



The Open
University

Scotland



Outcome agreement between The Open University in Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council: Updated for 2015-16

Open to
People

Open to
Places

Open to
Methods

Open to
Ideas

Contents

The Open University	3
AIM 1: Access for people from the widest range of backgrounds	7
AIM 2: High quality, efficient and effective learning	13
AIM 3: Right learning in the right place	15
AIM 4: A developed workforce	17
AIM 5: Research	22
AIM 6: University-industry collaboration	25
AIM 7: Sustainable institutions	26
Summary of outcomes and targets	28
Critical assumptions	32

Our mission

The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas.

Tha an Oilthigh Fhosgailte fosgailte do dhaoine, àiteachan, dòighean agus beachdan

Our values

Inclusive

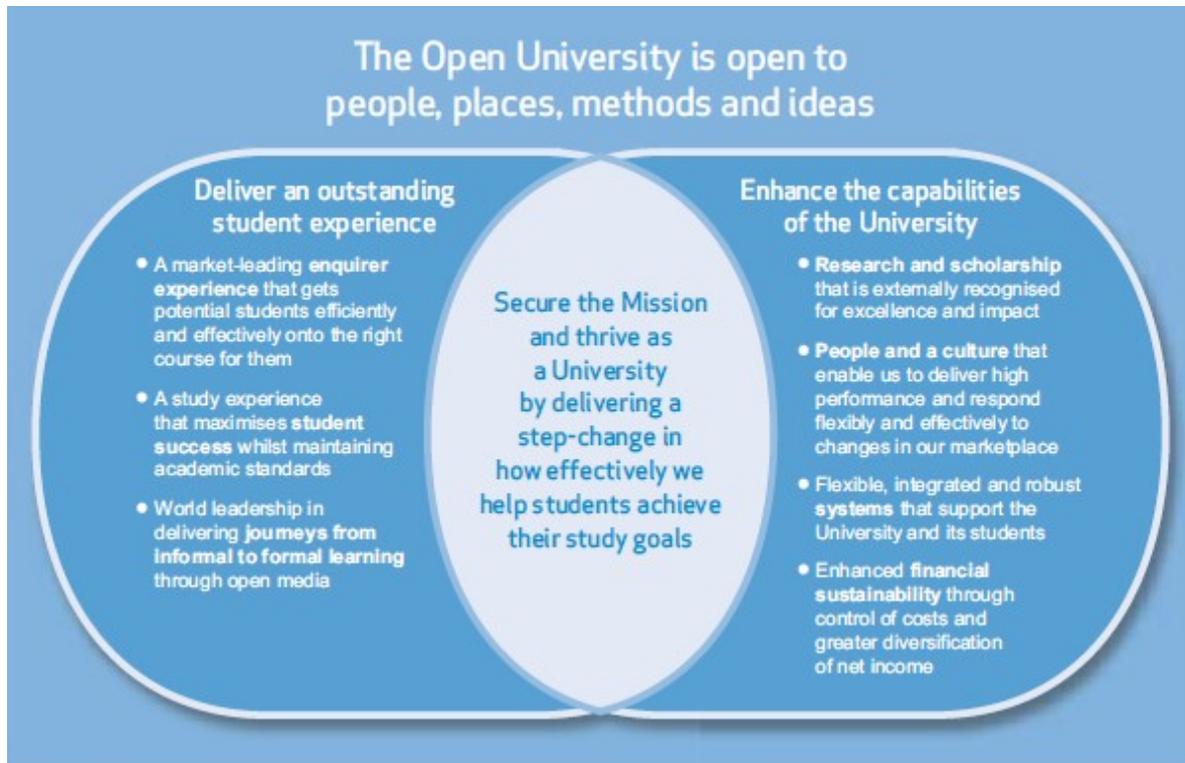
- We play a unique role in society, making Higher Education open to all
- We promote social justice through the development of knowledge and skills

Innovative

- We lead the learning revolution, placing innovation at the heart of our teaching and research
- We continuously seek new and better ways to inspire and enable learning
- We create world class research and teaching

Responsive

- We respond to the needs of individuals and employers and the communities in which they live and work
- We are dedicated to supporting our students' learning success
- Our institutional strategy



The Open University: A unique institution serving the whole of Scotland

The Open University remains committed to its policy of open entry; for most of our qualifications or modules, there are no formal entry requirements.

The flexibility of our unique model of supported open learning allows our students to work and study at the same time, and can apply the skills they learn immediately to their jobs. Nearly 70% of our students in Scotland are in full or part-time employment.

We bring to Scotland significant benefits derived from being part of the UK's largest higher education institution. The size and scale of the University allows it to offer a broader curriculum, a more diverse range of staff and students, wider access to educational innovation including our strategic partnership with the BBC, and greater investment in systems and platforms which can improve the student experience and our efficiency.

Curriculum

Our students can study single credit-based modules or towards qualifications that are fully integrated with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. We offer more than 250 qualifications including the uniquely flexible programme of Open qualifications: the Open CertHE, Open DipHE and BA/BSc Open, which allow students to tailor a qualification around their interests and career needs. Our curriculum includes specialist vocational and work-based options and has particular strengths in languages and STEM subjects.

The development of our modules is a uniquely collaborative process delivered by multi-disciplinary course teams. These teams include OU academic staff working in partnership with colleagues from other universities; educational technologists and media specialists contributing pedagogic and technical expertise; and external assessors to ensure academic standards are consistent with other universities. This model has helped to build the University's reputation for academic rigour and quality and has since been adopted by distance teaching institutions worldwide.

Our staff

Our students have an associate lecturer to guide, advise and offer comprehensive feedback on their coursework. Some standalone modules have study advisers who are available for students to contact if they have any academic queries. The majority of our undergraduate modules have a tutorial group of twenty students. Associate lecturers can be contacted by phone or online, and lead group tutorials and seminars making use of online teaching technologies to link up student groups across the country. We have more than 400 associate lecturers living in all parts of Scotland; many of whom also work in business and industry or for other Scottish HEIs or colleges.

The Open University in Scotland has around 130 academic, academic-related and support staff based in our offices in Edinburgh. The Open University has a strong commitment to the professional development of its entire staff, with The OU in Scotland playing a leading role in developing resources to support sound pedagogical use of new technology. The University offers the OpenPAD scheme for the professional development of those who teach and directly support learning. The scheme is aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (UKPSF) and is accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). It offers OU staff a pathway towards external recognition as an Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow of the HEA. There are also bespoke support and development opportunities for staff in Scotland, reflecting the specific teaching and learning context.

Geographical reach

The Open University reaches across the whole of Scotland with nearly 15,000 students from Shetland to Stranraer and from Peebles to Peterhead. This gives us an unparalleled ability to undertake nationwide developments, to support the Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives often by working in partnership to ensure successful delivery and that maximum impact is achieved.

The Open University works closely with partners across the whole of Scotland. These partnerships include employers, trade unions, public sector bodies, institutes, private, third sector and community organisations, universities, colleges and schools. By continuing to develop such strategic partnerships, we will enhance our position as the leading provider of flexible learning and increase the number of students who choose to study with us.

The Crichton partnership enables us to enhance our activity in Dumfries and Galloway and provides a highly valued springboard for work with individual learners and organisations across the region. The Open University in Scotland's engagement with the Crichton partnership is detailed in the Crichton Campus Consolidated Outcome Agreement for 2015-16.

The Open University is the only higher education institution dedicated to supported open learning. Our students are not required to attend a campus and can study with us wherever they might live, with access to our world-class online library and support services. This is of particular benefit to the 12% of our students who live in remote areas of Scotland and who would otherwise have limited options to access higher education.

OU students are not just in Scotland; the University has over 200,000 students across the UK and we offer programmes in countries around the world, both taught directly from the OU and delivered through local partners. The Open University also helps to deliver development programmes in partnership with governments, NGOs, funding institutions and local partners. Our programmes in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia address areas such as front-line health, teacher education and English language teaching. Through its International Development Fund, the Scottish Government supported the OU in delivering the Access to Teaching Saltire Scholarships which provided a pathway for rural women in Malawi into teaching. This project laid the ground for the OU's current four-year 'Keeping Girls in School' programme funded by DFID Malawi.

Journeys from informal to formal learning

The Open University is a mass communicator of free, informal learning both nationally and globally through its OpenLearn website, iTunesU, the OU channel on YouTube, the OpenScience Laboratory and FutureLearn, a company wholly owned by The Open University. The OpenLearn website gives the public free access to learning materials from the OU. These materials either come from our modules or are developed to support our BBC television and radio programmes and provide expert comment on topical issues.

The OpenLearn website has provided The Open University in Scotland with opportunities to provide free learning resources to a global audience such as its highly regarded units on Gaelic culture, self-directed support in Scotland and rural entrepreneurship. In 2013-14, 500,000 learners followed links from the OpenLearn website to view OU courses.

The Open University's unique partnership with the BBC continues to flourish and evolve. Between 150 million and 300 million views and listens of OU produced programmes take place each year in the UK. Academic experts from across the University are involved in all OU/BBC productions; recent examples include the *Life Story* series with Sir David Attenborough, *Wild Weather* with Richard Hammond and the award-winning *Secret History of our Streets* which in 2014 revealed hidden stories behind streets in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. OU/BBC co-productions inspire people to take their interest further by visiting the OpenLearn website; viewers are encouraged to access videos, interactive games, podcasts as well as articles and booklets.

Students as stakeholders

The Open University in Scotland strongly believes that the student body, as a key stakeholder, should be represented formally on the University's governing bodies and that its views and concerns are acknowledged. Our charter states that there must be an organisation of students of the University, and that the President of The Open University Students' Association (OUSA) is an ex officio member of the University's Council. In addition, OUSA elects a further member to Council and appoints six students to Senate. OUSA in Scotland has an Assembly with the power to act autonomously in relation to those issues affecting students in Scotland. OU students in Scotland also elect a member to OUSA's Central Executive Committee to represent the interests of Scottish domiciled students and to participate in institutional decision-making.

The Open University also holds consultative meetings with students across the UK. In Scotland, students, staff and Associate Lecturers are represented on the Scottish Committee which meets annually. The smaller Scottish Working Committee meets twice a year to consider proposals and issues and take reports. There will additionally be an online Scottish Consultative Forum in order to consult students in Scotland on a range of issues.

The University's new student consultative structure makes use of online forums and meetings to enable consultation with students on a range of topics. It acts alongside the University governance structure, as detailed above. Introduced by the University and the Students Association, the new approach uses forums to enable consultation on OU strategy, policy and other developments to take place virtually as and when necessary rather than be restricted to fixed dates in the year. Their membership consists of a mix of Students Association representatives, individual student volunteers and staff.

The University Students Consultative Forum seeks and considers views on matters affecting the study and student experience of all undergraduate and postgraduate students. Additionally, each student support team (SST) has its own online forum to consider aspects of provision within its scope, and there are separate forums for international, Open Degree and Postgraduate research students.

The Open University's new Student Charter came into effect from 1 August 2013; www.open.ac.uk/students/charter. Developed by the University and the OUSA, this charter sets out what the responsibilities are and what staff and students can expect of each other. A review of the Student Charter is currently taking place. The review is seeking to assess to what extent the Student Charter has had an impact on the student and staff experience, and on University policies and practices. Any proposals for changes to the Student Charter's content and processes will be considered by Senate in June 2015.

Our Outcome Agreement process

This outcome agreement has been considered and approved at an institutional level, with student consultation through The Open University's Scottish Committee.

This outcome agreement is presented in terms of the seven aims given by the Scottish Funding Council in its *Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2015-16*. There are also cross-cutting themes of equality and diversity, widening access, partnerships, skills development, quality assurance and enhancement which we have taken into account and embedded throughout our outcome agreement. We have used the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework as a point of reference in the development of this outcome agreement.

SFC Aim 1: Improve access to higher education for people from the widest possible range of backgrounds

SFC Outcomes

1. More even patterns of participation by different groups of learners, including those from areas of deprivation, from protected characteristic groups and care backgrounds
2. An increase in the number of students articulating with advanced standing from HNC/HND to degree level study

Open University Outcomes

3. Recruitment levels of OU students with a Higher National (HN) background are maintained.
4. An increase in the number of schools, including those that are part of the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP), involved in our Young Applicants in Schools Scheme.

Our strategic intention and context

The Open University has always operated an open access policy; our students can study modules and qualifications at undergraduate level with no requirement for previous qualifications. The Open University is committed to extending opportunities for educational success to those who would otherwise be excluded from higher education. Our model of supported open learning is particularly suitable for those whom attending a campus would present significant challenges such as remoteness, caring responsibilities or disability. We also make innovative use of open educational resources to support journeys from informal to formal learning.

In 2013/14, 17% of our new undergraduate students were resident in the most deprived SIMD quintile. This proportion fell slightly between 2012/13 and 2013/14 due in part to changes in the University's curriculum and the transition to the Part-time Fee Grant. The proportion of new undergraduate students resident in the second most deprived SIMD quintile has risen. It is important to recognise that there are people experiencing significant hardship in geographical areas that are deemed to be less deprived than SIMD20 and equally that not everyone in a deprived area is individually deprived. The Open University continues to call for SIMD to be considered as one of a basket of measures of deprivation rather than the sole measure. The number of OU students on low incomes in less deprived quintiles has increased to a greater extent with the growth solely amongst those in receipt of the Part-Time Fee Grant.

Our students come from a wide range of backgrounds, including a high number on low incomes. In 2013/14, 58% of our new undergraduate students had an individual income below £25,000. In July 2013, The Open University welcomed the introduction of the Part-time Fee Grant by the Scottish Government which has increased the number of people on low incomes coming to study with us. The Scottish Government is conducting a review of the Part-time Fee Grant to be completed by summer 2015 which, amongst other aspects, will consider the current 30 credit point threshold.

Access provision

The Open University in Scotland's widening access strategy targets those people with no previous experience of study at SCQF level 7 or above; low incomes and those for whom attending a campus would present significant challenges.

From 2014, the University moved to a new access programme which is designed to maximise student success, retention and progression. The new access programme provides three highly supported accredited modules at SCQF level 6 that facilitate the transition to HE level study. It is assumed that at SCQF level 6, these access modules are not fundable by the Scottish Funding Council. The University also offers a number of short standalone modules at SCQF level 7 which can serve as 'tasters' to support the transition into more substantial HE study.

The Open University in Scotland's widening access strategy includes outreach activity that is enhanced by working with partners across the country and the provision of supported pathways into degree level study that are appropriate to the individual learner. Our partners include community-based organisations, colleges, trade unions and employers.

We are actively developing a widening access framework using open educational resources to support our widening access work with the launch of *Open Pathways to Higher Education*: a resource pack that offers various pathways from informal to formal learning in early 2015 and the introduction of OpenLearn Champions. The University has also developed a suite of skills-based Badged Open Courses (BOCs) which are available, free to anyone, on the OpenLearn platform. These include: *Taking Your First Steps into Higher Education*; *Succeed with Learning*; *Succeed with English*; *Succeed with Maths* and *Succeed in the Workplace*. We are also developing innovative methods of collaborating with partners to co-create customised open educational resources.

Widening access: case study

Tracey Wilson, aged 41, a single parent from Oban, says The Open University has given her the confidence to study for a degree after leaving school early.

Tracey grew up in Glasgow and lived with her Gran. She was 16 when her Gran passed away, so she moved to Oban to live with family. She says 'I got my O-grades in Glasgow and was meant to sit my Highers, but then I had to move and it was a bad time for me to go back to school. There was a big time gap until I began studying with the OU.'



Tracey was unemployed when she chose to study with the OU. She started with an *Openings* access course, *Understanding health*. 'It's a lovely course to start on. I really enjoyed it and the support I got from the tutors was great because they know you're just starting off'.

Tracey is now studying for a BSc (Hons) Health Sciences degree. She says 'What I enjoy most about the OU is the feeling of being part of a great, supportive organisation and meeting tutors and other

students. Oban is quite rural so it can feel very lonely but being a student with the OU takes the edge off the isolation. I like chatting on the forums and love attending the face to face tutorials.'

Tracey's OU studies fit in with her work and looking after her daughter. She studies between shifts, as she has two part-time jobs in cleaning and catering at local schools. OU study has given Tracey the confidence to consider a new career path, she says 'I started studying just for myself, but as it's progressing it's making me think of possible careers in the local hospital. I would enjoy working as a lab assistant, but I'm also interested in psychology, working with the mental health teams'.

Tracey is eligible for financial support to cover the cost of her course fees. She says 'The Part-time Fee Grant is just tremendous. I wouldn't have been able to study without it'.

Students with disabilities and additional needs

The Open University in Scotland offers a wide range of support services and facilities to enable learners with additional needs to succeed in their studies including course materials in alternative formats, special arrangements for tutorials and examinations including home examinations and where appropriate advice about funding.

In 2013/14, 16% of our total student population in Scotland identified themselves as having a disability, including physical and mental health conditions and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. A significant proportion of our disabled students have problems with mobility. Numbers have more than doubled in the last five years, and we now have over 2,000 disabled students.

The OU in Scotland welcomed the change in 2014-15 to how the Scottish Funding Council allocates the Disabled Student Premium to recognise that most of our disabled students choose to study less than 120 credits a year yet each of them require an individual assessment and support arrangements. The increase in the Disabled Student Premium will enable us to augment the level of support that we are able to offer our disabled students, particularly in terms of information, advice and guidance.

Offender learning

The Open University has provided modules to students in prison since 1972. Through our partnership with the Scottish Prison Service, we are able to facilitate access to higher education for those prisoners who have not previously had the opportunity to study at this level and who have demonstrated their potential and motivation. The Open University in Scotland is the only Scottish HEI represented on the Higher Education Access Board (HEAB) which coordinates access by offenders to higher education provision. In 2014-15 we have 48 students (an increase of 20% from 2013-14) in 13 prisons across Scotland (covering all security categories) and a further 12 students in 2 secure hospital units.

The OU in Scotland intends to scope the potential for increasing the scale of our work with offender learners in 2015-16 through discussion with the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government.

Studying in prison allows students to gain knowledge and skills which can be invaluable when seeking employment. In turn, this can reduce the chance of reoffending, as well as reduce the impact of crime on wider society. A recent study of 3,000 prisoners who had access to study materials has found that the reoffending rate was just 19% within a year. Participation in distance learning was found to be the best reduction method¹.

Carers and care leavers

We have put particular emphasis on working with carers in Scotland over the past year as part of our widening access activity; it augments our work in SIMD20, articulation, partnerships and work-based learning. The Open University's model of supported open learning is particularly suitable for carers who can study from home and fit their learning around their caring commitments. We also can make special exam arrangements for those students who would find difficulty in attending an exam centre.

Through our work with carers we have developed significant partnerships with organisations such as the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance (SYCSA), NHS Education Scotland (NES), Carers Trust Scotland and local Carers Centres. This collaboration has resulted in the development of the two free online resources: [Caring Counts](#); a self-reflection and planning course for carers and *Caring Counts for Line Managers*. The content of *Caring Counts* was developed with practitioners from the Dumfries Carers Centre. Both courses provide learners with the opportunity of gaining a digital badge.

¹ **Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending**, Ministry of Justice 2013

The Open University now asks its students to self-declare whether they are care leavers on completion of their registration to study and this information is included in our equality monitoring activity. Most students choose not to disclose whether they are care leavers; with less than 0.5% of our student population in Scotland declaring that they were looked after.

Through its inclusive widening access strategy, the University is committed to support those from disadvantaged backgrounds, which includes care leavers, throughout their student journey from recruitment, induction, retention, completion and through to their next steps.

Over the period of this outcome agreement, The OU in Scotland intends to undertake a scoping study for working in partnership with organisations that support care leavers. In addition, the Enhancement Themes Student Network, which is facilitated by QAA Scotland and includes The OU in Scotland, is currently taking forward a project focusing on care leavers and the support they receive.

Age

Most of our students are studying to improve their careers; nearly 70% fit their studies around work. The median age of our entrants in Scotland is 30. In 2013/14, 10% of our undergraduate entrants were aged under 21. Our oldest graduate in 2014 was aged 86. This range of ages reflects the place of The Open University in being able to deliver lifelong learning for Scotland.



The oldest graduate, John Hutchinson (86) and the youngest one, Joanna Hughes (23), with Dr James Miller, Director, The OU in Scotland, at our graduation ceremony in Edinburgh, June 2014.

Transgender students

The Open University does not intend to introduce monitoring for gender identity. We have a legal duty to protect the privacy of individuals who have fully transitioned and we will not retain any records relating to gender change. The University's approach to understanding and addressing transgender equality is to rely on qualitative information derived from engagement and research. The University has been working to improve its policy and guidance for transgender students and staff, and published its ['Transgender Students: Policy and Guidance'](#) in February 2014.

Articulation from colleges

The Open University in Scotland offers students with HNCs and HNDs the opportunity to build on their college credit and to enhance their skills and qualifications. All our undergraduate students study part-time, and choice and flexibility is paramount. They can study at the level of intensity that suits their individual circumstances and choose to link or not link their OU study to an OU qualification.

The OU in Scotland has active partnerships with all of the Scottish Colleges (other than UHI colleges) plus SRUC, whereby students with an HNC or HND get the appropriate credit transfer into our BA or BSc (Open) with or without honours. We have also developed pathways and credit transfer arrangements for students with relevant HNQs to progress to specified OU named degrees. The partnership agreements are reviewed on an annual basis.

Our students can choose to:

- take time out from study after completing their HN and articulate to the OU when they want professional development or to expand their career opportunities
- register for a wide range of degree options using their HN
- begin their studies with one or more modules
- study on the Open Degree using all their credit from an HN
- study on a named programme where the amount of transferred credit varies depending on the content match between the HN and the degree
- not to use their HN qualification as credit because they want to refresh and update their skills
- study on a degree in a different field from their HN (a significant proportion choose to do this)

OU Honours Degrees consist of 360 credits compared to the Scottish norm of 480 credit points. As a result, even where students with an HN are in receipt of a partial credit for their HN or have chosen not to transfer credit, they may still complete an OU Honours degree within the standard Scottish four-year timeframe. Our experience is that part-time students combine work and study in a variety of different ways. Articulating students can complete their degree in as little as two years but most will take a longer and often interrupted learning journey.

The Open University's new Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy will be in place in 2015 and will offer students more direct entry routes to OU study. This policy has been developed to align with the Scottish RPL framework.

In addition to the articulation and progression agreements we have signed with colleges, we seek to embed the routes available to OU study in college processes by promoting The OU in Scotland's [College Routes](#) website, developing information sessions with curriculum staff and students groups, inclusion of the OU route in college promotional material and attendance at college HE progression events. Over the period of this outcome agreement, and working with the [Opening Educational Practices Scotland project](#), we will be developing our use of open educational online resources with colleges to enhance existing curriculum and to prepare students for OU study.

The OU in Scotland welcomed the 60 additional places for articulation provided by the SFC again in 2014-15 and we will report on progress towards the fulfilment of these places in our self-evaluation report for 2014-15.

Our campus-based model of partnership is another strand of our articulation activity was extended to five colleges in 2014-15, with discussions well-advanced for two further colleges participating in 2015-16. This unique model provides students who have completed their HND, the opportunity to continue to use the college as the study base for their OU degree. For many students, being based at their college is the only option available to them to continue studying due to geographical constraints, caring responsibilities, their employment or disability. The college base also represents a 'safe' and supportive environment for learning. Evaluation of the Fife College pilot showed very positive academic results and completion rates. We aim to continue to develop and expand the college campus-based model over the period of this outcome agreement.

We have established OU Learning Spaces at Dumfries and Galloway, New College Lanarkshire, Fife, West College Scotland and South Lanarkshire Colleges with the help of SFC capital investment funding in the first four cases. Learning Spaces give OU students in the college catchment area access to IT, library, study and other social facilities. The Learning Space agreement with Dumfries & Galloway College was recently renegotiated, securing this resource for a further five years. As a result of college mergers, we have now been able to extend the facilities to all the main campuses of New College Lanarkshire and Fife College.

Working with schools

Our Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) allows students in the final year of secondary school to experience higher education level study in school alongside their other subjects and enhance their career prospects. Students can choose from a range of high quality modules at

SCQF Level 7, giving them opportunity to broaden their knowledge of their Higher and Advanced Higher subjects or to try a topic which is not available in school.

Experience of independent, degree level study and access to all OU student facilities, including personal tutors and our renowned online library, helps to prepare pupils for the transition to university or college. Extra study can help school-leavers' UCAS applications to stand out and they can also use the credit they gain towards a qualification with the OU.

YASS is to be included on Insight (the Scottish Government benchmarking tool for the senior phase) and can be added to UCAS forms as another qualification.

Since its introduction in Scotland as a pilot with Highland Council in 2007/08, YASS has grown so that over 100 schools throughout Scotland and over 700 pupils have participated in 2014/15 to date. YASS has proved to be a very attractive addition to many schools, particularly smaller ones, those in remote areas and with limited numbers staying on to S6, that encounter difficulties in providing breadth of choice for their pupils.

The OU in Scotland welcomed the support of the Scottish Funding Council to extend YASS and to increase use of the scheme in SHEP schools. As a result of the YASS+ Project, we are working towards a target of 25 SHEP schools participating in YASS. To date 29 SHEP schools have participated in YASS. 18 SHEP schools are participating in YASS in 2014-15 which is an increase of 38% on the previous year. The interim figure for the number of pupils from SHEP schools has tripled in 2014-15 from the previous year.

SFC funding for the YASS+ Project has enabled the OU to provide an interim solution for school pupils to fund studying OU modules but a long term solution is still being sought. The Scottish Government is conducting a review of the Part-time Fee Grant with the view of reporting by July 2015 and a decision being made regarding the eligibility of YASS students in time for AY 2016-17. Through the Outcome Agreement, The OU in Scotland is therefore asking the Scottish Funding Council to extend its provision by meeting the costs of YASS module fees for the interim period of 2015-16.

Young Applicants in Schools Scheme: case study



“Doon Academy is a secondary school in a small, remote, rural community in East Ayrshire. Over 80% of the school roll of 339 is represented in the bottom two deciles of the SIMD.

In recent years, a number of pupils have wanted to study Advanced Higher courses but it has not been feasible, due to staffing and the requirement to meet the needs of all our learners, to timetable courses with class sizes of one. At times, this has resulted in pupils going to other schools to pursue these qualifications; at other times, the goodwill and flexibility of teaching staff has enabled Advanced Highers to be achieved ‘off timetable’.

The YASS scheme provides a solution for us here. Not only does it give pupils in the Doon Valley opportunities to study subjects that wouldn't otherwise be available to them at a level that wouldn't normally be possible - it allows them to do so here, at Doon Academy. Crucially, it also provides them with opportunities for independent learning. Taking responsibility for the management of their own learning in the senior phase is, in my opinion, invaluable for our students - particularly those going on to study courses at HE institutions.

The pupils and staff at Doon Academy are grateful for the opportunities the YASS scheme provides. For me, YASS ticks just about all of the boxes of a good widening access initiative: it fills a curricular gap; it provides opportunities to deepen and broaden learning; it provides routes into higher education; it encourages our young people to take responsibility for and be positive about their futures; and it limits the disadvantage faced by pupils from one of the most deprived parts of the country.”

Norman Paton, UCAS Adviser / Widening Access Coordinator Doon Academy

SFC Aim 2: High quality, efficient and effective learning – learner journeys are short, efficient and effective as possible and learners experience the highest quality of learning and teaching and achieve successful outcomes

SFC Outcomes

5. An improvement in the retention and success rates of learners.
6. Greater flexibility in entry and exit points, where appropriate, to reduce potential inefficiencies in the learner journey where this is of benefit to the learner.
7. Quality of learning provision and learner outcomes assured and enhanced.

Open University Outcomes

8. Expansion of the *back on course Scotland* service for full time undergraduate students who have withdrawn from higher education before completing their studies.

Our strategic intention and context

In 2014, The Open University in Scotland was ranked second for overall satisfaction by the National Student Survey: 92% of OU students in Scotland declared themselves satisfied with the quality of their study experience.

The Open University, at UK level, changed its support structure from February 2014 to create Student Support Teams bringing academic and support staff (the latter traditionally based in 13 regions and nations across the UK) into curriculum-based rather than geographically-based teams. The aim is to improve student retention, progression and satisfaction by integrating academic and non-academic support through systematic, evidence-based, proactive, as well as reactive, support. The new structure is designed to provide a continuity of support for students throughout their study experience. In Scotland, we are working with faculties and Student Services colleagues to ensure that our students benefit from this new approach while continuing to receive support, information, advice and guidance (both proactive and reactive) which recognises the different context from which they come to OU study and addresses their distinct characteristics and needs.

The OU in Scotland continues to be able to offer a unique level of flexibility to students through its modular delivery model. However retention is a complex issue since for many OU students success is measured by progression to other higher education providers or because their professional development requirements are met by the successful completion of an individual module. Part-time learner journeys are often non-linear and cannot be measured or monitored in the same way as full-time campus-based study.

We have undertaken significant statistical modelling work in order to understand better the impact of a range of student characteristics and behaviours on students' likely completion and progression rates. This work has demonstrated the negative impact on module completion for new undergraduates of: low previous educational qualifications; unemployment; low income (i.e. being on benefits and in receipt of a fee waiver when studying a longer module); overlap of study with holiday periods; and age (i.e. being in the youngest or oldest age groups). By contrast, students with credit transfer and those sponsored by their employers are more likely to be retained at the module level.

A key issue for us is the high volumes of students on low income taking OU modules. Over the past five years, students on low incomes have grown considerably as a proportion of our intake. With significantly lower completion rates, this group places a downward pressure on our overall rate and presents an increasing challenge for teaching and support staff. The OU in Scotland Retention Action Group has commissioned quantitative and qualitative research, sponsored module-specific interventions by associate lecturers, and designed pro-active interventions for implementation by learner support staff, including proactive learner support, working with associate

lecturers, module-specific interventions and research. We are now working to integrate this with interventions researched and designed by Student Support Teams ensuring that support is tailored to meet the needs of students in Scotland.

There is a commitment across the University to learning enhancement activity. The Learning and Teaching Centre is coordinating this activity with a priority focus on supporting students into study and support for retention and attainment of qualifications.

Within Scotland, the QAA Enhancement Theme on student transition is providing a further catalyst for research, scholarship and development of evidence-based practice. Over the period of this outcome agreement, we aim to further develop our understanding of key transition points that are particularly critical to our students in Scotland: transitions for students new to HE, those studying in the workplace or articulating from college.

At an institutional level, the University aims to improve the completion rate on modules undertaken by both new and continuing students. The OU in Scotland continues to monitor the progression and completion rates of our students by age, SIMD, disability, part-time fee grant, level of study, remoteness, ethnicity and gender and other appropriate protected characteristics. Analysis of this information helps us to evaluate the impact of our retention work and to implement appropriate actions. The Open University, as a whole, has prioritised the provision of its qualification framework, primarily due to the significant changes to funding arrangements across the nations of the United Kingdom but also with the aim of improving the proportion of students completing their qualification. Completion rates have previously been presented at modular level only; work on data to indicate overall completion rates at qualification level started in 2014.

back on course Scotland



The *back on course Scotland* initiative demonstrates our commitment to retention and our role as a national provider. It was established in response to concern about the number of students leaving higher education before reaching their study goals. It is not intended as a substitute for the retention activities of individual HEIs but to provide further support once the students has left their institution and to feedback in ways that can help retention

strategies within the sector. The service is delivered by The Open University in Scotland, funded by the Scottish Funding Council and is currently working with seven Scottish university partners (Robert Gordon, UWS, QMU, Napier, Abertay, GCU and UHI) but is open to receive calls from early leavers from all Scottish universities.

The two core strands of the project are:

- A free, impartial advice and guidance service for full-time undergraduate students who have withdrawn from higher education before completing their studies. Whatever their circumstances, early leavers are offered the opportunity to reflect and focus on their next steps either back into university or other positive outcomes such as college, training or employment.
- Research into the motivations, needs and characteristics of early leavers in order to determine the impact of current retention policies and activities in the seven participating HEIs. The overarching aim of this research is to share the findings with the whole Scottish higher education sector and help provide a more robust and practical approach to retention activities.

The Scottish Funding Council, in discussion with the *back on course Scotland* Steering Group, is giving thought to the involvement of all Scottish HEIs and to the expansion of the early leaver eligibility.

SFC Aim 3: Right learning in the right place – secure coherent provision of higher education in Scotland in line with SFC’s statutory obligation

SFC Outcomes

9. Universities are responsive to current and future skill requirements of employers
10. More targeted recruitment to courses of national and regional economic significance
11. Implementation of the National Gaelic Language Plan

Open University Outcomes

12. The cross sector *Opening Educational Practices* project facilitates best practice in open online education in Scotland.

Our strategic intention and context

The breadth and flexibility of OU provision plays a vital role in enabling adult learners in Scotland to achieve personal and professional learning goals. Many individuals make use of OU modular provision to provide a stepping-stone to study with other providers; many more are able to complete qualifications with the OU that they started at other institutions.

A responsive curriculum

The University delivers over 20 work-based qualifications designed and developed in collaboration with employers, to provide the intermediate technical and professional skills that employers want. To study for these particular qualifications students must be working or volunteering in a work setting gaining a qualification, which is related to their area of work. The pedagogy and support structures underpinning these qualifications mean that they are accessible to students working in both SMEs and large organisations, irrespective of location.

The University takes advantage of its size and reach to develop vocational and work-based curriculum in partnership with organisations across a number of sectors, appropriate to the learning needs of the organisation. From bite-sized CPD workshops to the shaping of specific qualifications, we are open and responsive to changing employer needs.

As the provision of foreign languages at HE level decreases across Scotland, The OU has a growing demand for our modules in French, German, Spanish, Welsh and Mandarin.. The Open University does not offer Gaelic language provision but in reference to the National Gaelic Language Plan (NGLP) 2012-17, we developed [Gaelic in modern Scotland](#): a free online learning resource in both English and Gaelic to raise awareness of Gaelic and to encourage interest in learning the language.

STEM

STEM enrolments in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects have grown considerably in the past few years and now stand at well over 2,300 FTEs. In 2013/14, STEM students accounted for nearly two-fifths of the total student cohort; 42% were female. Our gender balance across our student population in Scotland is 59% female and 41% male.

Open Educational Practices

The Open University is a world leader in the development of open educational resources (OERs). Building on this expertise in the wider university, we are working with partners across Scotland to use OERs effectively in different contexts such as workplace and community settings, and to explore new ways of providing the right learning in the right place.

The Open University in Scotland is currently the lead institution of the [Opening Educational Practices in Scotland](#) project to facilitate best practice in open education through the development of a peer support network, an online hub and awareness raising activities. The project is supported by a formal steering group consisting of the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and

the Highlands & Islands however the project is intended to be of benefit for the whole of the tertiary education sector in Scotland and aims to engage with a broad range of stakeholders across the country.



[FutureLearn](#), a private company wholly owned by The Open University, provides a platform for MOOCs. Amongst its partners are the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow and Strathclyde, as well as institutions such as the British Council, the British Library, the National Film and Television School and the British Museum. Futurelearn will increase access to higher education for students in the UK and around the world by offering a diverse range of free, high quality, online courses through a single website.

SFC Aim 4: A developed workforce – learners who have the skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial spirit to get a job and progress their career; institutions that respond to the skills needs of the economy locally and nationally

SFC Outcomes

13. Graduates are well prepared for work and can utilise their skills effectively in the increasingly international labour market.

Open University Outcomes

14. Levels of employer sponsorship are maintained in a period of austerity.

15. Participation in workplace learning increases.

16. Drawing on an evidence base, The OU in Scotland continues to broaden and build its range of approaches and models to support learning in the workplace

17. Through research, The OU in Scotland increases its understanding of the synergies between work and learning, and of the cultural conditions that support learning transfer and skills acquisition in the workplace.

Our strategic intention and context

With nearly three-quarters of our students in work, The Open University in Scotland occupies a unique place in terms of developing the Scottish workforce. The OU's expertise at supporting learners at a distance means that employers can be offered high quality work based programmes regardless of where the workplace is located in Scotland. The OU's flexible approach to work based learning means that regardless of the size of the organisation and the number of employees, a learning solution can often be found.

In 2013/14, over 1,300 students were sponsored to study with us by organisations from Shetland to the Borders. Many more students pay their course fees and are subsequently reimbursed by their employers. The OU in Scotland understands the challenges and constraints encountered by employers to develop their staff, and as a result, has developed a plethora of pedagogic models to support workplace learning to help employers engage the workforce. Day workshops, with a specific skills focus encouraging reflective practice have become particularly popular as well as a suite of undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities that include specific and relevant work related curriculum. The increasing use of Open Educational Resources in the workplace has also allowed experimentation using that methodology to support learning.

While The Open University delivers specialist work-based learning qualifications, all our modules and qualifications are written for adult learners with the understanding that learners bring existing skills and experience to their studies. Work across the University is ongoing to embed the development of employability skills and attributes throughout the curriculum offer. During the spring of 2015, a new, free employability badged online course will become available. The OU in Scotland and the OU's Careers Service will work with a range of partners, including the Crichton Institute in Dumfries, to assess the efficacy of the course to enhance employability skills in students.

There are very strong links between The OU in Scotland's employability and work-based learning activities. Though we have chosen to report separately here on employability, work-based learning, entrepreneurship and internships, there is significant overlap between these areas that both informs and enhances this core part of our work in Scotland. In recent years we have been able to further expand our repertoire of approaches to work based learning and the sectors that can be supported. The OU in Scotland is well equipped to support Scottish Government priority sectors e.g. in renewable energy and food and drink. In 2015 the OU will collaborate with Skills Development Scotland to explore a unique flexible pathway in engineering apprenticeships. Additionally, The OU in Scotland will also examine its potential to contribute more generally to the apprenticeship market in other areas e.g. in the Health and Social Care field.

We continue to play an active role in the development and future strategic direction of the Crichton Institute in Dumfries. In 2015 we will conduct a scoping and intelligence gathering exercise to surface prime opportunities that are suitable for development in the Dumfries and Galloway region. Specifically, we will contribute to two key developments: the Crichton Care Campus and the Crichton Creative Quarter. We will also explore how we can better support the needs of workplaces and employers in this locality.

Through a strategic partnership with the STUC and Scottish Union Learning, The OU in Scotland has built on our community outreach model to offer group-based higher education in the workplace in partnership with an ever increasing number of unions. Typically the participants are non-traditional learners. We offer short modules, non-accredited workshop-based courses and in a smaller number of instances structured pathways through to degrees or intermediate qualifications. Through this work we have developed a powerful tri-partite model of employer/union/university partnership. A recent partnership has emerged with the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) to support teacher Continuing Professional Learning Development. A large joint event for the teaching profession has been arranged for June 2015 to support this strand.

We work in partnership with the Scottish Government to deliver their priorities in health and social care. We have a well-developed work based learning curriculum that enables students to access professional programmes in nursing and social work. The flexible nature of the OU offer means that students are often attracted to a distance learning route who would not be able to access a mainstream professional campus based programme. In addition, The OU in Scotland provides educational support for those who work with and care for people on the autism spectrum. A 60 hour non accredited online resource has been developed to support the implementation of Self Directed Support in Scotland. Dedicated resources are also available to support communities and workplaces to utilise this resource. Free, workplace enhancement material is also available. The OU in Scotland also plays a very active wider strategic role in the development of this work in Scotland to support the Scottish Social Services Council and The Scottish Government in terms of implementing this work and related areas e.g. Health and Social Care integration.

Work-based learning: case study



We continue to focus attention on dementia, a priority public health concern of the Scottish Government. We have now completed a comprehensive mapping exercise of our Dementia Care module to the SSSC and NES Promoting Excellence Framework, allowing students and employers to assess competence levels to the national skills framework for dementia. In addition to providing dementia education to the care sector through workshops, a non-accredited online module and an accredited module, we are now working with non-care organisations that experience people with dementia. The primary emphasis is on the notion of promoting dementia friendly communities, enabling people with dementia to live more independent and fulfilling lives.

We have developed an innovative, strategic partnership with ASDA stores in Scotland, working with their community life ambassadors across Scotland. Through a tailored workshop, ASDA's community life champions are trained in developing their awareness and skills so that they can better support people who come into their stores, and in the communities they serve who have dementia.

In addition we are currently exploring a range of extension activities with ASDA to create a more dementia friendly retail environment. This work has generated considerable broader interest, and we are currently exploring other options to further support organisations who want to do something similar.

Employability

The Open University understands student employability as '*A set of capabilities and achievements that support students in developing their careers, raising their aspirations and enhancing their contribution to society*'. We recognise the diversity of our student body and its distinctiveness within the Scottish sector. In particular, our approach to employability has a unique focus on supporting the 'employability of the employed', enhancing opportunities for students to develop and apply their skills and learning to develop within their current careers, to change career, or to return to the labour market. Figures from a recent University-wide student profile analysis on career motivation² indicate that 47% of respondents thought their OU study would help them to change to a new career area; 43% thought it would help them to develop or progress in their current career and, reflecting the fact that the majority of OU students are already in employment, 5% thought it would help them to move into employment for the first time.

The University's [Student Employability Policy Statement](#) describes our approach to employability through three areas of activity:

- Orientation – helping enquirers and students choose and understand study options in the OU which are relevant to their study and career goals
- Skills Development – enhancing a range of employability skills as an integral part of all OU qualifications
- Articulation – educating and empowering students to be able to articulate their skills and the benefit of study to employers and the wider community

Employability statements are now built into the course information provided to students and prospective students, and consideration of career pathways, employability and skills development is built into the module and qualification development process. Investment has been made in a three year university-wide Careers and Employability Project to design a high quality extended [Careers Advisory Service](#), embed Personal Development Planning in the student learning experience, develop 'badging' for OpenLearn resources that support employability skills development, and identify OU measures for student employability and organisational performance in terms of study and service provision. A new Badged Online Course on employability skills enhancement will be available in March 2015.

Work-based learning

In addition to our curriculum offer, The OU in Scotland is also focused on the development of innovative models for facilitating learning in the workplace that meet the needs of diverse student groups across Scotland, ensuring that our students can make a meaningful impact on the Scottish economy and society.

We are taking forward a range of work-based initiatives around seven main themes:

- i. Developing a relevant curriculum that works: for employees; for employers; for sectors; for Scottish society
- ii. Making experience count i.e. accrediting work-based learning
- iii. Strengthening learning communities and building community capacity and assets
- iv. Skills utilisation and learning transfer
- v. Challenging policy and practice
- vi. Developing approaches to partnership and engagement: with colleges; with employers; with unions
- vii. Regional coherence
- viii. Experiment with pedagogic models to develop innovative approaches around the learning organisation (a systemic approach to organisational learning and development)

² Student profile data analysis, January 2014. Total number of responses – 41,229

Widening access, partnership and sustainability are additional crosscutting themes, which inform all this activity. Through multiple initiatives across the public and private sectors, we are increasing the range of opportunities for participation in workplace learning and systematically collecting and disseminating evidence of good practice. In 2015 -2016 we will continue to showcase exemplars of positive impact in the workplace.

We will continue to grow our work-based learning activity by increasing the number and diversity of employers we are actively engaged with and the number of sectors and unions we work with.

Work-based learning: case study



Scottish Union Learning (SUL) in the Highlands and Islands supports trade union members and Union Learning Representatives by encouraging and helping workers based in the area to develop their learning skills.

In November 2014 Scottish Union Learning Highland and Islands students successfully completed a two-year Certificate in Higher Education Open. Union members from Unison, Unite, RMT and TSSA came together as a cross-union class and took their first steps into further education. The course was aimed at aspiring managers and practising line managers, studying work based learning modules covering a broad range of management and interpersonal skills.

Angela McLaren is the office manager for UNISON in Inverness and was one of 15 learners from across the Highlands and Islands who embarked on the Certificate in Higher Education Open, two-year qualification with the Open University in Scotland in 2012. Angela said:

“Since finishing the course, I’m more likely to question things I read, I put a bit more thought into things I write for work and I’ve implemented some new time management techniques.”

Work-based Learning: A baseline study of work-based learning at undergraduate level in Scotland was published in April 2014 and is available on The Open University in Scotland’s website: www.open.ac.uk/scotland/research/research/learning-development/work-based-learning

Through a project funded by the Scottish Funding Council and working with the OU’s Knowledge Media Institute, The OU in Scotland has produced an online Work and Learning Evidence Hub for anyone involved managing and developing learning in the workplace. The hub encourages evidence sharing around the themes of work-based learning and enables users to discuss and evaluate ideas, issues and good practice.

Entrepreneurship

The Open University offers a range of taught postgraduate courses and research degrees in entrepreneurship and innovation.

In 2014 The OU in Scotland launched Rural entrepreneurship; an open educational resource freely available for anyone interested in starting their own business in a rural or remote environment. The resource will be promoted via gateway organisations such as Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise with the OU offering enhanced wraparound support and pathways into relevant formal study.

Third Sector Internships Scotland scheme

The Open University in Scotland has led the way in establishing the Third Sector Internships Scotland scheme with Queen Margaret University and the Scottish Council for Voluntary

Organisations. Third Sector Internships Scotland offers students from all Scottish universities regardless of their economic circumstances the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations through completing paid, supported internships. It is a unique example of HEIs working in partnership with each other and with third sector groups to enhance student employability, creating nationwide impact and local level change. The internships take place at organisations based across Scotland, from Dumfries to Dingwall, benefitting not just the students and the organisations, but communities across the country.

The OU in Scotland welcomes the extension of funding for the Internships scheme in its current form to the end of September 2015. We will continue to build on the partnerships developed through this programme, particularly the strong links with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, and explore avenues for further collaboration around skills and employability development.

SFC Aim 5: A research base that is internationally competitive and improving its reputation and standing in the world

SFC Outcomes

18. An improvement in the sector's performance in REF2014 compared with RAE2008
19. Enhanced research and KE collaboration
20. An increase in the number of institutions and departments securing Athena Swan awards

Open University Outcomes

21. Greater awareness of The Open University's research, scholarship and knowledge exchange in Scotland
22. Recognition of The Open University in Scotland's contribution to knowledge exchange through its delivery of informal learning

Our strategic intention and context

In the Research Excellence Framework (REF2014) the OU was ranked 54th for the quality of its research in [The Times Higher Education's rankings](#). We have improved the quality of our research with 72% scored as 3 star or 4 star– the highest available, indicating that the research is world-leading or internationally excellent in terms of quality, impact and environment.

The Open University has two collaborative research centres in Scotland with the University of Edinburgh ([Innogen](#)) and the University of Stirling ([the Institute for Social Marketing](#)). It also has over 35 research partnerships with other Scottish universities.

Collaborative research project: case study

The Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom research project (PSE UK) is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and is a major collaboration between The Open University, Heriot-Watt University, University of Glasgow, University of Bristol, Queen's University Belfast and the University of York, working with the National Centre for Social Research and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

The [PSE UK website](#) is a comprehensive research and teaching tool. As well as providing full details of the PSE UK research project itself, it includes a searchable digest of recent news stories, reports and specially commissioned articles on poverty and social exclusion in the UK, video testimonies of living in poverty and details of projects encouraging collaboration between research and community groups.



Scotland benefits from the quality and impact of the wider Open University's research; recent examples of material impact of our research include innovations in floodplain management, empowering people through intuitive technology, developing a new theory of software engineering and improving decision-making in financial environments. The OU in Scotland has more work to do in communicating this institutional activity to key stakeholders in Scotland.

Income from research grants and contracts has increased by 5% to £15.5 million in 2013/14. The majority of The Open University's research funding is from HEFCE with the SFC contributing funding towards knowledge exchange.



The OU is strongly committed to the advancement and promotion of the careers of women in STEMM subject areas. Following our success in achieving the Institutional Athena SWAN bronze award in 2013, The Open University has also been successful in achieving the Departmental Bronze awards for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and the Department of Physical Sciences. We are proud to be working towards submissions for departmental silver awards.

The Department of Physical Sciences was also awarded JUNO Practitioner status in January 2014. This award recognises actions that demonstrate commitment to addressing the under-representation of women, specifically in subjects allied to Physics.

Reach

The Open University offers research degrees on a full-time and part-time basis with over 1,000 postgraduate research students currently registered; a proportion of whom are based in Scotland. Students can study a PhD, MPhil Master of Research (MRes) full-time or part-time; the Doctorate in Education (EdD) is a part-time degree. Our research students are also supported through the [Virtual Research Environment](#).

Open Research Online (ORO) is The Open University's repository of over 25,000 research publications and other research outputs. It is an Open Access resource that can be searched and browsed freely by members of the public. The University has also recently introduced the Scholarship Platform for internal staff to share learning and teaching research and scholarship activity.

Research and Scholarship within The OU in Scotland

Whilst the majority of The Open University's research functions are located at the campus in Milton Keynes, its impact influences policy and practice from local to global levels. Amongst our academic staff within The OU in Scotland, there is active research on volcanology, social policy, poverty, post-independence tax implications, economic development in community buyouts, business history, music and language learning amongst a variety of other topics.

The University has introduced the status of Honorary Associate which enables OU Associate Lecturers, who wish to undertake research in collaboration with the OU, to apply to a faculty or institute, similar to Visiting Academic status. This scheme allows the research of associate lecturers in Scotland to be recognised and will strengthen our academic community.

The OU in Scotland's Learning Development Team conducts a broad range of practice based research and scholarship which impacts on pedagogic practice institutionally and across the HE sector. Evaluation of our research on the key thematic areas below leads to the development of innovative pedagogic practices, then into staff development and the mainstreaming of practices:

The Learning Development Team conducts a broad range of practice based research and scholarship which impacts on pedagogic practice institutionally and across the HE sector. Current priority areas for scholarship activity include:

- The pedagogy of online and distance learning
- College-university transitions
- Understanding and supporting widening access
- Open educational practice
- Educational needs and support of carers
- The needs and experience of young students
- Work-based learning, employability and skills development
- Professional development in the HE sector
- Reflection and Learning
- Student experience, student identity and networks of support

Within Scotland, the QAA Enhancement Theme on student transition is providing a further catalyst for research, scholarship and development of evidence-based practice. Over the period of this

outcome agreement, we aim to further develop our understanding of key transition points that are particularly critical to our students in Scotland: transitions for students new to HE, those studying in the workplace or articulating from college.

Cultural engagement

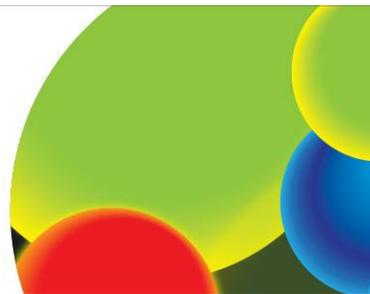
As part of its cultural engagement programme, The Open University in Scotland supports a number of lectures and events at book festivals, arts festivals and science festivals across Scotland. Our current programme includes Wigtown, Crichton Campus, Ullapool, Stirling, Motherwell, Lanark and Orkney with our 'flagship' event being the Edinburgh International Book Festival where we have developed a strong partnership over a number of years.

We believe that our cultural engagement programme in Scotland complements the OU-wide strategic priority of delivering journeys from informal to formal learning as we deliver or support events which are relevant to our curriculum or BBC collaborations, and which can map directly to particular modules/qualifications.

Knowledge exchange

The Open University in Scotland receives baseline funding from the Scottish Funding Council for its knowledge exchange activity which includes conferences, lectures and workshops. However The OU also engages in significant non-income generating knowledge exchange in Scotland, such as the development and provision of informal learning, at a much higher level than the baseline knowledge exchange grant. Under the current metrics such activity cannot be acknowledged or rewarded. It remains our intention to work with the SFC to have the benefits of such knowledge exchange activity recognised.

Knowledge exchange: case study



The OpenScience Laboratory is an online laboratory for practical science teaching which was launched by The Open University with support from The Wolfson Foundation. The laboratory brings interactive practical science

to students anywhere and anytime the internet is available. The laboratory features investigations based on on-screen instruments, remote access experiments and virtual scenarios using real data. Working with the [Opening Educational Practices in Scotland](#) project, we have been piloting the use of OpenScience Lab in a small number of Scottish secondary schools.

SFC Aim 6: University- industry collaboration – deliver a step-change in the engagement of business and industry with universities, removing any barriers to the exploitation of research for economic and wider societal benefit

SFC Outcomes

23. Maximise the potential for leverage of further investment at the UK and European level to further enhance HEI/industry collaboration, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Our strategic intention and context

Partnerships are core to The Open University in Scotland strategic plans. Partnership activity with employers and unions is most prevalent in areas such as Health and Social Care, Social Work and Nursing but it makes an important contribution to every faculty area. We have a diverse range and large number of partnerships from private sector to public, formal to informal and from student sponsorship to collaboration over new curriculum developments. A snapshot of the partnerships in one region, the Highlands and Islands, gives some sense of the range: Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll and Bute Community Health Partnership, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council), Highlands Council, NHS Highland, Highland Home Carers, NHS Orkney, Shetland Islands Council, NHS Shetland, Marine Harvest, Caithness Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Union Learning, Unison, Ross County FC and the Scottish Football Association.

Additional places allocated for skills by the SFC in 2014-15 have enabled The OU in Scotland to augment our engineering provision to well established partners such as Rolls Royce, Babcock, BAE Systems and Mahle, unions and colleges.

University-industry collaboration: case study

The Open University is working with Scottish Water to provide a new [educational pathway](#) for people working in or aspiring to work in the water industry.

For the first time, professionals working in the water industry will be able to realise their potential career aspirations with qualifications recognised from further education to Honours and Master Degree level, whether they work in customer services or as a laboratory technician.

The OU is in partnership with Scottish Water, Glasgow Clyde College, and Heriot-Watt University, to provide the pathway. The OU will give credit for Glasgow Clyde College's Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Water Operations, into the OU's Bachelor of Arts/ Science (BA/BSc) Open Honours degree, preparing students to move to Heriot-Watt's Master of Science (MSc) in Water and Environmental Management. It is possible to join the study route at HNC, BA/BSc or MSc entry points.

This new partnership will help achieve the Scottish Government's ambition of becoming the first Hydro Nation; committed to maximising the economic, health, social wellbeing and environmental benefits of Scotland's water.

As a result of our work with Community Energy Scotland we have developed an online open access course *Community Energy in Scotland* to support communities, as well as individuals, who want to develop their own energy efficiency and generation measures.

The OU in Scotland works with colleagues in the Business Development Unit to increase non-core net teaching income.

SFC Aim 7: Sustainable institutions – ensure high quality of governance and management for institutions delivering long term and financial and environmentally sustainable interactions

SFC Outcomes

- 24. Institutions have in place appropriate and effective governance structures which ensure sound governance, internal control and risk management.
- 25. Institutions' governing bodies have clear ownership of institutional sustainability.
- 26. Institutions invest in their estates for teaching and research at a sustainable level.

OU Outcomes

- 27. An increase in philanthropic income from Scotland
- 28. Stable grant income

Our context

The Council is The Open University's governing body for all its operations across the UK including The Open University in Scotland. It has a membership of 25 which includes a majority of external members co-opted for their experience and expertise in line with the requirements of [Scottish Code of Good HE Governance](#), the Vice-Chancellor, five members of the Senate, the President of the Open University Students Association and one other student, two Associate Lecturers and one member of the non-academic staff. Much of the detailed business of the Council is conducted through its specialist committees, which advise the Council on Audit, Development (fundraising), Estates, Finance, Membership, Remuneration, Staff Strategy, and Strategy, Policy and Resources (joint with the Senate). The Council is chaired by the Pro-Chancellor and has the ultimate authority within the OU but has to respect the views of the Senate in academic matters.

The Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, is the academic authority of the University which, subject to the powers reserved for the Council, is responsible for promoting the academic work of the University in teaching, learning, and research and enterprise. The Senate has a membership of 108 with an academic majority. It comprises ex-officio members such as the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans and some other officers, fifty-seven representatives of the academic and research staff, six Associate Lecturers, six students and 14 non-academic staff. There are in addition a number of co-opted places, one of which is held by the Director of the Open University in Scotland.

The Open University in Scotland

The Open University is a unique institution, which delivers teaching in all four nations of the UK and is funded by the governments in Scotland, England and Wales. As such, it has governance structures which recognise and work within the increasingly diverse policy contexts of each nation. The Director of The Open University in Scotland is designated as the Vice-Chancellor's Delegate in Scotland and is responsible for the provision of services to students based in Scotland.

The Open University in Scotland convenes two committees as part of its consultative structure: the Scottish Committee and the Scottish Working Committee. Both committees include representation from students and academics, as well as non-academic staff representatives. The Scottish Committee meets once a year and the Scottish Working Committee meets twice a year. Working with our student and associate lecturer body, we undertook a review of consultative structure in Scotland in 2013 to ensure our current practices and procedures operate effectively within Scotland and the wider Open University consultative structure.

Financial sustainability

The Open University has a well-developed financial strategy, reviewed annually by its Finance Committee that specifies parameters for borrowings, net current assets and surpluses. Each year the starting point of the annual budgeting process is the maintenance of the University's financial sustainability over both the short-term and the long-term. The annual recurrent teaching grant from the Scottish Funding Council contributes to the University's overall income and its financial

condition.

Further information on The Open University's financial position is available in our audited financial statements which can be found at www.open.ac.uk/foi/main/expenditures.

Philanthropic giving

The OU in Scotland is working with colleagues from the Development Office to raise the profile of the University in strategic networks and explore the potential for more philanthropic giving from Scotland for particular projects.

Environmental sustainability

The Open University is committed to the principles of sustainability and sustainable development. By its very nature distance learning is inherently more sustainable than residential HE institutions and the University will strive to achieve even higher standards.

The University's Carbon Management Plan demonstrates our commitment to reducing carbon emissions and fits with our core values of social justice, being responsive to the needs of society and involves minimising energy use, transport and waste. The University has undertaken to reduce its carbon emissions by 36% by 2020 against the 2005 baseline of 15526 tonnes. The University has introduced the Go Green programme which aims to contribute a 5% reduction year on year to work towards this target over the next few years.

Go Green is a University wide programme to reduce our impact on the environment. It aims to achieve environmental and financial savings across the University by empowering staff to take action on energy, waste, water and travel. The Go Green programme is intended to become an integral part of staff behaviours in the future to enable the University to manage its energy needs and energy costs.

The Open University is a member of the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) and liaises in Scotland with EAUC-Scotland.

Summary of measures and targets (where applicable)

SFC Outcome 1

More even patterns of participation by different groups of learners, including those from areas of deprivation, from protected characteristic groups and care backgrounds

Protected characteristics

The diversity of our student population for the most part mirrors that of the Scottish population.

Characteristic	2013/14 FTE	2013/14 % FTE	2016/17 target
Under 21	205	10%	10%
21 and over	1765	90%	90%
Female	1,150	59%	59%
Male	815	41%	41%
Disability declared	250	13%	14%
Disability not (yet) declared	1,715	87%	86%
BME	85	4%	5%
White	1,855	94%	94%
Ethnicity unknown	25	1%	1%

In support of core activities such as widening access we will continue to monitor entrants and all other student demographic profiles by age, SIMD, disability, part-time fee grant, remoteness, ethnicity and gender and other appropriate protected characteristics. Analysis of this information helps us to evaluate our impact and to learn more about successful ways to raise attainment.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

SIMD quintile	2013/14 FTE	2013/14 % FTE	2016/17 target
Most deprived	330	17%	19%
Second most deprived	390	20%	19%

Table: Proportion of new undergraduates with valid postcode-datazone mapping at start in SFC population-based 2012 SIMD quintiles.

SFC Outcome 2

An increase in the number of students articulating with advanced standing from HNC/HND to degree level study

The number and proportion of students articulating to The OU in Scotland

The FTE count of new undergraduates with highest previous qualifications at HN level, who have been awarded credit transfer. This indicator monitors the achievement of additional funded places.

Academic year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Credit transfer awarded	68.2	63.7	63.5	73.8	74	74

Notes

The Open University has an extremely flexible credit transfer policy: although students are encouraged to transfer credit before starting OU study, they may in practice do so at any point before claiming their qualification. As a result, OU credit transfer data is very complex to extract and analyse. In order to produce comparable time series for reporting purposes, a snapshot of credit transfer status is taken on 1 August

following the end of each academic year.

This figure is therefore a *lower bound* for the number of students from colleges awarded credit transfer to The Open University in Scotland.

No target has been given for 2016/17 at this stage as we consider how The Open University can maintain the scale and reach of its articulation activity going forward with institutions expected to embed their articulation activity from 2016 onwards.

OU Outcome 3

Recruitment levels of OU students with a Higher National (HN) background are maintained.

The FTE registrations and percentage of new undergraduates with highest previous qualification (PEQ) at HN level. This indicator provides a measure of the volume and level of our recruitment of students from the college sector.

Measure	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
HN FTE at start	277.0	264.6	314.9	326.0	326.0	326.0	326.0
% HN FTE at start	15.3%	15.7%	15.9%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%

OU Outcome 4

An increase in the number of schools, including those that are part of the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP), involved in our Young Applicants in Schools Scheme.

Number of schools including participating in the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme

Measure	Confirmed			Interim	Target
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of SHEP schools	7	5	13	18	25
Number of schools	78	106	92	106	100

Number of students registered on the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme

Measure	Confirmed			Interim	Target
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of YASS students	496	577	566	722	700

Notes

No target has been given beyond 2015/16 at this stage as the strategic funding for the YASS+ project comes to an end in July 2016.

SFC Outcome 5

An improvement in the retention and success rates of learners.

Progression

The sector-wide progression metric introduced by the Scottish Funding Council for reporting cycles 2014/15-2017/18 relates to full-time students only so The OU in Scotland is currently negotiating an equivalent metric.

Completion

Undergraduate stage	2012/13 (near-final)	2014/15 target	2015/16 target	2016/17 target
Entrant	58%	60%	60%	60%
Continuing student	68%	67%	67%	67%

SFC Outcome 7

Quality of learning provision and learner outcomes assured and enhanced

Students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey

Measure	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Proportion of OU students satisfied with overall quality of their study experience in the National Students Survey	93%	93%	94%	93%	92%	92%	92%	92%

SFC Outcome 8

Expansion of the *back on course Scotland* service for full time undergraduate students who have withdrawn from higher education before completing their studies.

Number of early leavers notified to The Open University for the *back on course Scotland* service

Measure	2013	Interim 2014	Target 2015	Target 2016	Target 2017
Number of records passed to <i>back on course Scotland</i> service	1,105	2,309	2,000	2,000	2,000
Proactive attempt at contact	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% of early leavers the service has successfully interacted with	35%	22%	38%	38%	38%
% of those whose records have been passed to <i>back on course Scotland</i> going on to full guidance stage	5.6%	4%	7%	7%	7%

SFC Outcomes 9 & 10

Universities are responsive to current and future skill requirements of employers
More targeted recruitment to courses of national and regional economic significance

Proportion of students on STEM modules

Measure	2013/14 FTE	2013/14 % FTE	2016/17 target
STEM module	710	36%	40%
Non-STEM module	1,260	64%	60%

OU Outcome 14

Levels of employer sponsorship are maintained in a period of austerity.

Measure	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Proportion of total student headcount (undergraduate and postgraduate)	9%	10%	10%	8%	8%	8%

OU Outcome 22

Recognition of The Open University in Scotland's contribution to knowledge exchange through its delivery of informal learning

Measures

An incremental increase in knowledge exchange income to The OU in Scotland over the period of this outcome agreement.

Evidence of impact in 2-3 sectors of The OU in Scotland's knowledge exchange activity.

Critical assumptions

There are a number of critical assumptions that have been made when drawing up The OU in Scotland's outcome agreement for 2015-16; some rely on external factors, others are internal to the University:

- Additional funding is provided to meet the anticipated shortfall between the demand from pupils to participate in the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) in 2015/16 and the available funding for fees. Recommendations from the Scottish Government's review of the Part-Time Fee Grant, which will be implemented in 2016/17 should resolve the funding issue for the longer term.
- A viable number of short modules remain available within the University's curriculum to sustain the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) and attract learners who wish to start their learning journey with small amounts of credit.
- The Scottish Government's Commission on Widening Access does not recommend immediate changes to the Scottish Government's priorities and targets in this area.
- Legislation relating to HE governance takes account of the unique governance arrangements of The Open University (as a UK institution) and makes it an 'exceptional case'.
- The Scottish Funding Council's review of regional coherence funding with potential changes in AY 2016-17 supports both The Open University's wider access & retention and work-based learning activity.



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