

LEARNING AND TEACHING VISION AND PLAN 2025

‘LEARNING NOW FOR THE FUTURE’

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan is a high level document to inform planning and decision making across the University regarding our informal and formal learning and teaching approaches. The ‘Learning Now for the Future’ vision and plan provides the strategic framework to enable progress towards the achievement of its priorities. ‘Learning Now for the Future’ is deliberately paradoxical to reflect the thinking and actions necessary in the short term in order to ready ourselves and our many stakeholders, our learners and graduates, for a changing world.
- 1.2 The Open University is committed to Supported Open Learning as a mark of the University’s distinct contribution to Open and Distance Learning. This Vision and Plan seeks to reinvigorate our commitment to open and accessible higher education and to enhance our understanding of effectively supporting adult learners at a distance.
- 1.3 The process to develop a plan to address Learning and Teaching through to 2025 and beyond was initiated in late 2013 and builds on the refresh of the existing plan undertaken in 2012. This Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan has emerged through a process of wide consultation and includes ideas generated from across the Learning and Teaching Community, including all categories of staff, Associate Lecturers (ALs), The UK Nations, the Senate, the Council and our students. From the outset, the task was framed in terms of our social responsibility for an uncertain future, with a focus on local to global challenges ranging from local issues of employability and sustainability to food and energy through climate and trade issues. Contributors were asked to think about the role of higher education in responding to renewing social responsibility for the grand challenges we face in relation to global issues considering a) how we as individuals work more as communities in a world that is fast- changing and ever more ‘connected’, b) ensure that both informal and formal curriculum is future facing, relevant and interdisciplinary and c) that learning and teaching methods provide a rich, collaborative and engaged learning experience.
- 1.4 The Charter and Statutes of the University states:

“The objects of the University shall be the advancement and dissemination of learning and knowledge by teaching and research by a diversity of means such as broadcasting and

technological devices appropriate to higher education, by correspondence tuition, residential courses and seminars and in other relevant ways, and shall be to provide education of University and professional standards for its students and to promote the educational well-being of the community generally.”

This Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan aims to establish and clarify the ‘diversity of means’ that is most appropriate over the coming decade.

- 1.5 This document introduces the concepts within ‘Learning Now for the Future’ and seeks that these are reflected across the University.
- 1.6 In a more competitive market inclusive of the UK four Nations, students will be seeking learning and support experiences that meet their specific and individual requirements. Learners’ expectations of what constitutes a quality experience are also changing within the external learner-oriented higher education landscape. Learner engagement becomes increasingly important within this landscape and this presents a variety of new potential benefits as well as bringing challenges for both students and the University in sharing responsibility for working in active partnership within the United Kingdom, across our regions and Nations, and globally.
- 1.7 The move to a qualification-based approach to curriculum (recognising that modular study remains available in Scotland) should not stifle opportunities for increased recognition of prior learning. Alternative pathways or bringing informal learning experiences, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), into qualifications are options for consideration. This will offer challenges to the systems and processes we currently operate, but will bring advantages to the student experience by engendering flexibility, continuity and community. As long as the University’s strategy includes provision of single modules or Continuous Professional Learning and Development (CPLD), the Learning and Teaching approach needs to be effective in supporting those types of learning.
- 1.8 The OU needs to be supple enough to support all forms of distance learning and teaching and, to this end, disaggregation of content, assessment and services may become an increasing priority for Business to Business and CPLD markets. This is a significant concept that feeds into a number of areas and will require a co-ordinated approach.
- 1.9 To remain an innovative organisation there needs to be more opportunity to respond to a range of internal and external drivers and this requires devolution of further responsibility and accountability in order to address adaptive challenges. We should be reminded that while a relational culture and systematised processes have built the organisation, they also, at times, create tensions for some areas of the University in relation to academic autonomy and the ability to take measured risks within an ‘at scale’ organisation.
- 1.10 We have many opportunities and imperatives for change in our approach to creating an engaging learning experience for our learning and teaching methods and support services in learning and teaching. We need to recognise the imperative to be responsive to agendas and priorities across the four Nations – e.g. commitment to widening access / new curriculum priorities / fees and funding impact on priorities and practices. We need to be scholarly in this endeavour to gather the best evidence to inform future developments.

1.11 All faculties and units will be expected to reflect the principles and priorities identified in the Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan in their strategic statements and action plans, and will report progress annually through the business planning process. The Planning and Resource Officer (PRO) process and annual setting of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) priorities will ensure a level of comparability in the way units approach implementation. Each unit within their contexts, inclusive of the devolved UK Nations, will establish performance targets that reflect their context and priorities and contribute to the achievement of the priorities identified in this plan. Adhering to these principles and priorities will enhance the University's work towards delivering its mission:

- The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas.
- It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential.
- Through academic research, pedagogic innovation and collaborative partnership it seeks to be a world leader in the design, content and delivery of supported open and distance learning.

1.12 In an increasingly competitive open distance education environment, it is essential that the OU maintains its leadership position and reputation.

2 RATIONALE

Changing and diverse student populations

- 2.1 The Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan is aligned with the implementation of the Student Charter, particularly its emphasis on aiming to inspire and enable learning within an academic community (Principle 2 of the Student Charter) and on inclusivity, diversity and challenging inequality (Principle 1 of the Student Charter). We remain focused on the needs of all of our various cohorts including the requirement to meet the needs of international and other geographically remote or isolated students studying within the full range of disciplines and subject to a range of constraints on the times at which they study.
- 2.2 The OU has led the way on widening access to higher education in the UK and is committed to accessibility, inclusivity and equality and we need to continue to do so. The University's outstanding contribution to the widening access agenda will continue as we support students from diverse backgrounds to successful outcomes. Measures of success will not just relate to recruitment but also to reducing the retention, progression, completion and attainment gaps for students from low socio economic backgrounds, especially black and minority ethnic (BME) students for whom the attainment gap in particular continues to widen.
- 2.3 We are experiencing a significant change in the composition of our student cohort and need to address the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Our average new undergraduate age is now 29 and this requires new consideration. As we seek to expand into new international markets we will also need to consider how we internationalise our curriculum and make our business practices applicable to a global market, in a way that provides an equitable learning experience for all learners. At the same time, difference and divergence as a consequence of devolution within the UK will require similar institutional flex and differentiated approaches. We also have increased numbers of students declaring a

disability which requires ongoing consideration. The OU is committed to accessibility, widening participation and equality and we need to ensure that our diverse population is given the support it needs (including access to high quality learning materials). The University continues to make a contribution to the widening participation agenda and support students from diverse backgrounds. New approaches to learning design and the processes that support production and presentation will need to be assessed for their impacts on different groups of students, particularly those at entry level, so that the efficiencies, enhancements and transformations we make do not impede recruitment, retention and progression for any group.

Changes in the wider world

- 2.4 A key feature of the Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan is that it has been developed through a process of reviewing the University's purpose and activity in view of the some of the major world challenges around issues such as demographics, mobility, society, geopolitics, sustainability, health and technology (the 'Megatrends' identified by the Oxford Martin Commission 2013). Whilst these imperatives are not explicit in the plan, they do underlie much of the thinking that has helped the plan to evolve. Focus on the megatrend concept will help to bring out the relevance of what we offer and we can better focus our market research activity; and thus inflect the learning experience we wish our students to have. In addition, because businesses, particularly large businesses, are already aware of megatrends, we can easily communicate the relevance of our curriculum and learning methods to businesses who would wish to employ our graduates and to our undergraduates. This Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan will ensure an approach to teaching and learning that enables students, as individuals and as members of diverse communities, to understand and act in a fast-changing and ever more 'connected' world.

Change in the external education environment

- 2.5 Shifts in learning and teaching are occurring at a national and international level due to changing relations between learning, work and professional practice and hence the changing reasons and context for learners choosing to study at the higher education level. Technology plays an increasingly prominent role in the world of learning, work and leisure and ensuring learners are capable critical and digital citizens is imperative. Retention, progression, employability, internationalisation, digital literacy, widening participation, access, sustainability, inter- and cross-disciplinarily and student engagement are each becoming increasingly important. Ongoing quality enhancement, which has a focus on outcomes related to areas for improvement evidenced from scholarship and data, rather than a focus on process, is an imperative (for example, by drawing upon analytics and other data to enhance our learning experience). Inquiry-based learning and experiential learning approaches to the curriculum are increasingly becoming more important as they provide for the development of different skill sets around social interaction, group work and employability that are not always explicit in the distance mode.

Change in learning and teaching methods

- 2.6 In order to meet the changing needs of our students and society, and to operate effectively in a complex, rapidly changing world, the OU will need to rethink the processes of designing, developing and delivering an enhanced learning experience and ensure that the teaching approaches, including technologies can respond nimbly. There is an urgent need to

be able to develop quickly, potentially at the academic desktop, in partnership with students and with an increased use of existing content. Our approach needs to be based on learning designs fit for the contemporary graduate who is an adult learner, inclusive of the emerging external themes, disciplinary differences and evidenced through scholarship. There is a shift in how learning occurs within distance education from 'one to many' to including 'many with many'. This places students as generators of knowledge and contributors to their own understanding and the understanding of others. Key challenges

Changing the way we do things

- 2.7 The Open University has evolved very detailed and established systems and practices around production and presentation of materials. It may be necessary to change many of our systems and practices around production and presentation of materials whilst ensuring this will not be at the expense of the Open University's reputation for quality. It will be necessary to change, for example, if we are to develop materials quickly and in partnership with students (building on the principles set out in the Student Charter) and other stakeholders. This is one example which will require a significant change in the culture and established systems, processes and internally focused accounting methods of the University.

Innovation to Impact

- 2.8 Whilst there is a great deal of innovation in the University, it has been difficult to get ideas realised and tested quickly. It will be necessary to be less risk-averse and be willing to take more managed risks to enable us to innovate rapidly and bring the benefits of innovation to our students. A key issue that can hinder responsiveness is the time lags between presentation of innovation, student experience and reaction to it, and ability to modify the student experience.

Overcoming internal barriers

- 2.9 A number of current structures within the University militate against the kind of cross-disciplinary and collaborative work suggested by the priorities in this paper. It will be necessary to find ways to incentivise units to work more in this way.

Staff development

- 2.10 This plan also suggests that our various categories of staff will need to change their working practices significantly. This will only be possible with a well-developed programme of staff development to support staff in working in new ways.

Meeting the needs of the spectrum from informal to formal learning

- 2.11 It is important that we find ways of creating flexible units of learning for informal, professional development and formal learning that can be built into coherent packages for students.

Resources

- 2.12 There is inevitably a cost of change, but overall, new developments will need to be considered as guiding and prioritising current and or new investment. Whilst some things will imply a cost to implement, they should suggest improved demonstration of key performance indicators such as retention, progression and completion and thus increased revenue. Any increase in investment should be guided by these considerations.

3 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are intended to provide clarity about terms used throughout the Plan.

- a) **Social responsibility** refers to the proposition that the Learning and Teaching community, and the University, has an obligation to act to benefit society.
- b) The Plan uses the term **scholarship** as a short-hand inclusive term covering activities that lead to evidence informed development of our learning and teaching.
- c) **Curriculum**, in the context of this document, is used to refer to the shape of the curriculum and content, that will need to reflect the Principles outlined below, i.e. be future-facing and socially responsible; address global challenges; reflect the importance of diverse networked communities; use technology as both a driver and enabler; and be informed by our experience in innovation and by our research and scholarship.
- d) **Global citizenship** links to the idea of social responsibility in that, whilst the institution has a responsibility to benefit society, individuals, as global citizens, have a responsibility to understand the complex world they live in and be aware of how their actions, and the actions of others can impact on a wider society (locally, nationally and globally). Oxfam define a global citizen as someone who:
 - is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
 - respects and values diversity
 - has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally and how these impact differentially across and within local and national domains
 - is outraged by social injustice
 - participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from national to global
 - is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place
 - takes responsibility for their actions.
- e) **Student engagement**: Coates (2007) describes student engagement as “a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience”, comprising the following:
 - active and collaborative learning;
 - participation in challenging academic activities;
 - formative communication with academic staff;
 - involvement in enriching educational experiences;
 - feeling legitimated and supported by University learning communities.
- f) **Informal learning** refers to any sort of learning that is undertaken other than for University credit, including CPLD , non-accredited learning, Open Educational Resources (OER), MOOCs.

- g) **Formal Learning** refers to learning on a University qualification or module that is taken with the intention of gaining University credit and progressing towards a stated aim.
- h) **Pedagogy** is used to encompass aspects of thinking and practice around the teaching methods used to support learners and bring learning into life. Teaching is one important aspect of this but not the sole focus and must take into account learning styles, attitudes and processes associated with 'learning' and student engagement. Open University pedagogy also includes the distinct role that tuition has within the supported learning environment alongside the Student Support Teams (SSTs).
- i) **Content curation** refers to the capacity to filter and add value to the content we receive, adapt, contribute to and are exposed to from a variety of sources, particularly through online formats.
- j) **Stakeholders** refers to everyone who has an interest in Learning and Teaching at the Open University – including all categories of staff (academic, academic related, Associate Lecturers, staff in regions and nations), students, informal learners, employers, partners and collaborators.
- k) **Learning Design.** OU Learning Design is characterised by three principles:
 - i) the use of design 'views' as a means of describing learning activity
 - ii) mechanisms to encourage the sharing and discussing of learning and teaching ideas
 - iii) the use of empirical research and conceptual tools and frameworks to inform and guide the decision-making process.

4 INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

The guiding principles below underpin a set of overarching general indicators of success. These include, but are not limited to:

- a) retention, progression and completion
- b) widening participation, equality and accessibility
- c) digital citizenship
- d) social responsibility
- e) employability
- f) interdisciplinary
- g) internationalisation
- h) an engaged and satisfied learner experience
- i) collaboration and cooperation
- j) evidenced based scholarship for learning and teaching
- k) students as partners

5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 5.1 There is recognition that the University is committed to the Four Nations Strategy and acknowledges the differing requirements of each of these four nations. The Four Nations Strategy will also need to be updated to incorporate the principles and priorities.

Principle 1: Future facing and socially responsible

5.2 This Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan is purposefully future-facing. There is a focus on the student learning through and in the workplace/practice settings and the future graduate who needs the employability skills to be able to participate fully within increasingly complex digital societies, and be able to imagine alternative futures for themselves as local and global citizens.

Principle 2: Connected communities

5.3 A key strength of the University is its committed community. We need to create opportunities for the communities of the University to strengthen their relationships amongst staff, students, employers and other higher education institutions (HEIs), and to work together to cooperatively create learning and teaching materials and events to best meet their various needs and aspirations on a global scale. This collaborative work should lead towards an environment that enables change, innovation and measured risk taking.

Principle 3: Technology as an enabler

5.4 Technologies have a fundamental role to play in university education in relation to enhancing the learning experience, transforming our business and pedagogic practices and improving efficiency for staff and students. However, technology is not the principle driver for an excellent learning experience and is, in many respects, an enabler (See Appendix A for further detail).

Principle 4: Digital globe – technology as a driver

5.5 There is a tension between working in an increasing online world that utilises the range of tools to support learning and teaching, and enabling access for all students. The OU educational experience will demonstrate leadership in addressing the challenges of ensuring all students have the opportunity to learn effectively in a digital world through online and blended formats by using tools and learning methods that are appropriate and suitable for their specific contexts.

Principle 5: Innovation to Impact

5.6 We need to create spaces where we can identify, assess and nurture innovative ideas and spaces for people to step outside normal constraints and innovate rapidly with institutional support.

Principle 6: Widening participation, equality and accessibility

5.7 We need to continue to demonstrate our commitment to the widening access and success agenda through further development of inclusive, accessible and engaging teaching approaches, ensuring that our learning and teaching routes are accessible to diverse 'local' markets and contexts and the needs of different learners in communities across the UK and beyond.

Principle 7: Focus on the Learner

5.8 We need to support students in their development as lifelong learners, and in effectively managing their learning. We must work to reconcile the different approaches to learning and teaching that students encounter in different contexts in their lives whilst developing learner independence and autonomy. We must recognise the skills and experience that students bring with them, and provide convenience and flexibility for learners whilst supporting networks and communities of learners. The Student Charter will be important.

Principle 8: Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Evaluation

- 5.9 We need to ensure that key learning and teaching decisions are informed by evidence. We also must ensure that effective quality assurance and quality enhancement processes address the needs of the new learning and teaching environment. These processes will draw on a scholarly evidence-based approach to learning and teaching. They will ensure that necessary data and analytics are easily accessible and provided in a relevant format. Importantly we also need to redefine what we mean by quality assurance and standards in a digital context. Drawing upon the emerging work in Scotland on indicators of enhancement, which highlights practices that lead to enhancement, will be useful.

Principle 9: Academic Excellence

- 5.10 Our community of academics, actively engaged with research and connecting their research to their learning and teaching work, is a key strength of the University. Likewise, our scholarship of learning and teaching, particularly in the area of open and distance education, is world leading for evidencing and making transparent good practice in learning and teaching.

6 PRIORITIES

Priority 1: Student Experience Now for the Future

6.1 We will support students in achieving their diverse study goals

We will do this through the following actions:

- We will focus on subject and professional knowledge, and on developing the skills learners require to achieve the indicators of success.
- We will provide students with support for their overall educational well-being to help them become effective learners.
- We will support current student learning through, and in, the workplace/practice settings with associated assessment that focuses on students accurately self-benchmarking.
- We will create a learning environment where students feel they belong within their chosen academic community so that they can best achieve their study goals and engage in meaningful interactions and develop confidence and identity relevant to their aspirations and goals.
- We will provide a variety of ways for students to access and achieve their goals, from small informal pieces of learning through to well-designed and supported qualifications, with a range of intermediate options in between.
- We will increase the amount of content freely available and accessible through a variety of distribution platforms.
- We will find ways in which to use informal learning within the formal curriculum and look to ways in which we can develop curriculum that can cater for different markets.
- Our qualifications will have clear alignment between learning outcomes and the skills learners require to achieve the indicators of success.
- We will use a scholarly evidence-based approach to decision-making in learning and teaching that also ensures that necessary data are easily accessible and provided in a relevant format.

Priority 2: Pedagogies and Curriculum Now for the Future

6.2 We will embrace a curriculum that addresses global, actual experience or practice problems and learning and teaching methods that support social responsibility

We will do this through the following actions:

- Discipline boundaries will not be a barrier to enabling the learning and teaching community to contribute to, and operate in, a complex world.
- We will develop learning and teaching methods that develop ideas of global citizenship and social responsibility that enable students to address actual experience or practice problems locally and globally.
- We will draw on the academic excellence of our teaching community to ensure that we deliver a curriculum informed by research and scholarship.
- We will resolve resource and systems/process issues that inhibit cross-discipline curriculum development.
- We will explore personalized processes that take into account learners' access and preparedness for study and support them to become effective learners and members of the Open University learning and teaching community.
- We will ensure that all curriculum developed for qualifications will include elements that are made available freely or for low cost for informal learning and/or professional development uses.
- We will develop ways for learners to include assessment of informal or prior learning for credit and inclusion within their formal learning.
- We will ensure that students engage actively as learners and creators of learning and content alongside the University.
- We will provide an induction programme, offering effective support for new learners with the Open University to become effective as learners and content curators across the undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) curriculum.
- We will be flexible for learners from non-UK backgrounds and take their learning needs, their cultural background, their linguistic background and their learning styles and experiences into account.

Priority 3: Technologies Now for the Future

6.3 We will use technologies to support students in their formal and informal learning

We will do this through the following actions:

- Our learning design will be innovative and will draw upon scholarship to inform the design process.
- We will use learning analytics ethically both to inform stakeholders about the effectiveness of learning design and to guide targeted individual support to learners.
- We will ensure that our materials are mobile-ready and developed in ways which are efficient, cost effective and easily assembled and curated by many stakeholders.
- We will use technologies to engage students for social, peer and new assessment approaches and we will ensure technologies meet accessibility standards and are available for a global market.

- We will constantly seek to innovate with new technologies, but will also carefully evaluate all innovations for their effectiveness for learning and teaching.
- Technologies will be robust and ease of use will be a primary driver.
- We will ensure that staff and students have the right digital skills to use technologies in their learning and teaching.
- We will support staff to work with others in learning design and be able to make changes to learning materials directly.

Priority 4: Scholarship in Learning and Teaching Now for the Future

6.4 We will focus on Innovation and Scholarship for Learning and Teaching

We will do this through the following actions:

- We will develop good quality scholarship that underpins and advances quality enhancement and quality assurance.
- We will foster scholarship that contributes to our world leading research excellence in learning and teaching.
- We will focus scholarship across subject boundaries on identified innovation and problems in learning and teaching based around the indicators of success given in section 5 and those particular to the priorities of our Nations.
- We will create an environment that supports clusters of communities of practice and teams of innovative scholars who identify trends and problems in learning and teaching on which scholarship can be focused.
- We will support communities of practice or networks around scholarship and innovation and recognise and reward scholarship in career progression and other mechanisms.
- We will create an innovation 'engine', complementary to the existing scholarship platform, to capture, support and develop good ideas from wherever they arise in the community.
- We will use sharing of scholarship to cascade innovation across the organisation.
- We will support a programme of ongoing professional development for staff to support their work in scholarship and innovation.

Priority 5: Communities and Networks Now for the Future

6.5 We will foster partnerships in all areas of the Open University so they become a normal part of everyone's working life

We will do this through the following actions:

- We will encourage dialogue and exchange of ideas between students, staff, employers and other communities within and external to the University.
- We will build on the strengths of our vast communities for collaborative and imaginative problem solving within a culturally diverse society.
- We will ensure that a variety of spaces will exist, both within, across the four Nations and outwith the University where the OU Learning and Teaching community can share ideas and solve problems.
- We will make clear links between modules and qualifications to communities that are wider than the module or qualification.

- We will create, and engage with already existing, communities and networks of learners and scholars engaged with local and global issues.
- We will reduce barriers (financial, process and organisational) to enable networks and communities to thrive.
- We will support our students in discovering and applying their learning in and for 'local' contexts and reasons.

7 IMPLEMENTATION AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This plan will be implemented from October 2015, subject to approval by the Senate. An implementation working group will be established in order to produce a list of Key Improvement Actions (*updated February 2015*). Whilst this plan will reach into the long term, this working group will be developing sets of short- (approximately 1 year), medium- (1 – 3 year) and longer-term (3-5 years) targets and objectives. The implementation group will consult with Central Academic Units (CAUs) and other units to devise a process that will assist them to respond in their imminent individual business plans for 2015-2016.
- 7.2 Initial work has included development of a number of scenarios, from student, staff and external perspectives to bring the Vision and Plan to life. It is also likely to include the development of a 'maturity checklist' for units to evaluate their current provision and a set of PVC priority questions that will be included in the PRO processes from autumn 2014 onwards.
- 7.3 The detailed implantation plan will articulate the work being undertaken across the University which contributes to delivery of the Vision and Plan. This work is owned and managed by units across the University, with the Learning and Teaching Centre retaining oversight and undertaking a monitoring role. (*updated February 2015*)
- 7.4 There will also be a stakeholder engagement and communications plan to define the following:
- Key stakeholders:
 - From whom authority is needed
 - To be included in project team
 - To be kept informed
 - From whom buy-in is needed
 - Roles and responsibilities for communications
 - Mechanisms and media to be used
 - Key messages to be conveyed, when and to whom

8 REVIEW

Aspects of this plan will be reviewed every two years with a more extensive review to align with wider Strategy and Policy reviews, to ensure relevance; any significant changes will be taken through the appropriate governance structure.

9 USEFUL REFERENCES

Student Charter

<http://www.open.ac.uk/students/charter/>

University Student Consultation on the Learning and Teaching Plan (URL to be added after the consultation period)

[Learning Now for the Future VLE workspace](#) – contains links to stimulus materials used in the generation of this plan, student creative entries, staff ‘big ideas’ analysis, outcomes from the initial workshops and feedback from the cascade workshops, presentations and drafts of the plan.

[Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations report](#)

(<http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/commission>)

Coates, H. (2007) A Model of Online and General Campus-Based Student Engagement. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. 32 (2), pp. 121–141.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/global-citizenship/what-is-global-citizenship>

APPROVED BY THE SENATE 15 OCTOBER 2014 with minor revisions to implementation arrangements in February 2015.

Technology Enhanced Learning and Innovation – extract from the Learning and Teaching Plan 2012

The learning and teaching plan covers learning and teaching in all of its forms, but places a strong emphasis on the use of technology including new and emerging technologies. At the OU we seek to take advantage of appropriate technologies to provide the best learning experience.

There are a number of drivers for an increased use of technology and eLearning, which can be grouped into pedagogic and business reasons and include:

Pedagogic

Technologies will be used to:

- Improve learner outcomes;
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning;
- Encourage learner independence and support personal development;
- Enhance the learner experience and make it more personally focussed;
- Improve access to learning;
- Support a diverse range of learning opportunities and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse group of students;
- Provide a wider range of content and resources in the most effective way;
- Increase the flexibility of provision;
- Enhance the provision of information, advice and guidance and learning resources;
- Develop approaches to individualised and personalised support for planning and recording achievements;
- Provide opportunities for students to develop their skills in communicating, collaborating and teamwork;
- Support learners in building knowledge collaboratively and engaging in social learning;
- Reduce isolation of the distance learner – between novice and expert, and between peers through online communities of learning and practice;
- Provide the facility to manage a lifelong learning record. Effective use of technology will help learners to do this - providing links to formal qualifications as well as the capacity to support reflection and help them in identifying appropriate new learning outcomes;
- Enable learners to use their own devices in institutional contexts and to personalise institutional services to meet their own requirements; and
- Provide enhanced capacity for integrating study with work and leisure through work-based and home-based learning.

Business

The capacity of technologies will be exploited to:

- Improve retention and progression of students;
- Enhance our reputation and maintain our position as leaders in supported open and distance learning;
- Enhance internal work processes. Technology can provide the efficiencies and flexibility that will allow us to develop more agile processes of curriculum design and delivery;
- Respond to student expectations that they will be able to use the technologies that they use in everyday life in their life as a student. An increasingly large group of potential students, particularly those in the younger age groups, have expectations of using elearning and developing ICT skills as part of their courses;
- Meet our responsibility to provide high level skills for the information economy and to equip learners with the skills they need as workers and citizens in an information society.
- Improve employer engagement, and communication with sponsors, and develop the student competencies that employers require;
- Provide learning and teaching experiences that meet distinctive national requirements;
- Increase our access to international markets; and
- Increase our global market share.

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

SCENARIOS FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING VISION AND PLAN 2025

Tony Bates

These scenarios are designed to suggest some concrete examples of how the vision might be operationalised. Each scenario is not meant to cover everything in the vision, but is meant to be consistent with it.

These three examples are really heuristic, aiming to promote discussion and perhaps further redefining of the vision. Ideally, staff at the OU should develop their own scenarios.

Scenario 1: Stopping the flu

Hi, Chris, you asked for an update on what I'm studying at the OU. Well, I'm about half-way through a really great course called Global Science. We get to choose three problems to research. At the moment, the problem I've chosen is called 'Stopping the flu.' Basically, we're looking at the influenza virus, and how to prevent pandemics. I thought when I started it would be all medicine, but I'm having to do maths, geography, agriculture, even management and communications, as well as other types of science because they are all related in some way to the problem we are looking at. We work as a group on defining the problem, collecting data, and interpreting the results.

I'm in a group of 25 students, and they are from all over the world, although altogether there are over 2,000 students taking the module. My main tutor, who's responsible for my group of 25, is from the OU and is based in Edinburgh, but really she's more like a conductor of an orchestra, because the course uses experts from all over the world, some of whom come in with just short podcasts or YouTube videos, while others run webinar sessions that deal with specific questions as they come up in our research. My tutor is great at finding resources to help us, and we also occasionally get sessions online with some of the academics at the OU who helped design the program.

What threw me at the beginning was the lack of lectures or pre-determined weekly study topics. Although we all had to do a set of topics on basic research methods, and we have a sort of module guide on the web designed by the OU team, we choose study topics and are provided with a guide to a wide range of resources, (mainly free stuff available all over the Internet, such as published papers in open access journals or stuff on iTunesU) with the help of our tutor that will directly help us with the research problem we are tackling. Some of these topics, such as the molecular structure of the flu virus, are

pretty obvious, but other topics we had to identify ourselves. I was particularly interested in the link between international travel and the spread of flu. One of the things we have to do always is to provide an evaluation of the sources we use and their reliability.

Each month the group has to create our own online reports - called e-portfolios - which shows the progress we've made on the research question each month. In the end, we get 50% of our marks from the monthly group e-portfolios and the other 50% from an individual e-portfolio we each create summarising the whole project and our individual contribution to the project. Our tutor does the marking and grading.

There's about 20 other OU student groups researching the same question, and we are sharing data across the groups, so we get great help and feedback from the other groups as well, through a discussion forum and a shared web site for the monthly e-portfolios. Because of my job, I'm particularly interested in mortality rates from different kinds of flus and I was able to hook up with another student in another group who turns out to be a specialist in that subject, working for a Swiss insurance company - it might even lead to a job for me!

Because of the agreements the OU has made with many hospitals and health authorities around the world, we're getting access to some great data. We often have to go and find local data ourselves, such as the number of local hospital admissions for flu in a particular week. For instance, we were able to track the spread of a particular strain from the first week of our course, when it was identified in China, across the world over the following five months. The OU also has an agreement with IBM to load the data and use some of their analytics as well. Apparently the OU got money from one of the research councils to support some of the research on this program because of the ability to draw on so many sources of relatively raw data from around the world, which means we sometimes get Skyped by one of the OU profs who wants access to our data! Another group even got asked by the WHO (no, the World Health Organization, not the rock group) for their data.

Many of the international students are in other universities, and will transfer the credits into their own courses, although a lot of the students are also sponsored by employers, such as hospitals or government agencies. You can in fact get a badge for successfully completing just one of the research problems, and a diploma for doing all three. However, the final 60 credits of the degree programme requires me to do my own, individual research project, and I think I'll try and do that, because I need that to go on to postgrad study, although everyone says that doing the individual research project is pretty tough, as the standard is very high.

But what I really like about this course is that I'm learning so much, so quickly. We're dealing with a real problem, and you know, having so many people from such different backgrounds all working on the same problem means that I feel we are actually making a difference, as well as studying.

Acknowledgement: this scenario was influenced by McMaster University's integrated science program. However, this is an on-campus program limited to a highly selected group of 50 students.

Scenario 2: How to create an e-commerce business

I'm one of the legion of unemployed graduates in Portugal. I got a good degree in philosophy from the University of Coimbra and a job as a high school teacher, then the economy went bust, and I got laid off as I only had one year's experience (first in, first out). I've been unemployed for three years now, so needed to do something different. So I was browsing the web and saw this advert from the U.K. Open University. They were offering a master's degree on e-commerce for anyone who can speak English. When I looked a bit more closely I found the programme teaches what you have to do to set up an online business.

Now I've a great idea. I'd like to organize historical and cultural tours around Portugal for the new middle classes in Brazil and perhaps from Lusophone Africa - you know, this is where your ancestors - or slave owners - came from. I'd advertise over the Internet and partner with travel agencies in the different countries as well as with hotels and cultural institutions in Portugal. But I haven't a clue about how to set up a business, and my Internet expertise ends with Google.

The course has turned out to be just what I'm looking for. There's about 180 students in all, mostly from southern and eastern Europe, although quite a few from the U.K. as well. The one thing we have in common is that we speak English and we are all unemployed (although a lot of the other students have much more work experience than me). The great thing about the course for me is that it's free, apparently as a result of funding from the EU.

What I particularly like about the course is that you had to come with a business idea, then the course takes you through all the things you need to do to get your business going. But even better, you have to do it. So the first module was on whether or not to incorporate, and they had units that enabled you to actually incorporate in whatever European country you lived in. Then we went through market research. I had to find out who else was offering similar services to the ones I wanted to offer and how to estimate the likely market and so on. Although most of the materials were generic, I had to find the specific answers for my proposed business. That was fun!

I spent a lot of time researching Brazilian travel web sites and did find a couple of agencies that specialized in visits to Portugal, so made some useful connections there. We had some great activities on using social media for marketing. I ended up making my own YouTube video to advertise my business idea. However, when I shared it with the other students, I realised it was awful, but they also gave me some great ideas.

Then we went through the money side, which I found the most difficult. I had no idea how to do a business plan, but the activities on this were very practical. (I think they had already been developed for another programme at the OU). One of the students was from Spain, and had previously worked in a Spanish bank, and was interested in my business idea, so we worked together on the business plan.

One of things the OU had done was to bring in people from business and industry as adjunct staff. Sometimes they worked right through the programme, helping design some of the materials as well as teaching them. Others just came in for one part of the course. My tutor arranged for a senior manager from one of the U.K.'s leading travel agencies to evaluate our business plan. He was so interested that he wants to keep in touch after I finish - I'm hoping his company might like to partner with us. I've had to modify my original plan quite a lot, but I have a pretty good idea now of what I want to do and how to do it.

What's interesting about this programme is that although there are some common core elements, it's very much personalised to the needs, hopes and aspirations of each of the students. It has only a few full time OU people working on the modules I'm taking, one a professor from Walton Hall, the others mainly tutors from both England and from some of the other European open universities. But it has developed a large list of potential consultants who can be brought in from all over Europe at relatively short notice to provide the individual help we all need.

I'm anticipating that by the end of my course, I'll either have my business up and running, or I'll be hired by one of the leading European travel businesses - and anyway I'll have a master's degree, just in case that doesn't happen, so I'll be a really well qualified unemployed person.

Scenario 3: How to cope with being old

Beth Carter Good evening, everyone. This is Beth Carter, for BBC Radio. The Open University yesterday announced that it had signed up half a million participants in what they claim is now the world's largest online course. The OU's MOOC - which stands for massive, open, online course - is about something many of you will be familiar with -

getting old, and the many challenges and opportunities that come with that.

In the studio with me is Jane Dyson, who is the course co-ordinator. Jane: at 55, and coming from a social services background, you seem to be the least likely person to be running such a massive, technology-based program. How did that happen?

Jane Dyson: (laughing). Well, it's all my own fault! I've been an OU graduate for many years, and they have an online alumni forum, where they ask former students for ideas about what are the most pressing issues we see in the world, and what the OU could do to address some of these issues. I do a lot of work advising elderly people, their families and even employers these days about the many different kinds of issues that arise with aging.

The OU has many courses and online materials that deal with lots of these issues, but you have to sign up for a degree or diploma or you can just get the materials online but without any support. Also, there are just too many different issues for even the OU to cover in its formal courses. So I suggested that they should do a MOOC where all the different people involved - health care workers, social workers, care givers, family, and most important of all, old people themselves - could talk about their problems and challenges, and what services are available, what people can do for themselves and so on.

Beth Carter. So what happened then?

Jane Dyson. The OU asked me to come in to my local OU regional office, and I met with several people from the OU, and after that meeting, they asked me if I would be willing to co-ordinate such a course.

Beth Carter. Now tell me more about MOOCs. I remember they were big about 10 years ago, then they went all quiet, and we haven't heard much about them since. So what's made this MOOC so popular?

Jane Dyson. The problem with the earlier MOOCs was that participants just got lost in them. Many of the MOOCs were just lectures and then it was up to the participants to help each other out. There was no organisation.

What the OU did was to ask those who signed up for the 'Aging' MOOC to fill in a very simple online questionnaire that asked for just a few details such as where they lived, whether they were professionals in aging, or family, or elderly people themselves, and then used that data to automatically allocate participants into groups, so that there was a mix of participants in each group.

Beth Carter. Why was that important?

Jane Dyson. Well, at the OU, the Institute of Educational Technology had done some research on the early MOOCs, and had identified this problem of how to get groups to work in large online classes. They worked with another research group in the OU called the KMI, who developed the software we are using that allocates participants into groups so that there is enough expertise and support in each group to help with the issues raised in the group discussions.

Beth Carter. And how does that work?

Jane Dyson. You wouldn't believe the range of issues or problems that come up. For instance, we have family members desperate because their father or mother is suffering from dementia, but don't know what to do to help them. We have some seniors who feel that their family is trying to force them out of their homes, while they feel they are quite capable of looking after themselves. We have social workers who feel that they are liable to get fired or even prosecuted because they can't handle their case load. And we have some participants who are just old and lonely, and want someone to talk to.

When we put all these participants into an online discussion forum, the results are amazing. What's really critical is getting the right mix of people in the same group, with enough expertise to provide help, and having someone in that group who knows how to moderate the discussions. We have a huge list of services available not just in Britain but in many of the other countries from which we have students. So the course is a kind of self-help, support service within a broader community of practice.

Beth Carter. Let's talk about the international students. As I understand it, almost half the participants are from outside the U.K.

Jane Dyson. That's right. The problems of an aging population aren't just British. The OU is part of a very powerful network of open universities around the world. When we were talking about starting this course, the OU went to several other open universities and asked them if they were interested in participating. So we have participants from the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, Japan, Canada, the USA, and many other countries, who participate in the English language version.

In Spain, though, we have a 'mirror' site, with materials in Spanish and Catalan, and the discussion forums are managed by the Open University of Catalonia. That brings in not only participants from Spain, but also from Latin America. We are about to develop a similar agreement with the Open University of China, which we expect will bring in another half million participants. What's really great is that because we have so many participants, there are always enough dual language participants to move stuff from one language discussion forum to another.

Beth Carter. So what's next?

Jane Dyson. One of the big issues that keeps coming up in the Aging course is the issue of mental health. This of course is not just about elderly people. The Aging course has already resulted in petitions to parliament about better services for isolated elderly people, and I think we will see some positive developments on this front over the next couple of years.

I think the OU is thinking about a similar MOOC on mental health, and I'd really like to be part of that initiative.

Beth Carter. Well, thank you, Jane. Next week we will be discussing online gambling, with an addiction counsellor.

Scenario 4: The changing experience of women in modern literature

I'm taking a very interesting course as part of my undergraduate program at the Open University. It's partly a literature course, partly a women's studies course, and partly a writing course.

We can choose a minimum of five books from a list of about 20 recommended by the faculty. We have to read at least one book from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, respectively. Although all the books are in an English language version, the writers are from all over the world: India, South Africa, Canada, Pakistan, France, Sweden as well as Britain and Ireland. Most are novels, but some, such as 'I am Malala', are biographies.

All the books are available for free in an online version through the Open University's OpenLearn site. (I think the OU negotiated a special deal with the publishers, as most of the books on the list have to be purchased if you are not an OU student taking this course - we are each given a unique code.) In two or three cases, there is also a film version or a TV series of the book, and we can download that and include it as another source if we wish (but we must still read at least five books.)

The one common element across all the books is that a woman is the main or major character in the book.

We are asked to look at a number of different themes when doing our reading or viewing. For instance, what remains constant and what has changed over time in terms of emotional relationships between men and women (or among women)? How much of any change is more a matter of form, or are there real changes in the nature of love? Another theme I'm choosing is how women exercise power, both within the family and outside, and how that appears to have changed over time.

There is another theme around writing technique, such as how the structure of the novel or biography facilitates or hinders the

development of the central character in the book. There is a course text on the links between writing techniques and the development of character, and this is really the only 'core' reading in the course, leaving us to focus largely on the books themselves.

What makes this course really exciting is the way we interact with both the faculty and other students. We each have our own personal blogs (we have to use the version specially designed by the OU for the course), but there is also a blog associated with each book. The OU has worked out a way for us to see not only what the faculty are writing about each book, but what all the other students are writing. For instance, I wrote my own blog post on Henning Mankell's novel, 'A Treacherous Paradise', about a Swedish woman who ends up managing a brothel in Mozambique in the early 1900s, and I linked that to the course site about the novel. I can also see on that novel's site a list of other students who have linked to the site and when I click on their name I can compare their comments with my own. (The faculty choose some of the best student comments and put them on the front page of the post for the novel.)

There are too many people on this course (about 800) for me to read all the students' posts, but I'm beginning to recognize the students who make the most interesting comments. (I also get quite a lot of comments on my blog posts from other students, which is very nice.) Of course, I always read first what the faculty have to say about a book, just after I've read it, because that really helps me focus on the main issues when I come to do my own post on it. (I prefer to read the faculty's analysis *after* I've read the book, so I can form my own opinions.) When I have finished reading a novel and posting my comments about the novel and in particular the themes I am addressing in relation to the novel (I have two weeks for each book), I notify my personal tutor and she sends me some comments and a mark that goes toward my end of course grade.

The themes are handled somewhat differently. There is an online discussion forum for each theme, and we are divided into groups of 25-30 within each theme. We don't have to cover every theme (there are about 15 in all) but we are expected to spend eight weeks in each of four themes. I'm always in a group monitored by my personal tutor, but sometimes the central faculty also join in the online discussion. It's in the discussion forums where we have most direct contact with both central faculty and regional tutors, who between them closely monitor all the theme discussions, and help us focus on the key issues. I found I got confused, even upset, about one theme, and I was able to have a very helpful Skype discussion with my tutor about the theme and the issues that needed to be discussed. However, she is tracking not just me, but 25-30 other students as well, so I don't get a lot of comments from her, but when I do they are really helpful.

At the same time, I have to build an electronic portfolio of my work, where I select and organize my thoughts on each of the books and the main themes I have been discussing, as I work through the books. They are giving us two weeks towards the end of the course to summarize this, and it has to be no more than 1,600 words or roughly 400 per theme. I'm supposed to discuss my four themes by drawing on my comments on each book. I'm really anxious about this, because it means I will have to be really well organized and concise in my writing, as already I have so much 'stuff' on the books and the themes. I get half the marks towards my grade from the 'exam' e-portfolio, and the other half from my personal tutor who has been tracking my blog comments and contribution to the discussion forums. (The OU has developed its own software that enables them to do this quite easily).

I'm loving the course so far. The only book I've really struggled with is Madame Bovary, which was heavy reading for two weeks, but any course with a Jane Austen novel can't be bad, can it? But what's really been fun is looking at Elizabeth Bennett and comparing her situation and character with those of the other main characters in the books in this course.

LEARNING AND TEACHING VISION AND PLAN CONSULTATION

WHO	WHEN	APPROX NUMBERS
Learning and Teaching Advisory Group	22 nd January 2014	21
Small Team	12 th February 2014	10
Learning and Teaching Strategy Group	20 th February 2014	12
Faculty of Education and Language studies (FELS)	25 th February 2014	30
PVC (A) and Deans	25 th February 2014	22
Learning and Teaching Directors and extended team	5 th March 2014	19
Programme Directors	11 th March 2014	23
Learning and Teaching Workshop (Selection from all areas across OU)	13-14 th March 2014	75
Module Chairs	20 th March 2014	100
LTSSC	24 th March 2014	30
Tripartite Group	3 rd April 2014	10
Social Science Faculty	8 th April 2014	30
Faculty of Health and Social Care (HSC)	10 th April 2014	30
OUSA Central Exec	26 th April 2014	?
Council	13 th May 2014	25
Faculty of Business and Law (FBL)	14 th May 2014	30
Science Workshop	19 th May 2014	30
Assistant Directors Meeting, Student Services Bristol	19 th May 2014	8
LT Portfolio	22 nd May 2014	300+
PVC (A) and Deans	3 rd June 2014	22
Small Team	4 th June 2014	10

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology (MCT)	10 th June 2014	20
AL Executive	10 th June 2014	12
Pre Senate Briefing	11 th June 2014	67
Tripartite Group	12 th June 2014	10
Extended Leadership Team (ELT)	16 th June 2014	20
Arts Faculty	19 th June 2014	30
Scotland Workshop	20 th June	30+
Coffee and Cake session with selection from across the OU	24 th June 2014	18
IT Workshop	June	All of IT
OUSA Conference	28 th June 2014	12
Associate Directors (Ads)	30 th June 2014	8
Employers MK	25 th June	2
AL Assembly	5 th July	60+
Student Consultative Forum	June/July 2014	July 7 th =21 st
LTSSC	16 th July 2014	30
Senior Team Strategy Day	16 th July	30+
VCE	15 th September 2014	
Senate	15 th October 2014	
Council	25 th November 2014	
Nations Responses	June	Scotland Wales
Individual responses	March-June	22
Cascade workshops by champions	March-June	250+

Note: In addition to the above consultation workshop delegates were asked to carry out workshop cascades to 20 people within their units. Feedback has been received from many units including IT, FELs, Learning and Teaching Solutions (LTS), Open Media Unit (OMU), Library Services, MCT, IET, Social Sciences amongst others.

Guiding principles

- Future facing and socially responsible
- Connected communities
- Technology as an enabler
- Digital globe – technology as a driver
- Innovation to Impact
- Widening participation, equality and accessibility
- Focus on the Learner
- Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Evaluation
- Academic Excellence

Priorities

Student experience

We will support students in achieving their diverse study goals

Pedagogies and Curriculum

We will embrace a curriculum that addresses global, actual experience or practice problems and learning and teaching methods that support social responsibility

Technologies

We will use technologies to support students in their formal and informal learning

Scholarship

We will focus on Innovation and Scholarship for Learning and Teaching

Communities and Networks

We will foster partnerships in all areas of the Open University so they become a normal part of everyone's working life

Indicators of success

- Retention, progression and completion
- Widening participation, equality and accessibility
- Digital citizenship
- Social responsibility
- Employability
- Interdisciplinarity
- Internationalisation
- An engaged and satisfied learner experience
- Collaboration and cooperation
- Evidenced based scholarship for learning and teaching
- Students as partners