

LEARN AND LIVE

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGY FOR 2022-2027

OUR ENDURING MISSION

Open to people, places, methods and ideas

OUR VISION

Life-changing learning that enriches society

THE VALUES WE LIVE

Inclusive, innovative, responsive

Through the power of learning we aim to transform lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone. This strategy sets out what we will do over the next five years to progress our mission.

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FOREWORD

The Open University is a global leader in higher education able to reach every adult in the United Kingdom - and many others across the world - with the opportunity to learn and achieve, using the power of technology and our world-class expertise in supported distance learning.

From our inception we have been a movement and not just a university, in a class of our own. Our model has inspired other universities across the world and changed millions of lives. We are uniquely a university of four nations, based and funded in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. We are passionately open to people, places, methods and ideas, with a huge range of free resources that enable thousands of people every year to take their first – or further – steps into higher education. Non-selective in most of our undergraduate admissions, we enable students from many different backgrounds to achieve the highest standards of academic and professional excellence.

The University embarks on its new strategy from a position of strength; a university with an enviable reputation and scale, with more students than ever before achieving their goals and aspirations, and with pioneering research that is advancing knowledge and improving lives. It is a strategy that stays true to our enduring mission, a strategy of both continuity and change. Our mission has remained a constant since receiving our Royal Charter more than fifty years ago. It is more relevant now than it has ever been. These are times of environmental and social problems on an unprecedented scale, needing an informed public engaged in their solutions, and times of an ever-faster pace of technological change demanding lifelong learning.

Learning successfully is a challenge, one that the OU is an unrivalled expert in, knowing how to prepare students and see them through to success. But it is also about being truly human and living life fully, which is why we have named this strategy after the motto on the University's shield: 'Learn and Live'. We have developed the strategy with our colleagues in their many different professional roles, with our students, with our governing body

and with many friends and advisers. United by a shared commitment to the University's mission, we have identified together the challenges and opportunities we need to address during the next five years and agreed the goals and actions we need to prioritise.

The strategy sets out not only what we are aiming to achieve during the period ahead but also how we will continue the internal renewal which will enable us to thrive through change, both the changes we intend to make and those that may be necessary because of economic, political or social change around us. It challenges us to realise our goals by living our values, putting into practice our commitments to be inclusive, innovative and responsive in the way we work together and the choices we make.

Through the commitments set out in this strategy, we will achieve an Open University in five years' time which has advanced its mission as a social movement and is true to the vision and values that we not only share but want millions more to share with us.

Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor

Malcolm Sweeting
Pro-Chancellor

Baroness Martha Lane-Fox
Chancellor



INTRODUCTION

The strategy is built on five goals and seven enablers, showing how we will achieve our mission over the next five years.

Our five goals:

- **greater reach**, offering unrivalled choice, quality and flexibility to more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities, with the University's core offer of qualifications and accredited learning at its centre¹.
- **success for our students**, supporting them to achieve their goals, wherever and wherever they are, with outcomes that are equitable and open up new opportunities in life and work.
- **societal impact** locally and globally through research, enterprise and skills development that shape the future.

- **equity**, greater diversity at all levels, and inclusion in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve.
- environmental and social **sustainability**.

The seven enablers to reach our goals:

- **living our values**, being inclusive, innovative and responsive in all we do.
- **supporting each other** to do our best work.
- **continuously improving** how we work and manage change.
- **employing secure and effective technologies** with the best possible user experience.

- **using data and evidence** in all our decision-making.
- **building on our uniqueness** as a university for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- **stewarding our finances** so that we can invest in our goals.

¹ Channels are the platforms through which the University reaches learners, such as its virtual learning environment, our OpenLearn website, collaborations with employers and colleges, and broadcasting with the BBC. Learning opportunities are its various course products, from degrees and modules to apprenticeships and microcredentials, as well as different ways in which these can be studied, from higher and lower study intensity to blended or entirely online experiences.



OUR STRATEGIC PROCESS

Our goals will only be achievable with effective implementation, which is a challenge in any large and complex organisation. The Open University is the largest university in the UK with around 10,000 employees, 200,000 students and millions more learners benefitting from our free courses and broadcasts². Our mission has endured for more than fifty years: to provide a university education that is truly open to people, places, methods and ideas. By doing that, we improve lives on a scale that only technology-enabled learning can achieve with both value and quality, but a scale that we are increasingly learning how to personalise even better for each individual student.

This strategy sets out our plans for progressing this unique mission. Our aim over these five years is to bring flexible, high-quality university education to even more people, achieving even greater societal impact as a social movement and not just a university. The strategy is a call to action about our mission and values, and although it is a practical document setting out principles and priorities for unit and other plans across the University, it is not a detailed blueprint. This is because the OU is both large and

devolved, with major academic and professional services units working in dynamic market and policy conditions. Their plans and targets are refreshed annually, guided by an annual strategic framework, which will be based on this strategy but evolve as planning and governance decisions are made each year.

This strategy was approved by the Council on 23 November 2021 to guide the next five years of the University's planning. Implementation and alignment with it of other plans and business cases will be overseen by the University's Planning Coordination Group, which reports to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive. The Vice-Chancellor's Executive has representation from all the University's units and makes major operational decisions subject to the general control of the University's Council, which is the executive governing body of the University, and to the powers of the Senate, which is responsible for the academic work of the University and its regulation.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

We need to offer learning which is accessible, flexible, high quality, engaging and relevant. We need to

work on dismantling barriers our students and potential students face, whether discrimination, wrong turns, disability or hardship. We want to partner with organisations that share our mission and values and make the case to governments and employers for policies and funding that help achieve this mission.

To ensure every student achieves the success that they work for, we will build on our outstanding quality of course design, teaching and support to students. Our scholarship will be critical to helping students learn with ever better methods and technologies, and our research will take our students, research users and the wider public to the frontiers of human knowledge in the search to resolve some of our greatest societal challenges.

The following sections address each of these goals and enablers, setting out actions we foresee as needed over the next five years. While our goals and enablers will stay the same, we will regularly review our actions to ensure that they are being implemented successfully and remain relevant and appropriate to our goals.

² The term 'learner' is used to refer to the many people who study or view the University's open resources without registering as a student on a course. Many learners later become students, and many are both learners and students.

LEARN AND LIVE OUR FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

Mission: Open to people, places, methods and ideas.

Vision: Life-changing learning that enriches society.

Values: Inclusive, Innovative, Responsive.

OUR GOALS



Sustainability



Societal
impact



Greater
reach



Success for
our students



Equity



OUR ENABLERS

Live our
values

Support
each other

Secure and effective
technologies

Manage
change well

Decisions and
data

Four Nations

Steward our
finances

OUR GOALS

Greater reach, offering unrivalled choice, quality and flexibility to more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities, with the University's core offer of qualifications and accredited learning at its centre

The Open University has enjoyed an enviable reputation for the quality of its teaching and high student satisfaction, as well as impressive feedback from employers. This has been built up over many years, largely on the reputation of our degrees, diplomas and certificates, but increasingly from new products we have developed, often with employers, such as apprenticeships and microcredentials.

Over the next five years we will continue building a comprehensive portfolio of degrees, diplomas, certificates and accredited modules based on current and forecast demand, while developing - from the expertise we have in our core provision - new products either for established demand or to test and learn.

We believe that everyone with the motivation should be able to access university learning regardless of personal circumstances, but the way people want to learn is changing. Two trends are especially important to plan for: students changing their intensity of study for a qualification either to accelerate or spread out their learning module by module, and students wanting to study short courses that meet shorter-term needs or interests.

Both these trends are associated with other developments such as school and college leavers being attracted to the OU model because of its flexibility and affordability, lifelong learning imperatives given the ever-shortening shelf-life of knowledge and rapid economic change, and policy reform, including new technical education and short course options and a strengthened role for further education in post-18 education and funding.

The priority during the next five years will be to increase and strengthen our core undergraduate provision across the four nations, building out from this core to develop new

models of study that respond to market and policy developments. As we do this, it will be important to listen closely to groups who are currently under-represented in our student body and highest qualifications outcomes to help overcome the barriers they currently encounter.

As we continue to gather insight into those needs, we will review and renew learning design, teaching methods and curriculum, staying at the forefront of advances in learning and technology, especially in how we personalise teaching and student support while growing our portfolio offer sustainably.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **plan and resource our response to changes in student numbers and funding** to ensure we do not compromise on quality for students or colleagues' wellbeing and support.
- **build more qualification pathways** to support and facilitate students who wish to accelerate their study by learning at a higher intensity for some or all of their time.
- **build and promote our short course offer**, including tailored information, advice and guidance.
- **advocate for policy, regulatory and funding arrangements** in each nation that advance our mission and goals.
- **prepare for possible policy, regulatory or funding reforms**, ensuring we adapt to reform effectively while staying true to our mission.
- **pilot 'on the ground' initiatives** to test the effectiveness of having a local OU presence where this can help achieve our mission and goals sustainably, working with local partners.
- **invest in our brand and marketing** with a stronger message about our quality to drive awareness of who we are and what we offer among a wider audience of people, increasing our student numbers while diversifying our intakes.

Success for our students, supporting them to achieve their goals, whoever and wherever they are, with outcomes that are equitable and open up new opportunities in life and work

Our students and learners have their own personal goals and motivations and their own ideas about what success looks like, which may stay the same or change during their studies or after a break from study. We will support our students and learners with their aspiration to succeed defined on their own terms, listening to and acting on the student voice.

Our aim is to see even more of our students and learners succeed and progress. We want everyone to leave the OU with greater confidence and with knowledge and skills which prepare them for future employment, career progression, further lifetime study and a life beyond the OU. We will welcome all our students after they complete their study to our alumni community, where there will be many ways in which they can support new generations of students, and will welcome many back to further study.

We aim to provide a journey which is flexible and personalised, and which reflects and anticipates the diverse needs of different groups of students, prioritising where we need to improve equity in access, progression and awards where this is due to policies or practices that are unfair or cause unjust disadvantages.



OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **continuously improve our student-facing services** at every step in their journey, from registration and induction to study advice and career guidance, achieving both improvements across the student body and closing targeted gaps, prioritising where the gaps are largest, and demonstrating these improvements each year with data reporting on progress.
- **strengthen the sense of community among our students**, enhancing how they feel welcomed, supported and heard, including communicating effectively how we have responded to feedback.
- **continue to evaluate and develop our course design, tuition and assessment practices**, providing even better value to students, improving our effectiveness in achieving learning gain and progression, and eliminating inequities where they are unjust or unintended.
- **design our courses to be truly inclusive** and accessible to as many students as possible by reducing reliance on specially produced materials.



Societal impact locally and globally through research, enterprise and skills development that shape the future

New knowledge is an engine for innovation and societal change. We are proud to contribute to the global pursuit of new knowledge and its translation into practice. Over the next five years we will be especially committed to developing deep expertise in interdisciplinary work to help solve complex societal challenges.

We recognise that research should be high quality so there is confidence in its findings, that it needs to be translated into impacts so that findings are put into practice, and that it should be shared widely and openly to maximise impact and minimise waste. An important way to achieve impact is to work with employers on innovation and the skills of their workforces to apply new knowledge, as well as use our open education channels to engage public groups in critical thinking and calls to action.

Our excellence in research, scholarship and innovation will achieve benefits across society as well as improve teaching, our curriculum and the student experience, sustaining our world leading position in open and supported distance learning and ensuring that our students can learn right to the frontiers of their subjects and professional fields.

Many taught undergraduate and postgraduate students undertake research as part of their courses. Our research students have a particularly important part to play in frontier research at the OU.

As a leading provider of university-level skills education, we work with communities, national and local public services, colleges and businesses to ensure that our curriculum and research make a strong contribution to national and

local priorities across the four nations, addressing skills gaps, supporting enterprise and entrepreneurship, and improving productivity.

We are committed to providing a research environment that is supportive, inclusive and equitable, facilitates good research practice based on principles of research integrity, and enables communities of researchers to undertake their best work.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **use societal challenges and opportunities as a collaborative engine**, bringing together teams with diverse skills to tackle challenges, and giving funders confidence that the OU is the best place to invest for societal impact.
- **lead the way in creating an open research culture**, supporting public engagement with our research and scholarship, and knowledge exchange with businesses and communities.
- **ensure that our curriculum meets skills needs** by working with employers, governments and communities on current and future needs.
- **promote business growth** by supporting students and alumni who are, or aspire to be, entrepreneurs.
- **enhance our research infrastructure and support for researchers**, making improvements based on business cases that recognise direct and indirect returns from the OU's own investment, tracking and reviewing performance to ensure the best possible use of this funding, and building external funding to achieve greater scale and quality.
- **build the next generation of research leaders** by supporting the success of our postgraduate research students and early career researchers, being proactive to create diverse teams that bring a range of perspectives and experiences to our research culture.



Equity, greater diversity at all levels, and inclusion in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve

We are committed to creating a culture of respect and belonging so that everyone is meaningfully included in the University's ways of working and way of life, addressing under-representation or exclusion of voices that should be heard. Guided by our values to be inclusive, innovative and responsive, we ask of ourselves and others that we take personal responsibility for our behaviour and hold each other to account for our words and actions to achieve the equity, diversity and inclusion that will make us an even better university.

Our aim is to become the university of choice for people who want to work or study at a university committed to being anti-racist and culturally responsive to the needs of our students, learners and employees.

An equitable student experience is paramount, and our students should see themselves reflected in their learning experience and curriculum content, as well as have their identities and experiences recognised as part of everyone's learning.

We regard diversity in our workforce and student body at every level to be key to a successful university. Diverse student groups enable better learning and diverse teams have higher levels of productivity and problem-solving success. To address inequity and enrich learning and our work at the OU, we will use meaningful data and make credible commitments to inform our strategies and policies with ambitious equity, diversity and inclusion principles that have real effect.

We aim for far more than mere compliance, but our plans will be aligned with relevant equality legislation across the four nations, our equality scheme and charter action plans.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **ensure all aspects of hiring, professional development and promotion address diversity**, tackling and overcoming bias in our recruitment, selection and promotion processes and delivering acceleration programmes to bring through well qualified people from groups currently under-represented in particular roles.
- **ensure that EDI objectives are evident in all staff appraisals and in line management conversations** so that accountability for change occurs across the workforce.
- **establish a meaningful and effective allyship programme** for all protected characteristics.
- **deliver our Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.**
- **deliver our comprehensive equality, diversity and inclusion action plan** to make change happen, led and informed by those with lived experience of inequity.

Environmental and social sustainability

Our approach to research and education will stay aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Our commitment to environmental and social sustainability will continue to run through our education, research, enterprise, curriculum and public engagement work. Our global presence and profile give us a unique opportunity to drive thought leadership and lead mass public engagement with achieving sustainability.

We define sustainability as meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. We acknowledge the impact of greenhouse gas emissions from our own operations, including the goods and services we procure, travel and our real estate. As such, we have committed to achieving zero net greenhouse gas emissions from our energy use by 2030 and from all other indirect emissions no later than 2050, through a programme of investment and measures to reduce and mitigate the adverse environmental impact of our activities.

We will continue to embrace policy and practice across the four nations, including the Climate Change Act 2008, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and Ireland's example of deliberative democracy with the Citizens' Assembly.



OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **build a dedicated team that supports, focuses and delivers our commitments to sustainability**, whilst continuing our approach that sustainability is everyone's responsibility. The sustainability team will oversee pan-OU annual reporting in line with the university and college sector Sustainable Development Goals Accord and UN Global Compact.
- **provide training and development to upskill and reskill colleagues on sustainability**, including identifying social and wellbeing aspects of sustainability and contributing to system change.
- **continue to advance learning, skills development and action in support of sustainability** by developing and promoting curriculum, including open courses and microcredentials, for individuals, employers and communities.



OUR ENABLERS

Living our values, being inclusive, innovative and responsive in all we do

As a university community we are united by our shared commitment to the University's mission, which remains inspirational and as relevant as ever to the challenges of today's society.

Everything in this strategy is intended to ensure our success in progressing the mission we all share by being inclusive, innovative and responsive. None of it can be achieved by a single individual or team. Different perspectives, views, skills, experiences and responsibilities are necessary

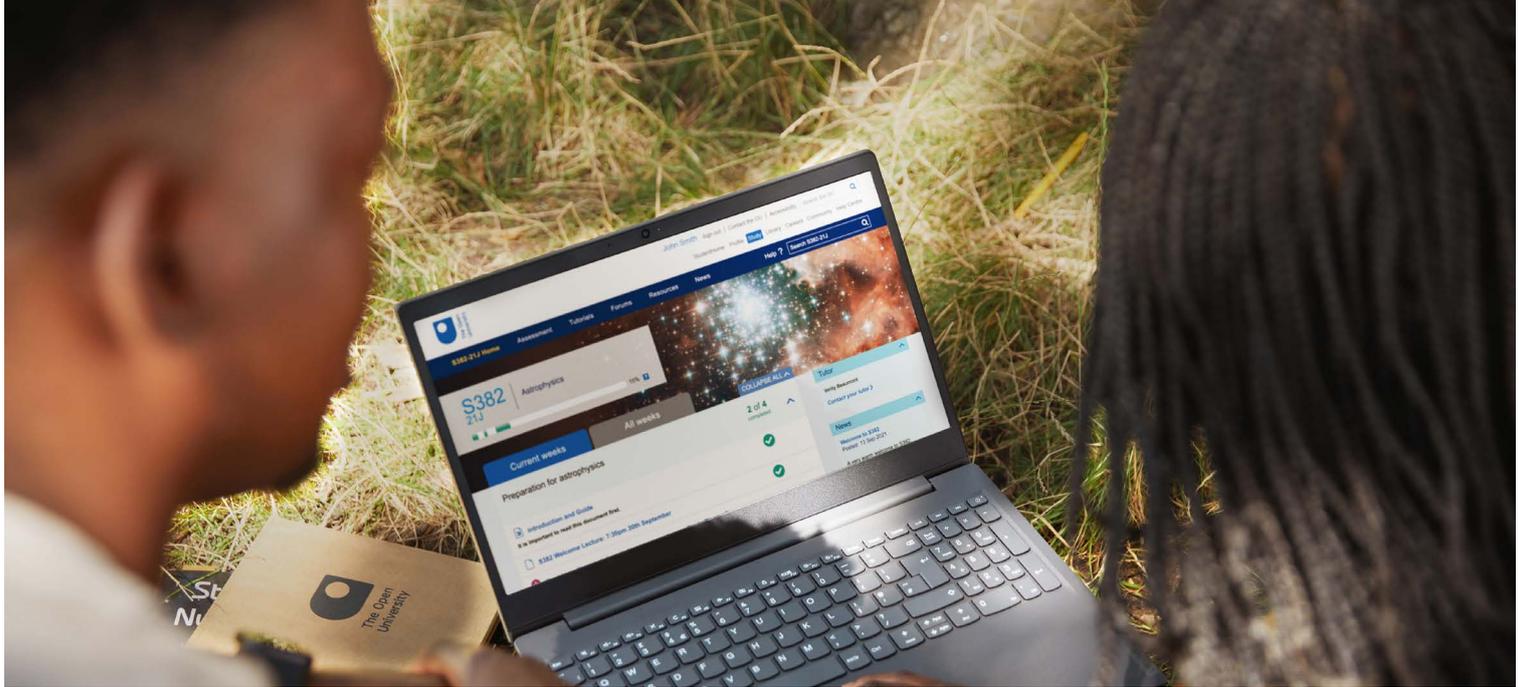
to take our mission forward but are not sufficient. Recognising that a fair process is as important as a fair outcome, and working on a normal assumption of positive intent, when a decision is made we all need to work together to achieve its benefits.

Our shared mission is underpinned by our values and our Student Charter. These provide a strong framework which requires each of us to be true to ourselves, respectful of others and collaborate in a spirit of openness which builds trust and common purpose.

Our University is a place of open enquiry and discussion. We aspire to be an exemplar of how to discuss

important and controversial matters, bringing the standards of inquiry we have as an academic institution not just into our own conversations but taking them out into wider society. These obligations are not just about following rules but about the care and regard we have for one another.

We value and respect each other for who we are and what we contribute, welcoming differences and building an inclusive community which enhances the wellbeing of students, learners and colleagues, and challenges us to do even better for our students and each other.



Supporting each other to do our best work

The goals of this strategy can only be achieved if the OU has people with the right skills, motivation and experience and we support each other. This also depends on all colleagues having the environment and tools they need. Getting these right will be an important focus over the next five years.

The OU will continue working to be an employer of choice, with competitive terms and conditions and opportunities for personal growth that attract and retain people committed to our mission and with the expertise and dedication to achieve it. We will continue prioritising the wellbeing of all colleagues so that they can do their best work and we can have high expectations of ourselves and others.

We recognise the importance of excellent workforce and financial planning so that workloads are at appropriate levels as factors such as student numbers or funding change.

We will continue to look for beneficial innovations in staffing policy and practices.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **develop the skills of all the University's leaders and managers** and the confidence their teams have in them, by investing in professional development, particularly building capabilities in inclusive, valued-led leadership.
- **review and where necessary change our appraisal, development and management approaches** to ensure they are fit for purpose, ensuring all colleagues feel recognised and supported in doing their best work, with expectations that are clearly stated and agreed, and which align with and contribute to the goals and actions set out in this strategy.
- **introduce a new behaviours framework** which supports our mission and values through our approach to leadership, development and reward, setting clear expectations, recognising and applauding the behaviours which bring our values to life, and enabling effective challenge, intervention and support when they do not.
- **significantly improve how we gauge the sentiment and views of all our employees** to enable better decision-making, using new technology, surveys, town hall meetings and personal discussions frequently and not just occasionally.
- **use new models of engagement for managers and senior leaders** that focus on high quality, results-orientated conversations rather than top-down communication.
- **ensure that our Associate Lecturers are recognised and contribute as full and valued members of their Faculties**, building on their new pay and job security arrangements, with supportive single line management and inclusion in the goals and actions set out in this strategy as appropriate to the importance of their role in achieving them.
- **encourage our teams to think creatively and experiment with different working patterns**, learning from the experiences of the COVID pandemic period.



Continuously improving how we work and manage change

We need to change to accommodate shifts in student, learner and colleague needs and behaviour, to adopt new findings from research, to adapt to technological developments, and to respond to new external factors such as changes in government policies, funding priorities, competition, demography or economic conditions. We will change in ways that stay aligned to our mission, vision and values.

Our success, as the largest university in the UK, has been based on offering high-quality supported distance learning at scale. This makes it particularly important to achieve streamlined and efficient ways of working; a few minutes saved with the administration for each student adds up quickly to a big improvement.

We are open to new technologies which will help us address our organisational needs and work more efficiently and to higher standards. However, we recognise that technology will succeed only if it is supported by a professional business change approach which is user-led and augments our human expertise in the services being supported by new technology.

We are open to ideas about change from everyone. All change that the University takes forward will be based on engagement with stakeholders affected by and intended to benefit from the change, with agreed benefits clearly articulated as a common purpose,

realistic expectations, strong delivery teams with the right people, and clear accountability. Change may not go to plan despite best efforts, and we will learn and grow from setbacks. We will look to multiple channels for feedback and make rapid corrections if things go wrong.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **adopt effective approaches to change** that are consultative, generally consider more than one option, have the necessary capacity and capability to achieve benefits, work with clear priorities and communications, and tests and learns.
- **develop a new pan-University innovation process** that more effectively stimulates, plans and deploys innovations in teaching and learning, research and professional services.
- **continue our digital test and learn programme**, experimenting with different ways of working supported by new technology to understand its potential.
- **invest in change leadership skills and capability** to help all the University's leaders and managers achieve change effectively with their teams.

Employing secure and effective technologies with the best possible user experience

As the UK's leading provider of supported distance learning, we need to stay at the forefront of technologies that help our students to learn and succeed as well as invest in the best technologies available to support our professional services. We need our technology to be reliable, user-centred and fit-for-purpose, including supporting new and better ways of working.

Over the next five years we will enhance in measurable ways the digital experience of our enquirers, students, learners and employees to make use of our resources easier, faster and more enabling. We will test, roll out and enhance existing and new innovations such as digital assistants, automated assessment, collaboration spaces, our OpenSTEM Labs, the OU study app, and virtual and augmented reality learning resources. We will develop our analytics capability to personalise interventions and experiences and improve cybersecurity.

Our students and partners trust us to keep them and their data safe. This requires a sophisticated and well-resourced commitment to the highest standards of confidentiality, integrity and availability of our digital assets, information and systems.



OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **introduce new and better student systems**, incorporating student management, student intervention, exams and assessment, academic policy management and curriculum solutions.
- **complete the roll out of People Services system, integration and identity solutions.**
- **take a systemic approach to deploying artificial intelligence** incrementally and ethically in administrative and academic applications, creating an ecosystem of agents that can work with students, learners and colleagues.
- **renew our processes for course production** to reduce timescales and incorporate student behaviour, enabling greater re-use and licensing of assets, more flexibility and personalisation, instant access to research outputs and institutional resources, and safe storage of assets for compliance and re-purposing.
- **ensure our colleagues have the digital skills needed** to realise the potential of our technology investments.
- **meet the highest standards of information security** for our students, learners and partners so that they can work and collaborate in a trusted and protected environment, gaining ISO 27001 certification.



Using data and evidence in all our decision-making

We aim to consult widely and hear different points of view in all our decision-making, and to arrive at decisions that everyone gets behind because they can see the benefits and have the evidence. Our huge amounts of data are strategic assets for the OU in making decisions about opportunities and risks, and we will continue investing in capabilities to derive insights from our data that inform our decisions and build common purpose. More powerful and accessible presentation of data through dashboards, for example, will enable us to track the outcome of decisions and take timely corrective action if necessary, and more frequent student feedback will enable us to act more quickly to resolve issues. This will be done in ways that accord with high standards of security and ethics.

As a provider of supported distance learning using dedicated technologies as well as tutors and advisers, we get to know our students and learners through the many digital interactions we have with them as well as their relationships with tutors and advisers.

We have considerable and growing capabilities to build knowledge and behavioural insight from our data that can help tailor support to the personal needs and circumstances of our students, connecting them to the information, advice and guidance that is most suited to their needs.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **develop our evidence-based decision-making capabilities** by using the investments we are making in data management as a way to make more inclusive, more timely and better decisions.
- **take opportunities to use AI ethically** in support of student and university success.
- **use data analysis to personalise student experiences** to ensure we connect with them at the right time and in the right way. The aim is to better support students during their studies and streamline time consuming administrative processes.
- **prioritise data analytics work** which informs and drives action for change in support of achieving greater equity, diversity and inclusion.



Milton Keynes



Cardiff



Edinburgh



Belfast

Building on our uniqueness as a university for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

The Open University is unique in being a trusted partner and leading provider of higher education in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as having many students in the Republic of Ireland. Although we will continue to welcome students studying in countries around the world, our priority over the next five years will be to strengthen our role in the four nations. This is especially necessary to enable us to focus on ensuring that policy changes expected during this period do not undermine the University’s mission but advance it. Longer term, we expect to develop and increase our international role alongside a greater focus on our postgraduate offer.

Scale is one of the University’s major strengths. But while there are many things that are best done in the same way at scale, we must be ‘four nations by design’, testing all we do for how it benefits each nation. We need to be more proactive exchanging lessons and good practice, sharing that learning with governments and other stakeholders such as colleges and employers. While we normally offer a consistent, high-quality curriculum to all students and learners regardless of their location,

there are times when we need to tailor our offer to accommodate different student and partner needs. By doing so, we will achieve even greater societal impact and benefits for our students and learners.

In this strategy, we are making a new commitment to use our presence, experience and expertise in the four nations to greater benefit

for all nations. This will be done both to improve how the OU itself works - by for example following the most progressive standards or regulations University-wide when this is possible - and secondly to improve tertiary education and other policy-making generally in the four nations, working with governments and other partners.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- leverage our expertise and four nations presence to develop **a new comparative public policy research and knowledge exchange capability**, contributing to our societal impact goal.
- **ensure our financial and operating models provide each nation with appropriate resources** fairly and effectively and enable learning and improvement across our nation operations.
- **agree criteria for when we need to tailor our curriculum to meet individual nation needs.**
- **develop our ‘four nations by design’ approach**, such as a wider range of job roles available to be based in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.



Stewarding our finances so that we can invest in our goals

The purpose of our financial strategy is to achieve our mission and goals and to ensure that the University can pursue its mission long into the future. Our income will need to meet both the costs of current activities and the costs of future commitments and maintaining and developing our infrastructure and assets for the future.

We will strive to remove financial barriers to study by providing free courses and programmes, by keeping our fees as low as possible without compromising quality or our ability to pay and reward our employees fairly and competitively, and by engaging with policy-makers to achieve the funding needed to achieve our goals. We will maintain and seek to enhance bursaries and hardship funding for students who need them.

We aim to spend our money well, without waste and in line with our principles and values. We will further diversify sources of income where that helps to achieve our goals and manage financial risk.

For example, further developing our apprenticeship, technical education and microcredential offers will both diversify our income and extend our reach to new students and learners.

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WE WILL:

- **continue to improve our business planning and resource allocation processes** to ensure they direct resources to where and when they are needed to achieve our goals, efficiently and effectively.
- **use our financial levers to pursue our mission and goals**, including using our purchasing and investment decisions to achieve our commitments to sustainability and to equity, diversity and inclusion.



ONE UNIVERSITY, FOUR NATIONS

In England, we are the largest provider of undergraduate part-time education. As is the case across all four nations of the UK, we are highly rated for student satisfaction, and through our scale and reach we make a major contribution to addressing widening participation and access to education. We work with employers in both the public and private sectors to address important skills gaps and continue to invest in new learning pathways for students and employers, such as higher and degree level apprenticeships as well as higher and technical qualifications. Our cost-effective model of flexible and lifelong learning is a key way for the UK government to meet the economic and social challenges ahead, equipping students with the skills they want and need wherever they are. Added to that, we continue to offer a wide range of free educational resources via our OpenLearn platform which extends our reach as well as local relevance via dedicated partnerships such as with the Department of Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus network.

The Open University in Wales is building on successive years of student growth following the introduction of part-time maintenance grants by the Welsh Government in 2018. We're looking

to become the provider of choice with employers, particularly in terms of health and education courses – as well as degree apprenticeships, postgraduate and continuing professional development. We work with many partners across Wales to help widen access to part-time education in line with HEFCW and Welsh Government aims. We remain committed to our social responsibility, and place a significant emphasis on equality, sustainability, and reaching more people through our civic mission work.

The Open University in Scotland is funded for the delivery of learning and teaching by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Each year we submit an outcome agreement to the SFC demonstrating what we deliver in return for public investment in line with Scottish Government policy priorities, particularly in relation to widening access, skills development, economic recovery and lifelong learning. We work in partnership with the education sector, employers, trade unions and community-based organisations to deliver knowledge and skills across Scotland. We have partner agreements with 15 regional colleges and we deliver a national schools programme in all 32 local authority areas which helps final year pupils transition to FE/HE study.

In Northern Ireland The Open University is working with the Department for the Economy and elected representatives to support the current Higher Education Strategy and the new “Skills for a 10x Economy” ten year strategy to identify how our model of higher education can continue to enhance the lives of citizens. We have enhanced engagement with employers, developed new partnerships with the further education sector, implemented a successful widening access plan and developed knowledge exchange capability – all of which are priorities in this strategic period.

In the Republic of Ireland, we have built strong partnerships with employers, like national broadcaster RTÉ, and with Enterprise Ireland through our innovative ‘Open for Growth’ scheme for growing businesses. We are well placed to grow our student numbers and to contribute to the University’s international work with Dublin as a base for our work within the European Union.

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