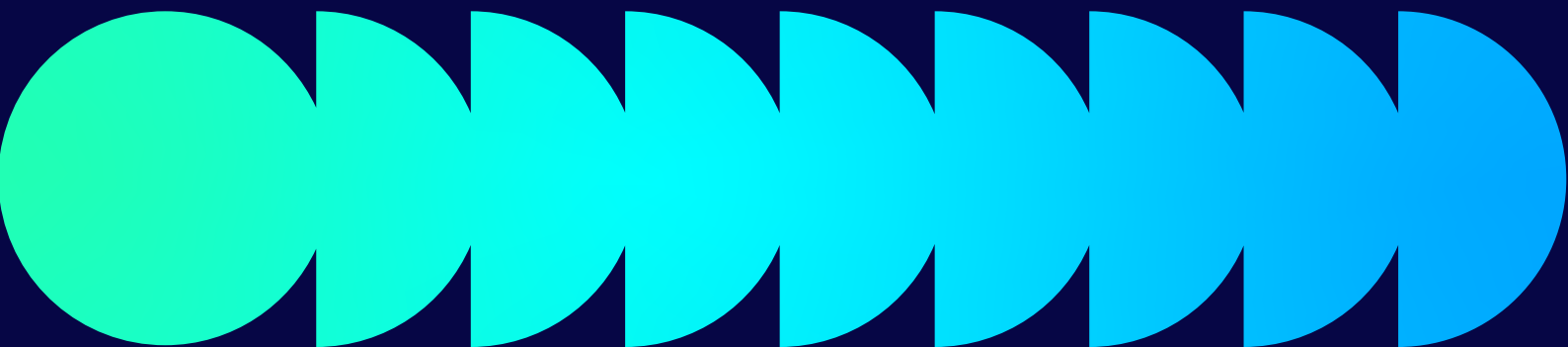




# Teaching and Learning Plan: *Enabling Your Success*



# Introduction

## Professor Josie Fraser, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Sponsor of the Teaching and Learning Plan



We are incredibly proud that The Open University is the leader in distance learning educating people across all four nations of the UK and across the world.

Since gaining our Royal Charter in 1969, more than 2 million students have succeeded with The Open University. We consistently score highly for student satisfaction with our teaching and assessment in the National Students Survey and have recently been awarded Gold status on the Teaching and Excellence Framework.

We strive to ensure that every student who studies with us has access to the best possible teaching and learning opportunities.

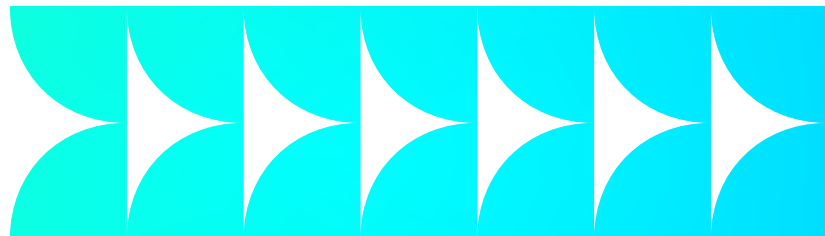
We want every one of our students to be successful in their studies and go on to achieve their life and career goals.

There are many pressures on students and challenges that the world is facing. All these factors affect how we approach our teaching and learning.

This plan sets out how we will continue to innovate and continuously improve the learning experience for our students now and in the future.

Our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas is at the heart of this plan. Our teaching model allows us to provide open entry to higher education and through the achievements of our inspiring students, we are creating a more equitable society.

**The future is open.**



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# Understanding the Teaching and Learning Plan 2022–2027

## Our principles

This Plan is informed by five teaching and learning principles:

1. A high-quality, supported distance learning experience is enabled through innovative teaching and assessment.
2. Students are supported to begin and progress through their OU journey at the appropriate level and intensity for their needs.
3. Learning is designed and delivered as anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, accessible and inclusive.
4. Students and their voice are integrated into the planning of our teaching to enhance the quality of our provision.
5. Teaching and learning are designed and delivered as an academically rigorous, research-informed process.



Figure 1: Key principles of the Teaching and Learning Plan

# Our Immediate Priorities

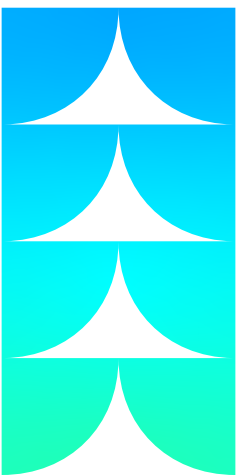
(Reviewed annually and on exception)

## Principle 1: A high-quality, supported distance learning experience is enabled through innovative teaching and assessment

Our teaching model of supported distance learning is distinctive and supported by sound pedagogy. It is underpinned by dedicated Associate Lecturers who provide student-centred tuition and support to our students. We are proud to be a market leader of supported distance learning across the UK, enabling us to respond to changes in higher education and wider societal challenges, such as sustainability.

Assessment drives student learning and therefore success; both assessment *of* learning and *for* learning. While assessment is an important way for students to demonstrate their learning, the OU's delivery of tuition through feedback and feedforward is fundamental in supporting student development and is an externally recognised benefit of the OU's distinctive student–tutor relationship.

- 1.1 We will review and improve the language and practices used in our assessments so that they are accessible, inclusive and authentic for all students.
- 1.2 We will ensure that students consistently receive timely, high-quality feedback across all assessment points.
- 1.3 We will ensure that the use of new learning systems and technological innovation such as artificial intelligence enhance our efficient delivery of high-quality teaching and assessment.



## ↕ Principle 2: Students are supported to begin and progress through their OU journey at the appropriate level and intensity for their needs

Distance learning starts for OU students through our supportive approach to open entry. Our teaching equips students with the study skills needed to progress successfully at undergraduate level. In addition, our Access modules are designed to build new students' confidence and appropriate skills at the early stages of their learning journey.

Diagnostic and module support activities are made available to students before module start to ensure that students are provided with appropriate study skills support at the right time. Our teaching is also informed by learning analytics that enhance our responsiveness to students' needs and enable them to succeed.

Nearly three-quarters of our students are in work, and while a growing number of students are studying to start their careers, many are studying with us to develop or change their careers, including a large number of apprentices. Therefore, enhancing students' employability at the most practical level across their working lives is a fundamental tenet of our teaching and learning approach. We actively support the setting of personalised study goals, developing confidence with employability skills and attributes, and empowering students to achieve life ambitions. We also recognise the value and credibility of employers in collaborating to provide real-life contexts to learning.

- 2.1 We will extend our one-to-one personalised academic support into qualification pathways to enhance student progression.
- 2.2 We will extend the use of learning analytics systematically and ethically to identify and provide students with tailored teaching and learning support.

## 📌 Principle 3: Learning is designed and delivered as anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, accessible and inclusive

Our curriculum is designed to be accessible to all students. We pride ourselves in having the expertise to design and deliver accessible distance learning that goes well beyond the sector accessibility standards. Our module and qualification design is informed by insights into awarding gaps that we use to develop an inclusive curriculum and inclusive teaching approaches.

We champion a blended approach to teaching by providing course materials and assessment in a range of different media across print and virtual learning environments. This allows us to cater to the diverse and changing needs of our current and future students and provide a sustainable and diverse curriculum.

- 3.1 We will develop anti-racist, anti-discriminatory and inclusive curriculum and assessment to ensure students from all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and can see themselves reflected in our curriculum.
- 3.2 We will review and, where appropriate, modify all current curriculum to ensure our curriculum is anti-racist and inclusive to comprehensively address our module and degree awarding gaps.

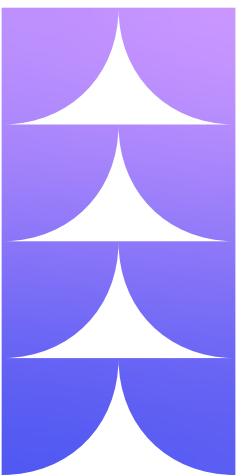
## **Principle 4: Students and their voice are integrated into the planning of our teaching to enhance the quality of our provision**

We work closely with the OU Students Association to ensure we hear and respond to a broad range of students' views. We do this through a range of activities, from student surveys and student consultation to student partnerships. We also ensure student representatives are part of formal decision-making governance committees and working groups.

We collaborate with our Students Association in hosting events such as informal drop-ins and virtual coffee mornings, alongside invitations to virtual seminars and lectures by faculty staff and postgraduate research students. We provide a range of activities designed to support all OU students in their studies and facilitate the ongoing development of an academic community.

We carry out student voice activities during curriculum production and presentation and are committed to involving students as critical readers or reviewers of teaching materials as they are produced. The feedback we gather from students during their studies informs our interventions or actions to support student success.

- 4.1** We will provide the opportunity for all students to give feedback on their course, as a minimum at the mid-point and end of a module. We will tell students how their feedback has been acted on to improve our teaching and the student experience.
- 4.2** We will create more opportunities for students, reflecting the diversity of the student body, to take part in co-creation of curriculum.



## **Principle 5: Teaching and learning are designed and delivered as an academically rigorous, research-informed process**

Research is a fundamental part of our university and underpins the OU curriculum. Our curriculum content is informed by our internationally excellent research activity, which provides rich opportunities to share newly created knowledge.

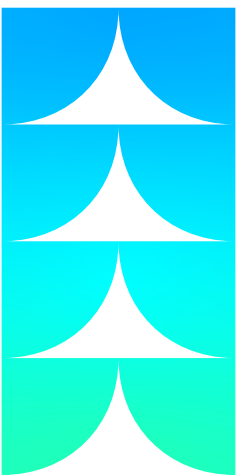
Our teaching model supports the production of high-quality learning materials by teams of research active academics and postgraduate research students. This means that our curriculum and teaching are current and academically relevant within the context of UK and international policy and practice.

We provide significant opportunities for our students to develop their research and enquiry skills within their studies. The development of these research-orientated skills is carefully embedded through our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This enables students to progress from guided techniques to explore existing knowledge to a more open-ended research approach as they near completion of their qualification, taking part in the creation of disciplinary knowledge.

Pedagogical research and scholarship of teaching and learning inform the development and design of our teaching methods. We provide opportunities for our staff to undertake and publish pedagogical research. The OU's Institute for Educational Technology (IET), a global leader in education, identifies future trends in teaching, learning and assessment. The institute offers evidence-informed practical advice to support the continuous improvement of pedagogy both within the OU and beyond. Working together to deliver the Scholarship Plan, the OU's Centres for Scholarship and Innovation inform a continuous improvement and innovation cycle to enrich the student experience and provide the evidence base that underpins our teaching methods.

- 5.1** Extend our commitment to research-informed learning to proactively underpin our teaching with the latest research.
- 5.2** Enable continuous review, evaluation and innovation of our teaching, learning and student support through research and scholarship activity

The full version of the Teaching and Learning Plan can be requested from:  
[academic-strategy-planning@open.ac.uk](mailto:academic-strategy-planning@open.ac.uk)





# Getting involved in our future

No one understands the student experience better than our students. We always want to hear the views of our students about their teaching and learning experiences.

Getting involved in student voice activities is a great way to enrich your learning and student experience at the OU. Our engagement work is a good way to build employability skills, develop your confidence, feel part of the OU community and get more out of your studies with us. Activities include paid internships, research and scholarship, consultation meetings, and student panels.

**Visit our Student Voice website to discover the latest activities and to sign-up to our mailing list.**  
<https://community.open.ac.uk/student-voice>

