QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

FACTSHEET 7: STAFF

Staff in the University

1 The University employs around 1000 salaried academic staff. They are primarily involved in qualification and module design and development, the management of qualification and module presentation and research. There are also around 5000 Associate Lecturers who are responsible for teaching students through correspondence tuition. In addition, the OU employs over 3000 staff in academic related and support positions.

2 The Staff Strategy Committee advises Council, subject to powers of Senate, with respect to academic staff, on determination of policies and strategies concerning University staff. The Director, Human Resources has responsibility to oversee an appropriate induction, probation and staff development programme for academic staff in the light of strategy statements, quality assurance objectives and equal opportunities. The Director, Students, has formal responsibility for generic staff development of Associate Lecturers. The Central Academic Units are responsible for module-related staff development.

3 Human Resources policies, procedures and guidance relating to staff other than Associate Lecturers are available from the Human Resources web-site. This includes a wide range of information including, for example legislation, recruitment, selection and appointment procedures, job evaluation policy and procedure, the employment of consultants, working hours and other commitments, rewards and salary, movement of staff within the UK, training, occupational health and safety, grievance procedures for staff, disciplinary procedures, and employment of temporary staff, termination and redundancy.

4 The Human Resources website also contains other information ranging from the Career Development and Staff Appraisal system and salaries through to the latest vacancies. There is also an Occupational Health website which contains a range of policies, guidance notes, and health promotion information.

5 Associate Lecturer Policy and Practice: AL employment policies contains policy information relating to the work of Associate Lecturers. The TutorHome employment pages include sections ranging from information about the Associate Lecturer role, the bullying and harassment policy and data protection information through to the daily average hours agreement, insurance and legal liabilities and payment information. Information is available for Associate Lecturers about their role in supporting students.

Recruitment and Appointment

6 There are well established arrangements for the recruitment and appointment of all staff including Associate Lecturers.

7 Staff Other than Associate Lecturers: The constitution of appointment committees for academic staff is set out on Governance Team website under Appointments, Promotions and Awards.

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1 Links to external and internal websites were checked in September 2016. Some web links referred to in this document may be intranet based and so restricted to Open University staff.
It is the policy of the University to offer equal opportunities to all applicants in all stages of the recruitment and selection processes regardless of their race, sex, marital status, religious or political beliefs, not only because such discrimination is prohibited by law, but because the University Charter embodies these principles and because the University is committed to its equality and diversity policies. Human Resources publishes a Guide to Effective Recruitment and Selection on its website, which provides guidance to ensure that practice accords with the Open University’s equality and diversity policies and to equal opportunities legislation and good diversity practice. There is a standard format for further particulars of all posts, and advertisements are screened for compliance with policy.

As part of the University’s commitment to equal opportunities and diversity, there is a Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People. The aim of the Code is to create a working environment and employment practices which will provide opportunities for the employment of disabled people at all levels in the University, and to ensure that disabled staff do not experience barriers to full participation in the life of the University.

The recruitment process is overseen by the Human Resources Services section of Human Resources. All internal members of interview panels are required to have attended a recognised selection skills course. Certain categories of vacancy have agreed Appointment Committee procedures.

**Associate Lecturers**: Many of the University’s Associate Lecturers work full or part-time for other organisations. The role of Associate Lecturer is to support students in connection with the module and their student learning and progress on the module. Full details of the role of the Associate Lecturers are contained in their terms and conditions of service and are also posted on the Associate Lecturer recruitment website.

Formal responsibility for the appointment of Associate Lecturers rests with the Director, Access, Careers and Teaching Support (ACTS), advised by members of academic units who are based in the Regional and National Centres (Staff Tutors, or Regional Managers). Associate Lecturers are employed on the basis that they are engaged to teach one or more module presentation lines each of which will last for the duration of the module life (normally 8 years). However, all appointments to teach module presentation lines relate to a particular location and are subject to fluctuation in student numbers.

The Associate Lecturer recruitment website provides details of the generic person specification for Associate Lecturers which staff must meet. In addition, each module team requires Associate Lecturers who teach their module to meet their specific tutor specification.

**Probation**

A period of probation applies to all staff joining the University. This is outlined in the University’s Probation Policy. It is the responsibility of the Head of Unit to ensure that the work of all probationers is carefully and continually monitored throughout the probationary period.

For staff Other than Associate Lecturers offers of appointment to external candidates may be made subject to an initial probationary period as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Type</th>
<th>Probation Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td>3 months to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic-Related Staff</td>
<td>3 months to 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>4 years (see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Staff</td>
<td>3 months to 1 year</td>
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</table>

Last updated: September 2016
For members of Academic Staff any offer of permanent or fixed-term appointment will normally be subject to an initial probationary period of 4 years, unless exceptionally where a candidate’s experience and research warrant this, by agreement of the Director of Human Resources, this condition is waived or the period is reduced in the letter of appointment. In the case of a fixed-term appointment of less than 4 years, the probationary period will apply to the initial contract, and any subsequent renewal or appointment to a permanent post, subject to the overall maximum probationary period of 4 years.

Internally appointed staff who have successfully completed a probationary period are not expected to complete another probationary period if they are appointed to another job on the same terms and conditions. Where appointment is to a different category of staff a probationary period is optional.

**Associate Lecturers:** The appointment of an Associate Lecturer to teach a module depends upon his or her satisfactory completion of a 24 calendar months’ probationary period. In exceptional circumstances they may be required to serve a further 12 calendar months of probation. Associate Lecturers are not expected to complete any additional probationary period if they are appointed to additional or different appointments during the same continuous period of employment.

**Induction**

Induction is provided for all staff joining the institution.

**Staff Other than Associate Lecturers:** Induction is provided for all staff joining the institution and operates at two levels:

- **Open Insights,** an online induction course is designed to complement the induction staff receive within their own unit. The module identifies and explains the University’s philosophy and practices, navigate websites on information about the University and its policies and practices and enables staff to plan their own ongoing training and development.

- Local induction – those who manage staff at a local level are responsible for ensuring that a thorough induction is provided to all new staff, either staff new to the University or transferring from another unit. Induction needs to cover processes and procedures work objectives and the unit plan of the unit. An Open Insights guide to good practice in induction is available to managers in hard copy and from the Human Resources website. The guide includes a checklist to ensure that relevant details at job and unit level are covered.

**Associate Lecturers:** Although new Associate Lecturers may have a wide range of experience and expertise in teaching and adult education, they usually still need briefing and development to be able to support open learning. All new Associate Lecturers are allocated a mentor, usually an experienced tutor on their own or a similar module, who provides support and advice on an individual basis during the probationary period.

There is a mandatory requirement upon Associate Lecturers to participate in formal induction, which is both module-based and role-based e.g. running tutorials, delivering correspondence tuition. A generic induction programme is supported by open-learning materials and mediated by regional academic staff in the light of the particular needs of individuals. There is a wide range of web-based and printed resources to support their induction, for instance a booklet ‘An introduction to your role with the OU’ and an online introduction to their role, AL Essentials.
The TutorHome website offers Associate Lecturers resources and information to support them in their practice. It provides them with their student group, links to Modules and Faculty sites, advice about supporting students with additional requirements, tutorial timetables, University information and their personal record. It also provides teaching and learning resources which set out the standards of performance expected from Associate Lecturers and offer good suggestions for further development.

Learning and Development

The University is committed to the development of all staff through lifelong learning. It aims to develop a flexible and proficient workforce through continued investment in staff development and the operation of appropriate human resources practices.

Staff Other than Associate Lecturers: The University aims to provide initial induction, learning, training and continuing staff development opportunities to ensure that staff are able to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities in order to meet individual, unit and University objectives.

The University advocates a systematic approach to implementing staff development, which is as follows:

- Identification of needs;
- Setting objectives for development activities;
- Selecting staff learning and development opportunities;
- Implementing/undertaking activities;
- Evaluating development activities to determine the benefit to the individual, the unit and the University.

As part of its annual business plan each unit considers development required by staff. It does this by analysing the needs of all staff arising from University developments, strategic priorities and individual requirements identified through Career Development, Staff Appraisal (CDSA) and other regular review processes.

The Learning and Organisational Development sub unit of Human Resources has responsibility for development of staff across the whole University. The team is responsible for ensuring staff are appropriately developed to build the skills, knowledge and confidence to perform at their best, whatever their role.

The team offers development and support to help individuals build the ‘right skills at the right time’ to reach their potential and maximise their productivity and effectiveness in their current and future roles. This is provided through a range of development options including, online guides, courses and resources as well as classroom based learning including management and leadership development programmes. Tailored and personalised support is offered to units by a team of experienced development professional who offer an Internal Consultancy service. The unit also facilitates and manages time limited projects which are established to support new areas of organisational development which are aligned to the University’s strategic priorities.

Professional Development for Academic Staff: The Academic Professional Development (APD) Framework launched in Spring 2015 describes Academic Professional Development at the Open University in terms of four core domains of academic practice: Learning and Teaching, Research, Knowledge Exchange and Leadership. Each of these domains is aligned with recently revised criteria for academic staff promotion and the relevant HE sector endorsed, external standards framework. These frameworks identify the core knowledge, competencies and professional values associated with each domain of academic practice.
For central, regional and national staff these frameworks can be used to facilitate conversations with line managers, heads of academic units and research centres concerning:

- professional development goals, directions or priorities;
- the appraisal process and planning for initial and/or continuing professional development;
- the identification of appropriate development activities that support staff to perform well in their roles, and that offer opportunities for career progression aligned with the criteria for academic and research staff promotion.

A web-based environment allows easy access to activities, on-line courses, tool kits and learning resources available to support academic professional development at the University across the four domains. This platform also offers information about the associated professional standards frameworks.

The Institute of Educational Technology (IET) also offers a range of qualification bearing modules based on their experience of educational technology research and module development. Qualifications in online teaching and learning, at a variety of levels on a part-time and full-time basis, include the Certificate, Diploma and Masters in Online and Distance Education (ODE), a PhD in Educational Technology, a Masters of Research. OpenPAD, launched in 2013, is a professional development solution developed by IET in partnership with the Higher Education Academy (HEA), providing staff with an opportunity to gain HEA fellowship.

IET also manages the University’s Research Development Programme, an annual series of professional development events for researchers and Supervisors including seminars and workshops.

Academic staff development also occurs through involvement in module teams and Examination and Assessment Boards, and in taking on new roles in the University, in encouraging staff to join professional networks/communities, as well as by formal training. Continuing professional development is further encouraged through the University’s study leave policies. Members of central academic staff are entitled to study leave on full salary, for research or other approved academic purposes, of two months per year.

**Associate Lecturers:** The process of monitoring assignment marking and correspondence tuition is one of the main staff development activities that all Associate Lecturers are subject to (see factsheet 4). The monitoring of correspondence tuition in particular enables good practice in correspondence tuition to be exemplified.

Associate Lecturers also receive feedback through the Student Experience on a Module (SEaM) survey sent to their students. The results are mediated by their Line Manager to inform their future development.

All Associate Lecturers are expected to undertake the equivalent of two days per year of pedagogical skills development that covers areas of learning and teaching that are wider than the teaching and conduct of a specific module. This includes staff development on diversity and disability which is provided to academic staff mainly through materials and access to specialist advice as required.

ALs are also able to apply to the AL Development Fund for support in meeting the cost of personal staff development activities or research and receive a fee waiver for most OU modules.
Promotion

Policies and procedures governing academic and research staff promotions are set down on the Governance Team website.