

SUCCESS

Annual Report

2015/2016

“The OU has fundamentally changed my life. I now have a successful career. I couldn't have done that without studying with The Open University”

Neil McIvor,
BSc (Hons) Mathematics
and MSc Mathematics



The Open
University



“

This has been a momentous year for The Open University. Engaging with a new UK Government agenda and a challenging part-time student market, and developing priorities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, we have emerged with a renewed vision of our historic mission”

”

FOREWORD FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

Almost half a century after our foundation, the need for our revolutionary ‘open to all’ model is as great as ever. But the world has not stood still, and neither can we.

In July, Council approved a package of significant investment to support a new and visionary strategy for growth, Students First. This provides a clear focus and targets which will see us, among other things, improve students’ study outcomes and career progression, and expand our income. The whole University – staff, stakeholders and, crucially, students – has been involved in its creation, which is why I am confident of success.

Success matters, not just for the University, but for the UK. We remain its single largest engine of social mobility, supporting just over half of the UK’s part-time students who do not have the usual university entrance requirements, and over one-third of all UK part-time students with disabilities.

One of my key objectives this year has been finding new ways for the University to continue to expand its mission in today’s environment.

To give just one example, we are working with the Quality Assurance Agency and Independent Higher Education to create a

new degree validation model. This will make higher education degrees much more accessible to students of Further Education colleges and alternative providers. Five new providers are already offering OU-validated qualifications, benefiting hundreds of students.

This year we have seen welcome signs that governments across the UK seek to boost part-time and in-work study, and we are responding vigorously to this agenda.

Our newly launched apprenticeship service will give comprehensive support to employers as they seek to fulfil their obligations under the new Apprenticeship Levy. We are also developing new higher apprenticeship programmes in key sectors; the first three launched this autumn.

In an uncertain world, it is vital we diversify our income, and to that end, we are increasingly working with employers to provide courses tailored to their needs.

But fundraising will also play a major role. Today’s part-time students are under threat from cuts and restrictions to funding

which are closing off the opportunities open to their predecessors.

To make it possible to continue delivering on our mission, we have launched our first major fundraising campaign, Open up the Future. Our aim is to raise £50 million by our 50th birthday in 2019. Its success will ensure we can, once again, shape the future of learning.

The omens are good. We round off 2016 with another strong showing in the National Student Satisfaction survey. That we’ve achieved so much this year is a tribute to the dedication and loyalty of Open University staff, students and supporters. I look forward to your continuing support in the next stage of our journey.



PETER HORROCKS

OPEN UP BUSINESS

The Open University works with a wide range of business and organisations in the public, private and not-for-profit sector to deliver effective and relevant staff training.

Our offer now includes:

- Apprenticeship programmes designed for employers' needs
- More than 600 learning modules
- Accredited courses, from leadership and management to role- and sector-specific skills
- Customised training programmes and qualifications
- Accreditation of in-house training
- Learning and corporate consultancy

bit.ly/ou-business



APPRENTICESHIPS

The Open University and workforce analysis specialists at **KPMG** have jointly launched a support service to help UK employers gain maximum benefit from the upcoming apprenticeship reforms.

From April 2017, the UK Government's new Apprenticeship Levy will oblige organisations over a certain size to invest in apprenticeships. The full-service scheme, launched this year, will help employers to predict future workforce

needs, identify skills gaps and source and manage apprenticeship training programmes.

The University is also developing new work-based degree and higher apprenticeship programmes in key sectors, which will allow staff to qualify while still working for their organisation.

The first three programmes, launched in October 2016, are: Chartered Manager; Digital and Technology Solutions; and Health.

They build on The Open University's track record in delivering flexible and scalable workforce development programmes, using high-quality online learning supported by expert tuition.

The Open University and KPMG intend to expand the model and work with other universities and training providers, to deliver a wide range of apprenticeship programmes across the UK.

bit.ly/ou-apprenticeships

ENGINEERING SUCCESS

Babcock International Group, a FTSE 100 company providing engineering support services worldwide, has partnered with The Open University to address a UK-wide shortage of qualified engineers.

Together, we have developed a flexible apprenticeship programme, which allows employees to gain an engineering degree while continuing to work, applying academic theory in practice to real work challenges.

This highly successful programme is enabling Babcock to grow its own stream of qualified engineers with knowledge and skills attuned to company priorities.

bit.ly/ou-babcock

“Working with The Open University allows us to have a professionally accredited degree programme that supports our employees across the whole of the UK”

Carol Anne Knight, Human Resources Director, Babcock

“Osteopaths are now extremely well positioned to improve their personal leadership, patient care and the profession’s development in years to come”

Tim Walker, Chief Executive, General Osteopathic Council

PROMOTING LEADERSHIP

The University has collaborated with the **Osteopathic Development Group (ODG)** to launch a leadership skills programme which is having a positive impact on the osteopathy profession throughout the UK.

The programme is tailored specifically to the needs of the profession and is delivered through a mixture of online and face-to-face learning.

In its first year, the programme has proved to be so popular that it is planned to run it annually for a minimum of three years.

bit.ly/ou-odg

GROWING BUSINESS

My Seaweed Looks Weird is an online course from the Scottish Association for Marine Science and Opening Educational Practices in Scotland, led and hosted by The Open University in Scotland. It makes recent research on seaweed parasites freely available for the UK’s budding seaweed industry. The UK lags behind Asia in exploiting its potential for seaweed production, providing an opportunity for courses such as ours to apply new research to the industry from the start.



OPEN UP OPPORTUNITY

Getting ahead in your career has always been a key motivation for Open University study.

In today's competitive and fast-changing work environment, it's more important than ever. That is why we have put student employability and career progression at the heart of the University's new strategy for growth, **Students First**.

Our goal is nothing less than to make The Open University the premier university in the UK for enhancing employability and boosting career prospects.

This year we have begun putting new resources and systems into place to:

- Systematically track what each student is seeking to achieve through study, and how we are helping them
- Continue to embed employability skills more explicitly in our curriculum
- Maximise the benefits that derive from students combining Open University study with their world of work
- Invest in and expand the University careers service
- Bring the employer perspective more directly into the University

“We aim to make the OU the 'go to' institution for boosting career prospects”

Mary Kellett,
Executive Dean

350+

350+ NEW EMPLOYERS
WORKING WITH
**OUR CAREERS AND
EMPLOYABILITY
SERVICE** TO HELP US
ACHIEVE OUR AIMS

STUDENT NURSE OF THE YEAR

“I'm currently based in a stroke ward... and I've been able to apply what I've learnt through my Open University study in practice”

David Ferran, Northern Ireland

David, 30, has gained a First Class Honours degree in Adult Nursing with The Open University in Northern Ireland. He studied while working full-time as a healthcare support worker for the Department of Health (Northern Ireland) who funded him.

In May he won the Royal College of Nursing (Northern Ireland) Student Nurse of the Year Award 2016, and will take up his first registered nurse post this year.

bit.ly/ou-nurses-video



GRADUATE SNAPSHOT

“ *I left school with limited options and low confidence and now ... I am someone who believes you can achieve anything* ”

Paul Mahoney, Wales

The son of a miner and from a ‘family that didn’t go to university’, Paul left school with three O levels and trained as a bricklayer. He studied for his Open University IT degree while working factory shifts. At 47, the former bricklayer is now Head of Networks Security and Resilience for an independent ATM deployer, who funded Paul to study a Masters degree.

bit.ly/ou-paul-video



“ *The success I have experienced recently in my career is largely due to the initial advice provided within my first careers appointment* ”

Wellington Chiwara, West Midlands



Wellington had been a successful HR team leader in his home country, but was working as a security guard in the West Midlands when he began Open University study. Feeling ‘down and rejected’, he took advice from The Open University Careers Service and changed his focus. At 51, Wellington is now a Trainee Quantity Surveyor for Carillion PLC and ‘earning more than I could ever have dreamt of’.

“ *It was the flexibility ... the opportunity not to be confined to the structure of having to attend lectures* ”

Rebecca Miller, Scotland

Rebecca, 44, had been out of education for some 20 years when she started studying with The Open University while employed full time in financial services, often working away from home. Shortly after completing her Psychology degree, she gained her ‘dream job’, working with young people in Scotland and Tyne and Wear for a prominent national charity. She says her Open University degree helped her achieve this goal.



“ *I’m hoping to become an equality lawyer and contribute towards making the world a more inclusive place for disabled people* ”

Helen Dolphin, East of England



Helen’s laboratory research career was abruptly halted when she contracted meningococcal septicaemia, resulting in the amputation of her hands and legs. She’s completed a Law degree while working full-time for a charity campaigning for disabled motorists, and says had it not been for The Open University ‘achieving a Law degree may not have been possible for me’.

OPEN UP OPPORTUNITY

Widening participation in higher education has been The Open University's core mission since it was founded.

Our continued leadership in this field was recognised in March when we won the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) 2016 Award for our **Badged Open Courses (BOCs)**.

BOCs are free online courses awarding digital badges on successful completion, to recognise a learner's achievement.

WALES ADULT LEARNER OF THE YEAR

James Harris from Merthyr Tydfil was crowned Wales' Adult Learner of the Year at the Inspire! awards in Cardiff in May. Jailed for 76 months at age 23, he turned his life around studying with The Open University while serving his time. Now released and working night shifts on the railway tracks, he studies during the day to complete his Open University degree.

bit.ly/ou-james-video



BACK ON COURSE SCOTLAND

Back on Course Scotland is a free service being delivered by The Open University in Scotland, on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council and the broader higher education sector. It helps students who've left a Scottish university without completing their qualification to get back into education, training or employment. It also aims to improve Scotland's student retention performance, reportedly the worst in the UK, with students from the most deprived areas at greatest risk of leaving early.

TRADE UNION AWARDS

The Open University in Wales has received three Wales Trade Union Congress Quality awards, for its innovative free online learning on Futurelearn and OpenLearn. The awards recognise our partnership with trade unions to upskill and reskill the UK workforce, and our shared commitment to keep higher education accessible. Over 2,000 Welsh union members have registered for Open University courses since the partnership began. We are the first Welsh university to receive a Wales TUC Quality Award.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Open University in Northern Ireland launched a partnership in June with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The formal agreement opens the door to learning to a quarter of a million trade union members in Northern Ireland. The partners will initially focus on widening participation, including progression pathways and access provision. The launch event was opened by Trevor Cooper, Director of Higher Education in the new Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland).

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTING EDUCATION

In the last year, nearly 10,000 alumni, supporters, trusts, foundations and organisations supported our mission to open up millions of futures.

Gifts totalling more than £4.6 million, including over £1 million from legacy gifts in supporters' Wills, are helping to make the impossible possible - from free learning resources open to everyone, to providing vital education resources for teachers in Africa and India.

STUDENT SUPPORTS HEALTHCARE RESEARCH

A gift of £75,000 from Open University student Julie Dyson (pictured) through her charity The Goldcrest Charitable Trust, is supporting the development of innovative haptic bracelets, which will help stroke survivors regain their mobility and independence. The OU's Dr Simon Holland first created the haptic bracelets to teach musicians at a distance, but research uncovered healthcare applications. Julie, who has built up a community of leading care homes, says: "The Open University has changed my life, and I want to help it change the lives of thousands more."



FREE ONLINE LEARNING FOR NEXT GENERATION

Paula Harris, a lifelong friend and supporter of the University, left a gift in her Will which has funded a free online course on nuclear power - offering learners an understanding of the risks and benefits of a contentious issue. Having studied with The Open University in the 1990s while in her sixties, Paula gained her BSc Honours and a Masters in Mathematics. Her generosity is remembered through a plaque in the University's Legacy Garden.

To help open up millions of futures, visit:

bit.ly/ou-giving

THANK YOU

The Open University is deeply grateful to everyone who made a gift to support students and projects this year. The following donors have made exceptionally generous gifts:

- Aldgate & Allhallows Foundation
- Mr Enrique Boo
- Mr Howard Brown
- Cisco
- Cordis Charitable Trust
- Dangoor Education
- Mrs Diana Delbridge
- Mrs Ann Dobson
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- GMC Trust
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Lord and Lady Haskins
- NSC Global
- OPITO International
- Santander Universities
- Tech Mahindra
- Mr Anthony Nutt
- The Aldama Foundation
- The Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust
- The Goldcrest Charitable Trust
- The Richard & Anne King Charitable Trust
- The Wolfson Foundation
- Baron Thyssen
- True Potential LLP
- University Book Search
- Mr John Watson
- Mrs Rachel Webb
- Professor David Wield

OPEN UP MINDS

The Open University/BBC partnership continues to provide innovative and engaging content for broadcast audiences, and rich resources for our students.

OU/BBC content attracted over 240 million viewing and listening events across channels and platforms this year, bringing 780,000 visitors to OpenLearn to continue their learning journey. And the OU/BBC partnership generated 81 hours of University teaching and learning resources.

We were part of three major BBC widening participation campaigns: inspiring digital creativity as part of *Make It Digital*; on BBC III focusing on the lives of people living with a disability; and encouraging the nation to *Do Something Great* on BBC Two, as part of the BBC's volunteering initiative.

For the first time we worked with BBC World Service Learning English, co-producing an animated series on Shakespeare's language. We also marked Shakespeare's 400th anniversary with a World Service series in partnership with the British Council. And we co-produced two series with Channel 4: *Chasing Perfection*, exploring what it takes to be a world-class athlete; and a thought-provoking examination of dementia, *Dementiaville*.

BROADCAST HIGHLIGHTS

We covered topics from birth to death this year on BBC One with *Countdown to Life: The Extraordinary Making of You* exploring the complexity of genetics; while *The Hunt* captivated audiences with its examination of predation, providing unique footage for Open University courses.

There was huge demand for the innovative posters complementing each series. Our augmented reality app brought *The Hunt* poster to life and gave insights into careers in the natural sciences.

Programmes this year have been at the forefront of topical debate: whether focusing on Brexit, with Jeremy Paxman; the immigration crisis, highlighted in *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe*; or assisted suicide, in *How to Die: Simon's Choice*.



OPENLEARN TOPS THE TABLE

In the run-up to its 10th anniversary in October 2016, our free online learning portal OpenLearn has seen a 20 percent increase in traffic and a re-launch with a new focus on skills for study and work.

In February we topped MocoLab's annual worldwide opencourse provider league table, ahead of MIT, Harvard, Berkeley and Yale.

In partnership with DfID, UNICEF and many others, OpenLearn Create has been helping train millions of workers and volunteers in the UK and worldwide, and through teacher education is impacting tens of millions of learners across Africa and India.

Our swathe of successful projects in 2015/16 included our historical knowledge game *O Fortuna* and our referendum guides, exploring the Brexit debate.

And *Return to STEM* offered a model for exploring Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in depth and provided employability tools used by 5,000 people. Our quick turnaround tribute to David Bowie attracted several thousand new visitors to OpenLearn.

OpenLearn courses served more than 100,000 of our students in terms of module choice and increasing confidence. This year we found that those who augment their formal studies with OpenLearn courses are 5-10% more likely to progress to their next module.

Five additional Badged Open Courses were developed and provided the highest impact yet. They attracted 12,000 new learners each month, with 26% going on to enquire about Open University courses.

And we also brought new students to the University. Each year, over 500 registrations are attributable to OpenLearn.

bit.ly/ou-openlearn

45m

PEOPLE ACCESSED
FREE OU
LEARNING SINCE
2006

900

COURSES AND 15,000
HOURS OF FREE STUDY
ON OPENLEARN

“*OpenLearn Create is a key tool for sharing our free education resources with over 200,000 healthcare workers, teachers and development professionals a year*”

The Open University
International Development
Office

OPEN UP THINKING

Research and knowledge exchange continue to be core to The Open University's mission. Our research is designed to have impact, influence policy and practice and change lives for the better. We maximise our impact through major collaborations with external organisations, ranging from public bodies to third sector to business.

CITIZENSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

An innovative six-month campaign to challenge negative attitudes to migrants in the UK was launched in June.

Co-led by The Open University and the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford, the campaign puts academic research into action.

It harnesses the power of creativity to increase understanding, employing art, theatre, and a major London exhibition to coincide with Refugee Week.

Innovations include 'Pop-up Prof' sessions, which give members of the public the opportunity to chat one-to-one with leading migration researchers.

The Open University's Professor Engin Isin said: "We believe it will usher in a long-term agenda for collaboration between academic research, civil society, education and the cultural sectors."

bit.ly/ou-migration

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

International experts met at The Open University in December 2015 to strengthen regional alliances in their fight against poverty in the Global South.

The Open University is the leader in PRARI (Poverty Reduction and Regional Integration).

PRARI is an international research collaboration, which works to make policy interventions more effective on the ground.

Its focus is Southern Africa and South America, which contain many of the world's most impoverished populations.

The importance of 'regional interconnectivity' is highlighted in the new global Sustainable Development Goals.

Open University Professor Nicola Yeates, who leads PRARI, said: "This is about what countries can achieve when they act together through regional blocs."

bit.ly/ou-prari



OPEN TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

Tomorrow's learners could be using the mind and the body to aid their study and even become their own research labs. 'Embodied learning' is one of the top ten emerging trends in education identified in the latest **Innovating Pedagogy Report**.

It's compiled by researchers in the University's Institute of Educational Technology – led by Professor Mike Sharples – who also highlight 'stealth assessment' and 'analytics of emotion' as among the hot trends to watch.

This year's report is prepared in conjunction with US-based research institute SRI International. It aims to give policymakers and educators insights into the sorts of innovations already underway, which are going to become far more influential over the next few years.

bit.ly/ou-future-trends

SPACE SCIENCE

Since the European Space Agency ExoMars Mission blasted off in March 2016 in search of the existence of life on Mars, space scientists at The Open University have been meticulous in monitoring its progress.

The ExoMars TGO (Trace Gas Orbiter) will orbit the planet searching for methane and other indicators of life.

Senior Lecturer Dr Manish Patel is co-principal investigator of the Orbiter's NOMAD (Nadir and Occultation for Mars Discovery) Instrument.

Dr Patel and his team developed UVIS, one of NOMAD's three miniature spectrometers, to 'sniff' the atmosphere of Mars.

Ultra-sensitive to any trace gases and weighing less than one kilo, UVIS is robust enough to survive the perilous conditions in space.

We are also applying our expertise in miniaturised analytic technology to terrestrial uses, including a prototype cancer screening system which is currently being trialled.

bit.ly/ou-mars-mission





OPEN UP LIVES

In the first year since the United Nations launched its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, The Open University has been working with partners around the world to take them forward.

We are helping to deliver education targets, and empower others to create a step change in international development.

Drawing together our expertise in research, teaching and development projects, we are supporting improved health, quality education, clean water, good jobs and economic growth.

Our projects harness the global rapid growth in low-cost mobile technology, to share tailored free learning resources with teachers, healthcare workers, students and development professionals.

We are hosting a series of seminars throughout the UK with government agencies, NGOs and academia to address how we can meet the UN targets, both domestically and globally. Find out more at:

bit.ly/ou-ido



TRAINING TEACHERS IN AFRICA

Teacher Education in sub-Saharan Africa

(TESSA) will be helping to equip even more untrained teachers with the skills and knowledge to offer pupils a high quality education.

Initiatives include a MOOC and targeted activity in selected countries including Zambia, Uganda and Togo.

Our longest-running education project, TESSA has been extended until 2019, thanks to the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust. The need is enormous: in Uganda, for example, there are just four qualified teachers per thousand students.

This June, Musoto Christian School, a community primary school in Uganda, received their first TESSA materials, and teachers say they are already seeing a big change in pupils' levels of participation.

Esther, who teaches Primary One, says children are starting to read words by themselves. 'This is very unusual from the children in this community.'

Produced collaboratively with local experts, TESSA resources suggest learning activities, linked directly to the target country's curriculum, that can be easily added into classroom practices.

bit.ly/ou-tessa

BOOSTING DEVELOPMENT AND CRISIS RESPONSE

We are giving frontline development workers the tools they need to operate most effectively.

Our new project **DIY Learn** aims to reverse a situation whereby two in three donor-funded development projects fail to achieve their intended impact, often owing to a lack of effective project management.

DIY Learn offers development workers free social innovation tools which can be quickly and easily accessed on mobiles. And it adds 'bitesize' learning on how to get the most out of each tool.

This project is made possible by the Rockefeller Foundation and delivered in partnership with the innovation charity Nesta.

The University is also working with the Humanitarian Leadership Academy to help professionalise the humanitarian sector and train frontline responders, to enable people to respond to disasters and emergencies in their own communities.

bit.ly/ou-diy-learn

“the teaching examples are so practical and child friendly, converting theories into practice”

Beatrice Alinga,
teacher education
volunteer

DIY
Learn



The largest academic
institution in the UK
with 174,739 students



88 of the
FTSE 100
have
sponsored
staff on OU courses



89% 

of students satisfied
with the quality
of their course

* National Students Survey

Financial highlights 2015/16
can be found at:
bit.ly/ou-financial-statements

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Find out more about the OU's equality
scheme and objectives:

bit.ly/ou-equality-scheme

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

For Council membership
August 2015–July 2016, see:

bit.ly/ou-council-constitution

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