QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

The content and links in this fact sheet are correct as of the date of last update shown. A full review of the factsheet series is planned in 2021.

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 just over 4000 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 Council, as governing body of the University, is the employing authority for all staff in the institution and is responsible for establishing a human resources strategy. The Director, People Services, has responsibility in overseeing 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, Academic Services, has formal responsibility for generic staff development of Associate Lecturers. The Central Academic Units are responsible for module-related staff development.

3 Policies, procedures and guidance relating to staff other than Associate Lecturers are available from the People Services intranet 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 People Services site also includes links to the annual leave system, latest vacancies and pension information. There is also a Health and Safety website which contains a range of guidance notes, and health promotion information.

5 The Associate Lecturer employment policies webpage contains policy information relating to the work of Associate Lecturers. The TutorHome employment pages include sections ranging from health, safety and security through to salary and benefits. 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 There is published information on Appointments, Promotions and Awards governing senior and academic staff.

1 Links to external and internal websites were checked in April 2020.
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. People Services publishes a range of information governing recruitment arrangements in the university on its intranet site.

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.

Many of the University’s Associate Lecturers work full or part-time for other higher education providers. The role of Associate Lecturer is to support students in connection with the module and their student learning and progress on the module. Details of the role of the Associate Lecturers are provided on the Associate Lecturer Employment site.

Formal responsibility for the appointment of Associate Lecturers rests with the Director, AL Support, Careers and Widening Access, advised by members of academic units (Staff Tutors, or Regional Managers).

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. Probationary requirements also apply to Associate Lecturers.

**Induction**

Induction is provided for all staff joining the institution.

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, navigates 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.

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. 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.

**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.

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.

People Services run a Learning Management System which lists staff development courses available and records the resulting development undertaken.

The Academic Professional Development (APD) intranet site comprises information to support academic and research staff in planning their career development in the following areas of academic practice: Teaching and Learning, Research and Scholarship, Knowledge Exchange, Mentoring, and Promotion and Progression.

Academic staff development also occurs through involvement in module teams and Examination and Assessment Cluster 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.

The process of monitoring assignment marking and correspondence tuition is one of the main staff development activities that all Associate Lecturers are subject to. 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 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 intranet site.