculty have plant, animal and marine ecologists who have existing relationships with research groups around the world. They can tap into what's interesting and have access to emerging research that might provide a unique and fresh angle for the production team.

The Open University's Broadcast team work with faculties via their media fellows to ensure all of our programmes and content support OU curriculum priority areas. The main focus is on what will make a series novel and exciting, and the OU can provide specialists to help shape the piece.

© BBC Studios

What specific role do academic consultants play – from initial concept through to completion?

Once a new series is commissioned the OU broadcast project manager brings together the BBC, independent producers and nominated academics to discuss how the programme themes align with the academic's research interests – in my case, that's anything from vegetation to soils.

Academic consultants then use their combined knowledge and expertise to advise. They check the scripts are as authentic and factually accurate as possible. This is crucial in programmes like *The Green Planet*, where the purpose is to educate the audience on technological advancements and new discoveries in the plant world.

Once the programme has been filmed, we're sent the very roughly edited footage and provide feedback to the BBC. We're then sent the edited fine cut and go through the script line by line to check it's all correct. In terms of lead times, these tend to vary. With something like *Countryfile*, the final cut is sent just two or three days before it's broadcast, as there's a new episode being made every week, whereas a programme such as *The Green Planet* has been four years in the making and we've been involved since the early stages, so there's a very different pace to that.

In summary, OU academic consultants offer the BBC a gateway to access cutting-edge research and academic excellence that enhances the script.



Sir David Attenborough
© BBC Studios

Can you tell us about the new series *The Green Planet*? What was your main involvement there?

The Green Planet is a five-part series presented by Sir David Attenborough. There are three academic consultants working on the series, including myself. Each self-contained episode focuses on a different habitat type. Much like the 1995 series, *The Private Life of Plants*, Sir David Attenborough explores the plant kingdom but with the advantage of using new technologies to capture some extraordinary images.

There are so many new cinematic techniques compared to the nineties, such as filming through a microscope, using drone footage and satellite imagery. *The Green Planet* aims to showcase these. One of our suggestions was to look at stomata, which are the pores in leaves that regulate the water that's lost and carbon that's absorbed. You can't see these with the naked eye, but thanks to the microscope, we are able to see them and share this with viewers.

The series also has an environmental focus, such as how conservation works and how humans are trying to protect the natural world. It tries to give a balanced view, the overriding sentiment is one of hope. The series makes the case that plants are in control of the planet; they can regulate the weather and therefore all terrestrial life relies on plants.

How can we find out more about the series?

The OU has launched a brand-new website providing creative and innovative ways to engage with all of our supporting OU/BBC content, amplifying the unique partnership whilst showcasing the expertise OU academics provide. If you want to find out more about our planet, history, society, health and culture, there will be a range of programmes and OU/BBC content to inspire you.

Find out more about *The Green Planet* and order the free OU poster that accompanies the series
<https://connect.open.ac.uk/greenplanet>

What's next for 2022

*working titles

Next year will be another exciting year for the OU/BBC partnership with lots more content and programmes to look out for, including:

The Making of Britain*

This new seven-part series innovatively explores the greatest British art, music, design and literature, focussing on key shifts and turning points in British history to tell our creative story.

Freeze*

This eight-part observational documentary will follow a group of young men and women from across Britain through the highs and lows of competition skating over the course of a year.

Black and British*

In this two-part series, six black Britons will gather together under the same roof to grapple with tough, unsettling and emotional questions about what it is like to be black and British.

Celebrating 50 years

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the University's partnership with the BBC, this unique relationship enables us to broaden the scope of the partnership beyond content production to encompass knowledge sharing and expertise in key areas of interest, including community and outreach, learning journeys and the development and use of emerging technologies. The partnership continues to evolve by extending its reach to encompass audiences and users across more BBC channels, digital platforms and social media networks and enables us to raise the profile of our academics, support research and engage with a range of additional partners across the public and voluntary sectors and higher education.

We have continued to deliver a range of projects reaching millions of viewers and users across different channels and platforms whilst generating hundreds of thousands of visitors who wanted to find out more. Our OU playlist on BBC Ideas has had over 3.5 million views from 40 videos, many of which feature OU academics.

David Gowing leads the Floodplain Meadow Partnership, an innovative project, based at the OU, which focuses on researching the management and restoration of this special habitat. With local collaborators, it recently won a prestigious award from Ecover to restore 50 hectares of meadow in the Thames floodplain near Oxford, and to explore the role of meadows in mitigating climate change by storing carbon. We aim to use this study to inform wider scale meadow restoration as part of the new farm-support schemes.

Find out more
www.bit.ly/floodplainmeadows21

OU students Leading the way

Four students addressing the climate crisis head on

Many of us have big ideas, but not all of us know how to execute them. At the OU, we are constantly inspired by our students who are not afraid to play their part in confronting big societal challenges and find ways to solve them. Fuelled by a passion to drive sustainable change and influenced by their studies, some students are using the knowledge they've accrued to make a fantastic difference.

From electric bikes and textiles to understanding why urban woodlands are so vital, we showcase the work of some trailblazing students who share one common goal – to save our planet before it's too late.



Tackling climate change, one urban tree at a time

Kate, from Aberdeenshire, has always been inspired by trees and the forest. Yet it wasn't until she began researching urban woodlands during her Master's, that she realised just how much spending time in nature boosted her mood and wellbeing. This led her to explore

how urban trees grow and the many benefits they can provide:

"Urban trees do lots of good things for us, like removing pollution from the air, climate change mitigation and improving our mental and physical wellbeing. However, you might be surprised to know that often we don't know a lot about how many urban trees we have, how big they are or what species they are. If we knew this, we'd be able to better manage these urban trees."

Through her work, Kate is encouraging the public to get outside and help collect much-needed data. She is leading the MK Tree Growth Project, a first of its kind study in the UK, where members of the public can help track tree growth across Milton Keynes. "Citizen science could help us collect far more data on urban trees than we could otherwise, while engaging people with local nature and science," says Kate.

➔ **Read about Kate's work**
www.bit.ly/urbantrees

Find out about the latest sustainability news, free courses, Microcredentials and how your University is making a difference

➔ www.open.ac.uk/sustainability

How one student's "side hustle" became an award-nominated business

Armed with a passion for sustainable fashion, entrepreneur Sam Vellana launched her environmentally friendly textiles business while studying for an OU Psychology degree.

During the pandemic, Sam started making masks and headscarves for her mum who was battling with stage 4 cancer. She then started selling her crafts online, which sparked an even bigger idea: "The masks were giving us good income, but we had so much fabric waste, and I could save more money buying wholesale cotton. So, I began developing designs for a fabric shop, with a long-term goal to discourage fabric waste, make recycled projects, and eventually stock largely sustainably produced cottons."

Her entrepreneurial skills and passion for sustainability were recognised by her OU tutors, and in 2021, she was nominated for the Santander X Entrepreneurship Awards. The award is now recognised as one of the UK's largest student and graduate business pitching competitions. Winning entrepreneurs are offered equity-free funding, mentoring and start-up support to help make their business ideas a reality.

"I'm really passionate about making the arts and crafts world more sustainable. With the support of Santander X and The Open University, we're working towards realising some carbon offsetting goals the textiles industry so desperately needs. I want crafters and clothing designers to shop for fabrics they love but in a more environmentally friendly way, so that shoppers know their money will be used for good."

➔ **Learn about Sam's OU journey**
www.bit.ly/samvellana



How electric bikes are helping to preserve Loch Lomond

Erin Charters is using her degree in Environmental Science to power her business and spark sustainable change within her community. The young entrepreneur and mum was inspired to start her electric bike hire business during an OU module on renewable energy: "I started Cycle Luss with the idea of wanting to make an impact and wanting to give people the opportunity to experience what electric power is," explains Erin.

She came across e-bikes when she was studying a module about renewable energy and the benefits of electric power. Inspired by the knowledge she gained; Erin set up a business in Loch Lomond where she lives. "I'm surrounded by beautiful mountains, hills and the Loch and I want to preserve this nice area so it can be here for millions of years to come."

Erin was recently awarded a grant by her local council in order to grow her business and encourage more people to use electric bikes as a form of transport. She says that studying with the OU has given her entrepreneurial skills and the confidence needed to push herself and her business forward. Now in her final year, Erin has already started to apply for graduate jobs within the environmental industry.

It's her ambition to continue raising awareness of the importance of climate change – for her son and future generations: "I'd like to leave behind a world where we're all thriving in terms of the air that we breathe and where the ecosystems are not causing bio-diversity loss."



➔ **Learn about Cycle Luss**
www.bit.ly/cycleluss

The engineering student tackling climate change in Antarctica

While studying for his Engineering degree, Alex works as a facilities engineer for the Rothera Research Station, the largest British Antarctic facility based in the Antarctic Peninsula. His role sees him spend long periods of time based in one of the most extreme climates in the world.

Thanks to the flexibility of OU study, Alex puts his passion for climate science and new skills into practice despite the geographical boundaries. As an engineer at the forefront of global warming research, Alex is helping to bring about positive environmental change:

"It's very poignant when you're here on the Antarctic Peninsula, which is one of the fastest-warming places on the planet. The station is important because it facilitates critically important environmental science. Contributors from all around the world come and use this area. It's full of wildlife and amazing marine wildlife. Our main focus is to keep the life support systems of the stations running to facilitate the science. We keep it habitable for people in the extreme climate."

Alex believes it's vital we foster a generation of environmentally-minded students who can engage with Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects. "We cohabit this planet, it's the only one that we currently have so we need to be able to innovate, develop, design and build new technologies but without destroying the environment in which we live."



➔ **Read Alex's story**
www.bit.ly/antarcticastudent



Some of these students are featured in a new 'Ones to watch' series with MTV Generation Change, which shows how OU students are using their qualifications to make a difference to people and the planet.

➔ **Watch MTV Generation Change**
www.bit.ly/mtvgen

We'd love to hear your story about studying with the OU...

What inspired you to become a student? Did you have any extraordinary moments while studying? Has completing your qualification changed your life or helped you discover a new self-confidence?

We would love to hear about your OU journey. Get in touch and help us inspire current and future students.

➔ **Share your story**
alumni.open.ac.uk

FASS FORWARD



It's been a further year of challenges, and the Faculty, its staff and students have continued to adapt to shifting circumstances.

As we move forward, I remain impressed by the resilience, determination and compassion of all involved in our research, teaching provision and support for our students. This is again reflected in our growing student numbers for 2021/22.

Throughout the past year, we have recruited new academics across our subjects and further expanded our curriculum.

**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



Celebrating student success

In 2021, the OU launched the FASS Student Awards to help maximise student success. The inaugural awards, *The Joan Armatrading Award for Outstanding Performance* and *The Sir Lenny Henry Award for Outstanding Achievement*, were awarded in November 2021, and gave recognition to students from underrepresented groups, such as Black, Asian or other minority ethnic backgrounds who have made exceptional progress during their studies, in order to achieve their goals. The recipients have either gained outstandingly high marks in their modules or have made exceptional steps towards achieving their study goals. Each award recipient is enrolled on a Roll of Honour, and receives an engraved trophy, certificate, and monetary prize.

To see who the winners are
www.bit.ly/celebratingstudentsuccess

A new partnership creates short courses on films and media

The Open University and British Film Institute (BFI) announced a new partnership and collaboration, with three stand-alone short courses in film and media. *Media, Politics and Society*, *Reading the screen: an introduction to the art of film*, and *A Story of Documentary Film* include the BFI National Archive's most significant treasures and the earliest films made in the UK.

Chaired by Dr Donna Smith (Politics) and Dr Jessica Davies (English and Creative Writing), the courses involved academics from multiple disciplines. The six-week courses are designed to encourage a worldwide audience to engage in flexible learning with regular activities and debate, enriched by audio and video content.

Learn more
www.bit.ly/bfipartnership

Pivoting to online therapy

In March 2020, when the UK Government announced COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face therapy became impossible, impacting those requiring mental health support.

At a time when pandemic-induced stress, anxiety and trauma were soaring, Professor Naomi Moller and Dr Andreas Vossler from the School of Psychology and Counselling worked with the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) to develop *How to do counselling online: a coronavirus primer*. The online course was created to support practitioners, most of whom had no prior experience in online therapy.

In September 2021, it was shortlisted for a Times Higher Education Award and became the most successful Open University Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course. To date, more than 22,000 participants have enrolled with over 13,000 badges of completion awarded.

Head of the School of Psychology & Counselling, Dr Jean McAvoy, says: "In a time of urgent need, Naomi and Andreas created a vital resource to support not only the many thousands of mental health practitioners who needed to move their practice online, but, of course, also the many thousands of clients who were then able to continue to access vital therapeutic support. It is hard to overstate the number of lives benefiting directly from this amazing resource."

Find out more
www.bit.ly/cpdprimer

Creative Writing student wins major "emerging writer" competition

Creative Writing student Fiona Monahan was selected by the inaugural Genesis Jewish Book Week Emerging Writers' Programme as one of ten emerging writers in the UK. Her competition submission – *The Unknown Soldier*, the story of looking for her grandfather's grave in France – was her assignment for her Creative Writing (A215) module.

As well as receiving a bursary for research in France, Fiona is taking part in masterclasses led by industry experts and best-selling authors, including Tracy Chevalier and George Szirtes. Fiona says "I am very grateful to the Genesis Foundation for this opportunity".

Competition details
www.bit.ly/jbwwriters

STUDENT STORY

Studying with the OU was a no-brainer

While working as a teaching assistant in Kenya, Njabs Garratt started researching different subjects to find out what he wanted to study in the future.

Njabs, who was born in South Africa and now lives in mid-Wales, realised that like his family, who work in the medical field, he wanted to help people and decided to pursue psychology.

But, as a frequent traveller and, after leaving school without top marks, Njabs didn't think a degree was possible – until he discovered The Open University.

"The OU's Open Entry policy is a breath of fresh air as it gives anyone the opportunity to gain a qualification. Studying with the OU was a no-brainer as it gave me a chance to study at a higher education level and I'm so thankful for that. The OU revolves around a level of freedom and not being tied to a specific university base – and that was important to me. At the time, I was moving around quite a lot – travelling back and forth to South Africa, and from Scotland to England. Without the OU's flexibility, that wouldn't have been possible."

Njabs graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Psychology at our Cardiff ceremony in 2019. He now works in the Civil Service and wants to have a career in psychology, helping the most vulnerable people in society with their mental health.



FBL FOCUS



What a hectic, yet successful, 2020-21 academic year it was despite the pandemic. The Business School retained its triple accreditation status for another three years, allied to the continued growth of student numbers.

For the first time, Law was part of the Faculty's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021) which determines our research funding.

We also welcomed a new Head of Business School with Professor Siv Vangen stepping up from her previous role of Associate Dean, Research and Scholarship.

Professor Devendra Kodwani
Executive Dean



The Business School's Alumni of the year Award

The Business School's Alumni of the Year Achievement Award winner is NHS senior manager and St John Ambulance senior clinical leader David Monk. The MBA alumnus, who graduated in 2012 having started his OU studies eight years earlier with an Open degree, is the Operations Manager (Urgent and Unscheduled Care) for Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

His role includes joint responsibility for the Emergency Department at Addenbrooke's Hospital and East of England Major Trauma Centre. David's role is diverse and has a number of responsibilities across Cambridge and works with wider health system partners to transform how urgent and emergency care is delivered across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. He also holds a voluntary national associate medical director position with St John Ambulance – a paramedic by profession, he was the first non-doctor to hold this post.

David said: "I left school at 18 not wanting to study anymore having battled to complete my A-levels and with no real direction for a career. My hobby with the British Red Cross and then St John Ambulance led me to become a paramedic, with The Open University allowing me to continue my new-found thirst for knowledge and development. The MBA combined study with practical application in the workplace, making a difference to staff and patients which motivates me daily. The MBA has supported me to diversify my career from the traditional paramedic field and achieve more than I ever thought possible."



David Monk

Learn more
www.bit.ly/davidmonk

The case for quiet leadership

It's a fact: extroverts are overrepresented in senior leadership positions. One study found 98% of top executives scored "very high" or "above average" on the extrovert scale. But do we need just extrovert leaders, or would a balanced approach be more effective?

The BBC Ideas video 'The power of quiet leadership' with Senior Lecturer in Public Policy and Management, Dr Jacqueline Baxter, makes the case for a quieter approach to leadership. She gives examples through history of successful leaders who use this approach, including Bill Gates, Rosa Parks and Mahatma Gandhi.

The three-minute video was viewed more than 145,000 times in 2021, making it one of the most popular videos on the playlist. BBC Ideas earned the distinction of *Webby Honoree in Video: Science & Education* from The Webby Awards, the leading international awards honouring excellence on the internet.

Learn more
www.bit.ly/powerofquiet



Love and marriage

Coronavirus disruption to weddings has highlighted the complexity and antiquity of marriage law and reinforced the need for reform, a new study conducted by the OU's Dr Stephanie Pywell and Professor Rebecca Probert, from the University of Exeter, shows. During the pandemic the ease and speed with which couples were able to marry has depended on their chosen route into marriage – religious or civil – the researchers have found.

Rules to prevent the spread of the pandemic attempted to strike a balance between getting married as a legal event and a wedding as a social event, and this has failed to please anyone, according to the research.

As lockdown loomed, couples marrying in the Anglican Church were able to apply for a common or special licence rather than waiting to have their banns read. During the first lockdown alone, the Church of England's Faculty Office issued 104 special licences in order to enable the marriages of those who were terminally ill, or who had a close family member who was terminally ill, whereas it would normally issue only 40 for this purpose in a whole year. Those having a non-Anglican wedding did not have the same option of expediting it and the options for emergency weddings were more limited. Reform is clearly needed, but any such reform has to be holistic rather than piecemeal, and the hope is that the research will strengthen the case for making weddings law simpler and more flexible for the future.

Visit
www.bit.ly/covid19weddings

STUDENT STORY



Pursuing a career while studying

Laura Ellis, from Belfast, originally started a degree at a traditional university but decided it wasn't for her and over the next few years worked in a coffee shop. Eventually she hit a crossroads in her life before beginning a BA in Business Management with the OU.

Laura explains "I had been doing the job for several years and felt that my only chance to progress would be to gain a qualification. I have heard of a few people studying with the OU over the years and, as I had been working for so long, I liked the fact that I could continue to work and earn money whilst also studying."

Laura has just completed her first year, but she is already seeing the benefits: "I was very fortunate that an internship popped up a few months into my study with the OU. It was a HR internship with Datactics, which is such a perfect match. I have gained so much knowledge that I wouldn't have from studying one module alone. As of several months ago, I received a permanent contract, so I've actually gained a permanent job from the internship!"

Read her story
www.bit.ly/lauraellis

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



Celebrating five years of Open Justice

The Open Justice Centre celebrated its fifth birthday in October 2021, offering an opportunity to look back at the wealth of fantastic opportunities that have been created for OU Law students to support their communities by providing free legal education, advice and guidance.

In addition to breaking new ground in developing an online advice clinic, delivering a nationwide programme of prison-based legal education workshops and working with schools across the UK, the Centre has also made significant contributions to the free advice sector with its open education resources. These have included free training to support human rights, tackle

discrimination and to ensure access to justice in domestic abuse cases.

The Centre's impact has reached beyond the UK via its three-year partnership with the United Nations, contributing to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Education for Justice (E4J) initiative which supports a global community of academics to tackle corruption and promote the rule of law through education.

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

SPOTLIGHT ON STEM



On-going COVID challenges to face-to-face tutorials, invigilated exams and residential events online, and other innovations have kept us busy. For Engineering students, we designed, assembled and delivered 2,000 Home Experiment Kits providing practical activities in place of cancelled summer schools.

Despite the pandemic, researchers received extra-terrestrial samples from the Hayabusa2 mission and Winchcombe meteorite for on-campus analysis.

Four colleagues officially observed at COP26, providing insightful reports.

This year we've launched several new qualifications including masters-level geology and (astro)physics.

I hope you'll be able to join us for events like *Behind the Scenes* of our BBC/OU programmes, *Ask the Experts* and many more.

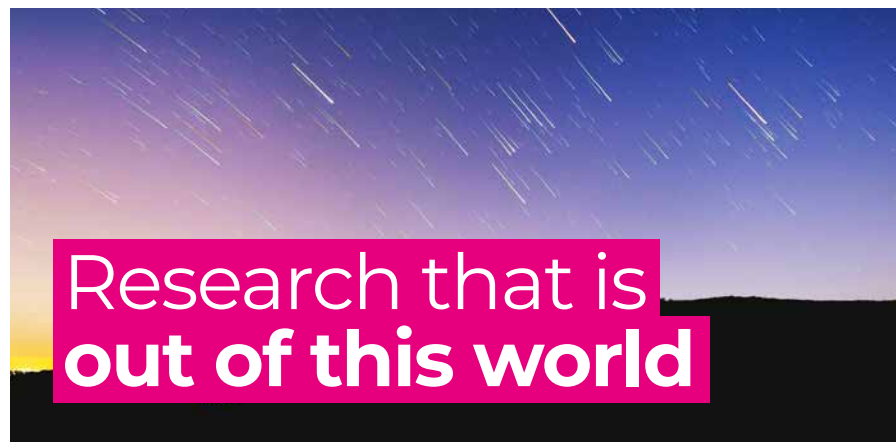
Professor Nicholas Braithwaite
Executive Dean



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



Research that is out of this world

On February 28, 2021 witnesses from across the UK and Europe reported seeing a fireball lighting up the skies. For the first time in 30 years a meteorite landed in the UK - in a driveway in Winchcombe. Dr Richard Greenwood, a postdoctoral research fellow at the OU, was part of the team that recovered the remnants of the meteorite.

The composition of the Winchcombe meteorite was verified at the OU's labs in Milton Keynes. Dr Greenwood discovered it was part of a rare group of meteorites known as *carbonaceous chondrites* - the first time this kind of meteorite has fallen in the UK. The primitive nature of the materials in the meteorite allowed the OU scientists to date the formation of the Solar System to 4,567 million years.

Extra-terrestrial samples

The OU was also one of the first non-Japanese institutions to receive the Hayabusa2 samples, also led by Dr Richard Greenwood, for expert analysis in the Faculty's world-leading oxygen lab. These samples from an asteroid called Ryugu (Dragon's Palace in Japanese), could reveal the secrets to how our Solar System formed.

Asteroid named Openuni

Two years ago, professors Simon Green and Andrew Norton set out to name asteroid 69423 'Openuni' in celebration of the University's 50th anniversary. In September this year, they received confirmation from the Working Group for Small Body Nomenclature (WGSBN) that the name had been made official. We are now only one of two UK universities that have asteroids named after them.

➤ **Find out more about this exciting discovery**
www.bit.ly/wincombemeteorite

Recognition of Academic Achievement

Professor of Polar Oceanography, Mark Brandon was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire), for services to polar science in the Queen's New Year's honours list. Professor Brandon has over 25 years' experience in polar oceanography and has been an Academic Consultant on both BBC *Frozen Planet* in 2012 and on *Blue Planet II* in 2017.



New BSc (Hons) Geology

In a new addition to the STEM curriculum, we are launching a new BSc (Hons) Geology qualification which allows you to discover how our planet works, from the core to the clouds and beyond.

Students can gain a broad understanding of science in biology, chemistry, earth sciences, environmental science and physics/astronomy progressing to scientific study of the earth, including volcanoes, mountain building, and earth's changing surface environment. They can explore processes that link its diverse systems and decipher clues to its extraordinary history and develop practical skills using geological maps, microscopes and investigations, past and present geological phenomena while gathering and analysing data using different data fields.

This new qualification will enable students to build new skills to test theories and address critical problems facing society, such as sustainability and the climate crisis.

➤ **Learn more about this qualification**
www.bit.ly/bscgeology

How Sarah achieved her degree while battling cancer



2021 OU graduate, Sarah from Inverness, achieved her OU degree in Environmental Management and Technology whilst juggling full-time work, raising three children and battling cancer. She began her study to get ahead in her career at the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. Only two years into her degree, Sarah was sadly diagnosed with breast cancer and everything changed.

"I have had several surgeries, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and hormone therapy. This while raising three amazing children as a single parent and working full time meant studying became a wee bit of a challenge!"

The flexibility of OU study and her ongoing determination meant that Sarah was able to continue her study plans, even when life was at its toughest. "The support I got from the OU enabled me to continue studying, and this year I finally got to reap the rewards of all these years of hard work."

"Studying with the OU has definitely helped me to secure a new job role and as I studied it helped me at work, building my skills and confidence all round. It has given me so much more than I thought it would. It has built my confidence and self-belief and I am so proud of myself for achieving my qualification."

STUDENT STORY



From student to tutor



My name is Cath Brown and I'm an OU addict (on my third OU degree) – that much of an addict that I took a sabbatical from my long-term teaching job to become President of the OU Students Association 2018-20.

Like many OU students, I'd often toyed with the idea of becoming a tutor. Both previous tutors and student friends suggested it, and I liked the idea of giving back. I finally took the plunge in May 2020 - sending in applications for anything I thought I could teach! Then the anxious waiting began.

At last the interviews arrived! The interview process usually involves an exercise in advance (eg marking or planning) alongside questions about supporting students and module content. It was so exciting when I heard I'd passed the interviews - and on hearing I had tutor groups for four modules, fizzy stuff was consumed.

Having been an OU student is a huge help when starting as a tutor - you know how the University works, and understanding the issues students encounter is so helpful.

And I'm enjoying it (except for multiple marking clashes). It's lovely meeting enthusiastic students and being able to make a difference to them, and I've lots of helpful, supportive colleagues. Since I started, I've added more modules to my repertoire - the OU is now my full-time job.

It does require hard work, decent time management and flexibility – but successful OU students have that in spades! And of course it means working some evenings and weekends. But it suits me - I have quite a lot of freedom to work to my own schedule.

I hope this brief history of my journey from student to tutor has inspired you to join me! If it has, have a look at this useful little course on becoming a tutor.



➤ **Becoming a STEM tutor**
www.bit.ly/oustemtutor

WELCOME TO WELS



As we start to imagine a life post-pandemic, we recognise that now more than ever there is a need to fully consider the impact it has had on human wellbeing across the globe. Not just in terms of physical health, but also in relation to children's development, mental health, communication and the support needed by the most vulnerable in society.

Our new Centre for the Study of Global Development seeks to tackle these big societal challenges, using our expertise and research to drive change and help build a better world.

Professor Fary Cachelin
Executive Dean



OU research shapes Morrisons' new children's book initiative

Working with the OU's Reading for Pleasure (RfP) team, in spring 2021 supermarket chain Morrisons launched a children's book donation and exchange station across its stores to promote children's reading and literacy. Research shows that Reading for Pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's future success, and so books were also donated to local schools and community groups.

Discover more about Reading for Pleasure
www.ourfp.org

Success for new language short courses

Following their launch in October 2020, more than 1,000 people have taken a language short course with the OU. Available at both beginner and elementary level, you can now study one of five languages: Chinese, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The short course offering continues to grow, with more due to launch in 2022 including intercultural competence and artificial intelligence. Free tasters of the new courses are available on OpenLearn; search for *Open Centre for Languages and Cultures*.

Search for courses now
www.open.ac.uk/courses/language-short-courses

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

Wellbeing for a better world

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

In the aftermath of a global pandemic, society faces questions about how we secure human wellbeing for economic and social development.

At the OU we want to play our part. Our new Centre for the Study of Global Development brings

together health, education, and communication expertise from within WELS, to help tackle these global challenges. The Centre will provide a vision for research to offer governments and development organisations deeper understanding on human wellbeing and capabilities in a post-COVID world.

Learn more
www.open.ac.uk/csgd



During the pandemic, academics in WELS have been supporting society with their research. Several projects have been awarded grants by the OU's COVID-19 Rapid Response funding scheme which aims to support and accelerate projects in areas affected by COVID-19.

Projects like 'CPD for Social Workers', led by Joe Hanley from the School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care (HWSC). His research has been piloting the use of free, online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resources to rapidly upskill social workers in disaster social work response, including working during a pandemic.

Learn more
www.bit.ly/joehanley

Dr Verina Waights is working with Willen Hospice in Milton Keynes to pilot the use of digital technologies in the hospice during the pandemic. The project seeks to provide more opportunities for users to connect with the 'Willen at Home' service during these COVID-19 measures, and for use in practitioner assessments and in supporting bereaved families.

Learn more
www.bit.ly/verinawaights

Dr Kerry Jones led a team of researchers studying children's experiences of death anxiety during the pandemic. They found that there is currently a lack of evidence-based research into the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of children and young people; their research offers various recommendations to combat the inconsistency in mental health and crisis support available through schools.

Learn more
www.bit.ly/kerryjones

STUDENT STORIES

MBE for Aimee



Mid-way through her Education Studies (Primary) degree, Aimee Durning has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. Aimee's nomination recognised her services to children with special educational needs and disabilities through the COVID crisis, as well as services to teaching assistants (TAs). Working as a TA at University of Cambridge primary school, Aimee set up a national network for TAs to share best practice and create networking opportunities.

It was her passion for learning new things that first sparked Aimee's decision to study with the OU and in further recognition of her talent for nurturing others, she has been appointed Director of Inclusion and Community at her school.

Student Kamal becomes co-researcher



A postgraduate Social Work student has been appointed as a co-researcher on a new OU research project that aims to gather reflections on the shared and lived experiences of individuals from Black and Minority Ethnic groups in the OU student community. Having already completed an MA in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights and with a PhD in Social Policy, Scotland-based Kamal was working as a tutor when he decided to enrol on the OU's professionally qualifying Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work. Of the Black and Minority Ethnic Student-Designed research project, Kamal says, "I thought I could make a meaningful contribution given my background, academic experience and exposure. For me personally, the project offers another opportunity to gain experience that will be useful for my future career."

The OU Law graduate using his degree to support fellow Windrush survivors



When Anthony Brown first applied for university aged 21, he was almost deported. Decades later, after achieving a Law degree with The Open University, Anthony is using his skills to passionately fight for others affected by the Windrush scandal.

"I was at college when the 1980s uprisings happened across the country. I was about 21 at the time and I got to thinking about what I could do. I thought if I studied Law and joined the Police that I could change things.

"I wanted to go to university, but I was told that I was being treated as an overseas student. I wrote to the Home Office and they said I was an illegal immigrant and I needed to report to Manchester Airport to be interviewed to be deported. That set alarm bells ringing, I was scared, and I was upset."

The fight to stay in the UK

Anthony moved from Jamaica to England with his family when he was six years old. He grew up in the Manchester area, attending the local grammar school until his father took on a teaching role at the College of Arts Science and Technology in Kingston and moved Anthony and his brother Paul to Jamaica. Anthony stayed with his father for four years before coming back to England aged 17 to finish school and attend college.

It was spending more than two years away from England which would ultimately put Anthony's future in jeopardy. Unknown to Anthony and his family, the rules around Commonwealth Citizens tightened when the 1971 Immigration Act came into effect on 1 January 1973. Though Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies from the West Indies became known as the 'Windrush generation' and were granted indefinite leave to stay in the country, as Anthony had left England for more than two years, he was being treated as an immigration offender.

What he hoped would be the start of university life became a fight to stay in the country he had grown up in.

Instead, what followed was an extensive campaign of demonstrations, petitions, and letter-writing, stretching from Anthony's local community to London, Scotland and eventually reaching the Government's Immigration Minister. Anthony recalls how his community, friends and family rallied together to fight his deportation.

Finally, Anthony and his supporters heard the news they had been waiting for: he was granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Despite the victory, Anthony was left feeling lost.

Discovering a love of Law

"The impact shook me up," admits Anthony. "I didn't go to university. It took me about ten years before I came to terms with it. It just made me doubt myself, as if I didn't belong. I came out of it eventually, got married and life took over. I did various jobs, had children, and never thought much about Law again until I separated in my fifties and started to reflect on life.

"Studying had always been something in the back of my mind but I never went for it. A friend said to me, 'If you don't do it now, then you won't ever'."

Anthony enrolled to study Law with The Open University in 2011 and immediately enjoyed diving into a subject matter that had always fascinated him.

"I felt in reading the material that there was a voice talking to me. So I thought, 'Why didn't I do this before?' I wish I'd known how much I would have enjoyed studying, I didn't know that I would find it so interesting.

"Completing my degree brought a huge change because for a long time, the deportation impacted me. After that, you don't know if you belong, you don't feel worthy, you don't feel confident and you keep your head down.

"When I graduated, you just get this great feeling that you can look other people in the eye now. It gave me the confidence to engage in different circles and do different things. It's really, really boosted my self-esteem."

“

I wanted to go to university, but I was told that I was being treated as an overseas student. I wrote to the Home Office and they said I was an illegal immigrant and I needed to report to Manchester Airport to be interviewed to be deported. That set alarm bells ringing, I was scared, and I was upset.

Anthony Brown
OU Law Graduate

”



Supporting the Windrush generation

The same month that Anthony graduated in 2018, the Windrush scandal broke. In the aftermath, Anthony teamed up with Leonie Shaw-Brown, a fellow OU Law student he met during a tutorial, to launch the Windrush Defenders. Together, the group of volunteers support the Windrush generation and their families in proving their legal status and claiming compensation.

"Leonie and I got talking. Afterwards when the scandal broke, I said 'we need to do something, we've got the knowledge, we've got the skills' and she said yes. Now we've continued for three and a half years.

"So having done the OU course and having understood how the law works and how to change the law, we decided we were going to change the law!

"We started our law reform campaign, identified some of the problems people were facing and that we needed a Windrush Act to tackle these problems, to restore the citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies."

Rallying to support others

From his own experience, Anthony knows all too well how isolating fighting for your rights can be. Following his qualification, Anthony feels he now has the skills and the confidence to make a difference to his community.

What started as his own fight to resist deportation, has turned into an ongoing battle to ensure the Windrush generation and their descendants are heard and given the protection in law they deserve.

"I get such a lot out of volunteering. When you realise that the skills and the knowledge you have can change someone's life, it's a big responsibility. You feel that you're keeping to your values. I've always had these values of wanting to help the community and to be able to do it in such a powerful way through the law gives me a great feeling."



Anthony and the supporters who helped him resist deportation in the 1980s



“

I've always liked to make sure that if I'm around then I'll always challenge things and try to help people. That's what I've been able to do more effectively now after studying the law.

Anthony Brown
OU Graduate

”

Learn more

Find out more about Anthony's work with the Windrush Defenders

<https://wdlegal.co.uk>

Discover the right OU Law course for you

www.open.ac.uk/courses/law/degrees

Read more about the Open Justice Centre on page 11 or visit the website which provides free legal advice to those who may struggle to access appropriate legal support

www.open.ac.uk/open-justice

Visit the 'Race and Ethnicity Hub' on OpenLearn

<https://bit.ly/raceandethnicityhub>

Upskill and futureproof your career with an OU Microcredential



As employers continue to report skills shortages in their workforce, three in five organisations say that they are not as agile as they need to be because of that shortfall. Tim Plyming (Managing Director, OU Paid Short Courses & Microcredentials) reports on The Open University's commitment to developing world-class, career-focused short courses, Microcredentials.

"Microcredentials offer learners the opportunity to quickly upskill and stay up to date with relevant and emerging trends. Covering high-demand subject areas, they're designed by our leading academic experts with many endorsed by high profile industry partners. Delivered on our co-owned digital social learning partner platform, FutureLearn – learning is 100% online and part of an international learning community of over 16 million global learners.

"Learners are demanding new ways to develop knowledge, skills and competencies, and want to do so quickly, from bite-sized, quality assured courses. Responding to the changing needs of learners and employers remains central to our mission. Upskilling through our Microcredential courses provides a great way to continue professional development while gaining and developing in-demand specialist skills and knowledge.

"We're thrilled to be gaining fantastic feedback from our learners, with 92% recording their overall study experience as 'excellent' or 'good' and 58% saying the course 'exceeded' or 'greatly exceeded' their expectations.

"Our latest Microcredentials include additions to our hugely popular Online Teaching suite – underpinned by our world-leading academic expertise and 50 years' experience in delivering supported distance learning. These sit alongside our Leadership & Management courses, designed by academic experts from our triple-accredited business school, and in-demand Computing courses, endorsed by leading industry partners, Amazon Web Service (AWS) and Cisco. Other exciting courses cover the important areas of Climate Change and Sustainability – issues high on the international agenda. Throughout 2022 we'll launch more high quality, career-focused short courses and support learners to achieve their career and lifelong learning goals."

Coming soon...

More courses covering vital subjects, from Children's Mental Health and End of Life and Palliative Care to Business Agility, Digital Marketing and more.

Make sure we have your email address so we can keep you informed on the latest from your University.

Future Learn Advance your career and develop new skills.
Find the right course for you
www.bit.ly/oumicrocredentials

It's make or break

Do you aspire to be a business leader? The OU-sponsored podcast series 'Make or Break' features a roster of influential business leaders, talking candidly about the make or break moments that defined their careers.

Hosted by journalist Owen Bennett-Jones, guests include OU honorary graduate Justine Roberts of MumsNet, and infamous jeweller Gerald Ratner. Owen discovers the guests' greatest learnings and ultimately, how a single decision shaped the course of their lives. It's essential listening for anyone interested in making their own critical decisions more effectively.

If you'd like to hone your leadership skills, explore the OU's Management of Uncertainty: Leadership, Decisions and Action Microcredential.

Visit
www.bit.ly/itsmakeorbreak

Supporting people to upskill during the pandemic

When face-to-face workplace learning opportunities disappeared virtually overnight due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tommy Breslin from Glasgow was able to continue to upskill and progress his career through Open University Microcredentials.

Tommy was promoted from a Development Officer to a Senior Development Officer within Scottish Union Learning after completing a range of Microcredentials.

"The skills I have developed will be invaluable in driving our organisation through a process of digital transformation.

"The tutors and mentors on the Microcredentials clearly have a strong appreciation of the additional pressures that the learners are faced with beyond the studies. Also, the mentor support for the students through the discussion areas, was really helpful and encouraging.

"I now feel a lot more confident in speaking to colleagues, funders, learning providers, training providers and trade unions about online learning and teaching."



A message from the **OU Students Association** as it celebrates 50 years...



For half a century, students have contributed to decision making at all levels of the University, helping to shape and improve the educational experience for themselves and their peers.

Since our inception many years ago the OU Students Association has held vital lines of communication with the University, which have helped to ensure that the student journey is as beneficial and positive as possible.

Sarah Jones
President, OU Students Association



Sarah's words echo the ambitions shared in the early 70s by Millicent Marsland, who became the first President of the Students Association. Millicent's focus on the importance of clear communications between the University and its students is still an integral part of the work of the Students Association as we prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our foundation.

The OU Students Association came into being in 1972, and Millicent, alongside 33 other elected council members of the Students Association, travelled from across the OU regions to meet for the first time at Walton Hall on 16 December 1972.

The Association has worked with the University to ensure that the Student Voice is heard. During its early years, the Association helped students with disabilities take part in study tours worldwide using a specially converted bus, and towards the end of the 70s we started the long fight for government funding for part-time learners, by campaigning for access to grants for OU students.



The 1980s saw the continuation of this work, with then President Chris Roworth delivering a petition with 160,000 signatures to 10 Downing Street in 1985. The OU Students Educational Trust was also set up to give a helping hand to students suffering financial hardship.

In the 90s we successfully campaigned for both Bachelor of Science and named degrees, so that students could proudly show their field of study to prospective employers.

The Association's long-running goal of expanding higher education support for Open University students continued, as we joined the campaign to make student loans available to part-time undergraduates from 2011.

In more recent years we have built further on a legacy of inclusion and diversity, formally affiliating our LGBTQI+ group OU Pride, the Disabled Students Group, and the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Group, with the Association. Additionally, our long fight to ban essay mills, where people can commission essays, has gained further traction, as the Government prepares to make offering essay-writing services to students for a fee a criminal offence.

Today, our focus is on making sure that what we do, and how we do it, is guided by the needs, hopes and aspirations of our student members. Our priority is ensuring that the Association continues to make a positive difference for all OU students, both now and into the future.



Find out more
www.oustudents.com

Bringing free learning to life

Behind the scenes at OpenLearn

Over 100 million visitors have spent time discovering new knowledge through OpenLearn in its 15-year history. There are currently over 1,000 free courses available for learners to choose, from history to climate change to languages – there really is something for everyone.

At the heart of OpenLearn and the free courses offered is the University's social mission to make education available to all. This has foundations in the University's Royal Charter that states that learning and knowledge should be shared using broadcasting and technology to promote education both for students and the community more generally. This means that part of all OU modules are made available for free on OpenLearn, as well as courses that are suggested by academics from the faculties across the University, and with external partners, which accounts for the range of new courses (circa 60 in 2021 alone) that are added to the platform each year.

Bringing a course to life

So, what does it take to bring an OpenLearn course to life? There is a whole team involved - there are meetings and discussions; an academic writes content; OpenLearn editors and producers build it into a course; it gets published. They're the very basics, and there's much more to it than that in reality, but there's also no great tricks of the trade to reveal; no pressing of a big red 'publish course' button with confetti falling or fireworks going off... just hard work and collaboration with colleagues like Mathijs Lucassen.

An Academic's Perspective

Mathijs Lucassen is a Senior Lecturer in Mental Health in the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS). Each faculty has Open Media Fellows, and part of their role is to work with OpenLearn to commission new content. WELS always comes armed with numerous new ideas every year, so we asked Mathijs to tell us how an idea even gets to the stage of becoming an OpenLearn course proposal...

"Our priority for course ideas is based on our faculty's teaching and research priorities, but it's not all just courses on OpenLearn, so we're also looking at topical and relevant contributions in terms of articles and other content. But the process is organic, courses grow from small ideas. Sometimes, the ideas can be too niche so that's where the partnership with OpenLearn and the expertise of the editors helps, to get the best ideas turned into actual courses."

WELS brings 20-30 ideas to the table every year, and prior to even being selected for production each academic has to receive approval from the faculty. Once the ideas have been approved, the aim is to bring all courses to fruition within the academic year. "It does require work and commitment," Mathijs explained, "and a very good working relationship with the OpenLearn team!"

"OpenLearn is a great shop window regardless, promoting the OU and our academics' research expertise as well as being an introduction to distance learning. That's why we're so committed to contributing as much as we can."

"It's a huge collaborative effort from the very start, and the Open Media Fellows, academics and the OpenLearn team can work for anything from a few weeks to six months or more to complete a course. That involves sourcing or creating images, videos and content to use, building quizzes, user testing, proofreading and publishing, when the final version is good enough for all parties. The creative team might go on to create a course trailer or animation to support it, and the content will be reviewed well into the future, so the process doesn't start and end with an idea and a publication date – it's a partnership that lasts the lifetime of the free course... in the case of WELS, that's all 273 of them."



Discover more with OpenLearn

OpenLearn really is a fantastic way to keep learning and you can discover different areas of interests! Remember, anyone can learn for free using OpenLearn.

It's also a great way for people to begin their studies if they aren't sure about what area to choose or if University study is right for them.

 **Dive in and start learning**
www.open.edu/openlearn

OpenLearn is proud to work with many organisations from all around the world, like NSC Global, to keep the platform as a free educational resource.

 **See our partners**
www.bit.ly/olpartners

Another record-breaking year

Last year we reported that OpenLearn had broken all records for visitor numbers, as learners flocked to the site as the lockdowns took hold. Despite the return to schools and the easing of restrictions over 2020/21, we're delighted to once again report another record-breaking year, with a further 14 million visitors over the last 12 months taking us to an all-time visitor landmark of 100 million! We are also pleased to announce that in October 2021 OpenLearn not only celebrated its 15th birthday but also the award of its 2 millionth certificate.

5 million
course enrolments

2 million
certificates issued

You can use OpenLearn to

 **Study free courses**

From 1 to 100 hours of learning - discover hundreds of free courses to inspire and inform everyone.

 **Earn while you learn**

Earn a free digital badge or Statement of Participation as evidence of your learning to share with employers, friends and family.

  **For Study**

Improve your study skills and get acquainted with student life with our expertly created courses and resources.

  **For Life**

Boost your employability skills and find useful resources to help you with your life outside of work.

It's a great way for people to begin their next learning journey!

New OpenLearn courses to discover

Some of the notable new additions to the site in recent months include:

BEYOND BELIEF

Beyond Belief – a hugely popular film interactive which delves into spiritual healing and your views on life after death.

THE KICKSTART HUB

Part of an OU partnership with Jobcentre Plus, **The Kickstart Hub** will offer free training tools designed to fit flexibly around any six-month Kickstart Scheme placement.

FREE HOME LEARNING RESOURCES

Free home learning resources from all four faculties aimed at students aged 16+.

ALL MY OWN WORK

One of our latest badged courses **All my own work: exploring academic integrity** has been designed to help students understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. This will be promoted to all new students across the OU alongside the hugely successful *Being an OU student* induction course.



Help with navigating your future



Want to discover where your OU qualification might take you, or explore pathways to specific careers? Studied for personal progression but want to make your OU study work for you and the community? Hoping to hone your application skills and achieve your goals? Everyone is different and the OU's Careers and Employability Services are here to help you achieve your goals for three years after you qualify. After that, you still have access to a wide range of useful careers information in the Help Centre, including Your Career Planning Guide and the Career Stories blog.

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 are skilled 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.

OpportunityHub connects you to hundreds of graduate opportunities and allows you to book careers events and consultations with our career professionals.

 **Explore the OpportunityHub**
www.bit.ly/ouoppHub

Career Readiness Pulse

After a couple of years of careful testing, analysis and refinements, we have adopted a completely new approach to tailoring careers support to your personal needs, called 'career readiness'. There are four career readiness stages – Discover, Explore, Progress and Achieve. To help you self-diagnose your stage, we have also launched Abintegro Career Readiness Pulse, an intelligent tool which signposts you to a tailored selection of tools to identify your next career steps.

You'll also find Pulse in an overview of all the career learning and support services we provide on our page 'Careers support for three years after you study' on **OpportunityHub**.

 **Keep your finger on the pulse**
www.bit.ly/crpulse

Do you see yourself as an entrepreneur?

If so, you're not alone. A recent survey of OU alumni indicated that 10% of respondents said their OU studies had helped them start a new business or social enterprise. Whether your aim is to make a profit or to make a difference in society, whatever your background, the OU can help.

Our new *Becoming an entrepreneur* Help Centre contains advice on getting support to set up your own business, links to free entrepreneurship courses

on OpenLearn, and sources of funding and grants. You'll also find out about life as an entrepreneur in a series of video interviews, hearing directly from OU alumni who have taken the plunge and set up their own businesses.

 **Find out more**
www.bit.ly/areyouanentrepreneur

Transforming lives and rewriting futures

Steven Wilson
Disabled Veterans' Scholarship recipient



For more than 50 years, The Open University's social justice mission has strived to break down the barriers to education through its open access policy and pioneering distance learning model. At the very heart of this is the Open Futures Fund, comprising of several scholarships and bursaries which are all designed to provide more people across society the opportunity to unlock their potential, transform their lives and rewrite their futures.

The Fund is completely unique and encompasses transformative schemes that have already provided 210 scholarships to disabled veterans and 90 scholarships for carers. Throughout the pandemic over 3,000 students were supported with urgent financial assistance when they needed it most, to ensure they did not have to give up on their dreams and aspirations. These life-changing opportunities have only been made possible thanks to our incredible alumni, donor and supporter community.

This year sees the Fund continue to grow with the launch of the Open Futures Black Students' Support Fund. This new initiative aims to provide up to 50 scholarships and bursaries in Spring 2022 and will support Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access OU study and help address inequalities in access to higher education.

So many students are already rewriting their futures, yet there are more students out there right now who so desperately want the same opportunity to transform their lives. Together we can give them that all-important chance. It is only through the collective power of philanthropy that we can continue providing crucial scholarships and bursaries, stopping potential from going to waste and ensuring everyone – regardless of background – has the opportunity to pursue their ambitions.

 **Support the Open Futures Fund or learn more about it**
alumni.open.ac.uk



OU GIVING DAY

Be a Futuremaker and help us make Giving Day 2022 an even bigger success

In July 2021, we held our first-ever Giving Day and raised over £158,000! Thanks to the support of our OU family, over 1,500 donors came together to raise money for the Open Futures Fund, helping current and future students rewrite their futures through life-changing study.

This year we have the opportunity to make it even bigger and better! One way to get involved is by being a Futuremaker, fundraising for life-changing scholarships and bursaries with an activity. From online quizzes to nature walks, Futuremakers find imaginative ways to raise awareness and donations within their own communities.

Last year, Futuremaker and PhD student Bradley Neal applied skills from his BSc in Environmental Science with the OU, alongside his passion for the natural world, and performed a 'walking' taxonomy lesson: "The most exciting thing about being a Futuremaker was to share my passion for our natural world, and the pride I have at sharing skills I've learnt during both of my degrees. The world will be a better place when the barriers to education are removed, and the Giving Day is a step towards that."



By being a Futuremaker and raising money for the Open Futures Fund, Bradley helped give others the opportunity to succeed. "To be awarded a scholarship is life-changing in itself, so I hoped my contribution could support funding an education for someone who really needs it."

 **Get involved in Giving Day 2022**
www.bit.ly/registerfuturemaker



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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 support today can transform the lives of more students who just want the chance to give back

We're both hugely grateful to the OU family of wonderful alumni and donors for the life-changing opportunities you've given each of us by so kindly and generously helping to fund our scholarships with The Open University. We're determined to use our qualifications to give back to society in whatever individual ways we can.

We know there are hundreds more potential students like us who are desperate for the chance to be awarded an OU scholarship through the Open Futures Fund so that they too can study and give back. That's why your support is so urgently needed today.

Thank you so much!

Zoe and Stuart



Zoe
Carer and scholarship recipient

“

I want to give back by becoming a paramedic. ”

“

I want to give back by becoming a teacher and inspiring future generations of kids. ”



Stuart
Disabled veteran and scholarship recipient

Please click here to donate today to help keep education open to more students like Zoe and Stuart.



Zoe
Carer

The life-changing difference your support can make to those who might otherwise miss out on a higher education.

“You’ve given me a real purpose”

31-year-old Zoe has her hands full as the carer of her children, one of whom has cerebral palsy and learning difficulties. In addition, her two-year-old son was born prematurely with chronic lung disease and a hole in his heart soon needing surgery. Despite these daunting challenges, Zoe pursued her dream of studying to create a better future for herself and her children.

Zoe’s also determined to become a paramedic in the future. “With so many caring responsibilities, part-time distance learning with the OU is giving me the perfect opportunity to get on track for my career dream job and degree. I didn’t think I’d be granted a scholarship, but was willing to give it a go. I was totally thrilled when I heard I’d been awarded a scholarship. The OU has also helped with funding a laptop and various different materials I needed for my studies towards my Certificate of Higher Education in Health Studies. They’ve been amazing and have gone above and beyond to support me.

I can’t thank the OU’s alumni and supporters enough for giving me this chance – you’ve given me a real purpose beyond my caring responsibilities which I will use to give back.”

“I just want to send a huge thank you”

42-year-old Stuart joined the Army at 18 and served on two tours of Iraq and one of Afghanistan. But in June 2017 with the Royal Tank Regiment, an exercise went horribly wrong when a breach explosion occurred in Stuart’s tank. Both his friends beside him were killed, while Stuart was severely injured. He suffered severe burns, lost an ear, several fingers and can still only stand for short periods. He spent eight weeks in hospital followed by two years in rehabilitation.

“The military was my life and now I felt everything was meaningless. But during rehab at Stanford Hall, a marine mentioned the OU to me. I’d never been academic, so thought not a chance! I’ve always liked history so set myself a goal to become a history teacher. When the OU awarded me a scholarship I just thought wow, I was so happy. It meant I was one step closer to achieving my goal and being able to give back in some way.

I’ve just started my second year towards a BA Honours in History and just want to send a huge thank you to the OU’s alumni and donors for giving me a chance not just to change my own life, but also to help educate and inspire my pupils of the future!”



Stuart
Army disabled veteran

Please click here to donate today to help keep education open to more students like Zoe and Stuart.



“

After joining the Royal Navy and serving in all kinds of ships, including in the Falklands, I was devastated when I had to be medically discharged and lost the highly skilled job I loved. I was delighted to be awarded a scholarship and I’m studying towards working in an NHS operational role where I can give back by helping others.

Michaela
Naval disabled veteran and scholarship recipient

”

How your support for the Open Futures Fund today can help more students fulfil their ambitions and give back.

The Open Futures Fund is a vital part of continuing the University's social justice mission to keep education open to all. That's why together we offer scholarships to disabled veterans, carers and those who encounter barriers to getting on in life.

The Fund has already supported so many students to help their careers, build their confidence and start giving back in new ways.

Today, the OU's Open Futures Fund covers a wide range of scholarships, bursaries and financial support for students. These include:



Disabled veterans' scholarships which enable those injured in or due to military service to rewrite their futures



Carers scholarships offering carers the opportunity to transform their lives



Black students' scholarships and bursaries addressing inequality in higher education by helping Black students access life-changing education.

“

I'm now 18, but my mum fell ill when I was just six and I've done more and more of the caring for her. I was over the moon to be awarded an OU scholarship as I couldn't have studied otherwise. I want to use my degree to build a career where I can help others like the OU has helped me!

Ellen
Carer and scholarship recipient



”

Your gift to The Open Futures Fund can help more students unlock their potential.

I am delighted that our Open Futures Fund is making a life-changing difference to many students who might otherwise miss out on a university education and the chance to achieve their ambitions in life.

To date – and thanks entirely to the kindness and generosity of our wonderful alumni and supporters like you – The Open University has awarded 210 scholarships to disabled Veterans and 90 scholarships to carers.

There is much more we can do and many more potential students who really need that same life-changing chance so that they too can fulfil their potential and give back to our society in ways that benefit them, their families and us all.

So please consider giving your valued support to keep education open to all by sending your donation to the Open Futures Fund today. Thank you so much!

Tim Blackman

Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor



Please click [here](#) to donate today to help keep education open to more students like Zoe and Stuart.

Thank you – your support is hugely appreciated by us all!