



# Changing lives, transforming learning

The Open University  
Annual Report  
2011/12

# The Open University Annual Report 2011/12



Photography by Graeme Hunter, Mepics Photography



## Our strategy

The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas. We strive to be responsive, innovative and inclusive in everything we do.

### Deliver an outstanding student experience

A market-leading enquirer experience that gets potential students efficiently and effectively onto the right course for them

A study experience that maximises students' chances of success in achieving their study goals whilst maintaining academic standards

World leadership in delivering journeys from informal to formal learning through open media

Secure the Mission and thrive as a University by delivering a step-change in how effectively we help students achieve their study goals

### Enhance the capabilities of the University

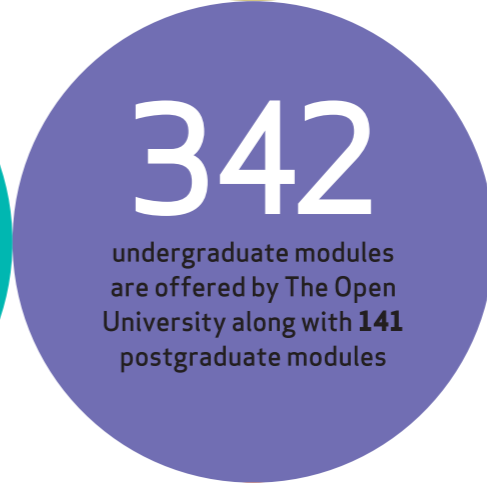
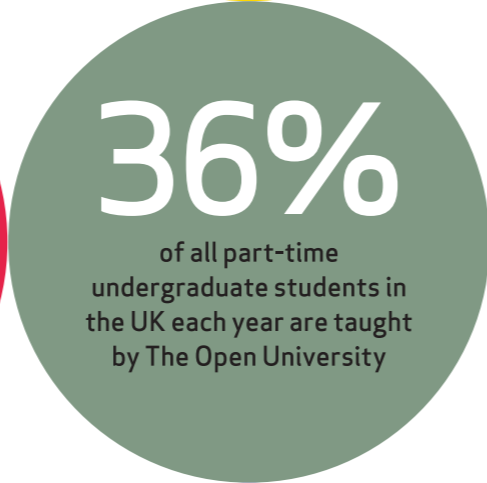
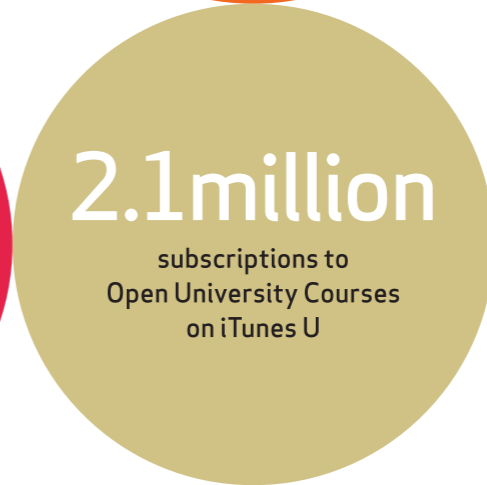
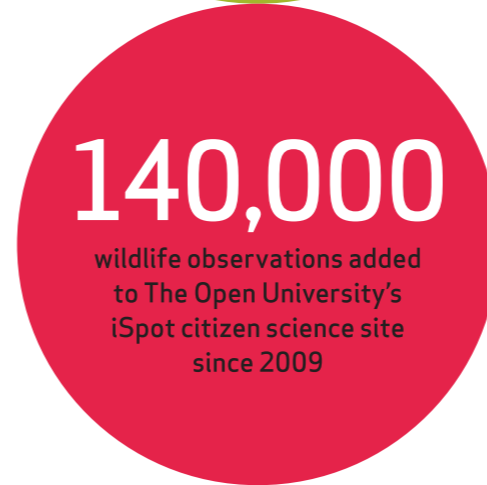
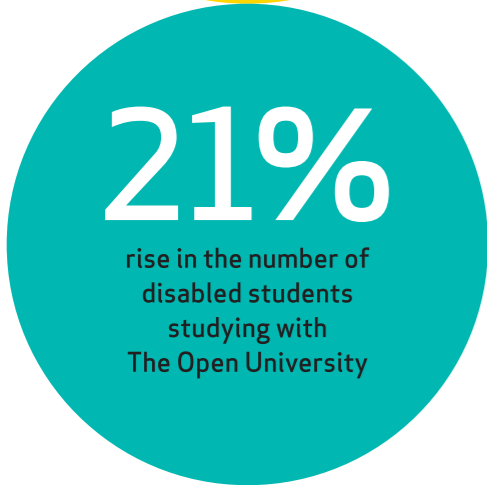
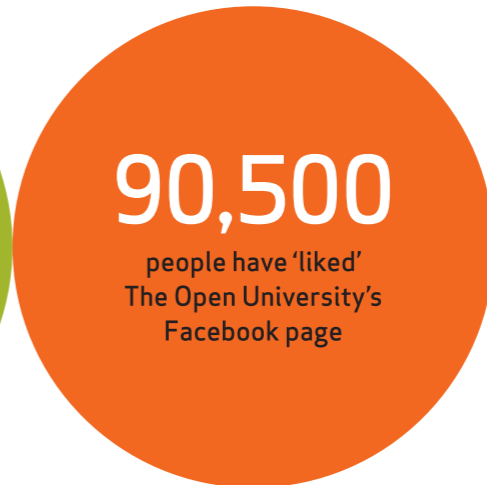
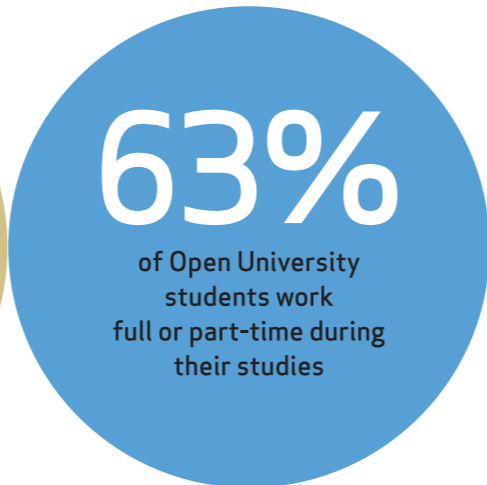
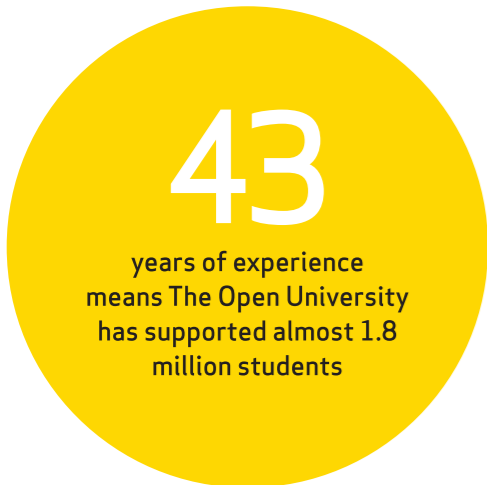
Research and scholarship that is externally recognised for excellence and impact

People and culture that enable us to deliver high performance and respond flexibly and effectively to changes in our marketplace

Flexible, integrated and robust systems that support the University and its students

Financial sustainability maintained through the delivery of good value

# 2011/12 at a glance



## Contents

Our strategy	2
2011/12 at a glance	4
Chancellor's foreword	6
Pro-Chancellor's foreword	7
Vice-Chancellor's foreword	8
<b>The OU is responsive</b>	10
Delivery for employers	12
Skills solution	14
Career catalysts	16
Supporting communities	18
Meeting the needs of society	20
Community partnership	22
Flexibility to succeed	24
<b>The OU is innovative</b>	26
Shaping the education landscape	28
Transforming e-learning	30
Inspiring learning	32
Pioneering access to learning	34
Unparalleled research	36
Navigating complexity	38
<b>The OU is inclusive</b>	40
Opening doors	42
Sharing expertise	44
Creating opportunities	46
Breaking barriers	48
Developing talent	50
Support where it's needed	52
Financial highlights 2011/12	54
Results for the year	55
In the words of the OU community	56
Worldwide locations	57
A year of success	58
Council membership	59

## Chancellor's foreword

Today's digital society allows us to search, store and share knowledge in ways our predecessors could barely have dreamed of. The world's 'digital library' is always open. Yet the existence of this extraordinary cornucopia of knowledge makes the need for an institution such as The Open University more crucial than ever.

A digital society is, or should be, just that – a society in which we thoughtfully balance our rights with our responsibility to share and, just as importantly, learn from others. Getting that balance right is all the more important in a world in which the economic future prospects of millions is far bleaker than previous generations would have ever imagined possible.

The OU is now a trusted learning guide, having carefully and responsibly built its reputation over four decades. If anything, that role is more crucial than ever in helping steer our students toward the type of information that is most likely to enable them to develop as genuinely informed citizens, equipped to play the fullest possible role in our complex and emerging digital society.

The OU seeks to create learning environments in which informed



responses to the challenges of the 21st century are encouraged and nurtured – a world in which prejudice and ignorance might become rather better understood for exactly what they are.

This Annual Report highlights the many ways in which, through the pioneering use of technology, the OU serves as that 'trusted guide' in an overcrowded digital world. The Report also demonstrates that the OU's commitment to widening participation remains as strong as ever. A commitment that becomes ever

more important in a world in which the financial challenges facing many people are greater today than any of us could have imagined just a decade ago.

As we gaze into the future, only one thing is certain – that The Open University will not at any point shirk from addressing these challenges.

**Lord Puttnam of Queensgate, CBE**  
Chancellor

Photograph of Lord Haskins courtesy of Dods



'The OU seeks to create learning environments in which informed responses to the challenges of the 21st century are encouraged and nurtured'

## Pro-Chancellor's foreword



'The quality of the student learning experience remains, as ever, at the very heart of what we do'



This has been a year of transformation for our students in England; they have seen first-hand the beginnings of a major reform of higher education. For new students across the sector, it has meant higher fees and the introduction of loans. For universities, it has meant the loss of our traditional teaching grants, set in the context of greater competition and economic recession.

In this era of uncertainty – across all four nations of the UK – the University has stayed true to its mission to be 'open to people, places, methods and ideas', and the quality of the student learning experience remains, as ever, at the very heart of what we do.

With 43 years of experience and nearly two million students having benefited, we continue to prove that we can combine extraordinary scale with phenomenal quality and, simultaneously, play a unique role in society by making higher education open to all.

The funding environment in England will continue to be very uncertain in the years ahead, and for us, as the only UK-wide university, there are

unique challenges and opportunities as the country's reforms take the sector into uncharted territory.

To help boost economic growth, the Coalition Government is keen 'to create a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe\*'. We share that vision. With our flexible, part-time learning, and high-quality research and innovation, we are very much part of the solution to boosting economic growth.

The University is working directly with employers to help them address the skills gap, offering their employees flexible learning pathways while they work. Our current partnerships with Lloyds Banking Group, ACAS, Airbus and Capgemini are some of the examples shared in this Report. No fewer than 80 of the FTSE 100 companies have sponsored staff on OU courses to learn while they earn.

Internationally too, our global leadership in innovative methods and technologies is gaining us recognition and enabling us to deliver high-quality education to students who remain in their own country, while studying as

part of a global network and remaining at work. In this Report you will find examples of initiatives ranging from India to Nigeria and Bangladesh to Ethiopia.

This year has shown that even during periods of instability, the OU continues to grow stronger, creating ever more innovative ways of improving the higher education landscape.

On behalf of the Council, I want to thank all members of staff for their hard work over the past year in a challenging environment to position the University so strongly for the future.

**Lord Haskins of Skidby**  
Pro-Chancellor

\*As set out in The Plan for Growth, HM Treasury, March 2011

# Responsive. Innovative. Inclusive.

Martin Bean, the Vice-Chancellor, reflects on the past 12 months and looks forward to a year of exciting new challenges.

Picking out my personal high point of the past year is very easy. It happened on Thursday 27 September, when I picked up the *i* newspaper from *The Independent* and saw the headline: 'Open University has the happiest students in Britain'.

The story underneath revealed that we had been rated the UK's number one university in the National Student Survey's league table of student satisfaction. It was an incredible testament to the work of our Associate Lecturers, our faculty academics, our support staff, everyone. And topping the table in 2012 was a particularly special achievement because it came in a year that also saw the biggest upheaval in British higher education since The Open University was created four decades ago.

The new tuition fee regime shifted the bulk of our funding from the state to the student. This was always going to present challenges for The Open University, challenges that many thought we'd fail to meet. Cynics and critics assumed that we wouldn't be able to balance the demands of the new funding arrangements with our core aim of remaining open to all. But, together, we are proving them wrong.

We spent much of 2011/12 preparing for the arrival of the new regime, doing all we could to ensure that students of all ages and backgrounds can continue to earn the qualifications that can change their lives forever.

Our Ready for 2012/13 project radically re-shaped the University's offering to students, and to the systems that support them. Working hand-in-hand with Ready for 2012/13, our hugely successful cross-media marketing and communications campaign, Go to Market, attracted enquiries from almost one million people.

We put in place the OU Guarantee, reassuring students that they could start studying with us even if they hadn't received their student loan confirmation before their course started. And we re-affirmed our mission to widen participation, creating a new Access to Success Route that offers extra support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

But while we've focused a lot of energy on getting ready for the new arrangements, we haven't neglected our pioneering work as a world-class research and teaching institution.

We've helped Lloyds Banking Group develop its managers, worked with BAE

Systems to improve safety on nuclear submarines, and trained more than 300 NHS employees in end-of-life care.

Our long and proud partnership with the BBC continued, while the number of Olympic and Paralympic medallists who are current or former students showed that OU study can be fitted around almost any profession.

And we're not just making a difference in the UK. This year, OU teams have been tackling autism in Ethiopia, supporting teacher training in India and working with NASA to study mineral deposits on Mars.

So it has been a hugely successful 12 months for the University, but that didn't come about by accident. We couldn't have done this without a tremendous effort by many members of staff who went above and beyond, as well the huge support we have had from our Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Council and Senate.

Looking ahead, the coming year will doubtless bring with it fresh challenges and unexpected opportunities. But the OU has always been responsive to changes in the outside world, and that's going to continue.

The global higher education landscape is shifting, as new technology

drives new ways of learning across new platforms. But the OU has always been innovative, adopting and adapting new technology to better serve our students. And that's going to continue too.

Most of all, the changes to funding and the continuing recession may deter less well-off people from further study. But the OU has always been inclusive, always been open to anyone with an inquiring mind regardless of their background or circumstances. And we're going to do everything in our power to make sure that mission stays at the heart of what we do.

Responsive. Innovative. Inclusive. Those values have always made the OU special, and this year's Annual Report demonstrates exactly how we're continuing to live them today.



**Martin Bean**  
Vice-Chancellor

Photography by Andrew Pini



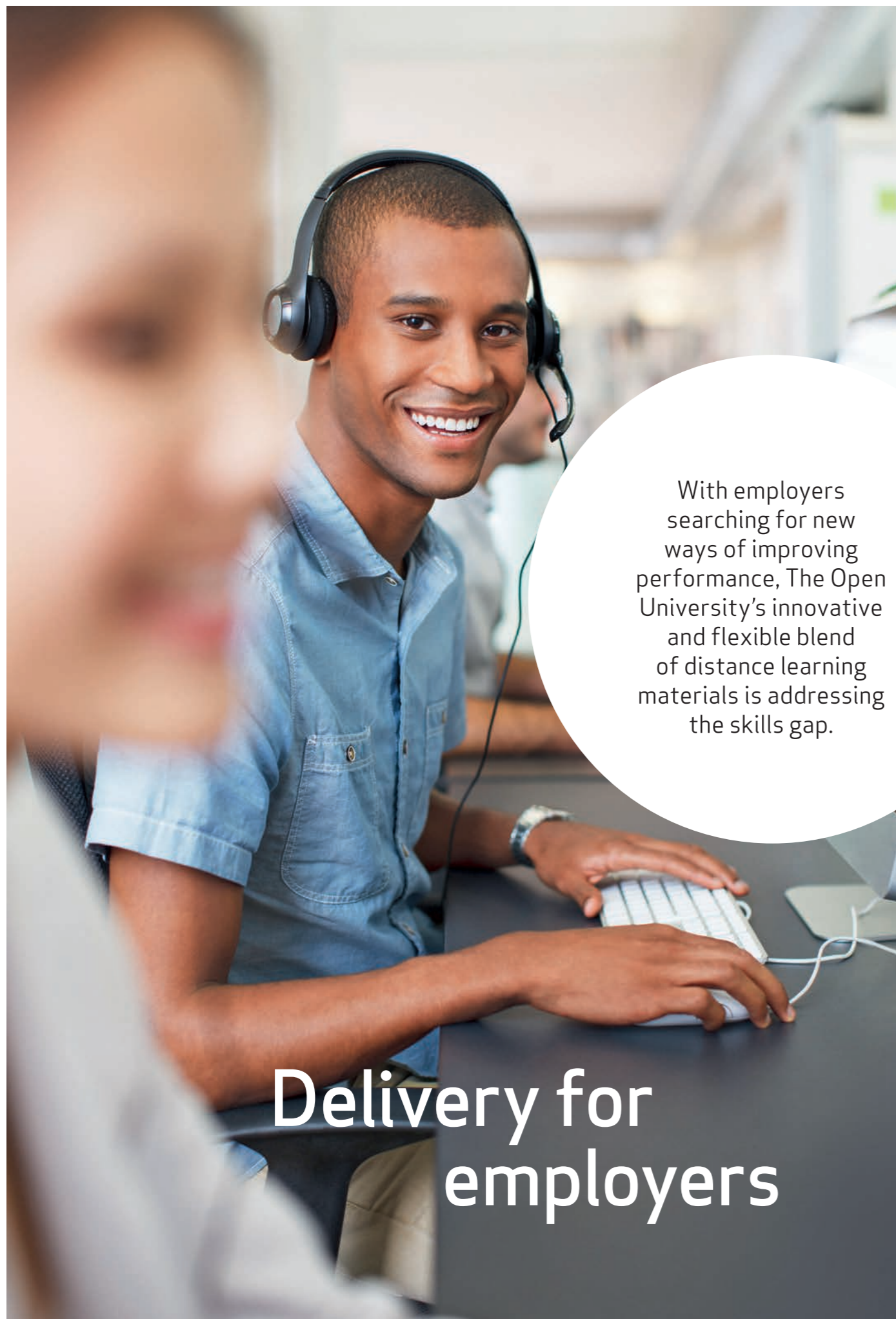
'The OU has always been inclusive, always been open to anyone with an inquiring mind regardless of their background or circumstances'

# 1 Responsive

Innovative  
Page 26

Inclusive  
Page 40

The Open University recognises the needs of both individuals and employers and the communities in which they live and work. In a complex and fast-moving society it is dedicated to maximising flexibility and supporting students to enable them to fulfil their potential in this challenging world.



With employers searching for new ways of improving performance, The Open University's innovative and flexible blend of distance learning materials is addressing the skills gap.

Delivery for employers

Getty Images

### Qualification resolution at ACAS

The Open University knows that a one-size-fits-all approach to learning will not suit everyone. That's why it worked closely with ACAS to create a unique qualification for its staff.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) approached the OU because it wanted to enhance the skills and knowledge of its 150-plus helpline staff who answer queries on all aspects of employment law on a daily basis.

Helpline staff are located across the UK, so any training solution needed to deliver a consistent level of content and support. ACAS also wanted any learning and development programme to lead to a postgraduate qualification.

On an operational level, ACAS needed a development solution to be created quickly and rolled out within six months of initial conversations. Any learning and qualifications needed to fit with their existing training and development pathways, and could require no more than half a day per week dedicated to study.

#### Tailored to suit

The OU developed a unique qualification – the Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Professional Practice (Employment Law Advice). This new qualification built on existing training and development undertaken by ACAS staff and added employment law content developed by the OU Law School in conjunction with ACAS itself. This combined course content was then brought into an accreditation framework to give a consistent and

recognised postgraduate qualification.

The qualification runs for 12 months and the first group of 24 students completed their studies in October 2011.

#### Working together

ACAS is committed to rolling out this specialist qualification across the entire helpline team, with regular staff surveys to assess progress and course outcomes.

'The relationship with The Open University throughout the project has been highly collaborative,' says Rob Deeks, ACAS Helpline & IDR Training Manager. 'The OU was keen to understand the business. We worked closely to develop a course that would help the students to become more self-sufficient in managing their own development, while accrediting in-house learning, expanding their knowledge of up-to-date employment law, and leading to a portable qualification.'

Whilst the focus of this qualification has been employment law advice, developing it has given the OU a framework that can be applied in other subjects and sectors.



### New pathways for Lloyds Banking Group

Interest soared when colleagues at Lloyds Banking Group found out that The Open University was involved with the bank's new management qualification.

When Lloyds Banking Group approached the OU to accredit its online management development qualification in 2011, a partnership began that saw the OU create new study pathways for the bank's colleagues.

'Working with Lloyds Banking Group, we were able to use their internal qualifications as a route into study with the OU through our *Managing in the workplace* and *CPD in practice* modules,' says Jacky Hinton, Assistant Associate Dean, Curriculum Solutions at the OU. 'Through this scheme colleagues have the chance to develop their management skills and enhance their qualifications.' Around 3,000 leaders have been given the opportunity, with the expectation that this will increase.

'This partnership is a significant development for our Leadership Curriculum. To have the OU accredit the Management Licence Programmes is a stamp of approval that colleagues can identify with and take real pride in,' says Sara Dewar, Senior Manager, Executive & Leadership Development at Lloyds Banking Group. 'The study pathways allow us to offer a flexible approach that means colleagues can tailor their development to their personal preferences and educational backgrounds.'



### Industry funds engineering research

Developed at The Open University, Problem Oriented Engineering (POE) is a groundbreaking framework for engineering design. By uncovering early issues that would have been more costly to resolve later in the engineering life-cycle, POE has benefited such advanced mechanisms as the Harrier Jump Jet and the Lynx helicopter. Created by Dr Jon Hall and Dr Lucia Rapanotti in association with General Dynamics UK, the framework is now being applied by five industry leaders, with further applications being used by the Foreign Office, Compass Group UK and Ireland, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Greenpeace UK.



# Skills solution

The Open University has used its programme development capabilities to help businesses to improve their professional skills training and enhance their employees' knowledge.

Getty Images

## Flying high with Airbus

With proven expertise in the field of supported distance learning, The Open University was the ideal choice to help Airbus create a development programme for its junior managers.

Airbus wanted to develop a new generation of talented, high-potential managers through a programme that would increase their overall business skills and foster functional and national mobility. To meet this need, Airbus commissioned AirBusiness Academy (ABA) and the OU to work with it to develop what became the Junior Manager Programme (Ju'MP).

### A new way of learning

The partners worked together to design a programme to connect ABA industry-specific and personal development modules with general management concepts, theories and models. Airbus looked to the OU for its expertise in supported distance learning, encouraging independent study and learning through interaction with tutors and peers, and in applying learning directly and immediately to their own work.

The partnership between Airbus, ABA and The Open University Business School enabled a new management development programme to be created for high-potential managers across Europe. The programme needed to remain closely aligned with the Airbus 2020 vision of the four pillars of innovation, integration, internationalisation and engagement.

The programme was deemed to have positively impacted all four pillars, reflecting a successful, rapid integration of both on-the-job and extra training. The knowledge acquired by the Ju'MP participants during the first year of the programme could be put into practice on business-critical projects during the second year.

### Enhanced programme profile

The success and the positive feedback have helped to raise the profile and perception of the programme and cement it firmly within the talent development strategy of Airbus.

Sue Parr, from The Open University Business School, says: 'The programme has become a valued part of talent management programmes, successfully developing a pool of high-potential managers skilled at solving problems and working internationally and across functions. The second-year project provides participants with an opportunity to bring together what they have learnt and effectively apply their knowledge to a project that adds value for Airbus.'

The project was awarded Highly Commended in the Talent Development category in the 2012 European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) Excellence in Practice Awards.



**'The programme has developed a pool of high-potential managers skilled at solving problems'**

Sue Parr  
The Open University Business School



## Up-skilling IT professionals

The Open University recognises that not everyone has the academic qualifications required to pursue a career in IT. In partnership with Capgemini, it is helping create alternative routes into the industry.

A recent OU report, 'Developing professionalism in new IT graduates – who needs it?', revealed concerns, shared by 43 per cent of employers, that IT graduate applicants lacked knowledge about business operations.

The OU is behind a new drive to encourage educators to increase the business relevance of their courses and provide more routes into the industry for students from vocational or industrial backgrounds, as well as those following the more traditional academic route.

In partnership with Capgemini, the OU has launched a higher apprenticeship programme to enable those lacking the academic background universities require to step onto the IT career ladder.

### An alternative route into technology

The programme provides a vocational, skills-based pathway that combines hands-on technical learning and professional development. For employers, the programme represents a fresh approach to grow their own graduate talent, rather than relying on the output of traditional higher education.

The first stage of the programme takes seven weeks, with a three-hour session organised at a time and place convenient to the student and their employer. The rest is delivered in the workplace, instilling in new recruits the most relevant technical skills within the context of their company.

This structure allows students to gain the business operations knowledge that IT employers so desire, without requiring them to spend large amounts of time out of the office, minimising disruption and any negative impact on productivity.





# Career catalysts

The higher education that staff receive can have a dramatic impact on the levels of commercial success a company may achieve. The Open University strives to give business leaders the intellectual rigour they need for growth.

Leslee Griffiths graduated with a BA (Hons) in Business Studies in 2010

Photography by Tristan Newkey-Burden

## Fulfilling potential

Some individuals know that they have the capability but lack the confidence to put their ideas into action. The Open University offers everyone the chance to learn, grow and find their voice by giving them the framework to fulfil their potential.

Now Practice Manager, Leslee Griffiths, 49, decided to study towards a BA in Business Studies when she found herself having great ideas to help her company but lacking in the confidence and knowledge to see them through.

'I left school at 16 feeling stupid and unsure of myself. I'd got two O-levels and four CSEs, but school wasn't a great experience for me. My mum was very ill and my dad had died, so it wasn't the right time for me to concentrate on learning. After leaving school I did a variety of jobs – everything from working in a depot to tarot-card reading. It was only when I got a job in the personnel department of the Inland Revenue that I started to realise that I was quite good at organising.'

Leslee was working part-time as a medical receptionist when she saw an ad for a Personnel Administrator at Staffordshire County Council. 'I was thrilled when I got the job. I had four different roles there, and in 2003 I joined the legal team. I absolutely loved it and really wanted to make a difference, but I lacked confidence and understanding about decisions that were being made. I was also working with a lot of professional people, all of whom had degrees.'

'I started thinking about doing the OU's Business Studies degree; I'd done an OU foundation course back in 1995, but personal circumstances took over and

so I didn't do anything with it afterwards. I called the OU to enquire about the degree and was really surprised to hear that my foundation course still counted.'

Leslee chose The Open University Business School because of the OU's reputation and flexibility, and also because she could see how each of the modules could be directly useful to her job. 'HR, finance, strategy – I realised that all these could help me,' Leslee recalls.

### Winning ways

Leslee graduated with a BA (Hons) in Business Studies in 2010 and went on to win the BA in Business Studies Student of the Year award in 2011. She is now Practice Manager in the Staffordshire County Council Legal Department, and believes that the OU is directly responsible for her advancement.

'My degree gave me a voice,' she says. 'I went from being an operational thinker to a strategic one and that was wonderful. The skills were always in me, but [after completing the degree] I understood the context and had the confidence to suggest looking at things in different ways. My skills help me to do my job better and work more efficiently, and now I look at the whole picture rather than just the detail. All my strategies have come from my OU knowledge. In my daily working environment that translates as an effective office, an efficient system and happy staff.'

Leslee recommends the OU to everyone; she is part of the LinkedIn OU Alumni group and still dips back into her study reading for specific projects.

'Studying with the OU is probably the best thing I've ever done for myself. The OU changed my life and changed who I am as a person. I am so grateful.'



### 'All my strategies have come from my OU knowledge'

Leslee Griffiths, Practice Manager  
BA in Business Studies



## Responsive

### A step up the career ladder

**Jake Smith** – Senior Marketing Manager

In today's competitive employment climate, an Open University degree can make a positive impact on career progress.

Recent OU graduate Jake Smith believes that his degree played a part in his promotion to Senior Marketing Manager at Legal & General. He dropped out of university to pursue his dream of being a rock star with, as he says, 'limited success'.

Fifteen years later, Jake wanted to return to education. 'It felt like unfinished business,' he says. 'The OU's flexibility, reputation and value for money seemed ideal. I couldn't afford a full-time course as my wife was self-employed and pregnant, but I knew the range of courses could offer a route that would help me develop.'

Jake initially studied with the OU to improve his knowledge of web design, but decided to continue on to a degree when he saw the breadth of courses on offer.

'When I realised my qualification could count towards a degree, it was even more attractive and useful to my job. My role at L&G was new; there was no real training available in house so we looked externally. The skills I gained helped me develop in my role, led to a promotion, and helped identify a future career path.'

### Reputation for quality

Once Jake finished his course, he continued with more non-work-related modules to complete his degree. 'My degree ended up being in a different field (music and technology),' he reveals, 'but many of the skills I developed were extremely useful.'

'Having the OU on my CV has always been seen in a really positive light. The reputation for quality helps, but so does the recognition of the commitment it takes to study while holding down a full-time job and starting a family!'

# Supporting communities

Through its work with local communities The Open University has helped to create strong platforms of support for students and local residents alike.

Wired Aerial Theatre was just one of the acts at the IF: Milton Keynes International Festival 2012

Photography by Mark McNulty

## Milton Keynes: a brighter future

The Open University has national significance and global reach, but is firmly rooted in its local community.

Since its inception, the OU has had its headquarters and main campus at Walton Hall in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. The new University and the new city have shared astounding growth in less than 45 years.

Now one of Milton Keynes's biggest employers, with many staff living in the city, the OU plays an active role in the commercial, cultural and community life of the area.

Together with a broad range of local partners, the University seeks to bring research and development (R&D) investment into the area and build the stock of knowledge economy jobs.

Working through national schemes such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) allows easy access to OU expertise for organisations in the area.

One recent project evaluated work experience placements organised by Worktree, the Milton Keynes Education Business Partnership, which develops the employability skills of young people.

Another local collaboration saw John Oates of the Centre for Childhood, Development and Learning working with families in Milton Keynes and nationally to develop a new easy-to-use app. The technology enables parents, teachers and health professionals to share information about child development using their PC, mobile phone or tablet.

Many parents need reassurance and support to help to spot any problems early. The app will do just that, designed

around a core set of developmental competencies and organised into a series of steps from birth through to school-leaving age.

### Hosting and promoting

The University is an active member of various local bodies, including the Milton Keynes Economic Development Forum and the tourism organisation Destination MK. Its work to engage with and support local employers saw the OU sponsor the Milton Keynes Business Leaders Quarterly Dinner in July 2012, with the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow MP, as guest of honour.

In July, the University also sponsored the IF: Milton Keynes International Festival 2012, with events and performances encompassing live music, theatre, comedy and film. The biennial event was listed as one of the top 100 festivals of 2012 by *The Sunday Times*, and a high spot of the city's cultural calendar.

'The Open University is proud of its association with Milton Keynes and our shared heritage,' said Professor Tim Blackman, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research, Scholarship and Quality. 'We are pleased to engage with the wider community at many levels where we can use our skills and expertise for the benefit of the place where we live and work, particularly to attract R&D investment into the area and build the stock of knowledge jobs. In turn this enriches our own experience and informs our mission.'



**'The Open University is proud of its association with Milton Keynes and our shared heritage'**

Professor Tim Blackman,  
The Open University

## A student community for all

The Open University believes in the power of the student community and uses traditional and virtual networking tools to engage students from all over the world.

Many people may be unaware of the fact that the OU has a student association (OUSA) but this year it has enjoyed huge success in creating a community that reflects the diversity of the student body.

It has also demonstrated innovation in challenging the perceptions of OU students as isolated, strengthening the University's reputation for diversity and supporting widening participation.

### Record attendance

In June 2012, the OUSA held perhaps its most successful annual conference yet, attracting over 400 students from around the UK and Europe who participated in the elections of their student leaders and a huge range of workshops, business meetings and social activities. The majority of the students came to the OU campus in Milton Keynes, whilst over 100 more students joined the activities via a specially commissioned, virtual portal.

The new world of higher education places an increasingly difficult challenge on all student unions to achieve the effective engagement of the student body in the quality agenda, but there is every sign that OUSA will respond to that challenge.



# Meeting the needs of society

Changing people's lives for the better takes many forms. Whether it is enhancing the skills of those caring for the terminally ill, or exploiting new technologies to aid learning, The Open University has always pushed the boundaries of development.

Getty Images

## Quality care to the end

The Open University supports healthcare staff to help improve end-of-life care.

The OU has a long history of research and learning development in end-of-life care and long-term conditions – both of which are key challenges for the NHS.

Since the OU first presented the *Death and dying* course back in the 90s, it has been radically redeveloped to meet the changing needs of practitioners, service users and carers, and praised as being 'revolutionary' in the way it captures the voices of people approaching the end of their lives.

Healthcare professionals value its potential to transform care and, with over 12,000 students studying the course since it was first launched, its impact on practice is significant.

### A transformed approach

NHS East Midlands is supporting workforce development by providing funding for practitioners and support staff in care homes and hospices, who care for people approaching the end of their life, to study with the OU.

Over 300 staff have studied *Death and dying* and their feedback shows the remarkable impact the OU has had on the way they carry out their work.

One student, based in a residential care home, said: 'Before studying the course, when someone was nearing death we used to call 999, but we now fill in all the paperwork beforehand so people can stay in the home. This means they are

surrounded by familiar people and things, which is a much better death.'

Staff also noticed the difference in themselves and in colleagues who have studied the course. 'Since taking the course I start conversations much sooner and have the confidence to take it where the patient wants to go,' says one. 'I would like more of my colleagues to do this course because it would help them care more thoughtfully for others.'

### Dementia care

In 2011, the OU began developing a new course, *Dementia care*, which drew on rich resources from its partnership with the BBC that investigated care in residential care homes.

The course addresses the rising number of people with dementia, the current thinking about possible causes and cures, and how care is delivered.

The course is well-timed as dementia is, at long last, attracting high-profile attention. The Prime Minister's Dementia Challenge in 2012 – and his declaration that the rising rate of dementia is 'a national crisis' – gives greater impetus to the OU's efforts.

It is hoped that employers will draw on the University's skills and expertise to transform care for people with dementia, in the same way and on a similar scale to its longstanding work in end-of-life care.



**'I would like more of my colleagues to do this course because it would help them care more thoughtfully for others'**

Student on *Death and dying* course

## Virtual worlds and real learning

The Open University continues to research new ways to harness technology to enhance learning for students of all abilities and at all stages.

Technology can be used to improve people's learning when traditional methods fail, as demonstrated by the OU's technology-enhanced learning (TEL) research programme.

For the past four years, this programme has been developing systems and software that, for example, use artificial intelligence to teach teenagers algebra and help autistic children with social skills.

This summer, the programme task group, which included the OU's Professor Eileen Scanlon and Professor Mike Sharples, presented a report, 'System upgrade. Realising the vision for UK education', which summarised the findings of the TEL programme, and offered recommendations for future strategy in TEL. The report was launched in June 2012 at the House of Lords to a group of policymakers, technologists and practitioners, and was chaired by Lord Knight.

The report looks at how artificial intelligence, virtual worlds, touch-screen technology and mobile computing are all being used for innovative teaching and learning, and focuses on 12 key themes and recommendations relevant to everyone involved in learning, including teachers, policymakers, lecturers and workplace trainers.

Considering the technologies that are now present in the majority of homes, and increasingly on mobile devices, their potential role in the learning process cannot be underestimated. The OU now needs to fully exploit those technologies for teaching and learning at all levels.



The Open University continues to expand its outreach programmes to open up more opportunities for students, regardless of nationalities or backgrounds.

# Community partnership

Students celebrate new skills at St Gemma's High School in Belfast

## Brighter prospects for students in Ireland

The Open University continues to challenge the common perception that higher education is out of reach for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Working in partnership with various organisations, the OU in Ireland has helped to promote access and support and facilitate a sharing of skills, knowledge and resources.

These initiatives have paved the way into higher education for those who would never have envisaged having such an opportunity.

### Collaborative study support

Working in collaboration with women's centres, the OU in Ireland has helped women from a range of disadvantaged communities, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, refugees and asylum seekers, to return to study. Providing these women with face-to-face generic study skill support has helped to boost their confidence, keep them engaged in their studies and make real educational progress.

Collaborative work with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has provided access to 'hard to reach' workplace learners and facilitated engagement with employers. For example, a recent agreement with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, and some of the large supermarket chains, has encouraged workers to take their first step into higher education.

### A new model for schools

In 2007, the OU in Ireland set up a partnership with St Gemma's High School – a school in one of Belfast's most disadvantaged communities.

The partnership offered a choice of Openings modules – *Understanding health* and *Understanding children* – for pupils in the 16-18 age group.

On completion of these modules, teachers reported that the pupils had gained a wide range of skills, including greatly improved literacy and essay-writing skills, and that many also went on to further study.

Following the success of this initiative, the OU's Community Partnerships Programme received a £60,000 grant from the J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust to roll out this programme to more schools over the next two years.

Four secondary schools, again located in Belfast's most underprivileged areas, have been selected to work in partnership with the OU in Ireland, and with one another in a collegiate structure, to offer Openings modules to post-16 level students.

Through this community development approach, focused on process and relationship building, the OU has helped to create community ownership of individuals' routes into higher education.



Open University initiatives have paved the way into higher education for those who would never have envisaged having such an opportunity

## Creating meaningful internships

The Open University understands that helping people find work means creating opportunities to apply learning in real-world contexts.

In the current highly competitive labour market, the demand for internships and work placements is strong. Interest in these come from students seeking to change career as well as those taking their first steps on the career ladder.

To support this, the OU has played a leading role in developing and implementing Third Sector Internships Scotland (TSIS). This initiative gives students from Scottish universities the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to community groups, charities and voluntary organisations through completing paid internships.

Led by the OU in Scotland, Queen Margaret University and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, TSIS has created 122 internships with 113 employers this year.

### Career success

TSIS intern Pete Mills is studying towards an MSc in Environmental Decision Making. He secured an internship with Community Energy Scotland (CES), with the aim of gaining practical work experience and a clearer insight into a career in the environmental sector.

He described the internship as 'a major commitment', as he had to juggle the work with his studies, but it has definitely paid off. On completing the internship, he secured a permanent position as an Assistant Development Officer.

'I'm now looking forward to starting a new career,' said Pete, 'and will continue to develop my interests in the field via my OU study.'



As the impressive medal tally of Open University students and alumni at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games demonstrates, flexible OU study and intensive sports training can complement each other with great success.

# Flexibility to succeed

Helen Richardson managed to fit her OU studies around her training schedule

Getty Images

## In the medals

Open University students and alumni celebrated a fantastic medal-winning summer, applying the same focus on excellence to their sporting discipline as they do to their studies.

It was an amazing summer of sport for the UK, and in particular for a number of OU students and alumni who took part in the London Olympics.

Gold medals went to business studies student Dani King for team pursuit cycling and psychology student Etienne Stott for the canoe slalom.

The bronze medal-winning women's hockey team included OU students Alex Danson, who scored the opening goal in the bronze medal play-off match, which saw the team go on to beat New Zealand 3-1, and Helen Richardson who is studying for a degree in psychology.

OU alumnus Alan Campbell also won a bronze medal in rowing in the men's single sculls.

### Flexible study

With punishing training schedules, it is the OU's unique flexible approach that has allowed these students to continue their

studies in preparation for when their careers in competitive sports are over.

Helen Richardson, who at the age of 18 in 2000 became the youngest female hockey player to represent Great Britain at the Olympic Games, has managed to fit her studies around what has become increasingly intensive and focused training. She says: 'The Open University has given me a fantastic opportunity to further my education whilst competing for Great Britain at the highest level. The flexibility of the OU courses is the best thing as it has allowed me to train like a full-time athlete preparing for the Olympic Games in London.'

'I'm able to study during my rest periods in the comfort of my own home which is perfect for what I need. The added extra of being able to attend tutorials is great because you get to meet your tutor face to face and there is an understanding that sometimes time is precious, so if extensions are required then that is absolutely fine.'

Helen mentions her OU studies in her Twitter 'bio' alongside her Olympic medal, saying: 'I would hugely recommend studying with The Open University, whether it's to gain a degree or for short courses. It's brilliant to fit in around life.'

### Team OU

Great performances also came from other OU students representing Team GB. In the aquatics centre, for example, there was Rosie Morris in the water polo team and Rebecca Gallantree who, with Alicia Blagg, finished seventh in the three-metre synchronised diving final.

In outdoor events, Abigail Edmonds made up one half of the women's kayak double and Rory Warlow competed in the shooting event. There was also Liam Pitchford who was part of the men's table tennis team. Overall, a great success for Team GB and Team OU.



OU business studies student Dani King took gold in the team pursuit cycling at London 2012

## Riding to success

Open University students also took part in the Paralympic Games, benefiting from study courses that could fit around their disabilities as well as their training schedules.

The London 2012 Paralympics proved every bit as riveting as the Olympics with some incredible performances, including that of OU student Deborah Criddle (pictured below), who won three medals in the dressage event.

A natural sciences student, Deborah won silver in the individual dressage championships (Test Grade III) on her horse LJT Akilles, before taking the gold in the mixed-team dressage alongside her three teammates.

### 'Icing on the cake'

Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor of the OU, said: 'It has been a great summer for OU Olympians and Paralympians, and Deborah's double really puts the icing on the cake. Her amazing achievement shows that flexible OU courses can be tailored to any individual, even allowing elite athletes to fit their studies around their intense training schedules.'



**'Deborah's amazing achievement shows that flexible OU courses can be tailored to any individual'**

Martin Bean  
Vice-Chancellor, The Open University

Responsive

Page 10

2

**Innovative**

Inclusive

Page 40

The Open University has been a pioneer in teaching for the past 43 years, and prides itself on placing innovation at the heart of its world-class teaching and research. It embraces technological advances and seeks to adapt and enhance them in order to break down barriers to education, inspire learning and enable students to be successful.

# Shaping the education landscape

The Open University is renowned for developing better teaching and learning techniques. As educational demands continue to evolve, innovation is high on its agenda.

Getty Images

## Harnessing technology

In a diversifying education landscape, The Open University continues to harness new ideas and technologies to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

The OU has spent 40 years honing its methods to ensure that students have the best possible chance to learn and succeed. It develops an inspiring and challenging learning experience for all.

OU research and experience has proved that simply making content available will not lead to learning. What the OU delivers is a complete learning journey. The satisfaction of its students and success of its open resources demonstrate its impact.

This year, three significant milestones were reached. OpenLearn, the OU's free learning website, surpassed 25 million unique views. OU content in the OU channel on YouTube reached 10 million views, and content in iTunes U achieved 40,000 downloads, meaning more than 58 million downloads of OU content have been made since it first began.

iSpot, a unique real-time online nature journal which enables members of the public to take part in a mass natural history experiment, has reached over 20,000 users. People load pictures of flora and fauna they can't name, and interested followers identify them and provide a wealth of additional information. Through this interaction, iSpot is building a huge repository of data about Britain's natural environment.



**OpenLearn, the OU's free learning website, surpassed 25 million unique views**

## Thought leaders in distance education

The Institute of Educational Technology (IET) is the OU's world-leading hub of applied educational sciences and open education. Its work has informed the approach of open universities globally and assisted traditional universities in their development of distance learning programmes.

In July, IET produced the 'Innovating Pedagogy' report. It suggests that UK universities can transform learning journeys by turning new technology to their advantage – particularly important in such a competitive world and in light of the development of Mass Online Open Courses (MOOCs). The report, published for the benefit of all teaching institutions, highlights the 10 innovations that have the potential to provide major shifts in educational practice.

## Study anywhere

The Open University is committed to creating learning resources that allow you to study anywhere.

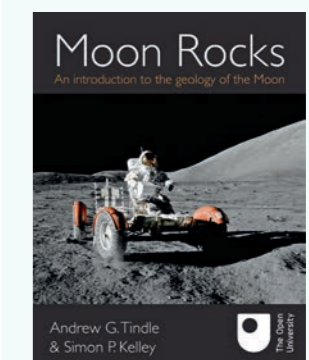
This year saw the OU make a strategic investment in two initiatives that have allowed the University to build its capability and capacity in ebook production for mobile devices.

Over the past two years, a team made up of members from the OU's Learning and Teaching Solutions department and the Knowledge Media Institute has created a method whereby texts can be rendered to multiple outputs.

The platform will make it possible for OU students to study their courses on tablet devices wherever and whenever they want to learn. It will deliver content in ways that no other academic institution can currently match, whilst providing a clear, accessible route to a degree.

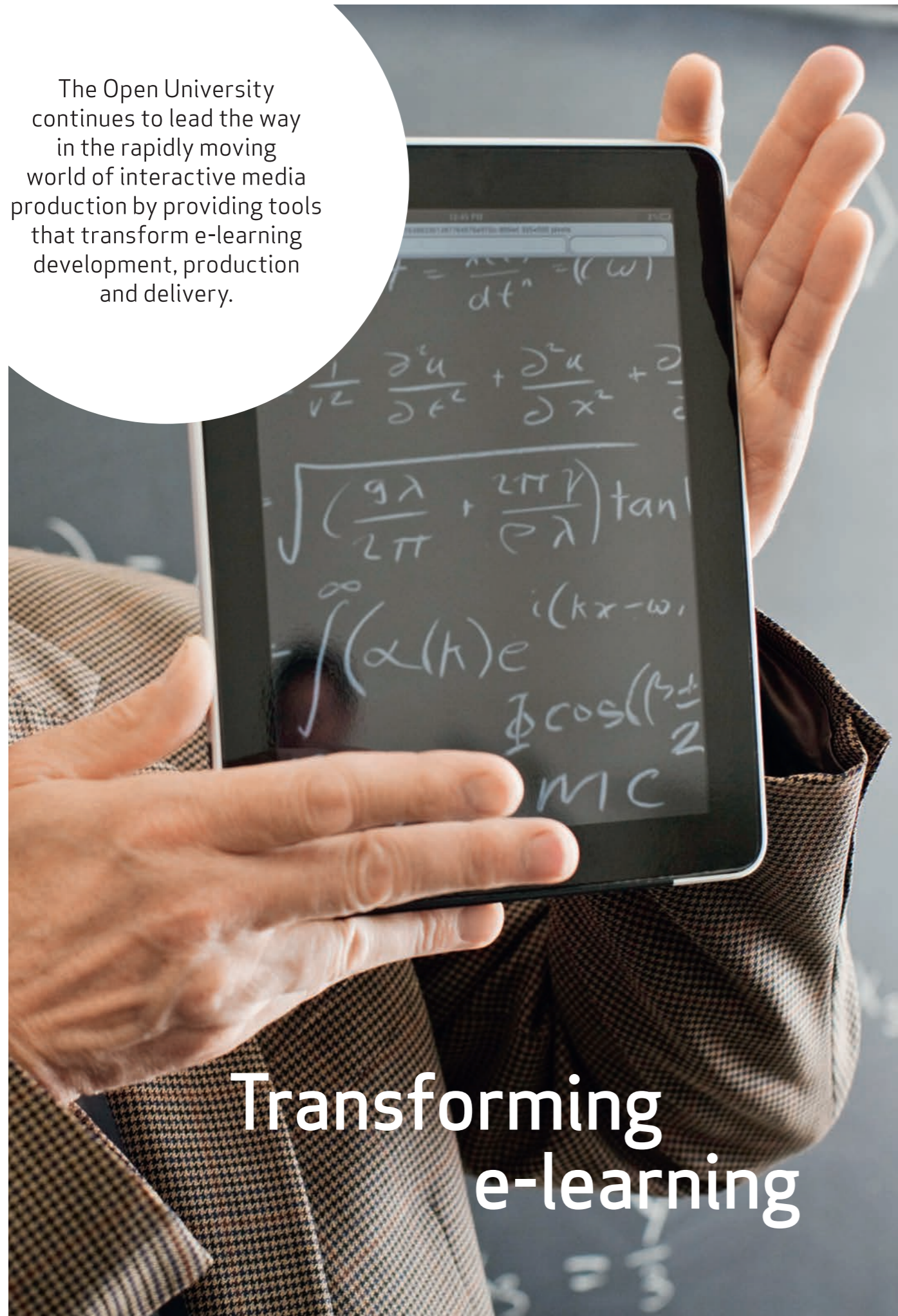
## Developments in eBooks

The OU launched its iTunes U app at the start of 2012, and has also created its first multi-touch eBook, *Moon Rocks: An Introduction to the Geology of the Moon*, to coincide with the launch of a new course, *Moons: an introduction*. The eBook features moon rocks collected by Apollo astronauts and is available on the iBookstore. Learners can view full-screen interactive diagrams, photos, videos, panoramas and more on the iPad.



*Moon Rocks: An Introduction to the Geology of the Moon* is the OU's first multi-touch eBook

The Open University continues to lead the way in the rapidly moving world of interactive media production by providing tools that transform e-learning development, production and delivery.



# Transforming e-learning

Corbis

## Video performances

The Open University's pioneering film-making techniques aim to help science and technology students in tackling complex concepts.

The use of video in digital communications has been expanding at a phenomenal rate. The OU, which currently has the largest presence on YouTube EDU in Europe, is well ahead in this field.

Building on this, the Institute of Educational Technology (IET) is leading a project, JuxtaLearn, that has been awarded a €2.1m grant to enable creative video-making to support science and technology understanding.

School and university students of science and technology often encounter sticking points which act as barriers to their understanding of complex concepts. JuxtaLearn will use creative film-making and editing activities to provoke and enhance students' curiosity and help them overcome these barriers.

### Key objectives

The framework of JuxtaLearn can be divided into three main sections. Firstly, students will take diagnostic assessments, which aim to help them identify the concepts that they are struggling to understand.

Once these have been identified, students will move on to the 'juxtaposition learning' stage. This is where teachers will engage students in personal performances that demonstrate the application of a certain theory in both a formal and a creative activity. For example, through these performances,

students could be shown how a complex physics theory is applied when DJ-ing, or how the bindings between chemical elements play out in a dance routine.

This stage will be complemented by 'reflective performance' which aims to encourage students' curiosity and creative expression through the use of state-of-the-art film-making and editing systems.

Students will be supported in instigating reflective decisions on what to film, how to film it and what and where to edit. These films will then be displayed, encouraging group discussions and sharing of ideas.

The aim of JuxtaLearn is not simply to enable students to have fun while learning. Rather, the programme proposes that through reflecting on these creative juxtaposed performances, in conjunction with more traditional methods, students will gain a much deeper understanding of scientific and technological concepts.

## Old world, new technology

A second round of funding for an Open University Classical Studies project will use digital technology to bring the ancient world to life for both scholars and the public.

The Google Ancient Places (GAP) project has made it easier for anyone interested in the ancient world to discover and make use of texts that refer to ancient places.

Thanks to the work of the GAP team, involving Dr Elton Barker, a lecturer in Classical Studies at the OU, Google has provided renewal funding of US\$50,000 via its Digital Humanities Research Awards Programme. This will help the team build an innovative web platform for reading texts spatially.

### Time machine

One way that GAP will bring the ancient world to life will be through Google Books, an online facility that offers URLs to individual books and pages in specific books. For example, GAP will allow users to choose a text available on Google Books, and then search for all references to an ancient place within it. The results can then be visualised in Google Earth to gain a snapshot of the geographic spread of the references.

Alternatively, all ancient places mentioned in a specific Google Book can be visualised in Google Maps as and when they are mentioned, alongside the online text.

GAP is available both to students and members of the public, and puts knowledge that is traditionally derived from research institutions in the hands of anyone who has internet access.

## Digital age of ancient discovery

Pelagios is making it easier for people to study the ancient world online. Led by The Open University's Dr Elton Barker, lecturer in Classical Studies, the project aims to create a world wide web of antiquity for the benefit of scholars and members of the public. Using follow-on funding of £154,000 provided by digital technologies support body JISC (formerly the Joint Information Systems Committee), Pelagios2 is building on the infrastructure of the internet to enable linking between different kinds of data – texts, photos, maps – from international archives, research institutions and museums through common references to places.



# Inspiring learning

Stunning visuals and groundbreaking investigations have defined The Open University's iconic co-productions with the BBC, which go on to inspire many thousands of new students every year.



BBC

## The OU/BBC – a unique partnership

The Open University's partnership with the BBC continues to flourish during a year that delivered award-winning co-productions and innovative programmes.

Television brings learning to life for millions of viewers and inspires them to begin their journey from informal to formal learning. In 2011/12 the OU/BBC partnership produced some remarkable and high-quality programmes.

Major landmark series such as *Empire* with Jeremy Paxman and *Frozen Planet* with Sir David Attenborough were complemented by a range of innovative commissions to increase the range of subject areas and extend the reach to a broader viewer base.

The range covered *The Story of Wales*, the first co-production with BBC Wales; *Julius Caesar*, the first drama; a new crime series for BBC Three; and the *Hairy Bikers' Bakeation*, which appealed to a wider demographic and brought large numbers of viewers to the OU's free learning website, OpenLearn, to find out more about intercultural communication and the languages curriculum.

Two OU/BBC co-productions had huge public engagement ambitions. OU academics from maths, computing

and technology participated throughout the country in *Bang Goes the Theory* roadshows whilst *Stargazing LIVE* was accompanied by hundreds of live events giving everyone – from amateurs to experts – the chance to get involved.

### Academic expertise

Academic experts from across the University are involved in all OU/BBC co-productions. Their contribution helps ensure that these programmes and the additional footage and interviews will be of interest and use in teaching long after the programmes have transmitted.

Last year, more than 40 academics and Associate Lecturers helped ensure that OU/BBC co-productions received a high degree of audience appreciation. *Empire*, *Divine Women*, *Symphony* and *The Story of Wales* topped the table for the Faculty of Arts. *Frozen Planet*, *Shock and Awe: The Story of Electricity* and *Secrets of our Living Planet* peaked with audiences for the Faculty of Science.

Two outstanding observational documentary series engaged audiences with the reality of life: *The London Markets* was supported by social sciences, and the Faculty of Health and Social Care advised on the *Protecting our Children* series.

OU/BBC co-productions inspire people to take their interest further by visiting OpenLearn. Anyone can access interactive games, videos, articles and podcasts – such as the award-winning simulation *Try a Day in the Life of a Social Worker* – as well as data visualisations, articles and study materials taken from OU courses. More than half a million BBC viewers visited OpenLearn in 2011/12, adding to the total number of 25 million visitors since its launch in 2006.



Professor Brian Cox and Dara Ó Briain introduced the night sky to BBC Two viewers with *Stargazing LIVE*

## Bringing Welsh history to life

*The Story of Wales* was another outstanding example of an Open University/BBC co-production that set out to explore the nation's epic history.

The series saw a journey back through 30,000 years of Welsh history. Presented by broadcaster Huw Edwards, the series began with a fascinating reconstruction of the earliest known human burial in Western Europe – the 'Red Lady' of Paviland, almost 30,000 years ago – and culminated with an exploration of modern-day devolution.

### New perspectives

Rob Humphreys, Director of the OU in Wales, said: 'This was the first bilateral co-production between BBC Wales and the OU in Wales, an exciting new chapter but part of the long and rich tradition of OU/BBC collaboration. The series is not about promoting Wales; rather, our duty as a University, particularly through our unique relationship with the BBC, is to offer opportunities to learn and open up the challenges of discovering new perspectives and debates.'

Huw Lewis, Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage in the Welsh government, said, 'I am delighted to see the OU/BBC partnership in Wales flourish. This series takes adult education and quality broadcasting to a new level and is something to cherish.'



**'Our duty is to open up the challenges of discovering new perspectives and debates'**

Rob Humphreys  
Director, OU in Wales



Getty Images; Science Photo Library. Photography by Kelly Cooper

When it comes to exploring new technologies in order to maximise teaching and learning opportunities, The Open University is a leader in its field.

# Pioneering access to learning

## Virtual study of practical science

A new online laboratory promises to make the teaching of practical science more inclusive and dynamic.

The Open University is set to create a global centre for practical science teaching, funded by a £1m grant from The Wolfson Foundation.

The OpenScience Laboratory, operating entirely online, will provide a gateway to a wide range of scientific experiments and observations, many developed by the OU.

'Practical science has long been an underdeveloped area of online education. This project is a cost-effective and bold way of making the world of science accessible to more people, particularly those in the least developed countries,' said Professor Steve Swithenby, Co-Director of the project.

'The future of science will be crucially dependent on working via a computer screen. The OU has already successfully taken up this challenge in education with the development of tools such as the virtual microscope. Although The OpenScience Laboratory is online, users will be accessing real data and equipment, enabling them to carry out authentic science investigations, a huge advance on oversimplified simulations,' he added.

### Global access

Operating as a virtual laboratory, The OpenScience Laboratory will be designed so that colleagues across the

sector and the globe can adopt it for use in their own teaching.

Students will not only have remote access to laboratories and observatories, but will also be able to remotely control and operate real physical equipment.

There will also be virtual laboratories and instruments that will provide interfaces to real data and emulate physical equipment, as well as collaborative instrument sharing, which will create environments for the discussion of design and data analysis.

Another key advantage will be online field investigations, potentially involving electronic access to a conventional field trip, or offering a virtual experience using satellite-borne and remotely operated sensors, where students can investigate specific environments, such as active volcanoes.

### Graduate boost

As a valuable resource for undergraduates, The OpenScience Laboratory will help to address the demand for experienced science graduates.

Twenty per cent of the material will be made freely available through open-source software and the initiative will operate internationally. The OpenScience Laboratory will also be integrated into OU science courses.



The OpenScience Laboratory will be globally accessible

## Mental health in Ethiopia

A groundbreaking collaboration is investigating how autism impacts underserved communities in Ethiopia.

On the front line of Ethiopia's healthcare system, 33,000 health extension workers (HEWs) provide vital services to a rural population of around 65 million.

In a bid to improve levels of education and create a standardised approach to training HEWs, The Open University collaborated with the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health, UNICEF and AMREF to launch the Health Education and Training (HEAT) programme in 2011.

The training modules include one on dealing with mental health and child developmental issues in rural areas.

'It is the first time that rural HEWs are exposed to mental health material – it's groundbreaking,' explains Dr Rosa Hoekstra from the OU's Faculty of Science, who, together with colleagues Dr Basiro Davey and Lesley-Anne Long and researchers from Addis Ababa University, received funding from the charity Autism Speaks to evaluate and enhance Ethiopia's mental health training.

Rosa and her team began interviewing parents of children with autism in Ethiopia to see what kind of support they would like and how they perceived mental health conditions. 'Traditional healing is still very prevalent in the country, and while these methods are not necessarily harmful, we needed to understand them.'

Rosa is also interviewing HEWs who have just completed studying the new mental health module, and working on enhancing the learning materials for the HEAT programme in 2013. 'Autism awareness needs to be addressed within the bigger problem of stigma surrounding all mental health issues and child developmental difficulties in underserved communities. I want this work to support a wider collaboration with experts in Ethiopia and ultimately to make a difference for families with autism.'

# Unparalleled research

Scientists at The Open University have played an important role in exploring and researching hostile environments on our own and other planets. Through its state-of-the-art learning resources, the OU enables others to share the experience.

*Frozen Planet* captured both the almighty power and the fragility of the arctic wilderness

Mars image: NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS. Photography by Mark Brandon

## Innovative

### Frozen frontiers

*Frozen Planet* was a highly successful, award-winning Open University/BBC co-production and also the impetus to a new course developed by the Faculty of Science.

The raw power of the elements and breathtaking Arctic and Antarctic landscapes, unmatched anywhere else on the planet, were beautifully showcased in the BBC's landmark series *Frozen Planet*. Produced in partnership with the OU, the show featured presenter and OU honorary graduate Sir David Attenborough's epic voyage across the Arctic and Antarctica.

Through the OU's free learning site OpenLearn, there are opportunities to explore the seemingly hostile environment of the polar regions.

The site has an interactive map featuring geographic information from Arctic and Antarctic experts, including real-time temperature and sea-ice levels, and looks at how these areas have been defined over time. An online course, *The frozen planet*, offers information on the temperature in the polar regions; how the energy from the Sun varies with the changing seasons; and how to read and understand graphs and maps.

### Diversity of life

The poles are also home to many of the world's hardest and most charismatic animals on Earth, from polar bears to emperor penguins, and wolves to wandering albatrosses. Using the latest camera technology on land, in the air and under water, *Frozen Planet*

captures the drama of their lives in the most intimate detail.

It also showcases the fragility of life and the almighty power of the elements. From underwater images of a deadly brinicle – a finger of ice, growing and killing everything in its path – to teams of orcas working to generate massive waves to wash their seal prey into the sea, the story covers the animals' ongoing struggle for survival within this dangerous and rapidly transforming world.

### Unique wilderness

Four years in the making, the series relied heavily on the expertise of scientists to make it happen. The OU's Dr David Robinson, Senior Lecturer in Biological Sciences and Dr Mark Brandon, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Science, were academic consultants for the series.

Dr Brandon explained: 'Having carried out scientific research in the polar regions for many years and been on location with the *Frozen Planet* team, I know first-hand just how unique this frozen wilderness is – and how fragile. We want to show what rising temperatures mean to the people and animals living there, but also the effect this will have on the rest of the planet.'



**'Having been on location with the *Frozen Planet* team, I know just how unique this frozen wilderness is – and how fragile'**

Dr Mark Brandon (far left, with Sir David Attenborough, right), Senior Lecturer in Environmental Science at the OU



### Exploring Martian minerals

The landing of the Mars Science Laboratory in 2012 presents great opportunities to discover more about our closest planetary neighbour. The Open University is at the forefront of this new research.

The planet Mars presents a hostile frontier of a different kind. With the landing of the Mars Science Laboratory comes unprecedented opportunities for OU researchers to find out more about the Earth's nearest planetary neighbour.

The OU has received three funding awards, totalling £682,656, from the UK Space Agency's £2m allocation for science associated with Mars exploration. This particular project will enhance the current understanding of the Martian environment and its potential habitability.

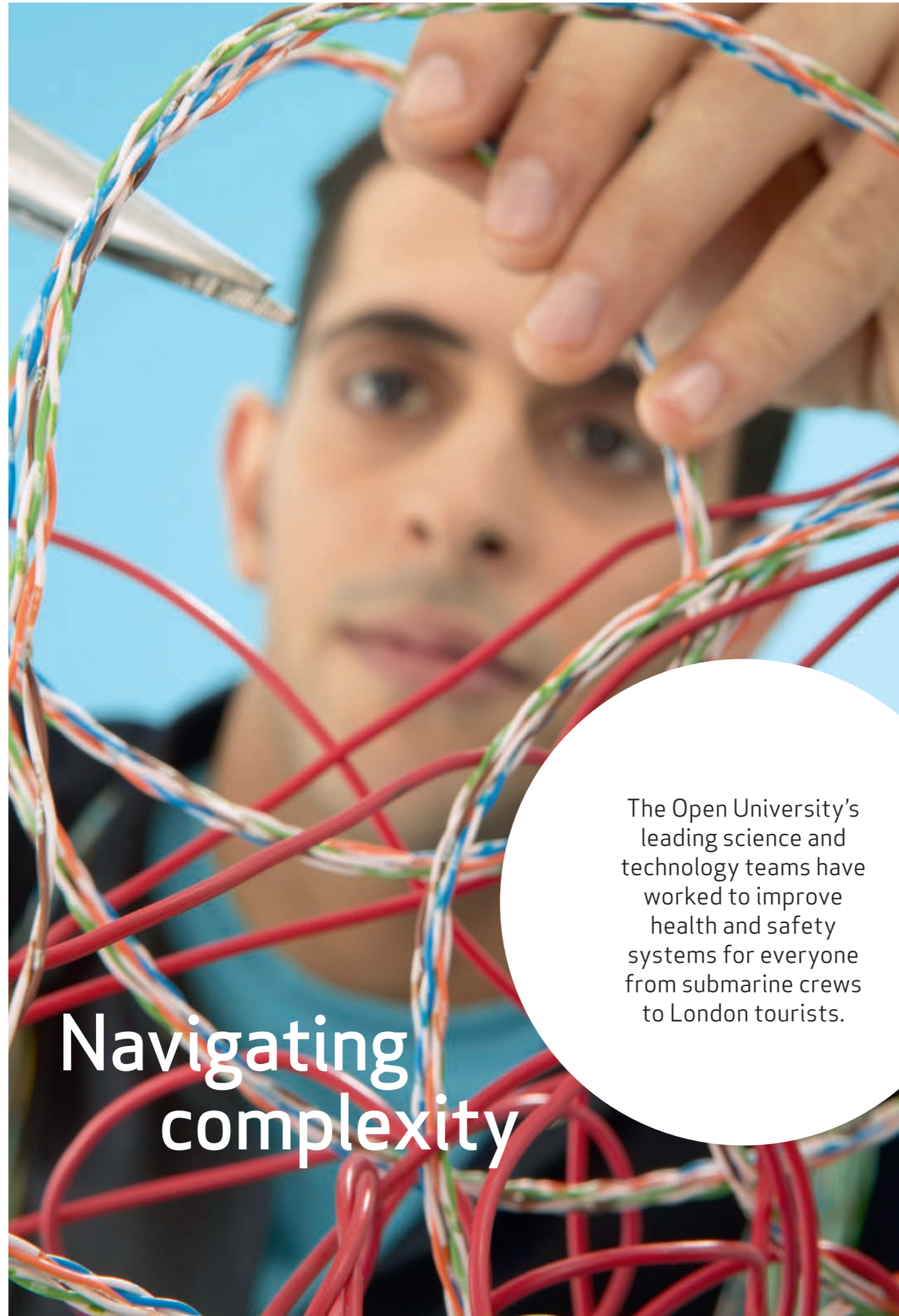
### Habitats on Mars?

Dr Susanne Schwenzer, from the OU's Centre for Earth, Planetary, Space and Astronomical Research (CEPSAR), is part of a team that will study minerals formed when water interacts with rocks on Mars, and ultimately explore whether the planet was ever able to support life.

She said: 'We already know that there was water on Mars, but now we want to know the temperature of the water and whether it was clean and supportive of potential life, or if it was poisonous. We also want to know if Mars has niches where microbial life could have existed.'

Why do we want to know? Because, says Dr Schwenzer, 'looking for habitable places outside our own planet and looking for when life first emerged on Earth, and under what conditions, is a fundamental question in planetary and Earth sciences; one that humans have asked since the ancient Greek philosophers pondered, "Are we alone?"'

The OU's Faculty of Science has an international reputation in planetary, space science and astronomy research, and will continue its exploration through space missions such as Rosetta, which is scheduled to land on a comet in 2014.



# Navigating complexity

The Open University's leading science and technology teams have worked to improve health and safety systems for everyone from submarine crews to London tourists.

SuperStock; Submarine image: © Crown copyright 2000, HMS Vengeance

## Keeping nuclear submariners safe

Journeys to the bottom of the ocean can be more challenging than space expeditions. To keep crews out of danger, Open University scientists are now using expertise learned on space missions.

Nuclear submarines are among the most complex vehicles ever devised, patrolling this hostile environment 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and operating in some of the most remote places known to man. Maintaining a safe internal submarine environment is crucial to ensuring the health and safety of operating crews.

A team of scientists from the OU is using the technical skills and expertise that were honed for space exploration to develop new systems that will help to protect submariners.

The team from the OU's Department of Physical Sciences (DPS) is developing a prototype air-monitoring system, which could be a potential alternative to existing technology. The Distributed Atmospheric Monitoring System is intended to continuously monitor submariners' atmospheric environment and alert them to any anomalies in the gases present.

The team is building on its significant experience of developing small, robust

gas analysis instruments which have been flown on missions such as Beagle 2 to Mars, and Rosetta which is scheduled to land on a comet in 2014.

### Technology transfer expertise

The team, funded by BAE Systems, is being led by Dr Geraint Morgan, Research Fellow. Original funding for the project is from the Ministry of Defence's Technology Development Programme.

The DPS currently has over 50 agreements in place with a number of government departments and agencies, academic institutions, not-for-profit organisations and commercial companies.



The HMS Vengeance crew will benefit from new safety systems

## Preventing an epidemic

Deaths from infections have yet to be eradicated, but The Open University has helped to develop an epidemic detection system that could save lives.

In spite of the advances of modern medicine, people are still at risk from epidemic diseases, as the 2010 outbreaks of swine flu showed us. Detecting a rise in infectious diseases as early as possible is vital, so that control measures can be put in place to contain the spread.

An enhanced automated outbreak detection system has been devised by a team from the OU's Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology, led by OU Professor Paddy Farrington in collaboration with the Health Protection Agency and University of Strathclyde.

The system offers an effective and comprehensive solution, and will improve on an earlier version which was used for the London 2012 Olympics, for which around 500,000 foreign visitors specifically travelled to the UK.

### Better detection capability

The amount of data now available on infections is too great to be processed effectively by hand, so the new system, which is based on statistical methods, is able to survey thousands of different infections that could pose a potential threat. If an epidemic outbreak looks probable, the data is passed over to public health professionals and epidemiologists to investigate.

It works well across a very wide range of infection types with different trends and seasonal patterns. The project has been supported by £621,000 of funding from the Medical Research Council.

Responsive

Page 10

Innovative

Page 26

3

**Inclusive**

The Open University believes that education plays a unique role in society. It values social justice, feels that the development of knowledge and skills should be available to all, and works tirelessly to break down the economic and social barriers that hinder students from reaching their true potential.

# Opening doors

The Open University continues to demonstrate a commitment to widening participation by offering accessible and affordable routes into higher education for those who might otherwise miss out on the opportunity.

## The Access to Success Route

The increase in fees and living costs can make the decision to go to university a difficult one, so The Open University has created a financially subsidised programme to help students in England make the right choice for them.

Studying at university level is never easy, and with higher fees and higher living costs, students in England will find it more challenging than ever. For this reason, they may feel there are no options open to them. The OU, however, is keen to continue its mission in breaking down barriers to education and is committed to being a study option for all.

To date, more than 1.8 million people have engaged in OU studies, including nearly a quarter of a million students at the present time, all from different backgrounds, and with varying levels of previous educational experience.

Although fees have been kept as low as possible, there is a risk that students with little previous educational qualifications and on low incomes, disabled students, or those lacking confidence will be deterred from taking out a loan to begin with.

### The solution

The Access to Success Route allows students in England to try out university-level study without any financial pressure so that they can decide if it is for them, and also to gain the confidence they need to move on and access further study options.

The programme is a two-step process. Step one offers the student

the opportunity to begin studying with a short introductory Openings module. These are available in a range of subjects with plenty of support and no exams.

Step two sees the student study a 60-credit module, or two 30-credit modules, in a subject that is relevant to the qualification they wish to pursue.

The Access to Success Route is jointly funded by the OU and the government's National Scholarship Fund, which means students only pay a small contribution (currently just two per cent of the normal fees).

### Moving forward

On completion of steps one and two, students will be well prepared to continue their studies with the OU, although there is no obligation to do so.

Many students find that the Access to Success Route offers them an ideal starting point to build their confidence and develop key study skills. From there, they can prepare for further study for qualifications in a field they are interested in or would like to pursue a career in.



**More than 1.8 million people have engaged in OU studies, including nearly a quarter of a million students presently**

## Inclusive



### Returning to learning

**Jagjit Kaur – Student**

One barrier to higher education can be a lack of confidence. The Open University's Openings modules help rebuild self-esteem as well as enhancing skills.

Jagjit Kaur is a single parent who works to support herself and her family. She has always wanted to work with children, but wasn't sure where to go or what she needed to do to have a career in teaching or childcare.

After speaking with an OU adviser, Jagjit was encouraged to study an Openings module, *Understanding children* (now called *Understanding children and young people*), suitable for anyone who would like to work with children or who is just interested in childhood experiences. The course covers topics in childhood studies, child psychology, social work, healthcare and teaching.

### Confidence boost

As she hadn't done any formal study since leaving school, Jagjit was understandably nervous. However, her success on the course boosted her confidence and persuaded her that she was able to study at this level.

She has since enrolled on a longer OU course and now plans to pursue a career in primary teaching. Studying with the OU has given Jagjit the confidence to take up opportunities such as volunteering at her local children's centre where she can gain the experience she needs in working with children. She now feels proud of her achievements and positive about the future.



As a pioneer of distance learning, The Open University is working to improve this study method's standards in some of the world's emerging economies to enable school leavers to fulfil their education aspirations.

## Sharing expertise

It is estimated that India requires 1.33 million further teachers by 2017

Photography by © Ryan Lobo

### Supporting teacher education in India

India's education system faces teaching challenges of scale and quality, but a partnership led by The Open University is providing some practical solutions.

Improving the classroom practice of teachers is essential for successful education reform, and this is one area where Teacher Education through School-based Support (TESS) and the TESS-India partnership, led by the OU and funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development, is making progress.

The programme will result in the creation of the biggest network of freely available, high-quality distance learning teacher education resources in India.

These materials will be available in multiple formats, in print and online, and will be used in primary and secondary schools across the country, rolled out in partnership with Indian States and the TESS-India partner education institutions.

By improving the quantity and quality of teacher education in India, there is scope to significantly improve the classroom experience of millions of pupils in schools across the country.

#### Interactive approach

In the first phase, TESS-India will produce primary-level materials in subject areas that include maths, science, English and mother tongue, with secondary level materials in maths, science and English following a similar format.

Materials on educational leadership will be produced for both secondary and primary teachers and head teachers.

The mixed-media materials, including low-cost audiovisual materials that could be used on secure digital cards on mobile phones, will be written in English and translated into five Indian languages.

The localised materials, together with models and case studies of programme design and implementation, will then be freely available online to assist teachers and teacher-educators across India with their ongoing professional development.

#### Meeting challenges

Project-funded state and Delhi-based staffing resources will help to support the implementation of TESS-India materials. Working to engage States from the beginning of the process will ensure that they are active and creative participants throughout.

The challenges facing India's educational system are very real. An estimated 1.33 million further teachers are required by 2017, and the quality of existing teaching needs dramatic improvement.

The OU's excellence, scale and reach, in addition to the skills and resources of TESS-India, will help meet these needs. Pressure on teacher education institutions will be reduced, enabling them to deliver high-quality teacher training at scale and speed, to both teachers in training and teachers in the classroom.

### Kusuma Trust funding supports teaching

Thanks to funding from the Kusuma Trust, The Open University is creating opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds in India with bespoke education materials.

The OU and Kusuma Trust UK share a belief that providing access to quality education has the power to transform lives in the poorest States in the country.

The Kusuma Trust is investing in better education for children in India, focusing on the districts of Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh and Sambalpur in Odisha. The OU has received grant funding from the Trust for the Udbhav Hardoi Teacher Development project that is supporting teachers in classes nine to 12 in Hardoi.

#### Power of education

Running until June 2013, the OU is producing fully bespoke programmes that are based around practical activities for teachers to carry out in their classroom, as well as providing face-to-face training and support for the teachers.

With internet access unreliable in Hardoi, the OU is providing low-cost materials, such as memory cards that can be used on mobile phones.

'Our main priority is to support interventions that improve education outcomes for people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to realise their potential and break the inter-generational cycle of poverty,' said the CEO of Kusuma Trust UK, Dr Balwant Singh.

Through the power of technology, this project aims to unlock better teaching and greater learning.

### Going the distance in Nigeria

Professor Steve Swithenby is Science Director of The Open University's eSTeEM unit, which brings together STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) academics to research, evaluate and innovate in STEM teaching and learning methods. Along with a team of OU academics, he has been working with the National Universities Commission in Nigeria to provide mentoring for the design, drafting, illustration and editing of distance learning resources and pedagogy workshops. Participants include around 30 Nigerian academics from six university distance learning centres and the National Open University of Nigeria.

# Creating opportunities

The power of education – from basic skills teaching for the many to dramatic opportunities for the individual – is evident in its wider benefits, boosting local economies and quite literally changing lives.



A teacher in rural Bangladesh uses audio aids in her lessons

## English skills for better opportunities

The standard of English language in Bangladesh needs to be raised if social and economic prospects are to be improved. The Open University has teamed up with various parties to devise innovative, multimedia resources to support this initiative.

Launched in 2008, English in Action (EIA) is a nine-year programme funded by the UK government to help millions of people in Bangladesh develop their English language skills via mobile and digital technologies.

Funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development, EIA is implemented through a partnership of the government of Bangladesh and a consortium of international partners (BMB Mott MacDonald, BBC Media Action and the OU), plus national non-governmental organisations (Underprivileged Children's Educational Program and Friends in Village Development Bangladesh).

EIA is making good progress as it enters its third phase of implementation. A first series of initial teacher workshops for this phase were held from April to July 2012 to roll out the programme to 4,500 teachers.

The programme's aim is to provide teachers of English in Bangladesh with professional development training as well as resources and classroom materials, so that they can enhance their own teaching skills and bring new ideas into the classroom.

### Using technology

The OU's experts in distance education have helped to produce professional development materials for teachers that fit with the Bangladeshi curriculum and culture. They also advise on how teachers and their use of technology can be supported in the programme.

These activities and materials are supporting communicative language learning in primary and secondary classrooms across Bangladesh.

Teachers have low-cost mobile telephones to use in the classroom with speakers, so that students can listen



to audio lessons in conjunction with their school textbooks. With the same mobiles, teachers can watch professional development video materials.

### Supporting success

Integral to the programme is the development of a local support structure, with groups of teachers coming together regularly in 'cluster meetings' to share experiences and advise each other on how they are using the new materials. This collaboration is crucial to success, helping teachers in more rural areas to build their own network of peer support.

Currently in Phase III, the project is scaling up the school programme to 12,500 teachers and 900,000 students by 2014. Phase IV, the final stage of the project, will scale up again to include 75,000 teachers and over 10 million students by 2017.



## Inclusive

### The life-changing power of study

Samantha Lucas – Student

The approachable and inclusive nature of The Open University has been a lifeline for many facing an otherwise bleak future.

Many students say that studying with the OU has transformed their lives. Samantha Lucas, a 2012 OU graduate and former drug addict, insists that it saved hers.

An abusive husband and a traumatic divorce triggered her reliance on drugs, which often kept her awake all night. That was when she discovered the OU on TV.

She says: 'I started writing essays just for fun and then thought I might as well get credit for doing it. I signed up with the OU and loved it, especially the amazing opportunities it can offer to people from all walks of life.'

### Second chance

Those opportunities often include giving people a second chance. As a youngster, Samantha had always planned to go to the University of Oxford, but when her mother fell ill she left school to care for her siblings and didn't take her A-levels.

Six years after turning her back on drugs, she finally has her honours degree and now plans to continue her studies.

'I have gained an immeasurable amount of confidence from my studies. It may be a touch dramatic to say that the OU saved my life, but I firmly believe it to be true.'



**'I signed up with the OU and loved it, especially the amazing opportunities it can offer to people from all walks of life'**

Samantha Lucas





# Breaking barriers

By implementing practical, financial and pastoral initiatives, The Open University has removed obstacles to higher education.

Getty Images

## Learning as treatment

**Corinna Murray – Student**

Individuals with physical disabilities often find that their emotional health also deteriorates. Studying through The Open University can revive a vital sense of purpose.

Twelve years ago, Corinna Murray, 37, developed a combination of painful conditions including fibromyalgia, myalgic encephalomyelitis, Ménière's disease and cervical spondylosis.

'I went from walking 10 to 15 miles a day with my dog to having to give up work and being confined to bed or my wheelchair. I became very depressed – when you can't work, days become very long.'

Corinna was doing voluntary work at Headway, a charity for people with head injuries, when someone suggested that she try studying. She sent off for the OU prospectus and instantly saw modules that interested her.

### New lease of life

'I will never forget the day my first course materials arrived,' Corinna remembers. 'It was amazing – a huge box, not just of books but microscopes, lab equipment and videos. I couldn't wait to get started.'

The difference studying made to Corinna's life was enormous. 'At last I had something worthwhile to fill my time. And the work didn't hamper my condition – with ME and fibromyalgia "little and often" is key to everything, and the OU fitted in perfectly with that. In fact, having a routine centred on my studies has also had a positive impact on both my physical and emotional health.'



Corinna achieved a distinction in her continuous assessment and exams for *Discovering science*, which encouraged her to carry on studying for two more Bachelors degrees. She graduated in the summer of 2012 with her third, an LLB in English Law.

### Invaluable support

Corinna's health has continued to deteriorate over the years, but the OU has supported her, both financially and practically.

The OU provided a helper for her at residential schools and offered flexibility with exams. A Disabled Students' Allowance award paid for a helper to organise her course materials and notes as well as a laptop and voice recognition software so that she can study in bed.

'The OU has continuously adapted the amount and type of support provided,' Corinna explains. 'It's been a lifesaver. It feels good to be able to succeed at something. I find that people often assume I'm incapable because I'm in a wheelchair. It's been great to be able to prove them wrong.'

## Rise in disabled students at the OU

The past year has seen a marked increase in the number of disabled students at The Open University.

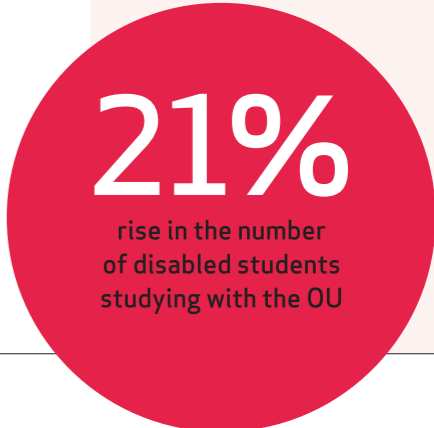
The number of disabled students registering for modules went from 12,263 in May 2011 to 14,883 in May 2012 – an increase of 21 per cent year on year.

This welcome increase in disabled registrations is in part due to efforts to encourage students to disclose their disability, and also a result of improvements in data capture systems.

'This is an important increase,' says Carol Doran, Assistant Director, Head of Disabled Student Services. 'Not only because it shows the OU is continuing to be successful in attracting disabled students, but also that individuals feel comfortable in disclosing a disability to us.'

The OU assists disabled students with support tailored to their needs – whether that is assistive technologies, alternative format course materials, assistance at day/residential schools, flexibility in assignments or home exams.

OU study is attractive to many disabled people as they can adapt their study to fit in with personal circumstances, other commitments and the pace of their lives.



## Pioneer in accessibility

The Open University strongly believes in the entitlement of disabled students to participate in all activities provided as part of their programme of study. It is very proud to be an established leader in the field of accessibility with its Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) programme. SeGA aims to make sure that, at initial module design stage, the needs of disabled students are considered. This crucial stage in the module creation process reduces the need to 'retrofit' study materials if and when a student faces difficulties. SeGA keeps abreast of disability legislation and ensures that it is threaded through University processes from the outset.



# Developing talent

The Open University believes that everyone should have access to higher education and is tackling the barriers that prevent students reaching their next stage of learning.

Getty Images



**'I went from cleaner to science teacher'**

**Karen Williams** – Teacher

The Open University believes a lack of school qualifications should not be a barrier to further study.

Karen Williams was a mother of three children under 10 and working as a cleaner in a nursing home when she decided to start an OU degree. 'I'd left school with no qualifications but when I went to night school, I realised that I had a brain.'

After seeing an ad in the paper, Karen signed up for OU study in 1991. 'When I began studying I knew that I had found something for me.'

Karen graduated with a BSc Open degree in 1999 and immediately applied for a teacher-training course at Bangor University.

'I completed my Postgraduate Certificate in Education in July 2001 and by September I was teaching science at a North Wales school. It was like a miracle had happened! I had found my vocation in life. Three years ago I was promoted to Head of Year.'

**Worth the wait**

However, Karen's journey hasn't been easy – her marriage broke down and her friends asked why she continued to study. 'Sometimes I used to question it myself and I always came to the same conclusion – it was the only way out of the poverty I was in.' Karen kept going and finally finished her OU education after eight long but rewarding years.

'I could only do it because of the financial awards that I was granted. Even with my graduation, I wrote to the OU explaining that I couldn't afford to attend the ceremony. They funded the train journey for me and my three children and hired the gown for me. I am the biggest advocate of the OU. I really can't thank them enough.'

**Bridge to Success pilots in the US**

The Open University was approached to address the challenge faced by the American educational system posed by students' poor confidence and attainment in mathematics.

Many US college students dream of a higher education, but many give up at the first hurdle due to a lack of basic skills. For example, only 26 per cent of students on low-income who enrol go on to successfully gain Bachelors degrees. Of more than 250,000 US students that require the most maths remediation, only 16 per cent complete the course requirements within three years.

**Award-winning project**

In 2011, the OU's Open Learning: Bridge to Success project was chosen from more than 600 entries and 50 finalists to win a US\$750,000 (£458,000) award to help pilot its work. The grant is part of the first wave of the Next Generation Learning Challenges grants, which is a partnership of US public education officials, educational tech companies and charities including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This project has created high-quality, interactive and motivational online education materials accessible to all. The aim is to increase the number of adults who enrol in colleges, and encourage more to go on to pursue – and crucially, complete – a degree or professional qualification.

**Combination learning**

The Bridge to Success project was set up to bolster the maths abilities of students tempted to drop out of college due to a lack of skills.

Created as a partnership between the OU, Anne Arundel Community College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Maryland University College, it combines resources from the OU's *Starting with maths* and *Learning to change* Openings courses to tackle the issues. The courses are released as open educational resources, which are free for all to use.

The project has reached more than 6,000 online learners and engaged with more than 10 US colleges plus workforce development agencies in the US.

'We are helping people, not only in our partner colleges, but also the tens of thousands of students who face the same issues, and we bring all of this experience back into open learning at the OU,' says Patrick McAndrew, Professor of Open Education in the OU's Institute of Educational Technology.



**The Open Learning: Bridge to Success project was chosen from more than 600 entries and 50 finalists to receive funding of US\$750,000**

# Support where it's needed

The Open University is indebted to its supporters, whose generosity and commitment play a key part in its future and the future of its students. This support helps finance the OU's work in widening education and transforming lives in both the UK and around the world.

The OU is extremely grateful to the individuals, organisations, trusts and foundations who, between them, contributed more than £2.8 million during 2011/12.

The OU extends its thanks to the 8,442 donors who gave money to the University this year, especially to those from the Vice-Chancellor's Circle. The money raised not only helps fund strategic and innovative projects in the UK and abroad, but also supports students who may be in financial difficulty. The OU believes that everyone should have the opportunity to learn and fulfil their potential, and that financial barriers shouldn't hinder an individual's educational progress.



Graduates celebrate at the Barbican degree ceremony, March 2012.

## Major gift donations

The University has received some very significant donations during 2011/12. One of which was The Wolfson Foundation's pledge of £1m to help create The OpenScience Laboratory, a global centre at the cutting edge of practical science teaching, which is entirely operated online (see Virtual study of practical science, page 35).

Paul Ramsbottom, Chief Executive of The Wolfson Foundation, said: 'The OU is among the international pioneers in this field and we look forward to The OpenScience Laboratory making practical science available to many more students across the globe.'

The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust made a significant donation towards the TESSA programme, which is enhancing the education of primary school teachers across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Baron Lorne Thyssen also pledged a substantial amount to support various initiatives in Classical Studies, including new posts, a new module and PhD studentships.

## Transforming lives by supporting the OU

To make a donation to the OU please visit [www.open.ac.uk/giving](http://www.open.ac.uk/giving). If you would like to learn more about remembering the OU in a Will please visit [www.open.ac.uk/legacies](http://www.open.ac.uk/legacies).

## Donations from individuals



For Jean Withers (pictured), her graduation day was the proudest of her life.

'There I was on the platform of The Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, shaking hands with the Vice-Chancellor of the OU, and hearing the loud cheers from my family.'

When Jean was asked to help by making a regular donation to OU funds, she had no hesitation in agreeing. 'I felt it would be one small way of repaying all I owe to this unique institution. My own studies were funded by an OU grant and they paid for my formal dyslexic assessment, thus allowing me to claim a disabled student allowance. I am happy to support others who need help.'

Jean is interested in the work the OU is doing in Africa, believing that it is easy to forget how lucky we are to live in a country where education is a right not a privilege: 'I feel fortunate to be able to play a small part in redressing that imbalance. That is why I support The Open University.'

## Legacies



The OU is enormously thankful to the increasing number of alumni, friends and staff who kindly support the

University by leaving a gift in their Will.

In 2011/12, the OU received £444,236 from legacies, and in the same period a further 154 people let the OU know that they have remembered it in their Will.

Iris Keating (pictured) is just one of the many individuals who has chosen to leave a gift. 'Quite simply, the OU changed my life. I chose to leave a gift in my Will to enable others to achieve their potential.'

This year, the OU received one of the largest ever legacy gifts in its history – nearly £280,000 bequeathed by Mrs Muriel Holden. One of the University's very first students, Muriel studied with the OU in the 1970s, graduating with an Open degree in 1981.

Muriel was passionate about the OU. She felt that higher education should be available to all, and her gift has now been divided between the Student Assistance Fund and the Access to Success Route.

The OU is hugely appreciative for her generosity – her gift helps the University's mission to make higher education available to everyone.

## The Vice-Chancellor's Circle

The OU is incredibly grateful to all donors and in recognition of their generosity invites those who donate more than £1,000 within a year to become members of the Vice-Chancellor's Circle. All members of the Vice-Chancellor's Circle receive special communications and invitations, and a chance to get more involved with the OU. Thanks this year are extended to:

### The Vice-Chancellor's Gold Circle

(those who have gifted £5,000 or more in the past 12 months):

The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust  
Mrs J Bailey  
Mr R Delbridge  
The Eranda Foundation  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust  
Lord and Lady Haskins  
Mrs J Jewell  
The Richard & Anne King Charitable Trust  
The Sir James Knott Trust  
Kusuma Trust UK  
Banco Santander  
The Shears Foundation  
Baron Thyssen  
The Waterloo Foundation  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
The Wolfson Foundation

### The Vice-Chancellor's Circle

(those who have gifted between £1,000 and £5,000 in the past 12 months):

Mr G Ahier  
Mrs P Butterworth  
Mr M Constant  
Dr D Day  
Ms A De Jager  
Mr J Devlin  
Dr J Drysdale  
Mrs J Harper  
Mr C Hume  
Dr T Hunt  
Mr K Hydon  
Dr R James  
Mr I Johnson  
Ms R Leung  
Mrs E MacNamara  
Dr D McGibney  
Mrs F Mylchreest  
Mrs T Norris  
Miss J Popovic  
Mr I Reid  
Ms G Rumley  
Mr N Sparks  
Mr G Stevens  
Professor M Stuart  
Mr P Todd

A full list of donors is available at [www.open.ac.uk/donors](http://www.open.ac.uk/donors)

# Financial highlights 2011/12

	Year ended 31 July 2012 <b>£m</b>	Year ended 31 July 2011 <b>£m</b>
<b>Results, cash flows, assets and reserves</b>		
Funding body grants	232.9	257.8
Tuition fees and education contracts	174.0	164.0
Research grants and contracts	13.8	15.6
Other income	28.3	29.2
Endowment and investment income	4.6	3.9
<b>Total income</b>	<b>453.6</b>	470.5
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>415.7</b>	423.2
<b>Surplus for the year before taxation and exceptional items</b>	<b>37.9</b>	47.3
Net cash flow from operating activities	32.6	55.9
Net returns on investments and servicing of finance	4.5	4.7
<b>Net cash flow before investing activities and tax</b>	<b>37.1</b>	60.6
Fixed assets	163.5	172.8
Endowment assets	0.5	0.5
Net current assets	237.1	191.5
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>401.1</b>	364.8
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>252.8</b>	215.2
<b>Other key statistics</b>		
Number of full-time equivalent students	<b>86,173</b>	85,704
Total number of students	<b>246,626</b>	256,674
Percentage of students satisfied with the quality of their course (taken from respondents to the National Student Survey)	<b>93</b>	93

# Results for the year

Total income decreased by £16.9m or four per cent to £453.6m.

Funding body grants decreased by £24.9m or 10 per cent to £232.9m, largely as a result of the non-repetition of a one-off grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) of £20.6m in 2010/11. The recurrent grant from HEFCE was £185.8m and represented 85 per cent of all recurrent grants from the various funding bodies. It decreased by £3.7m or two per cent from the total of £189.5m in 2010/11. Recurrent grants from other funding bodies increased by £0.7m from the total in 2010/11 to £31.6m. Specific grants decreased by £22.1m to £9.8m because of the one-off grant from HEFCE referred to above, and decreases in specific grants from all funding bodies totalling £1.5m.

Fee income increased by £10m or six per cent to £174m. The entire increase was in respect of fees paid by students, or on their behalf by their employers, in the UK, which increased by £10.1m to £151.7m. The overall increase results from a combination of general fee inflation and the increase in full-time equivalent students (see page 54).

Income from research grants and contracts decreased by £1.8m or 12 per cent to £13.8m, due to decreased value of work funded from research councils and other sources. Other income decreased by £0.9m to £28.3m. Endowment and investment income

increased by £0.7m or 18 per cent to £4.6m as a result of increased balances invested.

Total expenditure decreased by £7.5m or two per cent to £415.7m.

Total staff costs decreased by £5.4m or two per cent to £271.2m. £6.7m was from a reduction in the number of full-time equivalent staff, and £0.7m from a reduction in early retirement and severance payments. This was offset by a £3.4m increase resulting from nationally negotiated pay awards and progression of staff up incremental pay scales. The balance of £1.4m arose from a change in mix in full-time and part-time staff.

Other (non-pay) operating expenses, excluding depreciation and interest, decreased by £2.8m or two per cent to £133.3m.

The net result was a surplus before tax and exceptional items of £37.9m compared to £47.3m last year.

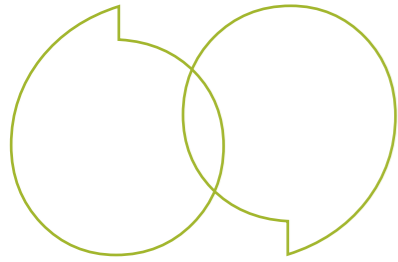
The 2011/12 surplus as a percentage of income was eight per cent. This highly creditable result was due to a combination of factors affecting both income and expenditure. The decrease in income arose from the one-off grant in 2010/11 of the University Modernisation Fund from HEFCE. In addition, cost increases were held at a much lower rate than the increase in income, due to a programme to reduce costs over

an extended period to meet cuts in teaching grants as a result of the previous government's decision to end funding for students in England studying for 'equivalent or lower qualifications' to those they already hold, and the Coalition Government's stated intention to reduce the public expenditure deficit.

The early commencement of expenditure reductions allows costs to be cut in a measured way so as to ensure that the quality of service to students is maintained. This has the beneficial effect of increasing the University's reserves at a time of such great uncertainty, which will allow time to deal with any unexpected revenue reductions.

For a full understanding of the University's financial position please refer to the audited financial statements, which can be found at [www.open.ac.uk/foi/p3\\_1.shtml](http://www.open.ac.uk/foi/p3_1.shtml)

The Open University offers not only a fantastic education but also personal development and increased confidence. Here, some alumni and honorary graduates explain how the OU has helped to enhance their lives.



**Joe Pasquale, Comedian**

'When most men have a mid-life crisis they go for younger women and motorbikes – I went for a BSc with The Open University. The best thing about the OU? The quality of the materials – they're just excellent. But to be honest I don't have anything bad to say about the OU.'

**Rakesh Kumar, Retail Duty Manager, BP**

'While working as a Manager, I developed many people to their next stage as managers. This only happened because of what I learned from my MBA degree with The Open University.'

**Evan Davis, TV Presenter and honorary graduate**

'My Producer at the BBC had done an Economics degree at The Open University and that played a big part in my employing him. It was what it said about him – that he was someone who didn't idle away the time but had a bit of ambition.'

**Mark Fry, Airline Pilot with Virgin Atlantic**

'It's a great way to study. I did a Psychology degree and now I promote the OU to other pilots and cabin crew through my job.'

**Sinead O'Mahony, Teacher in Dubai**

'Studying opens your mind. I'm a teacher and the MA in Education helped me learn different techniques and other ways of communicating with my students.'

**Baroness Grey-Thompson, Paralympian and honorary graduate**

'The beauty of the OU is that people come back when they feel ready to but they also have the flexibility, which makes a real difference.'

**Roger Dewell, Space Communications and Technology Consultant, and Managing Director, High Q Systems Ltd**

'Years afterwards, the same MBA concepts come to mind when facing business challenges, and I'm sure I will continue to benefit from the OU experience in business for many years to come.'

**Donna Nicholls, working towards a career in Law**

'I think that when I was made redundant, my studies in Law with the OU helped me find employment so that I wasn't out of work for long. Through my OU study I was able to illustrate my good time-management and organisational skills, as well as my academic abilities.'

**Elva Young, Student, Childhood and Youth Studies**

'It was very ambitious, but I wanted to be brave, and in addition to my health problems, I discovered I was dyslexic. However, thanks to the help of my tutor and specialist support provided by the OU, my whole life has changed. My studies have given me confidence, self-worth and a future – so thank you!'

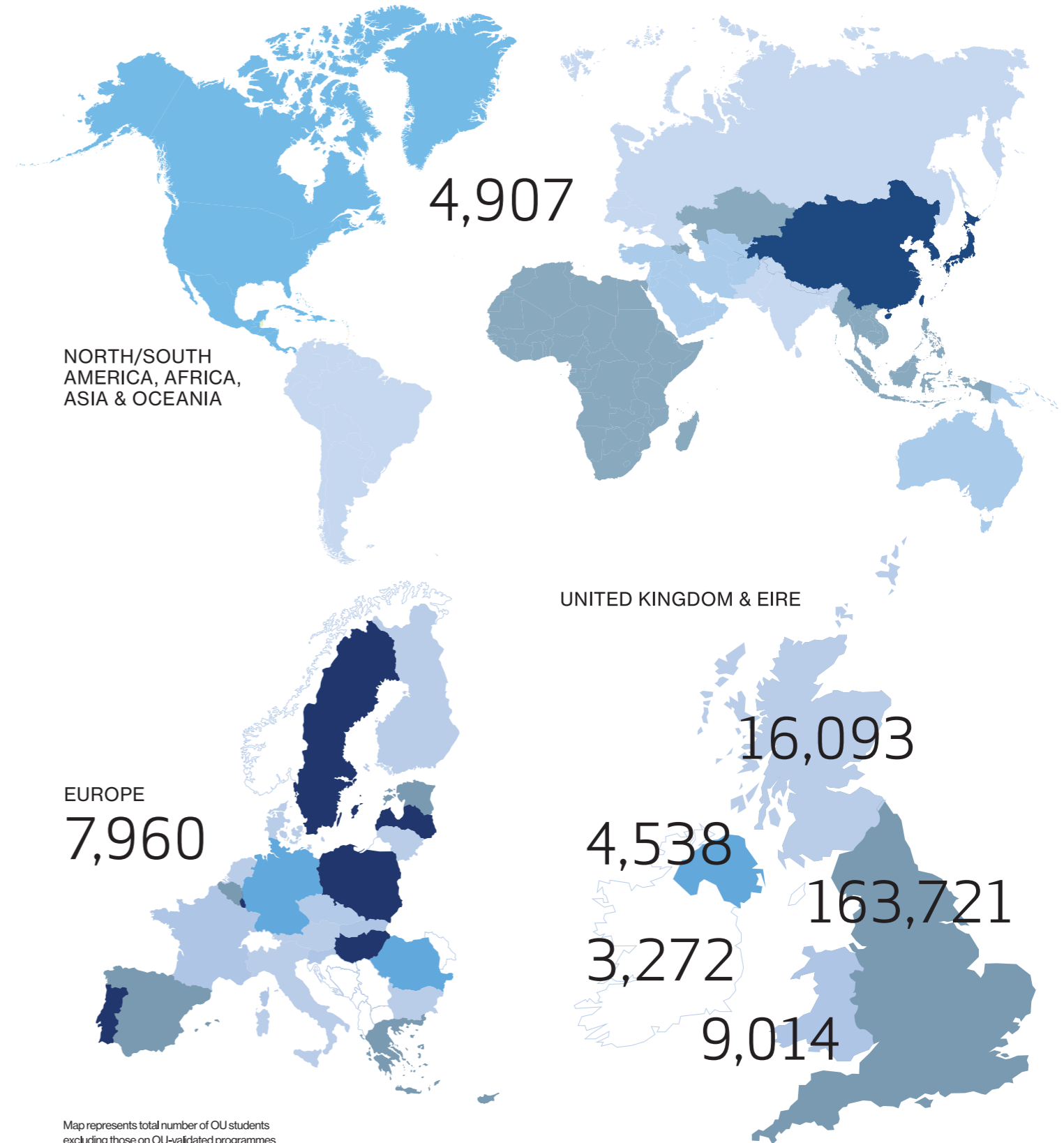
**Deborah Regal, Practitioner Adviser to academic publisher Emerald, and one of Management Today's top 35 UK business women under 35**

'I fundamentally believe the OU helped me to have faith and confidence to keep learning, to give things a go and to invest in myself. I have always felt that finishing education at 16, 18 or 21 is misguided, because life is a learning experience.'

To further engage with the OU community, please visit [www.open.ac.uk/platform](http://www.open.ac.uk/platform)

Operating at scale

Worldwide, 246,626 students are currently studying with The Open University, which includes 37,121 on OU-validated programmes.



## Our awards

# A year of success

It's been an award-winning 12 months for The Open University. Here are just some of the many accolades acquired over the past year.

### November 2011

The Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) project wins an award from the World Innovation Summit for Education. An OU-led partnership, TESSA strives to increase the number of skilled teachers in African schools and was praised for its 'exceptional impact'.

### March 2012

The Bridge to Success (B2S) project is awarded Distance Learning Program of the Year 2011 by the Maryland Distance Learning Association. B2S aims to improve maths skills needed by US college students to progress into further education.

The OU in Wales' Access to Learning for Carers Project wins the top gong at the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Awards. The project helps carers into higher education study and is supported by The Waterloo Foundation. Gayle Hudson, Widening Access Officer (North and Mid Wales) at the OU in Wales, said: 'The project has influenced the OU's practice and support for carers, who are now a "widening access priority group" for the OU right across the UK.'

### April 2012

*Frozen Planet* wins three BAFTA Craft Awards. The episode, 'To the Ends of the Earth' won in the factual category for editing, photography and sound.

OpenLearn's unit about the Ancient Olympics is recognised internationally with an award for OpenCourseWare excellence. *The Ancient Olympics: Bridging past and present* helps users explore the differences between the modern and ancient games; its use of multimedia (including animation, maps, timelines and videos) was highly praised.

*The History of English in Ten Minutes* wins the Learning on Screen British Universities Film and Video Council Award. Narrated by Clive Anderson, this animated series brilliantly fitted 1,600 years of the English language's history into 10-minute segments.

### May 2012

The OU/BBC co-production *Made in Britain* wins Best TV Programme of the Year in the Wincott Awards for Broadcasting. The three-part BBC Two series was presented by former BBC Economics Editor and presenter Evan Davis and looked at the British economy and its still magnificent manufacturing industry. The OU academic consultants were Dr Leslie Budd and Dr Matt Hinton. Dr Budd said: 'It is a great testament to The Open University and BBC partnership. Open University Business School academics provided academic advice, which made the quality of the series possible and demonstrated the public impact of our knowledge and expertise.'



### June 2012

OU student nurses Orla Mathews and Barry Magee (pictured above) win the Joint Runner Up Award at the 2012 Royal College of Nursing Student Nurse of the Year Awards in Northern Ireland. The award was for their research into the patient experience of young people with mental health problems. John D'Arcy, the Director of the OU in Ireland, said: 'This award is a fantastic achievement for Orla and Barry and speaks volumes about the quality of students at The Open University in Ireland.'

The OU's Professor of Planetary and Space Sciences, Monica Grady, is awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Professor Grady is based in the Centre for Earth, Planetary, Space and Astronomical Research and is an expert on meteorites. She has worked on the development of instruments to examine the Martian surface, and has contributed to a number of space missions, including Stardust and the European Space Agency's Exo Mars mission due to launch in 2018.

### July 2012

Dr Basiro Davey, MBE, Senior Lecturer in Health Sciences, is made a National Teaching Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She is one of 55 successful Fellows to win the award, chosen from more than 180 nominations submitted by higher education institutions across England, Northern Ireland and Wales.



Left: Beverley Midwood, Tricia Waller and Tony O'Shea-Poon at The 50+ Awards

The OU wins the 50+ Continuing Education Provider at The 50+ Awards. Nominated and voted for by members of the public aged over 50. 'We're thrilled to get this accolade from a generation that has grown up with The Open University,' said a delighted Tony O'Shea-Poon, Head of Equality and Diversity at the OU. 'We pride ourselves in offering quality, flexibility and value, and that clearly appeals to our 50-plus supporters.'

The Open University's Building 12 achieves an 'Outstanding' rating in its BREEAM assessment. The OU Estates team worked with Ridge & Partners LLP, SDC Builders and PEP Engineers to create a fantastic, modern building that incorporates sustainable solutions and renewable energies.

### September 2012

*Frozen Planet* wins four Emmy Awards. Produced by the OU in partnership with the BBC, *Frozen Planet* cleaned up at the Emmys, winning four awards in the non-fiction category: Outstanding Non Fiction Series; Outstanding Picture Editing; Outstanding Sound Editing; and Outstanding Cinematography. 'The series was not only spectacular, but remains topical, as sea-ice melt is once again at the forefront of scientific debate,' said series academic consultant and Senior Lecturer in Environmental Science, Dr Mark Brandon.

### November 2012

The OU's Dr Mark Brandon was named 'Most Innovative Teacher of the Year' at the Times Higher Education Awards 2012 for his work on *Frozen Planet* and beyond. The judging panel said: 'Researching and teaching about the polar regions is Dr Brandon's passion. His innovative approach to teaching has inspired students to break OU registration records to join his course.'

## Council membership



Members from the University's governing Council comprise:

### Ex-officio members

Lord Christopher Haskins, Pro-Chancellor (Chair)  
Mr Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor  
Mr Michael Steen, Treasurer  
Mrs Marianne Cantieri, President of The Open University Students Association

### Appointed members

Dr Sharon Ding  
Mrs Sue Dutton  
Dr Isobel Falconer  
Mr Bruce Heil  
Mr Rob Humphreys  
Dr Christina Lloyd  
Dr Toby O'Neil  
Mr Carey Shaw  
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### Co-opted members

Mr Howard Brown  
Mr Edward Briffa  
Dr Anthony Freeling  
Mrs Claire Ighodaro  
Mr Brian Larkman  
Ms Shonaig Macpherson  
Mr Peter Mantle  
Ms Ros McCool  
Mrs Ruth Spellman  
Professor William Stevely (Vice-Chair)






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Tony O'Shea-Poon, Head of Equality and Diversity, The Open University

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\*National Student  
Survey 2012