



The Open
University

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2012



Published: November 2012

The equality scheme objectives and action plans to which this report relates are available from The Open University's Equality and Diversity website at www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/

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In this section, we summarise information from the detailed annual reports provided by departments from across the University. We highlight equality initiatives and activities across our staffing, curriculum, learning and teaching, research, student support and partnerships, covering a wide range of individual characteristics, from every part of the UK.

Trends

In addition to this annual report, we have also published a significant volume of information through eight separate monitoring reports¹. They contain a comprehensive set of tables and charts for governance, staff and students, across a wide range of participation and progress indicators at an institutional level.



¹ The monitoring reports are published alongside this annual report on our Equality and Diversity public website at: http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p7_1.shtml

Introduction

Much has changed in the higher education funding and finance landscape in the past year, including the transformation of student finance to a system of loans replacing grant funding in England, increasing divergence of arrangements across the four UK nations, greater uncertainty about future allocations of widening access funding, and institutional responses resulting in differential fees.

In the face of this change, The Open University (OU) remains firmly committed to our mission and our core values which position us as an inclusive, innovative and responsive institution. We continue to play a unique role in society by making higher education available to all, and by promoting social justice through the development of knowledge and skills. Equality and diversity continue to be right at the heart of everything we do.

This year, we have completed embedding the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and addressed the specific public sector equality duties, including publishing a wider range of equality information, establishing new outcome-focused equality objectives, and revising our equality scheme to communicate our arrangements to our students, our staff and all our other stakeholders.

‘OU has the happiest students in Britain’²

We have also completed a significant realignment of our curriculum to one that is more qualifications-focused, while continuing to ensure that our offer is flexible, affordable and of a very high quality. The OU continues to have the lowest undergraduate fees in England and has been ranked as the university with the highest satisfaction in the National Students’ Survey 2012.

² Headline from The Independent, 28 September 2012, available online at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/higher/open-university-has-the-happiest-students-in-britain-8189704.html>

Our strategy

Our strategy is to secure the mission by delivering an outstanding student experience and enhancing the capabilities of the University. Equality and diversity are key enablers for the successful delivery of our strategy and we have articulated this relationship more clearly than ever before, so that all our stakeholders can understand the relationship between an inclusive institution and our future success.

We need to be responsive to the diversity of our students:

- By providing a high quality **enquirer experience**, we will attract increasing numbers of students from diverse backgrounds.
- By responding positively to individual needs and circumstances and by addressing barriers to success, we will create a **study experience** that maximise students’ chances of achieving their study goals.
- By promoting diversity and inclusion through open media, we will support individuals to make **journeys from informal to formal learning**.

We need to harness the collective capabilities of our increasingly diverse workforce:

- By leading **research and scholarship** in social justice and inclusion, we will achieve greater external recognition and impact.
- By promoting equality through all our people processes, and drawing on the creativity, skills and experience of all of our workforce, we will support **people and culture** that enables us to deliver high performance.
- By embedding accessibility in procurement and systems development, we will support the development of flexible, integrated and robust **systems**.
- By considering different needs and circumstances from the outset, we will reduce costs and support **financial sustainability**.

Introduction

Our 2012 annual report

We have developed a new format for our annual report this year, providing information about significant achievements and developments, rather than attempting to provide comprehensive coverage of every aspect of equality that we are working on. We hope that this new style will make for a more engaging read.

We continue to take a two-pronged approach to advancing equality at the OU:

- By distributing responsibility for mainstreaming equality across all functions and departments, which is implemented through our annual business planning process
- By developing 'positive action' initiatives – activities that are driven from the centre, by the Equality and Diversity Management Group and Team, and increasingly by project teams established to implement our new equality objectives.

This report provides some insight to our work across both approaches.

The section on **managing and mainstreaming equality** provides detail of new structural arrangements for strengthening the management of equality at the OU, and details about the development and implementation of our revised equality scheme and equality objectives for the period 2012 to 2016.

The **in-brief** section provides insights about a wide range of projects and activities distributed across all functions and locations of the University.

We have included two **in-depth** sections, one on Carers as students, and one on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality, to highlight the work we are doing to advance equality and promote good relations in these areas. In future years, we intend to look in-depth at other characteristics and circumstances.

We have included three **feature sections**, to tell you about significant activities we are working on to advance equality:

- Our Securing Greater Accessibility project, which is reducing barriers to success for disabled students,
- Our Aspire Leadership Programme, which is enhancing and utilising the capabilities of our ethnic minority and disabled staff, and
- Our work to proactively consider individual personal circumstances in the selection of academic staff for the national Research Excellence Framework.

Alongside this report, we have published a comprehensive set of equality monitoring trend data which are available on our website³.

In future years, we will also publish information about our progress towards the achievement of our objectives for 2012-2016.

Looking ahead

It is customary in the University's equality and diversity annual report to reserve a little space to looking forward.

Of greatest significance is our commitment to implementing our equality objectives over the next four years, and to ensure we have effective mechanisms for tracking and reporting performance, and managing risks.

It will also be important not to ignore emerging issues, and the Equality and Diversity Management Group will have a key role to play.

Whatever the future holds, it is certain that the higher education environment will continue to change at a rapid pace. It is also certain that The Open University will continue to be inclusive, innovative and responsive and our active commitment to equality and diversity will support us in doing so.

Tony O'Shea-Poon
Head of Equality and Diversity

³ Monitoring reports for 2012 were published in October 2012, and are available at: http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p7_1.shtml

In brief

No set retirement age

Human Resources have reviewed and implemented a revised retirement policy. Since 1 October 2011 there has been no set contractual retirement age and internal staff and Associate Lecturers are able to choose when they stop working (except where the contract is for a fixed term).

The Universities Superannuation Scheme has also reviewed retirement arrangements and a flexible retirement scheme has been implemented.

Increase in younger students

In October 2011, *Will Swann, Director, Students*, appeared on BBC Radio 4's *You & Yours* programme to discuss the OU's steady increase in younger students and consider why this group may be looking at alternatives to 'brick' universities.

Will contextualised the increase in younger students and explained more about what the OU offers, highlighting the diversity of the University's student body. He also reinforced the point that employers view OU students very positively, recognising their skills and commitment. An OU student was interviewed and cited flexibility and cost among the main reasons why she chose to turn down a place at a traditional University and opted for the OU instead.

Gerontology at HSC

The *Faculty of Health and Social Care* continues to be at the forefront of gerontology in the UK and internationally.



Projects include:

- Transitions in Kitchen Living – this project is building up a picture of the experiences of older kitchen users, which will be used to improve guidance on kitchen design.
- The last refuge revisited – researchers found residential care homes for older people that are run by the voluntary sector offer a better overall standard of care than public or privately run homes. The resulting book *Residential Care Transformed: Revisiting 'The Last Refuge'* was awarded the 2011 inaugural Peter Townsend Policy Press prize.
- Older people and technological inclusion – this research is looking at ways of understanding older people's relationships with technologies to discover better methods of inclusion.

Maths master classes

The *Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology (MCT)* organises mathematics master classes in collaboration with the Royal Institution. At present, there are two series of six classes per year, one series at Bletchley Park, the other at Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry. This year they plan to start a third series in Bradford with enthusiastic year 9 school pupils (about age 14) as the target audience.

STEM careers

The *Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology* is participating in the 'Adult returner journeys through Higher Education to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers' project in the South-West.

This project seeks to provide exemplars of mature adult returners, many with non-standard qualifications, who have successfully graduated in STEM subjects at South West universities and progressed onto STEM-related careers.



Supporting reasonable adjustments

Estates have introduced new procedures to improve communication following requests from staff for reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Project managers and staff are kept informed about the actions being taken.

Working with *Occupational Health*, a procedure has been developed to ensure that reasonable accessibility requests can be met.

OpenLearn achieves W3C

The OU's OpenLearn website has achieved W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) standards. Technical advice was sought from internal and external specialists around site usability and accessibility.

Following user testing, changes have been made to improve accessibility for people using screen readers and the improvements have resulted in a more user friendly experience for all.

Policy and guidelines on commissioning accessible content is now available on the intranet.

Library student induction video

A student induction video outlining resources and services provided by *Library Services* was produced in 2011-12. Services for disabled students were outlined in the video.

Sculpture and Sport

An exhibition in the *OU Library* titled 'Sculpture and Sport - a celebration for 2012', which ran from mid-January and throughout February was arranged by the *Estates* events team in association with Art of Edge.

The exhibition celebrated the success of people with disabilities and their outstanding achievements in the world of sport via the Paralympic movement. Sculptures from a range of materials explored the skill and dedication of athletes.



Profits from the sale of sculptures are being used to support disadvantaged and disabled young people through the Youth Sport Trust and Paralympics GB

Synthetic voice for DAISY

Student Services' Disability Resources Team in collaboration with the University's material production area (*Learning & Teaching Solutions*), produced synthetic voiced DAISY digital talking books as new accessible alternative format provision for 21 modules.

Testing to support accessible OU courses

The *Institute of Educational Technology (IET)* continued to support the delivery of accessible OU courses and student-facing systems, through a number of user evaluations including the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

At the same time IET has advised on new web-based tools in use by module teams, including 'Annotate' and 'Qualifications Online'.

Inclusive learning in FE and HE

A major conference 'Inclusive Learning in Further and Higher Education' was held at the OU headquarters in Milton Keynes in February 2012.

This conference was organised jointly by the OU, the Learning & Skills Improvement Service and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education - three organisations with an understanding, expertise and commitment to inclusive high quality education for disabled learners.

The conference recognised progress made in the past 15 years, and focused on the innovations and opportunities that will lead to further mainstreaming of inclusive learning.

In brief

Inflammatory Arthritis

A self-study course aimed at improving the care of patients with inflammatory arthritis was launched in February 2012.

'Inflammatory Arthritis a multidisciplinary approach' was created by the *Business Development Unit (BDU)* with a curriculum grant from Pfizer Ltd and reflects the diversity of people who work in health care roles in the UK.

The 50 hours of online interactive learning is aimed at health care professionals, people living with inflammatory arthritis and their carers.



New Access Bus

Student Services welcomed a new Access Bus at its official launch in November 2011. The bus provides an outreach service to give students an opportunity to assess equipment and facilities.

FBL supports RNIB

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) is disseminating Figure-Description Guidelines developed by the OU's *Faculty of Business and Law*.

Supporting students with mental health difficulties

A training package for Associate Lecturers (ALs) which focuses on working with students with mental health difficulties has been developed by *Student Services* and was launched in 2011. The package is accompanied by a web resource which ALs can access via the TutorHome intranet portal.

Openings videos get BSL in-vision signing

The access curriculum modules, Openings, have been revamped to include in-vision signing on all module video material. For students who use BSL as their first language, the first steps into higher education study with the OU are more accessible than before.

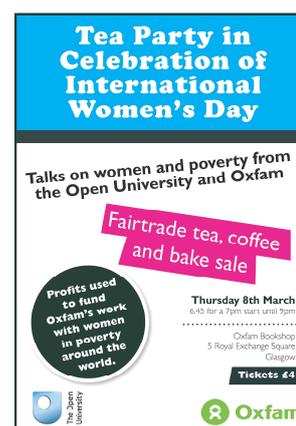
OU in Wales' partnership pilot wins award

The OU in Wales developed a partnership pilot in the Merthyr area with Hafal, a national mental health charity working with individuals recovering from serious mental illness and their families.

In May 2011 the Hafal group won the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) Dysgu Cymru Adult Learner Community Action Group of the year Award.

Autism Speaks

The OU has been awarded almost \$200,000 from Autism Speaks, one of the world's largest autism science and advocacy organisations, to conduct a two-year autism research project in Ethiopia. Led by Dr Rosa Hoekstra (*Faculty of Science*), a team of researchers from the OU and Ethiopia will collaborate in this initiative which intends to raise awareness around mental health issues and about autism in particular.



International Women's Day

The OU marked International Women's Day (IWD) in March, which included:

- Audio downloads about Women in Science, Women in Law and 'Mompreneurs' - mothers who set up businesses.
- Podcasts on Women in Science on OpenLearn.
- Themed International Women's Day content across Platform.
- A tea party in Glasgow in collaboration with Oxfam.

Equal pay review

Human Resources (HR) completed an equal pay review for gender and are taking several actions forward through a new equality objective, including:

- Understanding best practice in addressing the gender pay gap.
- Responding to the identified barriers to progression of women to senior roles.
- Considering changes to procedures and guidelines in relation to recruitment and selection, promotions, discretionary increments, career breaks and maternity leave.
- Increase in pay transparency.



Athena SWAN

The University has become a member of Athena SWAN, a charter which promotes the academic careers of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subject areas. A self-assessment team is working towards submission of evidence for the Bronze university-level award, with a view to working towards departmental silver awards in 2013.

Skirting Science

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology (MCT) staff in the South West participated in 'Skirting Science' a one day event for 250 girls from North Somerset that aimed to inspire the next generation of female scientists, and to dispel misconceptions about science careers. Interactive workshops were hosted by two Staff Tutors on 'Code Busters' and on Robotics.

WISE award for TESSA

The *International Development Office's* Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) project has received global recognition with an award from The World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE).

TESSA is an OU-led partnership project working to increase the number of skilled teachers in African schools, using online open educational resources to support school-based teacher education and training.

The project was one of six winners, chosen from hundreds of entrants from all regions of the world, and was praised by the judging panel for "outstanding quality and...exceptional impact".

In 2009 TESSA was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for world-class excellence in higher and further education.

TESSA's Access to Scholarship programme delivers for women

The TESSA Access to Teaching Scholarship programme in Malawi was named one of the 50 Ideas and Solutions Improving the Lives of Girls and Women Worldwide, by the global advocacy organisation 'Women Deliver'.



HEAT in the news

The 13 *Health Education and Training* (HEAT) modules being delivered in Ethiopia were highlighted in the newsletter of the African Health Open Educational Resources (OER) Network. The newsletter reaches out to OER creators across Africa to share new developments.

Ethnicity and attainment action plan

Progress on the University's ethnicity and attainment action plan was reported to the *Widening Participation Management Group* in January 2012. Building on OU research, the main emphasis of the plan was in addressing the academic language development needs of students through curriculum development and provision of tutor feedback.

In brief

Beginners Welsh

A dual marketing strategy was adopted for the promotion of Beginners Welsh which saw *Marketing* exceed the target with 160 student registrations.

Within Wales, the module was promoted through sponsoring the 'Welsh learner of the Year Award' at the National Eisteddfod, and promoting the course in a Summer Festivals campaign.

The module was also promoted successfully outside of Wales.



Black women's health and wellbeing in the UK: Resistance, Resilience and Renewal

This seminar was organised by the OU's Health Promotion and Public Health Research Group and the Black Researchers Group and held in London. Presentations covered a range of issues, including the politics of black women's health, the impact of unsocial hours on family life, and impact on the career choices of the children of health professionals.

The Story of Wales

The OU/BBC series *The Story of Wales*, presented by Huw Edwards was rated by Welsh audiences as their favourite BBC TV series of 2012, following transmission in February and March 2012. The series attracted an average of 300,000 viewers per episode. Its success is credited with doubling the student headcount on the spring 2012 presentation of the OU's Welsh history course.

Divine Women

The new OU/BBC co-production of *Divine Women* was first broadcast in April 2012 on BBC2 and repeated in May/June on BBC1. It traces the hidden, and often controversial, history of women in religion.

The new three-part series looks at how, from the dawn of time, humans have felt the need to worship, to find a purpose and bring a shape to human existence. Women have always been at the heart of our understanding of the divine but historian Bettany Hughes argues that this part of our history has often been ignored, buried away.

To accompany the series, the OU issued a booklet that explored five controversial areas around goddesses and women in religion and invited people to vote and add their comments on women in religion on a dedicated discussion hub.

Photo ID code of practice

Estates have developed and implemented the University's first Photographic Identification Code of Practice (CoP). The religious and cultural needs of staff, students, contractors and visitors were actively taken these into account in developing the CoP so that it allows for identity to be verified in a way that is sensitive to religious and cultural customs.

Monitoring of religion or belief and sexual orientation introduced for Council members

The University is systematically improving its equality monitoring data through the implementation of a new equality objective. Questions on religion and sexual orientation have previously been included in the staff survey. New staff and student questions have now been agreed and are being implemented through OU staff recruitment and student registration systems. In the meantime, monitoring of religion or belief and sexual orientation has been introduced for the first time for members of the Council, the University's governing body. For further details see the Governance annual monitoring report on the OU's equality and diversity public website.

Managing & mainstreaming

New equality objectives 2012 – 2016 published

The University published specific and measurable outcome-focused equality objectives in April 2012. The objectives were published following an extensive involvement and consultation process and represent our key equality priorities for the next four years.

Using evidence to inform objectives

The Equality and Diversity Team carried out an audit of inequalities between April and June 2011, involving an extensive analysis of quantitative and qualitative information across a wide range of indicators for our students and staff. Much of the data used in the audit is published in monitoring reports, part of our 2011 equality and diversity annual report.



At the equality and diversity Annual Development Meeting in June 2011, priorities were agreed based on the findings of the audit. The objectives were shaped further by an advisory group which included

representatives from staff and student groups covering a wide range of individual characteristics. A public consultation was held between December 2011 and February 2012, with communications sent to students and alumni, staff, partner organisations, and equality-related organisations.

The equality objectives are published at: http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p8_1.shtml.

Senior Accountable Executives to provide strategic lead

Each of our nine equality objectives is championed by a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive and led by a Senior Accountable Executive (SAE), providing strategic ownership and leadership. This model of leadership is the same as that used for all of the University's strategic priorities, ensuring that equality objectives are managed with the same rigour as other priorities. The SAEs are supported by nominated members of the Equality and Diversity Management Group.

Dr Christina Lloyd, Director, Teaching and Learner Support, explains her role:

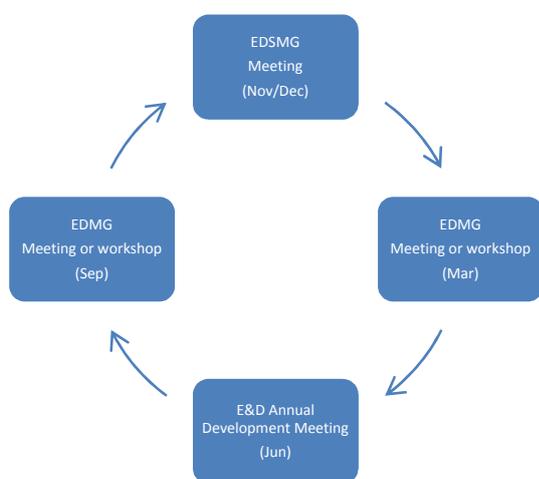
"I am the Senior Accountable Executive for the University's objective to reduce the ethnicity attainment gap for our students. To date we have established a strong steering group, and are now developing a project to raise tutor and student expectations. We have joined forces with other institutions through a Higher Education Academy structured programme that will help us evaluate impact and share learning across the sector, where this inequality is prevalent. The work will require deep thinking and innovation if we are to make a difference. I am determined that we will learn more about successful ways to raise attainment."



Managing & mainstreaming

Equality management strengthened

The Equality and Diversity Management Group is responsible for providing leadership in the development and implementation of equality strategy, ensuring institutional compliance and promoting best practice across the institution.



Following an effectiveness review carried out in 2011/12, some changes are being made to strengthen the group and clarify its relationship to the newly appointed Senior Accountable Executives.

A new Equality and Diversity Strategic Management Group (EDSMG) will be created, chaired by the University Secretary, and will meet annually to agree strategy and priorities, and manage risks.

The existing Equality and Diversity Management Group will now meet twice each year and continue to develop and implement policy, respond to emerging issues, and promote innovative practice. All parties will come together for the important annual development meeting to review performance and progress.

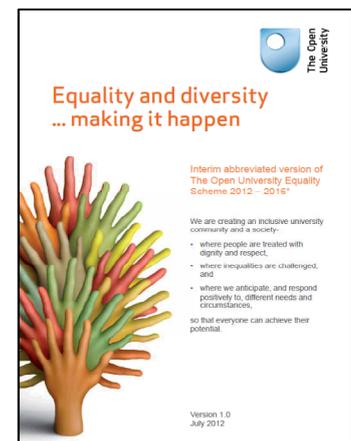
New Equality Scheme published

Following a development period of more than twelve months, the University has published a revised Equality Scheme.

The scheme builds on our previous arrangements and much of these remain unchanged. However, the following are noteworthy changes:

- Rather than managing two schemes, we now have a single scheme covering Great Britain and Northern Ireland⁴.
- There are now eleven different characteristics to be considered across all our functions.
- The responsibilities for students and different staff groups are now more clearly defined.
- The equality staff learning and development programme is more clearly articulated.

Our vision of a fair and just society and our equality principles remain at the heart of the scheme, and we continue to emphasise the importance of equality analysis, involvement and monitoring, both at institutional and departmental levels.



⁴ The scheme is currently published as an interim version at http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p8_1.shtml. Until such time as we have received approval from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, our current scheme for Northern Ireland is the 2003 version published at: http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p8_2.shtml.

Managing & mainstreaming

Mainstreaming across the OU

In addition to our development work to tackle specific inequalities, we continue to work to mainstream equality in core processes, so that every part of the business gives due regard to relevant issues at the most appropriate time, and in the most appropriate place. Here are some examples of the work that different departments have carried out in the past year to mainstream equality further:

The Strategy Office



The Strategy Office has embedded the requirement for equality analysis (equality impact assessment)

within the main business planning process. Departments across the University now determine which business changes are equality relevant at the start of the year, and flag these for equality analysis to be carried out at the most appropriate time in the year, and identify who will take responsibility for the process.

Human Resources



Following the introduction of the Equality Act 2010, Human Resources has reviewed a wide range of staff learning

and development resources and updated these to reflect the new legislation. The review was an opportunity to strengthen discussion of equality in a number of mainstream learning programmes.

Finance

The Finance department has updated the procurement process, so that providers of goods and services are now required to

confirm compliance with equality law, disclose information about equality-related legal proceedings and subscribe to the University's equality vision and principles. A general equality condition is now included in all contracts and guidance has been developed for staff with responsibility for creating and approving contracts to determine which contracts should have more specific equality-related award criteria and conditions.



Development Office

One of the functions of the Development Office is to encourage and manage donations and legacies to support the University's access and success strategy, and international development work. Donors

occasionally ask for funds to be restricted to particular groups of students, and the office has now introduced a systematic assessment and recording of information on restrictions to ensure that these are lawful.



Aspire~ is inspiring

The Aspire~ leadership mentoring and development programme



Aspire~ is a leadership mentoring programme for ethnic minority and disabled staff, and was developed as a pilot in 2011, initially for ethnic minority staff, under the wider People and Culture programme, one of the University's strategic priorities. It is sponsored by the Director of Human Resources and championed by the Vice-Chancellor.

The programme was developed in response to monitoring and staff survey findings that showed some staff groups had lower levels of job satisfaction, had a higher intention to leave the University and felt excluded from influential networks. This was seen as a significant threat to the University's equality and business strategies.

Components of the programme

As a mentee, participants have access to a senior member of staff that they meet monthly for nine months in a mentoring partnership arrangement. The programme co-ordinator supports individuals to develop personal development plans and review progress and challenges through a series of peer workshops and one-to-one surgery sessions when required. Networking lunches provide an opportunity for participants to 'rub shoulders' with senior leaders they might not normally encounter.



Impact of Aspire~ and Aspire~^{Plus}

Evaluation of the pilot showed that 100% of participants felt the time they invested was definitely worthwhile. Mentees expressed greater confidence in themselves and in the University. All mentors wanted to continue mentoring in the second year.

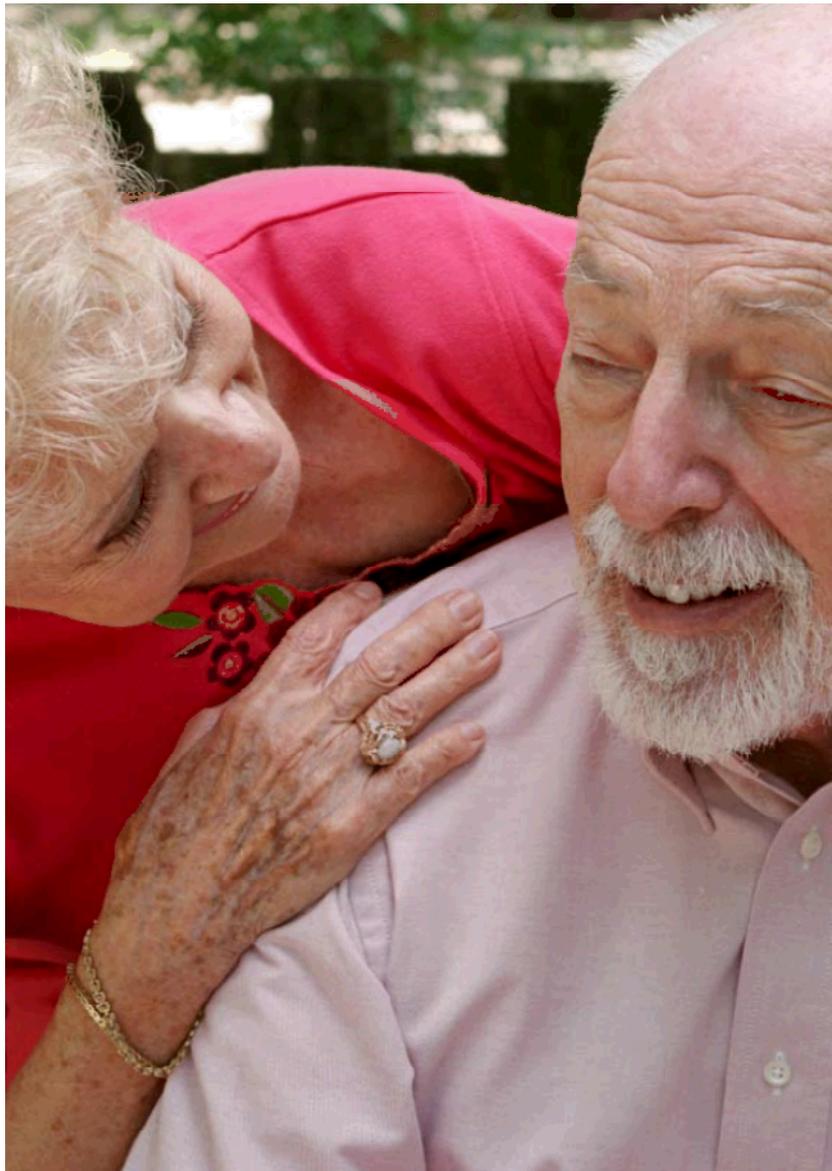
Following the success of the pilot, the programme was extended to disabled staff and the number of places increased to 20 each year.

A second stage development programme, Aspire~^{Plus}, was launched in 2012, consisting of more advanced leadership workshops, buddying partnerships and opportunities for work shadowing placements in other departments.

The programme was nominated for a national Race for Opportunity Awards in 2012 in recognition of its impact and explicit relationship to the business strategy.

In depth...

Carers as students



“I’m a wife, mum and a carer...I’m a student now too...”

Kim Crocombe, Wrexham

Carers as students

Advancing equality for carers

Carers are a priority in our new access and success strategy



Following our successful student carers' conference in May 2011, which contextualised challenges faced by carers within the changing political and higher education environment, the OU continues to focus attention on providing information, learning support and outreach to open up opportunities for carers to higher education.

Carers are now identified as one of five priority groups in our Widening Access and Success Strategy 2012-15. Over the next few years we intend to increase our understanding of the representation and needs of carers in our student population, and address barriers to access and success.

Resources for carers

Our updated 'Studying While You Care' website provides study advice, information about support provided by the OU, and useful links to additional advice about studying and financial support. Visit the website at:

<http://www8.open.ac.uk/study/explained/is-ou-study-right-for-me/studying-while-you-care>

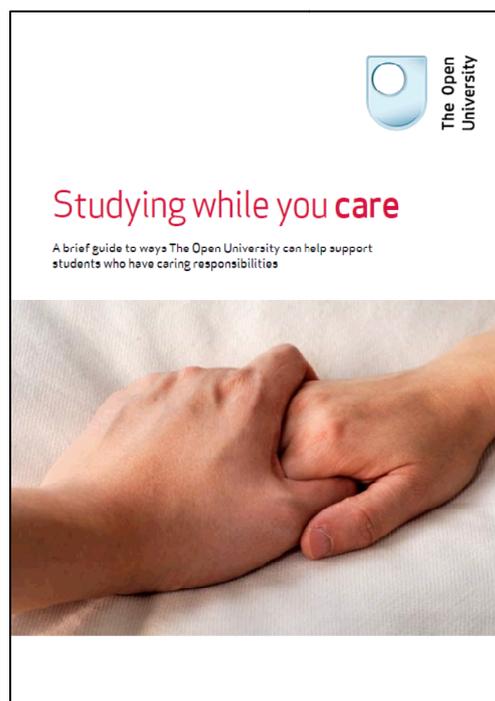
Download our 'Studying while you care' booklet at:

<http://www8.open.ac.uk/study/explained/files/explained/file/ecms-web-content/saou-studying-while-you-care.pdf>

Identifying carers

Q. Are you currently the main or sole unpaid carer for a dependent elderly person, or a disabled person, or a person with a long-term illness of 12 months or more (including a child)?

An important next step for our strategy is to be able to identify which of our students are carers. As with other areas of equality monitoring, we will ask students to self-declare when they register to study with us. In consultation with students and national care organisations, we have now agreed the question that we will start asking our students from 2012/13. The information will be used to measure access and success and can be used to tell students about information and resources available to them.



Carers as students

OU wins award for providing access to education for carers



The OU in Wales was the overall winner at the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Awards 2012⁵, for the 'Access to Education for Carers Project'. The year-long project, funded by the Waterloo Foundation⁶, aimed to raise aspirations and opportunities for carers to study at higher education level.

The provision of a bursary, and an active outreach programme with carers' groups in Wales, allowed 30 carers to enter formal accredited study programmes. The success of the project has meant the Waterloo Foundation providing funding for a further two years to ensure the activities developed can be embedded for the future.

"We have been running a number of courses...including IT, Welsh, Employability, CV writing, Art and French taster sessions and digital photography. The Open University offers opportunities to progress from these courses into higher education and many of the carers we are working with are keen to develop themselves and enhance their job opportunities for the future."

Simone Percy, NEWCIS, Denbighshire

Promoting understanding and good relations

Learning about carers educational needs and aspirations

With funding from the Scottish Funding Council's Knowledge Exchange Scheme, the OU in Scotland completed a collaborative research project with The Princess Royal Trust for Carers that aimed to provide an informed picture of the learning and training needs of staff working in care centres across Scotland. Sixteen centres participated in the study which identified a wide range of formal and informal training already available to staff, and the benefits of making better use of distance learning opportunities to minimise time management issues and reach rural locations. The development of workplace training programmes leading to recognised qualifications for staff is a key recommendation of the research project.



Photo courtesy of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

⁵ The UALL Awards website is at <http://www.uall.ac.uk/uall-awards-2012>

⁶ The Waterloo Foundation website is at <http://www.waterloofoundation.org.uk>

Carers as students

Research at the OU



“Care robots for the supermarket shelf”

The literature on the development of assistive robots is dominated by technological papers with little consideration of how such devices might be commercialised for a mass market at a price that is affordable for older people and their families. A journal article by Professor Tim Blackman⁷ discusses the potential of care robots, not as expensive and high-tech, or as dehumanising and ethically suspect, but as a useful and above all marketable addition to products that can appeal to older people and their families as shoppers for new types of consumer goods.

“Caring after death”

In her new book chapter ‘Caring after death: issues of embodiment and relationality’, Dr Jane McCarthy⁸ discusses the notion of care beyond death, despite the apparent loss of the other. She considers the bodies of the living and the way that grief and loss can be experienced as physical pain, examining how the well-being of the carer is bound up with that of the person they care for.



Study at the OU

Some of our current modules available to study...

Module name	Credits (A full-time year is normally 120 credits)	OU Stage
Understanding health	15	1
An introduction to health and social care	60	1
Foundations for social work practice	60	1
Dementia care	30	2
Death and dying	30	2
Adult health, social care and wellbeing	60	2
Working with children, young people and families	60	2
Adulthood, ageing and the life course	60	3

⁷ Tim Blackman is Pro-Vice Chancellor, Research and Scholarship. The article is available for free at Open Research Online, <http://oro.open.ac.uk/32902/2/2705D0A.pdf>

⁸ Jane McCarthy is Reader in Family Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences and part of the University's Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance. The article is available for free at Open Research Online, http://oro.open.ac.uk/32845/3/Care_Chapter_15_Jane.pdf

Carers as students

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Caring: A Family Affair

Introductory level, 8 hours

This unit explores the care that is needed at all stages of life. Care in the family is the focus because the overwhelming majority of care, including health care, is supplied in families, much of it in private, much of it unnoticed and unremarked upon. The meaning of care and 'informal carer' are explored.



The Adur Carers Project

Intermediate level, 1 hour

This unit takes a case study approach, featuring a project that supports carers in the Adur area of West Sussex. Two audio programmes, made with carers, examine the ways people talk about care and the meanings they give to what they do.

“The course fitted in nicely around my family life and Tom’s needs. It was not too demanding on my time, so if I missed studying one week, I knew I could catch up the next. It has given me the confidence to go further... So it is possible to move on, do something for me and still care for Tom.”

Kirsty

Securing Greater Accessibility

About SeGA

The Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) plan is the outcome from a workshop held in April 2009, when it was agreed that accessibility actions and information must be properly embedded in all of the University's relevant policy, processes and procedures.

The second year of the SeGA implementation plan was a period of change with many achievements and challenges that culminated in the development of a new strategy that moved from implementation to business as usual and future plans.

Accessibility Specialists

An Accessibility Specialists Group has been created which includes eight Associate Deans and sixteen faculty-elected accessibility specialists. This group is now well established within faculties and also includes staff from the Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP).

Support for specialists

A series of monthly workshops have taken place since October 2011 and throughout 2012 with accessibility specialists and Associate Deans encouraged to attend these and related events, such as:

- A Learning and Teaching Solutions (LTS) road-show.
- The annual disabled students' conference organised by Disabled Student Services.
- Institute of Educational Technology (IET) and Library accessibility services.
- The role of Disabled Student Services in supporting disabled students.

Accessibility Referrals Panel

An Accessibility Referrals Panel (ARP) has been established and meets monthly to make final recommendations for complex unresolved requests for reasonable adjustments covering platform development, module production and presentation. The ARP have a key role in delivering the SeGA plan, and have expertise in technical accessibility, reasonable adjustments and equality law.

Accessibility Practitioners Group

Since July 2011 the Accessibility Practitioners Group (APG) has met three times each year and acts as a forum for the dissemination and promotion of accessibility good practice.



Accessibility hub

As the original project draws to a close, the Institute of Educational Technology is investigating the development of an Accessibility Hub - a multi-unit structure that would tie together different strands of activity into a coherent whole for the benefit of students. Strands may include academic, applied and policy research, delivery of some resources and services to students, and specialist advice services to staff.

In depth...

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality



Photo by Benson Kua

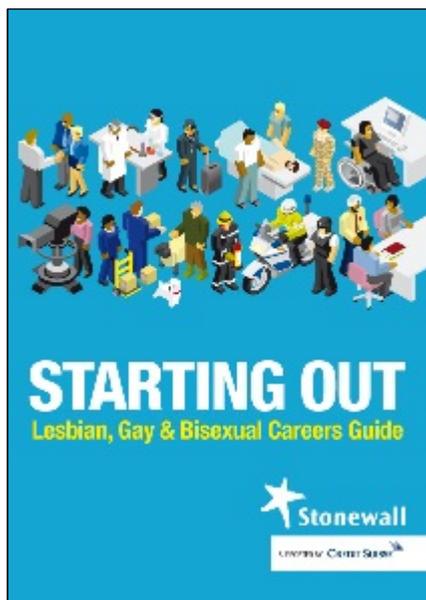
“As a gay student, I’ve not encountered any overt discrimination...service provision and policies seem to be broadly welcoming.”

OU Student, responding to public consultation on the University’s equality scheme

LGB & T Equality

Advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

Working with Stonewall



The Open University is a Stonewall Diversity Champion⁹. We recognise that people perform better when they can be themselves. Being a member of the programme gives us access to benchmarking, seminars and one-to-one advice from the Stonewall Workplace team when we need it.

Every year, we feature in 'Starting Out'¹⁰, Stonewall's lesbian, gay and bisexual careers guide.

Our provision for students is assessed independently and reported on the Stonewall Uni Guide website¹¹.

⁹ Further information about the Diversity Champions programme is available at: http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_work/diversity_champions_programme/default.asp.

¹⁰ The Starting Out guide is published online at: <http://www.startingoutguide.org.uk/>.

¹¹ See our performance for lesbian, gay and bisexual students on the Uni Guide website at: <http://www.gaybydegree.org.uk/index.php?dir=university&task=view-detail&unild=86>.

Monitoring sexual orientation and gender identity

Some people ask why we need to monitor sexual orientation. Sexuality is often claimed to be an entirely private matter. Despite major advances in legal protection and social acceptance, sexual orientation discrimination and exclusion is still a prevalent force in wider society. At The Open University, we want to be certain that staff and students do not experience exclusion because they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Information from this new monitoring question will help us to verify that outcomes such as staff promotions and student attainment are not disproportionate¹². In addition to staff and student monitoring, this year we also introduced sexual orientation monitoring for the University Council for the first time.

Q. Please describe your sexual orientation

My sexual orientation is:

- Towards people of a different sex (straight)
- Towards women of the same sex (lesbian)
- Towards men of the same sex (gay)
- Towards people of both sexes (bisexual)
- Other (e.g. asexual)
- I prefer not to say

We have decided not to introduce monitoring for gender identity (transgender). We have a duty to protect the privacy of individuals who have fully transitioned to a new gender and we will not retain any records relating to gender change. Our approach to understanding and addressing transgender equality is to rely on more qualitative information through consultation and research.

¹² Further information about declaring sensitive personal information and how we protect this data is available on our website at: http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p6_3.shtml.

LGB & T Equality

Networks and Clubs

The OU has an LGBT social club for staff and postgraduate research students and an LGBT staff network for campaigning and workplace engagement issues. The social club holds monthly lunchtime gatherings and occasional social events throughout the year. The OU Students Association has an established LGBT Forum¹³, run by students for students.

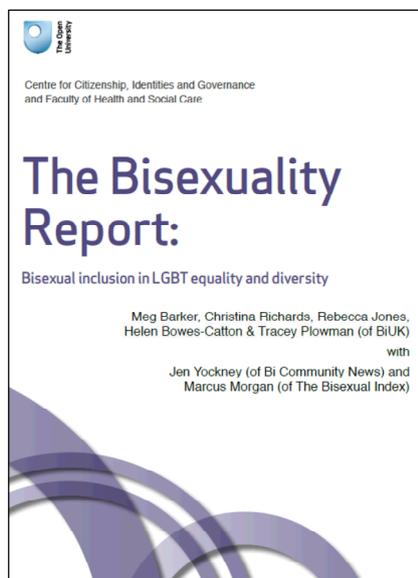


OU Students
Association

Transgender policy and guidance

The Equality, Diversity and Information Rights Team are currently working with a number of other offices in the University and with support from the Gender Identity Research and Education Society to develop comprehensive policy and guidance that will ensure consistent and professional support for transgender staff and students. Policies have been approved and detailed guidance is in development. The University already has guidance and operational procedures in place, but this work is part of our stated equality objective to provide greater clarity and transparency for staff and students about the services and support they can expect to receive in relation to different needs and circumstances.

Promoting understanding and good relations



The Bisexuality Report

The Bisexuality Report¹⁴, the first of its kind in the UK and the product of research led by Dr Meg Barker¹⁵, senior lecturer in Psychology, addresses the issue of bisexual inclusion. It was launched in February 2012 at the 2012 BiUK conference, in collaboration with the Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance, and the Faculty of Health and Social Care at The Open University. The report summarises national and international evidence and draws out recommendations for future bisexual inclusion in many settings.

Dr Barker said “Bisexual people often face prejudice from within lesbian and gay groups as well as heterosexual communities. They are invisible – not represented in mainstream media, policy, and legislation or within lesbian and gay communities. Government and communities need to single out bisexual people as a separate group in order to address this equality gap.”

¹³ The OU Students Association Forum is available to registered students at:

<http://learn.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/view.php?id=560970> .

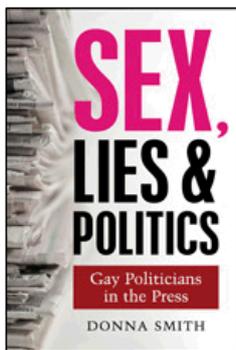
¹⁴ A copy of the report and a short video introduction to its findings is available at <http://www8.open.ac.uk/platform/news-and-features/the-bisexuality-report-%E2%80%93-the-first-its-kind-in-the-uk-%E2%80%93-published>

¹⁵ Read more about Dr Meg Barker and her work at http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/staff/people-profile.php?name=Meg_Barker

LGB & T Equality

Research at the OU

“Sex, Lies and Politics: Gay Politicians in the Press”¹⁶



Changing attitudes towards gay politicians is the subject of a newly published book by Donna Smith, Senior Faculty Manager, Faculty of Social Sciences. The book analyses the media coverage of gay politicians and those caught up in gay scandals over the

past 50 years. Sensationalism and scandal are key issues in the text, but the book is a serious academic study which examines issues such as the construction of identity and the changing line between private and public life.

“Qualitative Research on LGBT-Parent Families”¹⁷



In this book chapter, Jacqui Gabb argues that there is a deep division between sexuality studies and studies of family life, a separateness which perpetuates gaps in knowledge. In her work,

she focuses attention on the lived experience of same-sex parent families and the impact of parents' sexuality on children's emotional wellbeing and development. By bringing the two fields of sexuality and family studies together, Gabb sheds new light on everyday practices of 'family sexuality'.

“I didn't know that I could feel this relaxed in my body”¹⁸

Research on bisexuality has tended to use discourse analysis to explore bisexual people's articulations of identity. In this book chapter, Helen Bowes-Catton and colleagues take a different approach, using visual methods to research bisexual people's embodied experience of identity and space. They present preliminary results of the application of research methods such as modelling and photography with the aim of understanding how bisexual identities are produced in everyday life.



“The limits of democracy: transgender sex work and citizenship”¹⁹

During 1998, Buenos Aires witnessed a singular event: in the context of a broad legal renewal, street sex work was decriminalized.

However, the regulation of sex work continues to be the object of an intense political struggle and the current situation is still far from achieving a fair agreement for sex workers. In this journal article, Leticia Sabsay analyses the history of this legal norm and shows how the regulation of sex work creates consequences for the definition and configuration of public city spaces.



¹⁶ For information on purchasing the book and to watch a video interview with Donna Smith, visit the OU Platform website at: <http://www8.open.ac.uk/platform/news-and-features/video-ou-phd-puts-sex-lies-and-politics-under-the-microscope-new-book> .

¹⁷ Jacqui Gabb is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy. Further information about the book chapter is available at Open Research Online, <http://oro.open.ac.uk/30840/> .

¹⁸ Helen Bowes-Catton is Associate Lecturer and PhD student in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Further information about the book chapter is available at Open Research Online, <http://oro.open.ac.uk/29256/> .

¹⁹ Leticia Sabsay is a Research Associate in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Further information about the journal article is available at Open Research Online, <http://oro.open.ac.uk/30798/> .

LGB & T Equality

Study at the OU²⁰

Some of our current modules available to study...

Module name	Credits (A full-time year is normally 120 credits)	OU Level
Understanding children and young people (Y176)	15	1
The uses of Social Sciences (DD206)	60	2
Adult health, social care and wellbeing (K217)	60	2
Personal lives and social policy (DD305)	60	3
20 th century literature: texts and debates (A300)	60	3
Living political ideas (DD306)	60	3

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Identity in question

Introductory level, 12 hours

Why is identity important and how are identities formed? This unit looks at the many different ways in which identity can be categorised. By examining the requirements of the state, how a child views gender, and the importance of race and place of birth, you will start to understand how each individual can have more than one identity.



Sexuality, parenthood and population

Advanced level, 10 hours

Sexuality and parenthood encompass some of the most ordinary and yet most profound experiences that life has to offer. In this unit, we look at how attitudes to parenthood and sexuality and the links between the two have changed.

“I’ve never worked anywhere so supportive and so open. The Open University really makes you feel valued; not just for your work but for the person you are...”

Sam Dick, Communications and Promotions Officer

²⁰ To view all OU modules, and find out which qualifications they are linked to, visit Study at the OU at: <http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/>

Preparing for the REF 2014

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014

The REF is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. It will be completed in 2014 by the four UK higher education funding bodies, and is managed by a REF team based at the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Who is involved?

The University seeks to include in its REF2014 submissions, the work of all eligible staff who are conducting research in an appropriate field at an appropriate level, including those whose volume of research outputs has been limited for reasons relating to personal circumstances.

An Institutional Research Review Team (IRRT) chaired by Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality) has been set up to oversee the REF process. A number of other bodies are involved in REF2014 preparations including an OU REF Equality Panel.

Mock REF

During 2012, the OU completed a Mock REF selection, submission and review process. From the outset, in preparing policies and procedures for selecting staff for the REF, the impact of their application has been analysed to assess whether there was likely to be any differential impact on particular groups of academics or researchers. This has included analysis of data and consultation with colleagues from across the University.

Staff eligible to be included in the Mock REF were invited to submit information about circumstances that could affect their ability to produce the required volume of research outputs. This information was considered by an independent Equality Panel which made a judgement about whether the circumstances of each individual met the criteria for a reduction in the number of outputs required.



All Unit of Assessment (UoA) Panel members and members of IRRT participated in equality and diversity training in preparation for their work on the Mock REF. Members of the Equality Panel undertook enhanced equality training.

Preparations for REF2014

The Code of Practice for the REF 2014, based on the one developed for the Mock, was approved by the Research Committee in May 2012.

The REF 2014 process starts in November 2012 with eligible staff being invited to update their online Research Profile, submit their personal publication list, and if applicable, submit an individual circumstances disclosure form. The UoA Panels will then develop their REF submission for review by the IRRT, and the Equality Panel will consider individual circumstances in the same way as for the Mock exercise. The OU submission will be sent to the REF national Team at the end of November 2013. The outcome will be published in December 2014.

