Study after Prison
A guide for students leaving prison

- Want to continue your Open University (OU) studies after leaving prison?
- Worried about combining study with your new life style?
- Find out how you can make the transition to OU study on the outside so you can use the knowledge and skills you acquire productively.
Studying outside prison

When you leave prison, many aspects of your life will change and you will have new priorities and new pressures on your time. But as an Open University student you can continue with your studies wherever you are living in the UK and even if you move abroad.

This leaflet aims to help you make the transition to OU study on the outside, where you will be responsible for your own learning and will have access to a wide range of support services to help you through your courses.

We hope you will continue to enjoy your OU studies, and that you will be able to use the knowledge and skills you acquire productively in your new life.

Getting ready for release

As soon as you have firm information about your release date it’s important to discuss your future study plans with the prison’s Education Department.

You should then contact Learner Support at the Regional Centre for the area where you’ll be living as soon as possible after your release. They will start to set up the support you’ll need to continue your studies.

Remember: after your release you’ll be responsible for planning your study time, checking cut-off dates, submitting TMAs and generally dealing with your tutor and the OU. This will be easier if you have as much in place as possible before your release.

When you’re released

To ensure a smooth transition to study on the outside, remember the following:

- Bring out all your books and other study materials.
- Note down your personal identifier (PI) number, which will help the OU to identify you quickly.
- Find a safe place to store your OU material where you can find things quickly.
- Try to work out when and where you are going to study.
- Write to or phone Learner Support at your OU Regional Centre with your change of address. You may already have told your tutor but you need to inform your Regional Centre to ensure that TMAs, texts and other material are delivered to you on time.

Local support

As soon as your Regional Centre has your details, its Learner Support section will look after your OU interests and become a useful source of information and advice.

Unless you are near the end of your course, they will allocate you to a new tutor and a tutorial group of up to about 25 students. We encourage students to keep in touch with each other and, if they wish, to form ‘self help’ groups.

On most courses you’ll be able to attend tutorials and (on some courses) day schools at a study centre in a nearby major town.

Whether or not you can get to tutorials, you’ll be able to share ideas with other students on your course – by telephone or by email if you have access to the Internet.

Depending on when in the academic year you’re released, you’ll have the opportunity to go to study skills workshops, course choice meetings and other OU events to help you through your current course and help you choose the next one.
Residential schools

Some OU courses have residential schools, usually (but not always) in July and August. They form a very enjoyable and stimulating part of the study programme.

During your sentence you’re automatically exempted from residential school, but on release you may choose to take courses that have residential schools.

If you have queries or concerns about residential schools, you can discuss them with the Learner Support section at your local Regional Centre.

Examinations

Most OU courses have a three-hour examination, usually held during the last two weeks of the course. You can take your exam in any OU examination centre but the University needs to know well in advance so that arrangements can be made for you to attend your chosen venue.

In many Regions the OU runs workshops to help people with revision and exam skills and some can offer extra help to those who have particular anxieties about exams.

Additional requirements

If you have needed special study arrangements in the past due to a disability or other additional requirements, these can continue after your release, but once again the Region where you will be living will need advance warning.

If you have not already had one, ask for the booklet Meeting Your Needs, which provides useful information. It will tell you how to let the OU know what facilities you need.

Financing your studies

Leaving prison can be a time of financial hardship. Depending on your circumstances, you may well be eligible for a financial award that will cover all or part of your study costs, including course materials and residential schools.

If you have any queries or concerns about finance, you can discuss them with Learner Support at your local Regional Centre.

Course choice

You may have had help with your choice of courses while in prison. More extensive help will be available after your release but you will probably need to take more responsibility for getting the information and advice you need.

Many OU Regions hold course choice events where you can see course materials and talk to tutors and students. Regional Centres also have advisers who can help you by talking over your options by telephone and sending you information.

Careers advice

Your Regional Centre can provide information and advice on careers and put you in touch with other institutions that may be able to help you.

The Regional Centre provides a careers library and other resources to help with your career planning.

Open University courses are recognised by most other educational organisations such as colleges and universities. Your Regional Centre can advise on this and on credits you can claim for previous study.

Further help

All OU students have access to support and advice services to help them through their studies. Course tutors are your first point of contact on academic matters, but you can also call your Regional Centre if you want to discuss anything that affects your course work.