



The Open
University

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018



Foreword from the Vice-Chancellor

I am so proud to lead this innovative and responsive global university. Open to people, places, methods and ideas.

Our Annual Report tells the story of our year. Page by page, you will discover stories of student commitment, resilience and success, supported by our talented and dedicated people. Together, they show that the OU is a strong, vibrant, relevant and exciting place to study and work as well as a valuable partner.

Throughout the last 50 years, the OU's commitment to its social justice mission has never wavered. This remarkable university has provided hope and opportunity for over 2 million learners globally. As you read on, discover for yourself how we turn the OU's mission into practice by being:

Inclusive: We play a unique role in society, making higher education open to all; and promoting social justice through the development of knowledge and skills. Take a closer look on page 10 to learn more about how, every year, the OU unlocks potential for over 1,400 students in a secure learning environment.

Innovative: We constantly seek new and better ways to inspire and enable learning - it's in our DNA; creating world class research and teaching. Read more on page 39 to discover how the OU's teaching made an impact in Ethiopia.

Responsive: responding to the needs of individuals and employers and the communities in which they live and work; supporting our students' learning success. The OU and BBC's historic partnership captivated millions of viewers with its flagship Blue Planet II and the NHS@70 programmes. Read more on pages 46 and 55.



We are determined to deliver our mission through great teaching and world leading research. Much of this is made possible through our strong partnerships with four-nation governments, industry and not for profit sectors. We value and respect these important relationships.

The far-reaching UK Government Review into post-18 education and funding in England, announced earlier in 2018, marked a critical opportunity for the OU to promote the unique requirements of part-time, mature students. I very much hope the final report will recognise the need for part-time study to support the economy and social mobility, when published early next year.



The OU story, first written 50 years ago, is a phenomenally successful one. Transforming millions of lives along the way, it has the power to transform millions more.

Will you join us?

Mary Kellott

Highlights of the year

Discover through our annual report how we are changing the lives of our students and having an impact on employers and societies across the globe. Most importantly, you will see how we are breaking down the barriers to higher education and opening up education to all.



Student success

6–14 →

Our amazing students continue to make us proud and inspire us. Read the stories from some of our 8,000 students who graduated in the last academic year; find out how one young woman overcame bullying to successfully study with the OU. Discover how we are unlocking the potential of students studying in secure environments, and how a new OU fund is helping disabled veterans access OU courses. And read about the work of the OU Students Association to make sure student voice is heard loud and clear at the OU.

We work hard to increase the satisfaction of our students and we were delighted to see a one percentage point increase in student satisfaction this year, as measured by the National Students Survey, taking us to 87% overall satisfaction and joint 20th out of 139 participating universities. We fared even better in the Nations, with the OU in Northern Ireland ranking in first place, second in Scotland and joint third in Wales.



Research excellence

15–25 →

Unearthing new knowledge for the benefit of all is at the heart of what OU academics strive to do. Our research underpins our teaching, our partnership with the BBC and our free learning resources which reach millions every year. Find out how OU research is helping over 20 police forces in the UK to improve policing; how an OU Child Witness Interview simulator is helping new and early career police officers; how OU research on Mars is identifying whether life ever could have existed there; our work training dogs to sniff out cancer; and important cultural research on protecting heritage in times of war and new digital tools to track people's reading from the 18th century to the present day.



Teaching innovation

26–37 →

We are the UK's only university dedicated to distance learning and our approach means you can study alongside work, caring, or other commitments. Read about how Justice

in Action is giving our law students practical experience and find out how we are helping primary teachers teach languages in the classroom. Discover how we are helping to close the UK's digital skills gap as a partner in the new Institute of Coding and hear from employers about the impact of OU apprenticeships. Read about the reality of being an OU nursing student and see how a unique music course is bringing students together in harmony.

Global impact pages 38–44 →

The OU has been committed to international development for over 20 years. We are globally recognised for our teaching and pioneering research within the sector, and for driving innovation. Our current projects empower teachers, healthcare workers and higher education experts, reaching over two million people around the world. Find out about our innovative learning resources for frontline health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) workers; celebrate the work of one of our leading academics in developing the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme; and see how our African teacher-training continues through the Zambian Education School-based Training (ZEST) project.

Open up learning pages 45–57 →

The OU reaches millions of people across the world through our open access educational resources and our partnership with the BBC. These are core to our social mission and commitment to widening access to education. Read about our highly regarded commissioned television and radio programmes, going behind the scenes of Blue Planet II and seeing how OU academics shaped The NHS at 70 and The Truth About Obesity. Discover the wide range of new OU courses on OpenLearn and FutureLearn, from helping young people with their personal finances to new law courses in Scotland and online resources for citizens of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Thank you to our donors pages 58–61 →

This year we have received more than £5 million in donations, including legacy gifts. Read about the projects our generous donors are supporting, from our Open Networking Lab to scholarships for students in secure environments.

**STUDENT
SUCCESS**





Degree ceremonies: emotional, inspiring, amazing

Our degree ceremonies are always the highlight of the university year because they let us wholeheartedly celebrate the success of our students. This year we celebrated with more than 8,000 graduates at 29 ceremonies in 14 locations. Those 8,000 were joined by over 26,000 guests – supportive family and friends who cheered, clapped, whistled and whooped during each event. And we conferred 34 honorary degrees.





More than a qualification

On her graduation day, Jo (pictured) posted a fantastic message on Instagram for those who are still working towards their goals.

“So today, as I stepped on that stage, I thought of those dear to me no longer here and those who have supported me throughout and realised that my degree is so much more than just a qualification on a piece of paper.

“It gave me a focus when times were tough. It gave me confidence to believe in myself. And it made me realise that whatever obstacle life throws at me, I am stronger for it. So follow your dreams, keep fighting and don’t doubt yourself as one day it’ll all be worth it.”

Matthew, a steelworker and now proud owner of a BA (Honours) in English Language and Literature, said: “When I left college and went in to full time work I felt that I had wasted my chance at academic study as I hadn’t taken my A Levels seriously and therefore couldn’t attend a university with my peers. When I found out about the OU I enrolled.

“I studied purely because I wanted to prove to myself that I could possibly gain a degree. But the discipline that the course instilled in me and the confidence I gained from completing it have shown that the possibilities are endless from both a work and academic point of view.”

“It gave me a focus when times were tough. It gave me confidence to believe in myself. And it made me realise that whatever obstacle life throws at me, I am stronger for it. So follow your dreams, keep fighting and don’t doubt yourself as one day it’ll all be worth it.”

Find out more

Read more [inspiring stories from our students](#)





Welsh OU student wins Womenspire ‘Rising Star’ award



In June, OU in Wales student Charlotte Bailey (pictured) from Treorchy in South Wales won the Rising Star award at this year’s Womenspire awards, hosted by gender equality charity Chwarae Teg.

The Rising Star award recognises young women who have begun working in the last five years, achieving success and demonstrating real potential in the process.

Charlotte achieved 12 A stars in her GCSEs but had to leave the sixth form because she was bullied, and began

studying with the OU without A Level qualifications. Charlotte has used her challenging personal experiences to benefit others – and is tackling social issues affecting children by becoming an active anti-bullying and mental health campaigner.

“I am very proud of what I have already achieved, but to be recognised with such a prestigious award is amazing. It still hasn’t quite sunk in that I won!” said Charlotte.

“There were so many hard-working, talented and inspirational women attending the ceremony. I am hoping to use the award to inspire and encourage more young people to pursue their dreams. You’re never too young to change the world!”

“We are all so proud of Charlotte and what she has achieved with this award and her outstanding work so far,” said Louise Casella, Director of the OU in Wales. “We are so pleased that we were able to offer Charlotte the chance to get a university education - she is a fantastic ambassador for us and for young women in Wales.”

Find out more

Watch Charlotte’s story in [this video](#) featuring her and the other shortlisted nominees
Explore [the OU in Wales](#)





Unlocking potential - supporting students in secure environments

The OU taught 1,400 students in secure environments in 2017/18 on more than 130 courses. This includes people in prisons, secure hospitals, or released on licence. Others had served their sentence but had been released on conditions that would prevent them from conventional study.

All of these students were supported by our Students in Secure Environments (SiSE) teams who have a tough, yet highly rewarding job.

Our SiSE teams in England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland, along with the Registrations team, offer a dedicated service. They carry out taster sessions at roadshows within the secure environments, help students with funding applications, send out study materials, work closely with relevant parties to make study possible and hold secure graduation ceremonies.

“The students we work with are truly at the heart of the OU mission,” says Akila Kassam, SiSE England.

The students always come first; a sentiment that runs strongly across the SiSE teams. “The best thing about working on this team is working with students to support their rehabilitation process and helping them to have a positive experience of education and realise they can do it” said Amy Winter, SiSE Wales.

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But the team is not without its challenges. All secure environments view and value distance learning differently. They have extremely varied IT infrastructures and some students’ digital skills can be very poor, depending on how long they’ve been in their secure environment.

“The students’ circumstances are all very different and even after years of experience between us, we still get new and unusual queries that haven’t cropped up before,” explains Suzie Wylie, SiSE Scotland. “It requires a lot of ad-hoc problem solving, which keeps us on our toes. It’s often the most unusual suggestion that ends up being the solution.”

Find out more

Read more about our work in [secure environments](#)





Making strides for all OU students

The OU Students Association is the community and voice of OU students. It's run by students, for students.

Ensuring the student voice is heard

The OU Students Association is the recognised representative body for OU students. We are committed to working with the University to ensure that students are seen as partners in shaping their studies. Although OU students learn at a distance, we work to ensure they all have the opportunity to be involved in giving their views on the curriculum or institutional change and development.

The Association could not function without its dedicated leadership team of over twenty elected student representatives, who provide direction for our organisation including our President and Deputy President. Crucially the student voice is also heard throughout the University through our dedicated team of volunteers, including individuals who represent student views in decision making committees at every level.

Getting students together

The Association is at the heart of the OU student community – a vibrant and active place where everyone is welcome. From heading to a local meet-up in a coffee shop, to becoming a committee member for a student society, or joining

a club, everyone can get involved. Our aim is to provide students with plenty of opportunities to build links with others who are in the same boat – juggling study alongside busy lives. These connections are vital to support students to achieve their goals.

Supporting OU students

Our student Peer Supporters are trained to help OU students achieve a better study experience. These volunteers offer confidential, non-judgemental support to enable OU students to be the best they can be while studying with us.

Now in its second decade, this important service has been revamped, so it's better than ever and ready to continue supporting OU students through the unique challenges they face.





A conference like no other

2018 saw the OU Students Association host its biennial members' conference. Hundreds of OU students visited campus over a roasting June weekend to vote on crucial decisions about the future of the Association.

Those attending had the chance to make friends and learn more about what the organisation could do for them. Highlights included inspiring speakers, our societies showcase, workshops, a treasure hunt and a community choir.

We're already looking forward to doing it all over again in 2020!

Find out more

Visit the [OU Students Association](#) How OU students' voices are heard [OU Students Association Conference 2018](#)



“The Association is at the heart of the OU student community – a vibrant and active place where everyone is welcome.”



New disabled veterans' study fund launched

In April, the OU launched a new fund for military veterans who have been disabled during, or as a result of, military service.

The OU's Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund enables disabled veterans to study for free with us and receive wraparound specialist disability support and careers advice. It is the first of its kind in the UK.

Up to one in five veterans are discharged due to disabilities. Once they leave military life, the skills they have gained along the way can make a huge contribution to society, both socially and economically. And higher education can help them carve a new career path, and help them develop new skills, knowledge and experience.

The Fund can support courses of all levels, from an introductory access module, up to a complete undergraduate

or postgraduate qualification. There are 100 undergraduate scholarships (or equivalent) worth up to £18,000 each available over the next two years.

Helping people reach their full potential

The OU is renowned for its support of students with disabilities, and has over 24,000 students with declared disabilities. So far the OU has awarded 55 scholarships to veterans who started their studies in October 2018.

One recipient said: "I really do appreciate this opportunity given to me by the OU. To have the ability to study is really intrinsic to my recovery. This gives me a focus and purpose each day with the incentive to progress towards employment I enjoy."





“This is a tremendous opportunity for the OU to give something back to those who have made deep personal sacrifices,” says Mary Kellett, Vice-Chancellor. “I hope that through this scheme we can play a part in helping former members of the armed services reach their full potential through the power of education.”

We are grateful for the generous philanthropic support for the Disabled Veterans’ Scholarship Fund.

The Disabled Veterans’ Scholarship Fund is kindly supported by:

BAE Systems; funded by the Chancellor using LIBOR funds; ABF (The Soldiers’ Charity); The William Allen Young Charitable Trust; Constance Travis Charitable Trust; The Simon Gibson Charitable Trust; The Veterans’ Foundation.

Alumni and OU supporters of the Fund: John Duncan; Gordon Dickinson; David Godson; Colin Hume; Dr Michael James.

Changing lives

The Open University has 2,000 active or former service personnel studying courses. One of our successful graduates is army veteran and Welsh OU graduate John Spence, (pictured above), who this year received the Life Change and Overall Winner of the Year awards at this year’s Inspire! Adult Learning Awards, which celebrate lifelong learning.



Cardiff-born John was bullied at school because he couldn’t read, but with the help of the Army and the OU, graduated with an OU degree in Health Sciences at the age of 46 and now runs his own company training doctors all over the world. John describes graduating as the best moment of his life.

“I now realise the power of education and how one person noticing your strengths can change your life,” said John, as he received his award.

Find out more

Read more about [veterans who studied with the OU](#)

Read more about [John’s story](#)

Find out about the [Disabled Veterans Fund and how to apply](#)



**RESEARCH
EXCELLENCE**





Working with police forces to address future policing challenges

The Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL), led by the OU Business School and working with over 50 academics across all faculties and institutes of the OU, carries out innovative education and research. It works closely with 20 police forces and agencies, which ensure the Centre's work will make a difference on the front line, by informing ways to improve operational and organisational aspects of policing.

The Centre's broad range of research addresses key priorities for the police. Themes include detecting and investigating crime, technology and knowledge management, leadership, management and organisation, and vulnerability and wellbeing.

"The Centre has grown in confidence and ambition over the last couple of years and has attracted a talented range of academics from across the OU," said Professor Jean Hartley, Academic Director of the Centre. "We are forging new ways of working with our 20 police partners, and new ways of producing high quality academic work relevant to policy makers and practitioners."

Ensuring police forces are equipped to train and develop their officers

One of the Centre's projects is funded by the Home Office. Over two years, the OU's Dr Denise Martin, together with the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), will carry out research with all 43 police forces in England and Wales to study ways to transform and enhance their training, learning and development functions. It follows a baseline report that investigated learning and development across policing, to establish how ready police forces are to deliver training needed for new policing challenges.

Providing the tools for officers to become suitably qualified

Another project, led by Dr Matthew Jones, is developing a suite of new policing programmes that respond to the Police Education Qualifications Framework - including the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) and the Degree Holder Entry Programme (DHEP). Both programmes draw on the OU's experience of delivering blended programmes that combine academic and professional learning.



These programmes are part of a wider suite of informal learning opportunities and formal qualifications available through the Centre, enabling continuing professional development for police officers and staff.

Find out more

Read more about the [Centre for Policing Research and Learning's work](#)



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OU's research offers new-generation online police training

The OU's award-winning Child Witness Interview Simulator, a game-based online learning programme, is helping to train the next generation of police officers.

Developed by the OU's Centre for Policing Research and Learning in collaboration with Highskillz Ltd, the simulator complements existing training that new police recruits and early career front-line police officers receive for interviewing witnesses who are children. The simulator is designed to enhance the trainees' communication skills and help them develop good rapport with children.

The simulator cleverly recreates scenarios that officers might encounter in their working life and uses a gaming technique to test and underline key

skills for better results. These were developed alongside police trainers and practitioners. For example, one scenario features a nine-year-old boy who has witnessed an assault and the officer comes to his home to talk to him.

"In the game, there are hints and clues built in to help the officer build a relationship and gain emotional understanding with the child witness, such as how to engage with someone who doesn't seem to want to at first, or is constantly looking at their phone," explains lead OU researcher Dr Anne Adams. "The simulator also gives feedback to the trainee and helps ensure they are collecting the right evidence."

"The simulator aims to reduce the time it takes for new recruits to become competent in interviewing children and help them better understand how





it can take place in the real world,” she explains. “On a practical level, it enriches traditional classroom teaching and enables police forces to provide large-scale training without the need for face-to-face teaching.”

Preparing for front-line policing

“We spent a lot of time with police forces throughout the country to make sure the game is authentic,” she continues. “We want the game to help trainees understand the key points they will need to put into practice. And we have evaluated the game with police so that we can build confidence with new recruits, who are interviewing children for the first time.”

The simulator is already making a difference to trainee police officers, who report they feel a little more prepared for going out and speaking to children and building rapport with them.

Worthy winners of prestigious equality award

This project has also led to Dr Adams and her all-female team being recognised for their outstanding contribution to gender balance – in November 2017, they won the WISE Tech Innovation Award category in the WISE Awards 2017.



The award was presented by patron of WISE, Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal, at a gala dinner in London.

The judges said Dr Adams has seen a gap in training and supporting, and has used accessible technology, simulations, and creative videos to address issues within the police force and schools.

The research project was funded by the College of Policing and HEFCE (Centre for Policing Research and Learning), European Commission, The Leverhulme Trust, ESRC, and EPSRC.

“I’m proud to be recognised for our innovations we have produced with many other people, which develop the OU and other organisations such as the NHS and the police,” said Dr Adams.

Find out more

Read more about the [Centre for Policing Research and Learning’s](#) work in collaboration with [Highskillz Ltd](#)
Read more about the [Child Witness Interview Simulator](#)





We know there's water on Mars - but what else?

In July 2018, OU scientists collectively received over half a million pounds of funding from The UK Space Agency's (UKSA) Aurora programme to find out about the environmental conditions on Mars and whether life could have existed within them.

Using the latest data from current Mars missions, our researchers are now exploring the chemistry of the martian environment to determine if these environments would have been conducive to life, and if so, provide the tools to help us find it.

And it was a busy summer for Mars researchers at the OU - shortly after this funding was awarded, OU scientist Dr Peter Fawdon and his team, together with a number of other scientists,

discovered a series of large fan-shaped sediment deposits on the surface of Mars. This suggests Mars once had large seas on its surface and a water cycle similar to Earth and indicates when the planet's climate changed from being hospitable to the cold desert it is today.

Detecting living organisms through gases

Led by OU scientist Dr Karen Olsson-Francis, a team of OU and University of Essex researchers are using laboratory-based simulation experiments to investigate the potential habitability of Mars and the molecules that could be used as evidence of life.

"We are working to identify gases, including methane and ethane, in the atmosphere, that would signal that life once existed on the planet," explains





Dr Olsson-Francis. “We are particularly interested in methane, because we know levels in the atmosphere change seasonally, and this might be dictated by life.”

Dr Olsson-Francis is working with OU scientist Dr Manish Patel, who developed the NOMAD (Nadir and Occultation for MArS Discovery) instrument - one of the instruments on board the ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO) currently orbiting Mars.

“The findings from this project will inform the data that NOMAD is collecting from the planet itself and crucially, will ensure it is interpreted correctly,” she explains.

“By comparing ours and NOMAD’s data we hope to determine whether methane from Mars comes from life forms or not. And this funding will ensure the process happens much quicker – we’ll be able to compare our results to NOMAD data as soon as it’s collected.”

Understanding conditions on the ‘Red Planet’

The funding is also enabling the OU’s Dr Susanne Schwenger, alongside a large UK team, to study environmental conditions on Mars. She’ll do this by analysing data being collected on the Mars Science Laboratory (MSL) mission – by the Curiosity rover which landed on Mars in 2012 - to find out where energy and essential elements are, and how ‘liveable’ Mars is.

Curiosity is equipped with a series of instruments to investigate the planet. It

has already found variable amounts of methane in the atmosphere, and that Gale Crater, the site where Curiosity landed, was once filled by a lake which dried out about 3.2 billion years ago.

“This latest UKSA grant will enable us to understand the geochemical conditions on Mars, including an area called Vera Rubin Ridge, where Curiosity currently is,” says Dr Schwenger. “We are looking for evidence of chemical reactions called redox reactions. They are a source for energy for microbial life, so it will tell us if life could have existed there.”

“Curiosity is driving through terrain on Mars that has never been investigated before,” she explains. “Taking direct measurements on the ground and analysing them gives us firm evidence if that site was habitable - and if so, what type of microorganisms could have resided there.”

And this grant is helping to shape future space research, at a critical time. “Our findings will help to pave the way for the ESA ExoMars 2020 mission, by predicting what we should look out for,” Dr Schwenger explains. “This grant means our team can continue working on these missions and to be part of the most exciting time of Mars exploration.”

Find out more

Read more about our [research in space science](#). Get involved in our [citizen science project](#) to identify what over 30 million unique objects in space are





Making the most of dogs' amazing abilities to sniff out cancer

In June this year, OU researcher Dr Clara Mancini accompanied a group of incredible dogs to meet Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the charity Medical Detection Dogs.

These amazing dogs have been trained to use their powerful sense of smell to 'sniff out' cancer and other diseases from body fluids, such as urine, sweat or breath. When they recognise the odour in the positive samples, they signal back to their trainers by sitting down in front of them.

Harnessing their amazing smell could lead to a non-invasive way to screen for cancer in people and potentially diagnose it earlier, particularly for cancers which are difficult to diagnose.

Helping the dogs to help us

Dr Mancini has been working with the charity since 2013. She discovered that waiting for dogs to sit down in front of positive samples undermines the potential of what the dogs could do. Sometimes it's not clear what the dog means, so it can be confusing.

"Although this method means the dogs can tell us which samples are positive, they can't tell us more subtle differences, such as what disease stage the sample is from," she explains.

"Also, sitting down in front of samples goes against the dog's natural behaviour."

To get around this problem, Dr Mancini and her team is now working with the charity to develop a canine-computer interface, and they hope it could revolutionise cancer detection. This clever technology uses sensors to capture the sniffing behaviour of the dogs as they investigate the samples. This means they communicate with their trainers in more natural and spontaneous ways, and there's less confusion between them.

"We discovered interaction patterns that match the samples' content," Dr Mancini explains. "We also found that the stronger the dog presses its nose against the sample, the surer the dog is that there are cancer cells in it."

So as well as making cancer detection techniques more reliable, the researchers hope their approach captures the smallest details, beyond a simple 'positive' or 'negative'. They are now developing this technology so it recognises these patterns automatically, and can ultimately reward the dogs when they are correct.



The potential to screen and diagnose several diseases earlier

The team are now working out if this method of screening could be automated – with the charity, they are running a trial to develop algorithms that automatically interpret the data.

“We hope our work will pave the way for ‘artificial noses’,” explains Dr Mancini. “Ultimately, we want these to be used widely to test for different diseases, and potentially spot them earlier.”

And central to this amazing concept is the animal itself. By putting the dog at the heart of the design process, these technologies are harnessing their natural behaviours and choices to make a difference to our health.

Find out more

Watch these incredible dogs in action



“Ultimately, we want these to be used widely to test for different diseases, and potentially spot them earlier.”



Research to uncover what people read from the 18th century to now

An OU English lecturer is part of a €1 million research project to develop digital tools to find out what people read from the 18th century to the present day.

Dr Shafquat Towheed (pictured below), from the OU's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, is the UK lead for the Reading Europe Advanced Data Investigation Tool (READ-IT) project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Joint Programme Initiative for Cultural Heritage.

READ-IT brings together humanities, social sciences and information technology researchers from the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands and the UK, to uncover the rich wealth of information about readers and reading across Europe from 18th century until today. The project team will produce new digital tools to recover, analyse, and showcase the amazing wealth of

readers' responses and make these available for free to the 21st century reading public.

"The new READ-IT project will build upon the success of the OU's acclaimed 'The Reading Experience Database, 1450-1945' (RED), which has been the recipient of three rounds of Arts and Humanities Research Council funding, and contains over 34,000 records of British readers over five centuries," said Dr Towheed. "The new development work on READ-IT will allow us to produce brand new digital tools to examine and explain the reading history of people across the whole of Europe – and thereby return a hidden history of reading back to the European public."

Find out more

Explore [READ-IT](#)

Read more about [Dr Towheed's research into books and RED](#)





Developing principles to guide protection of cultural property in times of war

All British military personnel are bound by the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which entered British law in December 2017. Failing to protect cultural property or damaging it unless there is a military necessity to do so, will be a war crime.

But how do we protect culture and heritage in war zones, while making human life a priority?

This dilemma is now being addressed by OU research. OU Professor of Philosophy Derek Matravers has been awarded over £400,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to study the ethics of protecting symbols of culture and identity in war zones.

He will work with philosophy of war specialist Professor Helen Frowe who is the Director of the Stockholm Centre for the Ethics of War and Peace. Together, they'll formulate the principles and guide the practice of cultural protection.

During the three-year Heritage in War Project, Professors Matravers and Frowe want to find out:

- When it is acceptable to intentionally damage sites of cultural property in war

- What can be done to protect this cultural property and at what cost
- What the appropriate response is to damaged sites of cultural property.

"This is a tricky philosophical issue, as people are reluctant to push saving buildings as opposed to people," said Professor Matravers. "A recent example of this dilemma was whether to put a sniper in a mosque tower which would deliver a military advantage, but also make the mosque a target and thus liable to be destroyed."

The project will result in a 'Framework Document' that outlines the principles behind Cultural Property Protection (CPP) and 'Codes of Conduct' for the military; and a course for members of the military, NGOs, and other interested parties to use.

Find out more

Watch [Professor Matravers' inaugural lecture](#)



TEACHING INNOVATION





Justice in Action

The Law School's new Open Justice Centre provides free legal advice and guidance to people and groups who may struggle to access appropriate legal support through other means.

A good example is through its optional module *W360: Justice in Action* which explores social justice, professional identity and legal values and ethics. To develop their key legal, employability and personal skills, students work in small groups on a practical pro bono activity. They can provide advice in an online law clinic, run face-to-face legal information sessions in a school or prison, or carry out other online activities to promote legal awareness and social justice.

Students on the module's first presentation have been involved in the new Centre's Law Clinic, five prison projects, 15 school presentations, externships in civil courts and Citizens Advice, as well as in the inaugural [Open Justice Week](#) – an e-festival of public legal education.

Find out more

Explore our [Open Justice Centre](#)





New scheme to help teachers teach languages in the classroom

In June, an innovative distance learning scheme that teaches primary teachers languages and gives them the skills to teach them to their pupils was launched across Scotland.

In the programme, the first of its kind in the UK, primary teachers study French, Spanish, German or Mandarin and learn how to teach the language in the classroom at the same time.

The programme is a partnership between the OU and SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages based at the University of Strathclyde. Following a successful pilot featuring 54 teachers from 49 schools across nine local authorities, the programme is now available to primary school teachers in all local authorities. It is designed to support the Scottish Government's '1+2' language policy, which aims to enable all pupils to learn two additional languages from primary level onwards.

“Teachers in every part of Scotland – whether urban or rural – will be able to learn together and share their experiences and ideas, helping each other to bring the language they're learning to life in the classroom.”

The programme will also link up with the cultural organisations of France, Spain, Germany and China to facilitate immersive summer schools for participating teachers. Schools will also have the opportunity to make connections with schools in the countries whose language pupils are learning.



Pupils at Tomintoul Primary School in Moray, using their new skills in German



“The key thing about this programme is its flexibility,” said Dr Sylvia Warnecke, lecturer in languages and programme lead at the OU. “Teachers in every part of Scotland – whether urban or rural – will be able to learn together and share their experiences and ideas, helping each other to bring the language they’re learning to life in the classroom.”

“Teachers from the pilot project tell us their pupils love it and are really engaged,” she continues. “They have started after school language clubs and made links with schools in other countries. It’s exciting that all teachers, schools and pupils in every part of Scotland now have the chance to learn together through this programme.”

“This as an important collaboration between our two universities, local authorities and teachers,” said Fhiona Mackay, Director of SCILT. “The course is focused on boosting teachers’ confidence so they can create exciting and motivating lessons for their pupils. In this way we can make sure that languages feature as an integral part of the Scottish curriculum and that youngsters are given their full entitlement to language learning.”

“We are delighted to be able to take part, as it provides a quality learning experience for teachers who would otherwise find it difficult to access language training,” says Gwen McCrossan, Principal Teacher for 1+2 Languages, Argyll & Bute. “The course is also unique because it is tailor-made for primary schools.”

Such was the interest in the programme that teachers from Wales and Northern Ireland joined the presentation which started in October 2018.

Find out more:

Explore [the OU in Scotland](#)

Try out a [new language](#)





Institute of Coding launches at House of Lords



In June, OU academics joined guests at the House of Lords to launch the Institute of Coding (IoC) – a unique consortium which brings together industry and academia to develop the next generation of digital talent and close the UK’s digital skills gap.

The OU is one of the key partners within the network of 25 academic institutions and 60 businesses that will work together to do this, through degrees, degree apprenticeships, short courses, continuing professional development, innovative learning facilities and other outreach activities. We are leading on graduate employability and the teaching of computer science, data science and cyber security in universities. Our experience in delivering innovation and driving social mobility will encourage people of all backgrounds to study IT and computing.

Backed by £20 million from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (now UK Research and Innovation) and

£20 million of matched funding from partners, this consortium will ensure employers and learners of all ages across the UK can access the skills training they need.

Giving many people an opportunity

The Open University’s project lead for the Institute of Coding, Professor John Domingue said “We are looking forward to working on how industry and academia can come together to address the digital skills gap for the benefit of the UK economy, and for individual learners striving to fulfil their true potential.”

Find out more

Learn more about the [OU’s research and teaching in Cyber Security](#)

Take a look at the [Knowledge Media Institute’s website](#)

OpenLearn has [free resources, articles and interactives](#) on computing

Read about one of our [inspiring students who got his dream job in IT](#) thanks to the OU





Unique music course brings students together in harmony

Students from 22 to 72 came together for a week of music making as part of a unique course offered by Trinity Laban Conservatoire and the OU.

OU students on the course were set to complete their Arts and Humanities degree by attending the residential finish of the module. The course – *Certificate: The Practice of Music Making* – is the only one of its kind in the UK, delivered online with a week-long residential where people from all backgrounds from across the country come together to work in groups for the week.

A celebratory concert

Professor Ian Fribbance, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences went along to the celebratory

concert at the end of the residential week and found it a powerful student experience to witness.

“After the concert was over I chatted with many of the students and what came across again and again was their sheer love for the OU, its teaching materials, the tutors, and its various support systems,” he said. “Many of them told me how it had changed their lives and was the only opportunity they could have to undertake higher education study.”

Students came from all walks of life including professional musicians, an Army bandsman, a Church chorister; and between them performed classical, pop, blues and choral music.





Aiming for a career change

IT developer Matt Wilkey, 45, is studying for a BA in Humanities with Music, but aims to convert this to a BA Music degree when the course comes online later this year. He wants to retrain to be a secondary school music teacher, and says that the distance learning experience isn't impacting on family life.

"I've enjoyed the flexibility of distance learning and so far have managed to avoid too much disruption to my family life," Matt explains. "I've had to develop time-management, discipline and self-reliance. I'm very grateful to have developed these and I would say that this course has developed these kind of characteristics just as much as my musicality."

“I've enjoyed the flexibility of distance learning and so far have managed to avoid too much disruption to my family life.**”**

Find out more

Study music with the OU
Free resources and materials on
[OpenLearn](#)





Apprenticeships – a perfect fit for the OU

The OU has a strong heritage in work-based learning. Employability of our students is a key pillar of our strategy so working directly with employers to deliver apprentice programmes to meet their workplace needs is an ideal fit.

Our goal is to be the UK's leading provider of higher and degree apprenticeships where we have the ability to do so; and 2017/18 saw us take a significant step forward. During the year we introduced seven higher and degree apprenticeships in England, along with three graduate apprenticeships in Scotland.

The impact of OU apprenticeships

Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust has been working with the OU for two years to provide work-based learning to their employees and is a centre of excellence in Lincolnshire for apprenticeships. See why Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust chose to work with us and hear from Lee Gifford, Chartered Manager Degree Apprentice, in this video:



Travis Perkins is the UK's largest builder's merchants and chose the OU for developing and upskilling their workforce through higher and degree apprenticeships. Chris Walker,





Chartered Manager Degree Apprentice explains how he is developing his skillset and work productivity through the apprenticeship:



New software and cyber security Graduate Apprenticeships

The OU will offer Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs) in Software Development and Cyber Security, starting in Autumn 2018. Known for its flexible approach and expertise in work-based learning, the OU's GAs are designed to meet the needs of both employers and employees.

The OU's new GAs – which are funded by Skills Development Scotland and are available to existing and new employees of all ages – mean that apprentices can learn at work, increasing efficiency and reducing time away from the workplace.

Both Cyber Security and Software Development will be offered at undergraduate level, with Cyber Security also available at postgraduate level.

“Helping people to get on in work is what we do at the OU”, said Susan Stewart, Director of the OU in Scotland. “We understand what it takes to study and work at the same time and we offer the support learners need to succeed.”

“These new Graduate Apprenticeships take our expertise in computing and information technology and our long experience of supporting students in work and combine them to produce something which works for employers and employees alike, developing skills and improving productivity.”

Find out more

Read more about our work on [apprenticeships](#)

See how we [work with organisations](#)





A year to celebrate the OU's nursing successes

2018 has been a busy year for OU nursing. It's seen staff and students win awards, and was the inspiration behind the OU's most successful social media campaign to date - #nursing360.

OU's history of nursing expert joins the RCN's roll of honour

In May, the OU's Dr Claire Chatterton (pictured below) received a Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Award of Merit for her sterling services to nursing. She was commended for her exceptional contribution to the RCN and the international recognition she has for her nursing history expertise. As a result, Claire now joins the RCN Award of Merit Roll of Honour, alongside the great and the good of the nursing world.



Triple awards success in Northern Ireland

In June, the OU celebrated triple success at this year's Royal College of Nursing Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year awards, with OU students Craig Chambers and Philip Martin (pictured above) jointly scooping the Health Care Support Worker award.

These awards highlight excellence within nursing in Northern Ireland and celebrate the contributions that nurses and health care assistants make to the health and well-being of the people in the region.

Health Care Assistant Craig is currently studying nursing with the OU. "I felt very honoured to be nominated for the award, he said. "To be chosen by the Royal College of Nursing to represent the work we health care assistants do in Northern Ireland has been the highlight of my career."



The same day Health Care Assistant Philip received the award, he also learnt he had gained a place on the OU's pre-registration nursing programme. "Philip is the essence of a caring professional and a role model for other health care assistants," said Cait McGoldrick from the Southern Trust, who nominated Philip for the award. "His commitment to his own development, his awareness of patient care and his ability to advocate on behalf of patients is exceptional."

The same night, OU honorary graduate Professor Martin Bradley, former Chief Nursing Officer, received the Outstanding Achievement Award.

"It's great to see three amazing ambassadors for nursing acknowledged for their impact on patient care," said OU graduate David Ferran, previous winner of RCN Student Nurse of the Year and Chair of NI Men in Nursing. "It highlights the impact men can have on nursing, patients and their families and will hopefully encourage more men to join the profession."

#nursing360 – our social media awareness campaign

In May, we launched our #nursing360 campaign to raise awareness of areas within nursing. Over a two week period, our award-winning social media team shared a variety of content about nursing across our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels, including myth busters, student stories, animations, free courses and ethical dilemmas. And the campaign included one of our most-shared social media posts - five things you shouldn't say to someone with depression – which we posted again on World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September. To make sure we were balanced, we followed that post with another, containing five things you should say!



#nursing360



Telling the OU's nursing story through personal stories

An important part of the campaign was telling real life stories, including OU nursing students and graduates, and lecturers.

OU Lecturer and registered adult nurse Dr Gemma Ryan told us how she juggles her two roles and about the benefits it brings to her students.

Second year student Rebecca Reffold (pictured above) told us how she is studying with the OU, training to be a nurse and being a busy mum at the same time. Rebecca believes the OU has opened doors that are changing her whole life.

Demelza Dachtler told us how OU study has made her so much better at her day-to-day job and helped her climb the military ranks to Sergeant – and is now doing postgraduate study.

Teaching the world about the realities of nursing

The campaign also enabled us to shed light on OU nursing and different areas of health.

The OU's Sheila Counihan told us about learning disability and what's special about learning disability nursing. We debunked several myths about dementia, and unveiled the reality of being an OU nursing student.

In May, we reported results of the OU's commissioned research, which revealed the cost of the nursing shortage to the NHS. The report called for alternative ways to train to be a nurse, including flexible study and apprenticeships.

Find out more

Read [Gemma's story as a teacher and nurse](#)

Learn how [Rebecca is juggling study with motherhood](#)

Explore how [the OU is helping Demelza climb the ranks](#)

Learn why [learning disability nursing is different](#)



GLOBAL IMPACT





Thirst for knowledge

In the global south, improving access to clean drinking water should go hand in hand with better sanitation and good hygiene.

But unfortunately, the reality is that across the world 2.1 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services and 4.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene – known collectively as WASH – has profound health and wider socio-economic impacts, particularly for women and girls. For example, more than 340,000 children under five die every year from diarrhoeal diseases due to poor sanitation, poor hygiene, or unsafe drinking water – that’s almost 1,000 per day. And fetching water from a long distance and having to use open areas as a toilet can leave women and girls vulnerable to abuse and sexual assault.

WASH is a high priority – it’s one of the targets within the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, and access to safe water and sanitation are human rights. Supporting the development of well-resourced, capable institutions that can deliver the education and training required to achieve sustainable improvements in WASH systems is an important goal.



The OU making an impact - introducing OpenWASH

“The original plan was to explore the potential for applying OU teaching techniques to WASH education to improve the knowledge and skills of people working in the sector; that was the start of OpenWASH” explains OpenWASH Academic Director Pam Furniss. “After a gradual development stage, we formed a partnership with World Vision Ethiopia and UNICEF and, with funding from the Department for International Development, in 2016, the team produced a set of high-quality learning resources for the WASH sector. The original project delivered five modules for use in Ethiopia and there’s a Trainers’ Handbook that describes different ways the modules can be used for teaching and training. All the resources are available in English in print and online.”



The OU played a key role by using distance learning expertise to support development of the new WASH curriculum. “We work with in-country expert authors to create the new modules - they provide the local knowledge and context and we bring the techniques to put the ‘teacher in the text’,” says Pam. “The OpenWASH resources are now being used in colleges where there aren’t enough qualified staff to teach the students who are looking to work in the WASH sector in Ethiopia. The modules are also being used for professional development courses aimed at people already working in the industry. And in July this year, working with the international NGO WaterAid, we published a new module called *Count me in! Inclusive WASH in Ethiopia*, which is about equality and accessibility to WASH services for all.”

Working together

Pam had the idea for OpenWASH back in December 2010. “I was in Addis Ababa working on another OU project when I had the idea,” she explains. “It’s been a long time since it started. So many people have been involved and have worked hard to make it happen. There were 15 Ethiopian authors originally and another two on the new module, with five OU academics from STEM Faculty, plus the project manager and project coordinator from the OU’s International Development Office, as



well as other OU colleagues and the people from our partner organisations.”

“As OU academics, we have skills in writing for learning and teaching expertise that we sometimes don’t realise we have. We can use them to work with others to help reach large numbers of learners, and the people we work with value what we bring. We’ve had a lot of positive feedback from the authors in Ethiopia who really appreciated the experience and the learning they got from it.”

OpenWASH’s impact beyond Ethiopia

There are plans afoot to extend the benefits of OpenWASH wider, to other countries.



“As OU academics, we have skills in writing for learning and teaching expertise that we sometimes don’t realise we have. We can use them to work with others to help reach large numbers of learners, and the people we work with value what we bring.”

“It’s great to think our OpenWASH modules can be used and adapted for WASH projects around the world,” says Pam.

Pam’s involvement doesn’t end there. “I’m planning to visit some of the colleges where the modules are being used to evaluate our programme, and to promote the new module,” she says. “I hope OpenWASH will have a lasting impact on the future of WASH in Ethiopia and beyond.”

Find out more

Read more about [OpenWASH and other international development projects](#)
Take a look at the [OpenWASH modules](#)
See the [United Nations water facts](#)





Celebrating the OU's teacher education work in developing countries

In June this year, the OU's Emeritus Professor of Education Bob Moon was awarded a CBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours List for his pioneering work in teacher education in developing countries. The award also recognises Professor Moon's global advisory work.

Formerly a headteacher, Professor Moon (pictured right) joined the OU in 1987 and was instrumental in introducing teacher education and training. The OU's PGCE ran for 25 years and helped thousands of mature students qualify as teachers.

He then extended his work abroad, setting up the OU's first international teacher training initiative, the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme.

Africa's biggest teacher training scheme

Millions of teachers in Africa have benefited from TESSA, which has become the continent's biggest and longest running international teacher training project.

For nearly 20 years TESSA has worked successfully in some of the poorest countries of the world, and its success led directly to the equivalent programme in India, TESS-India, and the award-winning 'English in Action' programme



led by the OU in Bangladesh, both supported by the Department for International Development (DFID).

"I'm really proud to have received recognition for the ground-breaking research and development made possible by the OU and other organisations," said Professor Moon. "The OU has played a lead role in teacher education and training across the developing world and is now the principal expert in teacher training in developing countries."

Find out more

Read more about [TESSA and the OU's international development work](#)





OU's African teacher training continues through ZEST

In October 2017, the Zambian Education School-based Training (ZEST) project began, to help primary school teachers develop their skills.

Led by the OU in Scotland with support from the International Development Office, the programme will reach 4,000 teachers across Zambia's Central Province and will help to improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences for children in primary schools in the area. It will create and implement a scalable, school-based teacher development programme.

ZEST has been co-designed with Zambian teachers, building on existing practice and supporting an active, learner-centred approach to teaching which will improve learning outcomes in Zambia.





And alongside their partners in World Vision, OU researchers delivered the first large-scale workshops for all teachers within schools in the Central Province in May – that’s over 200 primary and headteachers from 17 schools. Feedback so far has been good, and it has been a very fulfilling and positive experience for the OU researchers.

“Quality primary education is critical to the economic and social wellbeing of Zambia, and we are delighted to receive this grant of nearly £1.3 million from the Scottish Government to help make that a reality,” said Susan Stewart, Director of the OU in Scotland. “Building on the OU’s skills and experience of education and teacher training across Africa, we will work with World Vision Zambia and Zambia’s Ministry of General Education to create an online professional development programme for primary school teachers across Zambia, focused on enabling

them to take a student-centred approach to teaching.”

“Scotland is determined to take a stand in the fight against global poverty, injustice and inequality,” added Dr Alasdair Allan, the Minister for International Development at the Scottish Government. “This project will make a real and lasting difference to Zambian communities.”

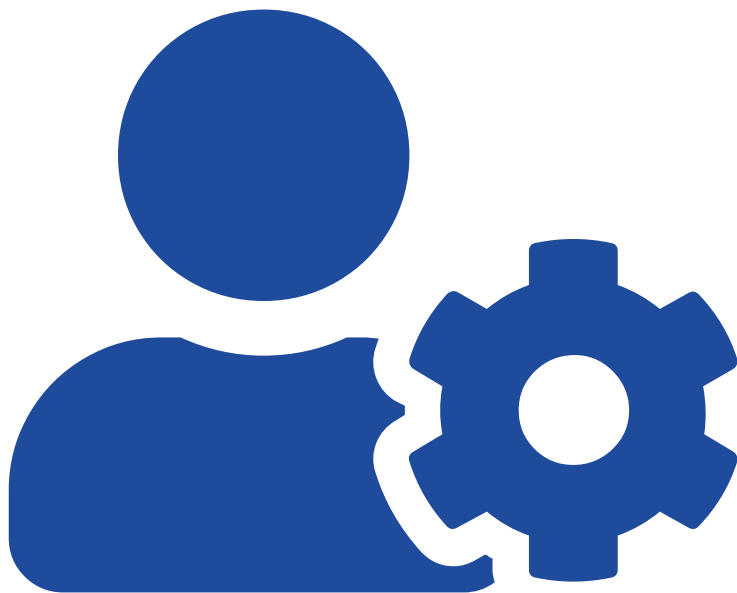
Find out more

Read more about the [workshops that have taken place](#)

“ This project will make a real and lasting difference to Zambian communities. ”



OPEN UP LEARNING





New series of Blue Planet II captivates millions of viewers

At the end of 2017, the new series of *Blue Planet II*, produced by the BBC Natural History Unit in partnership with the OU, brought the wonders of our planet's oceans to our screens.

The programme used breakthroughs in marine science and cutting-edge technology to explore new worlds and reveal the very latest discoveries across our planet; from the Arctic and Antarctic to the coral reefs of the tropical oceans.

Whilst we all remember the stunning images of giant turtles, whales and fish leaping out of the water to pluck birds from the sky – it brought home a real message about how much we are still to discover, how fragile this environment is, and how much damage humans are unwittingly doing. Amazing

images of new life being formed at deep sea vents was balanced by shocking images of albatross parents unwittingly feeding their chicks plastic.

Narrated by Sir David Attenborough, it proved a big hit with so many people, including younger audiences - the first episode was watched by 14 million people throughout the UK, including 2.3 million viewers aged between 16 and 34.

But what does working in partnership with the BBC actually mean?

OU academics shape the series

The seven-episode series was supported academic consultants from the OU, who worked closely with the BBC to make the programme, as well as help to create a wealth of resources to support it.





Polar oceanographer Professor Mark Brandon and palaeoceanographer Dr Phil Sexton were part of the OU academic consultant team on Blue Planet II. They have spent years working in oceans all around the world including Antarctica, the Atlantic and the Arctic.

“We know less about the shape of the ocean floor than we do about the surface of Mars and Venus,” said Professor Brandon.

To mark British Science Week in March, they brought the wonders of Blue Planet II to Wales – when they both gave a talk to over 200 people at the National Museum in Cardiff. They talked about their experiences of working on the programme, the science behind the series, and the enormous impact the programmes have had on public behaviour and environmental awareness.

Hosted by the OU in Wales in partnership with the Learned Society of Wales, the lecture covered the lessons we can learn for the future by studying our oceans, the impact of climate change on our oceans and the food chain, the scientific research that drove the programme making, and the impact that the series has had on our awareness of plastics and other pollution.

Capturing the wonders of the deep on a wall poster

As well as bringing audiences closer to an array of fascinating creatures and environments on screen, the programme created huge demand for our Oceans wall poster, with nearly half a million people requesting a copy.

The poster has been seen on classroom walls, and even on dentist’s ceilings for you to see from the chair!

Designer and illustrator Glen Darby, who designed the Oceans poster.





“I try and make it so people will learn something from every poster.”

But the poster is not simply a few pictures – behind the scenes at the OU, many hours of hard work have gone in to producing this much-loved resource.

“The process starts when the whole team sit around the table to discuss ideas,” says designer and illustrator Glen Darby, who designed the poster. “I try to drive the concept, by sketching out concepts while we talk, and we agree on a couple of ideas to take forward. I try and make it so people will learn something from every poster.”

Glen brings the ideas back to his desk and works them up to a place where academics can add facts and information to them. “For the Oceans poster, once we had agreed the concept of sea depth, the academics chose a range of sea creatures, found out what depth they

are found, and provided me with details about them,” he explained.

Once he had these details, Glen sat and painstakingly hand drew each animal digitally. “The pictures took such a long time to draw,” he said. “But once they were complete, I sent them back to the academics to check my drawings were accurate, and that each sea creature was in the right place. Then the academics wrote the text to accompany the pictures, working to a word count that I gave them. It’s quite a long process and there was quite a lot of back and forth, but it has to be right.”

And this quest to make sure the poster is accurate and represents the ocean floor correctly has paid off. “It’s great when so many people see it and love it,” says Glen. “The Oceans posters simply flew out of the door!”



A wealth of online resources

Blue Planet II has also led to a joint BBC/OU online platform called **Plastics Watch**, which brings together engaging and interactive content to help us understand plastics, the impact they have on the environment, and top tips to reduce our reliance on single-use plastics.

“Plastics Watch is a great legacy from *Blue Planet II* and we are delighted to have the opportunity to use our extensive expertise in this area to support the campaign,” said Dr Caroline Ogilvie, Head of Broadcasting and Partnerships at the OU. “Public engagement initiatives like this are a fundamental part of the great partnership between the OU and the BBC.”

An inspiration for research – Project Deep Blue

Blue Planet II has also led the OU to launch **Project Deep Blue** – which will support students by funding two projects.

In the first project, a PhD student will study how the marine ecosystem will be impacted in the future by climate. They'll do this by assessing the impact of climate on evolution of marine phytoplankton - the food source for most of the marine ecosystem. They'll study how warm climate during the Pliocene period influenced phytoplankton diversity, and the key climate-forcing factors that influenced their evolution.

The second project will provide the funds for 300 undergraduate students in the Environment, Earth and Ecosystem Sciences department to complete their field studies, and develop the right skills and talents to become the researchers of the future.

Find out more

Download our [Oceans poster](#)

Visit the [Plastic planet](#) hub on OpenLearn, which offers articles, free courses, and videos about plastics – what they are made of, and the issues and solutions to pollution.

Visit [Plastics Watch](#)





New course to help young people with their personal finances

In November 2017, thanks to the support of the Chartered Accountants Livery Company Charity, The True Potential Centre for the Public Understanding of Finance in the OU Business School launched a free online personal finance course for young people in response to research stating that one in seven 17 year olds have already racked up debts.

Hosted on its digital platforms OpenLearn and FutureLearn, *Managing My Money for Young Adults* aims to provide essential support 16 to 18 year olds as they become responsible for their own financial future.

The OU teamed up with BBC University Challenge star Bobby Seagull, (pictured bottom right), and MoneySavingExpert's Martin Lewis to deliver the course, which comprises eight bite-sized, video-based sessions of learning and quizzes. Each session takes around three hours to complete.

The course provides dedicated learning materials for young adults and teachers to support personal finance education as part of the national curriculum. It has already been viewed by tens of thousands of 16 to 18 year olds, either studying alone or in groups at school or college.

It includes topics such as:

- Earning money and understanding tax
- Savvy shopping and budgeting
- Preparing for life after school
- Living in shared households
- Understanding debt and how to borrow wisely
- Credit ratings and how to protect them
- Planning for later life such as buying a home and pensions.

“This course really bolsters financial education in schools by offering students and teachers a format they can study when it’s convenient for them,” said True Potential PUFIn’s Director Martin Upton. “While debt has its place in society and it’s not always negative, we are on a mission to ensure informed financial decisions are made before the dominos of debt start to tumble.”

Find out more

Visit [FutureLearn](#) to see the course





OU unveils free courses on law in Scotland

During the year the OU released a suite of free courses on law in Scotland.

The courses - *The Scottish Parliament and law-making*, *Scottish courts and the law*, *Legal skills and debates in Scotland*, and *Law and change: Scottish legal heroes* – come twenty years on from the historic vote for devolution and are intended to aid public understanding of the law and legal institutions.

The courses explore Scotland’s constitutional position, the law-making process in Scotland, and how developments such as the establishment of the UK Supreme Court have affected Scotland’s distinctive legal system.

Annabelle Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, said: “This new online resource provides

a fantastic opportunity for those interested in law making in Scotland to gain an understanding of Scots law and the legal processes that underpin our system overall.

“I hope that these courses inspire and encourage people from all walks of life to take up free learning and give them the opportunity to progress onto further flexible learning course in the future.

“I am pleased that the funding allocated from the Scottish Government to the Open University is being used in an innovative way”.

Find out more

Explore free [courses on law in Scotland](#)





New online resources for citizens in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

This year, the OU in Ireland launched two new free learning resources on the OpenLearn website, aiming to inspire local citizens and encourage them to learn about their heritage.

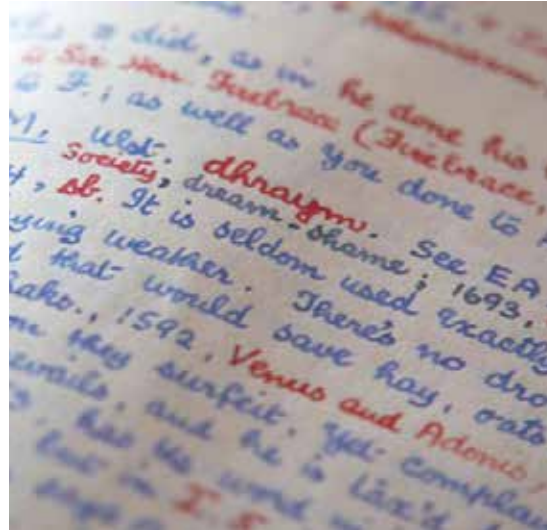
Languages of Ulster

The acclaimed three-part BBC/OU documentary series *Languages of Ulster* went on air in November 2017 and explored Ulster's unique linguistic traditions – Irish Gaelic, northern Hiberno English and Ulster-Scots – and the relationship between them. Four OpenLearn videos followed. Some 64,500 people watched the series on TV and BBC iplayer and the online resources received over 11,000 views.

Those at the launch event in Belfast watched a short montage of clips from the programme, before a panel discussion with some of the key contributors to the series and experts in Irish and Ulster Scots. These included Michael Fanning from *Below the Radar* TV, local historian and author Laura Spence, Pauline Holland from Queen's University Belfast and broadcaster Máire Bhreathnach.

Reflections on the Good Friday Agreement

In 2018, the OU launched a free online documentary-style video called *Reflections on the Good Friday*



Agreement, to celebrate 20 years since this historic peace accord was signed.

This free learning resource captures the reflections of a range of contributors who were both involved in making the Good Friday Agreement, and those who were opposed to it. Some were key players in the negotiations, including Senator George J. Mitchell, Bertie Ahern, David Trimble and Jonathan Powell.

Found on OpenLearn, the video is aimed at people interested in learning more about the Agreement, and its impact on citizens and society 20 years after it was made. It has had nearly 2,000 views.

Find out more

Explore [OpenLearn's resources](#)





OpenLearn achievements this year

Launched in 2006, OpenLearn is the home of free learning from the OU. It plays an invaluable role in introducing potential students to the world of study, and in supporting existing students to develop their study and employability skills. In 2018, OpenLearn achieved an incredible milestone – reaching 60 million visitors!

Achievements in 2017/18

- 44,000 visitors daily
- 7.8m unique visitors
- 4.5m viewed a free course
- 2.6m viewed interactive and AV content
- 1.2 million viewed BBC related content (Blue Planet II accounted for around half)

Most popular courses

- Start Writing Fiction
- Introduction to Bookkeeping and Accounting
- Introduction to Child Psychology
- Getting Started on Classical Latin
- Forensic Psychology

Top 5 games and quizzes

- Slip, slide, collide
- Take the photographic memory test
- Ocean Explorer
- History of English in 10 minutes
- PhotoFit me

Find out more

Search over 1,000 free courses, interactives, videos and more





FutureLearn marks fifth anniversary with news of postgraduate degrees with OU

FutureLearn, the OU's social learning platform, celebrated its fifth birthday in March by announcing plans to host postgraduate degree courses from the OU.

The announcement was made during a celebratory reception at the Houses of Parliament sponsored by the OU's Chancellor, Baroness Martha Lane-Fox, CBE (pictured below).

Building on its history in providing high-quality Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for FutureLearn learners, the OU plans to deliver postgraduate qualifications through FutureLearn, initially providing up to five qualifications. The first qualification, the postgraduate Certificate in Open and Distance Education, will be presented in February 2019.

"I feel extremely proud of the UK for creating FutureLearn as distinct from some of the other organisations that are doing this kind of online learning," said Baroness Lane-Fox in her welcome address. "It is so important that we continue to challenge ourselves about the best way to learn, that we continue to improve, change and innovate around the way we learn. FutureLearn is the best example of that."

FutureLearn now has over **7.5 million** learners in over **230 territories** around the world and **155 partners**, including **95** of the top universities in the world today. It also provides the common platform underpinning a **£40 million** project from the Institute of Coding, alongside the OU, and a **£20 million** government funded Cyber Discovery programme aimed at teaching teenagers cyber security skills.

Find out more

Explore what's available on [FutureLearn](#)





A busy year for the BBC and OU production team

It was a busy year for health programmes – the same year one of the UK’s best loved institutions, the NHS, turned 70. OU academics played a key role in shaping these programmes and making them insightful and informative for viewers around the world.

Marking the 70th birthday of the NHS

To celebrate this important milestone and the vital role the NHS plays in our lives, the OU and the BBC co-produced three programmes that went on air in the summer.

First up was ***NHS at 70 – Live*** - a one-off live show on 26 June. Presented by Anita Rani and Nick Robinson (pictured top right), the live programme posed questions in front of an audience of patients and NHS professionals. They asked about how good the NHS is at keeping us alive compared to other countries, how much money the NHS really needs to keep healthcare free, and how the NHS reinvents itself for the future.

Next up was ***The People vs the NHS: Who Gets the Drugs?***, which followed the incredible story of the battle for PrEP, a HIV drug, on the NHS. OU academic and public health expert Dr Peter Keogh helped to shape the programme, and wrote a news article that explains [more](#).



The programme explores the hugely complex decisions facing a cash strapped health service in one of the most difficult periods in its history. How are decisions about what and what not to fund made? What is the NHS for, and what should it be in 2018?

Early July saw a three-part series called ***The NHS: A People’s History*** on our screens. The programme told the story of the NHS through the voices of the people whose lives it has affected, from its birth in 1948 to the present day.





The NHS' 70th birthday is such an important occasion to mark. ”



“I really enjoyed being involved in this exciting programme, which tells the story of the NHS' 70 years through the eyes of those working within it and those whose lives are or have been shaped by it as patients and relatives,” explains the OU's history of nursing expert Dr Claire Chatterton, who played a key role in shaping the programme. “The NHS' 70th birthday is such an important occasion to mark.”

Spotlight on the obesity epidemic

In April, two new BBC series co-produced with the OU explored our national obesity epidemic, and what it means to be obese today. According to the *Health Survey for England* obesity levels in England have nearly doubled in the last 25 years, and nearly two thirds of adults were overweight or obese in 2015.

In *Britain's Fat Fight with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall*, Hugh confronted one of the UK's biggest health crises, by examining and exposing how consumers are being misled by packaging and portion sizes, and bombarded by junk food advertising.

The Truth About Obesity looked at the latest scientific research on obesity. While a fast food culture and our own genes have led to our expanding waistlines, small changes can help us all maximise the chances of keeping trim.

A close partnership with the OU

“*Britain's Fat Fight* is an informative series that addressed some of the key challenges of adult and childhood obesity, and showed how the whole community must support each other to tackle it,” said the OU's Dr Joan Simons, who was closely involved in developing both programmes.

“As obesity becomes more common, we can become immune to it and even fail to recognise it because it has become more accepted as the norm,” she explains. “*The Truth About Obesity* programme helped us judge if we need to lose weight and gave some useful tips how to go about it in our everyday lives.”

Dr Simons created some brilliant supportive content for our OU News website about the programme, and for OpenLearn.



The Truth about Obesity (image courtesy of the BBC)

Find out more

You can read more [about obesity and why it's a challenge](#). Find out if obesity is inevitable.

Find out about The Open University's [nursing and healthcare courses](#).

Explore [OpenLearn](#) for free resources and an interactive to ask [what healthcare you would fund](#).

Learn more about obesity and balanced diets by [completing our free online course](#).

“As obesity becomes more common we can become immune to it.”



**THANK YOU TO
OUR DONORS**





Generously supporting education

In the last year 9,448 alumni, trusts, foundations, companies and individuals have supported our mission to open up education to all. The OU has received more than £5 million in donations, including over £818,000 legacy gifts.

A legacy gift of more than £165,000 from alumnus Anthony Van West contributed to the £1.8 million raised for the Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund, giving those leaving the British armed forces opportunity to harness their full potential.

Flexible Learning Fund

The UK Government's £11.4million Flexible Learning Fund, will invest in a range of projects to help more adults back into the classroom and learning new skills. Supporting 31 innovative projects across England, the fund will encourage more people to take part in new training or courses that will help them progress in current employment or secure a new job. Projects are aimed at a range of skill levels, from teaching beginners all the way through to those who already have a good understanding of a topic.

As one of the 31 successful projects, the OU is working with three regional FE colleges, community partners including Unison and WEA, as well as Reed Recruitment and Impetus to deliver foundation entry Level 1 and 2

functional skills in English and Maths through access to free, online and (for-fee) college based, blended learning approaches.

Thanks to the support of Dangoor Education, the OU will also be able to enhance the quality of the materials produced and enhance the range and scale of promotion activities within this great initiative.

Open Networking Lab

The STEM faculty's new Open Networking Lab funded by the Ufi Charitable Trust, will make introductory practical computer networking skills training available to help Further Education and Apprenticeship learners, educators and industry. The pilot resources are about to enter a second stage of evaluation at several further education colleges, following the first, successful pilot version evaluation by several hundred learners and their teachers. We look forward to launching the Open Networking Lab fully in the coming year.

Scholarships for Students in Secure Environments

The Prisoner Learning Scholarships Programme, delivered by the OU in partnership with The Prisoners' Education Trust, launched in October 2017. This three-year pilot scheme empowers prisoners to engage with the



transformative power of higher education by providing scholarships to cover the first module towards a specified OU qualification, and an enhanced advice and guidance service to support scholarship recipients to engage with viable finance options for ongoing study. This work is made possible through the generous support of the Garfield Weston Foundation and the OU Students' Educational Trust.

Find out more

Support students or projects [here](#)

Or ring us on **01908 655 044** and talk with one of the team.

Thank you to our [donors](#) who have made exceptionally generous gifts.





Open Up The Future

Open Up The Future is the OU's first major fundraising campaign, aiming to raise £50 million by the end of our 50th anniversary year in 2020. Now in its third year, the campaign has raised £29 million thanks to the generosity of alumni, businesses and foundations.

The campaign centres on one simple act that has always come naturally to the OU: that of Opening up.

- **Opening up** opportunity through multi-million pound scholarships programmes so that barriers of financial needs and circumstance of birth, gender and life don't prohibit an individual from learning.
- **Opening up** minds through the power of connected, open and free learning.
- **Opening up** thinking through our leading and cutting-edge research:

research that encompasses our day to day lives, our careers, our children, our oceans, our plants and much more.

- **Opening up** lives across the world and playing our part in the world achieving global goals in quality education and health.

The OU believes where you start in life doesn't limit where you go. A stay-at-home mum can become an engineer, an African schoolboy living in poverty can set up his own business, and groundbreaking research can lead to a dog helping to detect cancer. Our Open Up The Future campaign has been supporting this and so much more.

Find out more

If you would like to know more or contribute to our [Open Up The Future](#) campaign and help us make the impossible possible.



**TOGETHER
WE CAN OPEN
UP THE FUTURE**

WE ARE INNOVATIVE, UNIQUE, GLOBAL; OPEN TO PEOPLE, PLACES, METHODS AND IDEAS

**A SIGNIFICANT
PRESENCE IN
ALL FOUR UK
NATIONS**



**THE LARGEST
UK UNIVERSITY,
AND ONE OF
THE LARGEST IN
EUROPE**



**174,898
STUDENTS**



**24,709
STUDENTS
WITH A
DISABILITY**



**1,400 STUDENTS
IN SECURE
ENVIRONMENTS**



**3 IN 4
STUDENTS
IN WORK -
EARNING
WHILE THEY
ARE LEARNING**



**87% OVERALL
STUDENT
SATISFACTION
(NATIONAL STUDENTS
SURVEY 2018)**



**RANKED
FIRST FOR
ASSESSMENT
AND FEEDBACK
(NATIONAL STUDENTS
SURVEY 2018)**



**60 MILLION
VISITORS TO
OPENLEARN
SINCE ITS
LAUNCH**



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF OPENING UP EDUCATION FOR ALL

Find out more

See our [Financial Statements](#) for year ending 31 July 2018

Find out about our [Equality Scheme](#)

Review our [Council membership](#)

