Outcome agreement between The Open University in Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council:
Updated for 2016-17

Open to people
Open to places
Open to methods
Open to ideas
Contents

The Open University 5

AIM 1: Access for people from the widest range of backgrounds 8

AIM 2: High quality, efficient and effective learning 14

AIM 3: Right learning in the right place 16

AIM 4: A developed workforce 19

AIM 5: Research 24

AIM 6: University-industry collaboration 27

AIM 7: Sustainable institutions 29

Summary of measures and targets 31
The Open University Mission
Open to people, places, methods and ideas

Our Vision
To reach more students with life-changing learning that meets their needs and enriches society

Objectives

- Academic excellence
- Enhanced employability and career progression
- Leadership in digital innovation
- Adaptive organisation and culture
- Income diversification and cost reduction

More students qualifying

People and Values
Inclusive • Innovative • Responsive
The Open University: A unique institution serving the whole of Scotland

The Open University has always operated a 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 aligned with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. We offer a wide range of 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 currently offers the OpenPAD scheme for the professional development of those who teach and directly support learning. This 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. This scheme will be replaced by APPLAuD in September 2016. 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 14,500 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. We collaborate with 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 OU in Scotland’s engagement with the Crichton partnership is detailed in the Crichton Campus Consolidated Outcome Agreement for 2016-17.

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 20% of our students who live in remote and rural towns and areas of Scotland and who would otherwise have limited options to access higher education.

OU students are not just in Scotland; the University has 174,000 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 OU 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 2014-15, 540,000 new learners followed links from the OpenLearn website to view OU courses. During 2016, all OpenLearn courses (over 800) will be launched on Google Play and Amazon for Kindle to reflect the diversity of the University's curriculum and the strength of the academic brand.

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 Hunt with Sir David Attenborough, Genius of the Ancient World with Bettany Hughes and The Bottom Line with Evan Davis. 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.

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 forums 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. There is also an online Scottish Consultative Forum in order to consult students in Scotland on a range of issues.

Each student support team (SST) has its own student consultative 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 in August 2013: www.open.ac.uk/students/charter. Developed by the University and OUSA, this charter sets out what the responsibilities are and what staff and students can expect of each other. We will review this Charter every year to ensure it reflects our current needs and challenges, while continuing to support the key aim of helping all our students to succeed.
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 2014-15 to AY 2016-17. 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. A sustainable funding model for the 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 2014/15, 38% of our new undergraduate students were resident in the two most deprived quintiles of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD40), an increase on 2013/14. The proportion of students resident in the most deprived quintile (SIMD20) has fallen slightly since 2012/13 due in part to changes in the University’s curriculum and the transition to the Part-time Fee Grant. 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 had hoped that the Scottish Government’s Commission on Widening Access would recommend that SIMD should be considered as one of a basket of measures of deprivation rather than the sole measure. As the recommendations of the Commission are put into practice we will work towards ensuring that all learners: school-leavers, part-time and mature students, are covered in any future work.

Our students come from a wide range of backgrounds, including a very significant proportion on low incomes. The Scottish Government’s Part-time Fee Grant, introduced in July 2013, has increased the number of people on low incomes coming to study with The Open University. In 2014/15, 64% of our new undergraduate students had an individual income below £25,000. The Scottish Government has been conducting a review of the Part-time Fee Grant in 2015 and we look forward to being able to reinforce our widening access activity as a result.
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. Our access programme provides three highly supported accredited modules that facilitate the transition to HE level study. It has been 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 OU 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 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 and by building on and extending our existing network 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 and to explore the use and re-versioning of OERs for use in specific supported contexts with varied groups of learners.

Widening access: case study

Jane Stitt is a full-time carer for her two disabled sons in Dumfries. She recently took part in a free reflection and planning course for carers developed by The OU in Scotland, which was facilitated by her local carers centre.

Before the boys were born, Jane worked as a nurse but had to give up her career thirteen years ago to care for them. She was beginning to think about returning to work but she lacked confidence and wasn’t sure how to account for the large gap in her CV.

“It was just the right time when this course was offered and I thought it was perfect, it will make me reflect on what I’ve been doing for the past thirteen years instead of being paid.”

The Caring Counts course offers an ‘open badge’ to recognise informal learning. After completing the course, Jane felt confident enough to apply for a job. At her interview she mentioned the course and her ‘open badge’, which helped her to articulate the skills and experiences she has gained through her caring role and the value of these in the workplace.

“the course really opens your mind up and gets you thinking about what you actually do and what your value is”

Jane intends to continue her learning journey, using Open Pathways to Higher Education to navigate the OU’s informal learning resources and possibly progressing to formal education.

“Actually I’m quite smart, I can pull this off, and maybe get a degree”.
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 2014-15, 15% 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 has enabled 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 OU 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 had 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 is maintaining a dialogue with the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government with the aim of enhancing and increasing the scale of our work with offender learners in 2016-17.

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 2013 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 method.\(^1\)

Students with care experience and carers

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. Coming to the OU as mature students, most people choose not to disclose whether they are care leavers, perhaps feeling this is no longer relevant information. Only 0.6% of our new undergraduates in Scotland declared that they were looked after in 2014/15.

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 remaining period of this outcome agreement, The OU in Scotland intends to undertake a scoping study for working collaboratively with organisations such as the Princes Trust that support care leavers.

We have put particular emphasis on working with carers in Scotland over the past couple of years as part of our widening access activity; it augments our work in SIMD40, 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.

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\(^1\) Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending, Ministry of Justice 2013
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 in the Workplace. The content of Caring Counts was co-created with carers and practitioners from the Carers Centre in Dumfries, Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire. Given new legislation to support carers, Caring Counts in the Workplace, has increasing relevance to employers and The OU in Scotland will look to do more to support this. Both courses provide learners with the opportunity of gaining a digital badge to recognise informal learning.

In 2015 The Open University was awarded the Carer Positive (Engaged) status; an award operated by Carers Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Age
The median age of our entrants in Scotland is 28. Most of our students are studying to improve their careers; nearly 70% fit their studies around work. In 2014/15, 13% of our undergraduate entrants were aged under 21; an increase of 3% from the previous year largely due to the success of our Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS).

Gender balance
In 2014/15 57% of our new undergraduates were female. Over 40% of all students taking STEM courses are female however we are aware that there are some cases of a severe imbalance in subjects such as computing and social care. As we move into the next three year outcome agreement period, we will report on the gender balance of our total student population in Scotland and monitor trends at a subject level. Where we identify subjects with an imbalance of more than 75:25, we will work with colleagues in our faculties and Equality & Diversity team to consider what action can be taken to achieve a greater balance. We will also work to improve gender balance at a sectoral level with organisations such as the Equality Challenge Unit and the Higher Education Academy in Scotland.

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 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), 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 enhance 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)

Most 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 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy was approved 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 are developing our use of open educational resources with colleges to enhance existing curriculum and to support students’ transition into OU study.

The OU in Scotland welcomed the 60 additional places for articulation provided by the SFC again in 2015-16 and we will report on progress towards the fulfilment of these places in the self-evaluation report in October 2016.

Our campus-based model of partnership is another strand of our articulation activity and we worked with five colleges in 2015-16. This unique partnership provides students who have completed their HN qualification, 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, therefore providing new learning opportunities in familiar spaces and supporting the transition from FE to HE study. 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. As a result of college mergers, we have been able to extend the facilities to all the main campuses of New College Lanarkshire and Fife College. Learning Spaces give OU students in the college catchment area access to IT, library, study and other social facilities. Over the remainder of this outcome agreement period, we are exploring different uses of the Learning Spaces as a way of fostering informal peer support networks of learners.

Working with schools
Our highly successful 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 now included on Insight (the Scottish Government benchmarking tool for the senior
phase) and can be added to UCAS forms as another qualification. We will advance discussions with UCAS in regard to tariff points for YASS modules.

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 1,000 pupils have participated in 2015/16. 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. To date 31 SHEP schools (those identified as having low participation in HE) have participated in YASS.

The OU in Scotland is grateful to the Scottish Funding Council for its support of the YASS project to date and also for providing an interim solution for school pupils to fund their OU modules whilst a long term sustainable solution is being sought. The Part-time Fee Grant does not allow for the eligibility of YASS students or those taking short modules of less than 30 credits.

We will explore further opportunities to build on our presence in schools to promote learning in the wider community via the parents and carers of pupils; stimulation learning cultures and supporting wider access.

**Case study: Young Applicants in Schools Scheme**

“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

**Equality and diversity**

The Open University launched its new Equality Scheme in April 2016. This is available on the OU website at [http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives](http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives). We are creating an inclusive university community and a society:

- where people are treated with dignity and respect
- where inequalities are challenged and
- where we anticipate, and respond positively to, different needs and circumstances so that everyone can achieve their potential.

The Open University participates in a number of equality charter marks, benchmarking activities and awards to support our agenda with regard to protected equality characteristics including:

- [Athena SWAN Charter](http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives)
- [Disability Standard](http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives)
- [Stonewall Workplace Equality Index](http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/content/equality-scheme-objectives)
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. Continued 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 2015, The Open University in Scotland was ranked first for overall satisfaction by the National Student Survey: 93% 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 in 2014 to create Student Support Teams bringing academic and support staff 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. This structure is designed to provide a continuity of support for students throughout their study experience. In Scotland, we work closely with faculties and Academic Services colleagues to ensure that our students benefit from this approach whilst 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’s 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 with colleagues, and harnessing some of the University's world-leading expertise in Learning Analytics, to design interventions tailored to meet the needs of students in Scotland.

The sector-wide progression metric introduced by the SFC for reporting cycles 2014/15 - 2016/17 relates to full-time students only. The OU in Scotland has now negotiated an equivalent metric which will be used for the reporting cycle 2015/16. We are pleased that there has been an improvement in the proportion of both new and continuing students who completed a module presentation at the first opportunity.

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. We are also expanding our student hubs model as a way of supporting the development of communities of learners. We have established Arts, Psychology and Social Sciences hubs for students in particular localities.

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 OU in Scotland, funded by the Scottish Funding Council and is currently working with twelve Scottish university partners (and two associate partners) 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.
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
12. An increase in the number of students with practical skills in modern foreign languages and Gaelic

Open University Outcomes
13. 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. There has been an increase in the number of S6 pupils on our Young Applicants in Schools Scheme studying language modules.

The Open University welcomes the new outcome from the SFC to increase the number of students with practical skills in languages including Gaelic. Learning from our collaborative project with Glasgow Caledonian University where The OU in Scotland provided OU language modules for GCU postgraduate students and staff to enhance their qualification and professional development respectively, we intend to include this outcome in our discussions with our college partners. The OU in Scotland has worked with Scotland’s National Centre for Languages (SCILT) and the University Council of Modern Languages in Scotland (UCMLS) for a number of years on various aspects of language awareness-raising.

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 over 2,500 FTEs. In 2014/15, STEM students accounted for over 40% of the total student cohort.

STEM case study: the Reboot Your STEM Career toolkit

The OU has developed an open educational resource ‘Reboot Your STEM Career’ (http://www.open.edu/openlearn/stemreboot) - a comprehensive, interactive toolkit to help those returning to STEM careers to relaunch their career and navigate their way back into the world of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. It will help users build on areas such as work-life balance, professional skills, entering the world of work, how to present themselves, searching for jobs and how to network. Whilst the toolkit is mainly aimed at women, it will be useful to anyone thinking of returning to a STEM career after a break. Users create an account and login, allowing them to return to their action plan as and when they need.

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 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.

Case study: OEPS open educational resources

The SFC-funded Opening Educational Practices in Scotland (OEPS) project launched two new open educational resources in May 2016: one is called My seaweed looks weird on seaweed cultivation and the global industry behind it, in partnership with the Scottish Association for Marine Science at the University of the Highlands and Islands. The other resource is called Understanding Parkinsons and is in partnership with Parkinsons UK.
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, the British Museum and the European Space Agency. 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.

Working together at the Crichton Campus

Over the past 12 months we have continued to upscale our contribution at the Crichton Campus and more generally across Dumfries and Galloway and laid the foundation for further developments through 2016-17

• A multi institutional research and development group has been established to gather evidence for the Crichton Care Campus concept. The group, coordinated and led by The Open University involves academics from all the campus partners. Three OU academics are contributing to the wider plan, and an interim dissemination event is planned for the autumn of 2016.

• We plan to increase our range of knowledge exchange and public engagement events on the campus. In January 2016, we ran a successful seminar for those working in education, focused on creating motivating and energising learning environments. We are planning 3 further events in 2016 in the health and social care field (one on mental health, and two on ageing). Where appropriate, we will work in collaboration with Crichton partners in planning the events.

• We continue to explore how the OU can make a distinct offer to employers in the region to help them upskill their workforce and to contribute to the local economy. We are establishing links with a number of umbrella organisations in the locality, building on the strong networks established by the Crichton Institute and the Crichton Project Manager.

• We continue to play a full and active role on the Crichton Institute, working collaboratively with other institutional partners.

• We continue to surface opportunities to widen access to higher education and work to support specific needs of particular groups of students. We plan to build on our collaboration with the Dumfries Carers Centre and extend our outreach via third sector organisations and other key local stakeholders.

• We welcome the opportunity to work with Crichton partners through the Joint Academic Strategy Group. The OU’s contribution makes a valuable contribution to expanding the curriculum offer in the region, opportunities for college articulation, and strengthens the capacity of the sector to contribute to widening access across the region.

• We intend to further strengthen our use of the Learning Space for OU students hosted in Dumfries and Galloway College. We will also work in collaboration with local students to explore ways of strengthen peer support and sense of OU student community
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
14. Graduates are well prepared for work and can utilise their skills effectively in the increasingly international labour market.

Open University Outcomes
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 OU 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 2014/15, over 1,000 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. In 2015, the OU launched a new, free employability badged online course *Succeed in the Workplace* will become available. The OU in Scotland and the OU’s Careers Service will work with a range of partners 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 2016 the OU will collaborate with Skills Development Scotland to explore the potential to contribute to the development of apprenticeship models, looking at flexible pathways to apprenticeships via part-time and distance learning study.
Case study: Employability Skills

The Open University in Scotland is delivering a bespoke course 'Employability Skills' to members of the Public and Commercial Services Union.

The two-day workshops are being provided in various locations and offices throughout Scotland. The Open University (OU) in Scotland won a bid to Scottish Union Learning for funding to be able to provide the workshops.

The course is aimed at administrative and clerical staff. It provides learners with the opportunity to acquire the skills needed in order to sustain employment, as well as building confidence to apply for new roles within their current workplace, and to once again enter the job market.

The workshops are delivered in keeping with the Civil Service Competency Framework. They are based on content from the Open University course ‘Succeed in the workplace’, from the OU’s free learning site OpenLearn.

Yvonne Ormiston works for the Department for Work and Pensions in Kirkcaldy. She said:

'"My confidence levels were raised and I would recommended this course to others. I am now very interested in the OU’s free ‘Working Life and Learning’ and ‘Succeed in the Workplace’ courses on OpenLearn.'

We continue to play an active role in the development and future strategic direction of the Crichton Institute in Dumfries. We have been conducting 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.

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 are exploring innovative tri-partite models of employer/union/university partnership.

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 (SDS) in Scotland and has been accessed by over 10,000 learners. This project has been extensively evaluated and findings suggest that it has made a distinct contribution to supporting staff and communities embed SDS in practice. This project also enabled us to work with harder to reach learners because of new networks we were able to join and be part of. Free, workplace enhancement material will also be available during 2016.

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.
Case study: Working together with Cyrenians to build a more skilled workforce

We are working in a close partnership with an Edinburgh-based third sector organisation, Cyrenians. Cyrenians typically work with people living on the margins of society, and through a variety of support programmes, help them lead more fulfilling and independent lives.

We were approached by Cyrenians to help them develop a skills strategy to upskill their workforce. Over the next five years they are keen that every member of staff undertakes some form of learning, with the OU being a key provider depending on the needs identified. Initially, we helped the organisation reflect on its strategic direction in terms of what skills it will need for the future. This then led to the design of a learning and skills audit for staff that was piloted, and is now being used across a wider staff group. The intention is to draw on the audit to devise a plan around what learning is required (including matching needs with an appropriate OU offer). Even at this stage, this has been work of real value to Cyrenians and there are clearly wider learning benefits to the OU in how we might approach this task with other organisations who want to do something similar.

In addition, this emerging partnership has directly spurred a range of innovative knowledge exchange events. In November 2015 a very successful joint seminar was held on Mental Health and Community Support, involving OU academics and staff from Cyrenians.

Given the success of this event, the OU is offering three other knowledge exchange events during 2016-17, all linked to the over-arching theme of widening access to education (especially for marginalised and disenfranchised groups). Again this will draw on the expertise of the OU presenting a theoretical perspective, with Cyrenians providing a related practice based input on their work.

In 2015, we worked with the retailer ASDA in a Scotland-wide, Dementia Friendly Retail programme to support customers and communities. This programme won a Herald Higher Education Award in the outstanding contribution to the community category. Given the success of this programme, we are currently exploring with our colleagues based in Milton Keynes, including our Development Office, how a national retailer programme could be developed throughout the UK.

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 motivation\(^2\) 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

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

**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 the following 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)

ix. Engaging pro-actively with Scottish Government economic priority sectors in Scotland including Scotland’s Food and Drink, and Scotland’s Young Workforce

x. In 2016, we will scope out new opportunities across the length and breadth of Scotland where the OU can make a distinct contribution.

xi. Provide a more integrated and seamless range of support around careers and employability (with the intention of further expanding our work in this area during 2016)

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.

Through Regional Coherence funding, we have restructured and augmented our Learning Development Team in order to continue to grow our work-based learning activity and increasing the number and diversity of employers we are actively engaged with and the number of sectors and unions we work with.
Our report *Work-based Learning: A baseline study of work-based learning at undergraduate level in Scotland* is available on The OU in Scotland’s website: [www.open.ac.uk/scotland/research/research/learning-development/work-based-learning](http://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 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.

The OU in Scotland developed *Rural entrepreneurship*: an open educational resource freely available for anyone interested in starting their own business in a rural or remote environment. We are in discussion with Highlands & Islands Enterprise to promote this resource with the OU offering enhanced wraparound support and pathways into relevant formal study.

We note the national priorities in relation to the Universities Innovation Fund Outcome Grant for 2016-17 and we will be looking to augment our careers advisory service to promote entrepreneurial opportunities to students during their studies.

**Third Sector Internships Scotland scheme**

The OU in Scotland 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 offered 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.

The Internships scheme ended in its current form at 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. The OU is also building on the learning from TSIS in the development of a series of new internships schemes across the institution.

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**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.

Scottish Union Learning Highland and Islands students have 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 has completed the Certificate in Higher Education (Open) two-year qualification with The OU in Scotland. 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.”

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Our report *Work-based Learning: A baseline study of work-based learning at undergraduate level in Scotland* is available on The OU in Scotland’s website: [www.open.ac.uk/scotland/research/research/learning-development/work-based-learning](http://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/research/research/learning-development/work-based-learning)
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. Increase knowledge exchange activity through new Universities Innovation Fund

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.

The Open University has four strategic research areas aimed at addressing 21st century global challenges and promoting social justice.

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<tr>
<th>Citizenship and Governance</th>
<th>Space</th>
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<tr>
<td>OU research into citizenship and governance is rethinking the changing relationships between states and citizens in the 21st century. It focuses on global issues like migration, and on the private sphere where people’s intimate lives are increasingly scrutinized and open to public policy and corporate intervention.</td>
<td>Using cutting-edge technology, OU space scientists are unlocking the secrets of the universe and are helping to overcome practical challenges here on Earth, as well as contributing to the growth of the space sector of UK economy.</td>
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<th>Education</th>
<th>International Development</th>
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<td>The Open University is the European leader for massive scale innovations in learning technologies which break down barriers globally. Our research in Technology Enhanced Learning is driving innovations in teaching, learning and assessment which have worldwide influence.</td>
<td>International development research at the OU is pioneering a different approach which we call ‘inclusive innovation’. We are involving poor and marginalised people in developing their own solutions, and working with them to bring about a fairer and sustainable world.</td>
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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 7% to £16.6 million in 2014/15. 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 STEM 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 award for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and the Silver Award for the Department of Physical Sciences. All other STEM departments submitted Bronze applications in April 2016.

The Department of Physical Sciences has also been awarded the JUNO Practitioner status. 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 30,000 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 forensic psychology, 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. 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.
Knowledge exchange

The Open University in Scotland welcomes receipt of the Scottish Funding Council’s Universities Innovation Fund (UIF) Platform Grant in 2016-17. We will utilise the Platform Grant to build on our core knowledge exchange and innovation activities, continue to support our programme of cultural engagement and to support the development of informal learning activities to have impact at both a national and global level. In the period 2016-17, we will also scope areas of future work where we are able to support the agreed national UIF priorities particularly to enhance our work on employer engagement and to promote entrepreneurial opportunities to our students.

As part of its cultural engagement programme, The OU in Scotland supports a number of lectures and events at book festivals, arts festivals and science festivals across Scotland. Our current programme includes the Wigtown Book Festival, a series of events at the Crichton Campus, the Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival, the Ullapool Book Festival, ‘Bloody Scotland’ in Stirling, ‘Aye Write’ in Glasgow, North Lanarkshire’s Cultural Encounter Festival, the New Lanark Book Festival and the St Magnus Festival in Orkney with our ‘flagship’ event being the Edinburgh International Book Festival where we have developed a strong partnership over a number of years.

Our cultural engagement programme in Scotland complements our ambition 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 provide a pathway to particular modules/qualifications.

Knowledge exchange case study: SIPR

The Open University in Scotland is delighted to have joined the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR). SIPR is a strategic collaboration between 13 of Scotland’s universities and the Scottish police service supported by investment from Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority, the Scottish Funding Council and the participating universities.

The key aims are:

- To undertake high quality, independent, and relevant research;
- To support knowledge exchange between researchers and practitioners and improve the research evidence base for policing policy and practice;
- To expand and develop the research capacity in Scotland’s universities and the police service;
- To promote the development of national and international links with researcher, practitioner and policy communities.

SIPR is an interdisciplinary Institute which brings together researchers from the social sciences, natural sciences and humanities around four broad thematic areas: Police-Community Relations; Evidence & Investigation; Education & Leadership; and Public Protection.

With the OU’s expertise in a range of different disciplines including psychology, criminology and social policy; our strong track record of working with the police as well as world-leading expertise in distance-learning, we can complement and enhance the skills and inter-disciplinary knowledge within SIPR and create new opportunities to link into the wider OU research community in the UK and the recently established OU Policing Research Consortium.
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

There is significant overlap between The OU in Scotland’s activity to support the SFC aim of a developed workforce (page 19) and this aim.

Partnerships are core to The OU in Scotland’s 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 2015-16 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. We are actively looking at how we can use the 10 additional Skills for Growth places in 2016-17 on a matched funding basis.

Babcock OU Apprenticeship Programme: case study

Due to the shortage of engineers in the UK, Babcock International Group plc responded by looking to increase its internal capabilities and competencies. The business wanted a tailored solution that could develop its existing staff into engineers while they worked, so it approached The Open University to develop a flexible apprenticeship programme that could provide the same standard of learning across the UK.

View their video testimonial here on our YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEbV7ghXZ5s&feature=youtu.be
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 welcomed the additional taught postgraduate places provided by the Scottish Funding Council in 2015-16. We have continued to target these places within the themes of leadership, management skills and professional development supporting students on the first module of the MBA and the MSc in Development Management. All the places have been successfully filled and we will report in more detail in the 2015-16 self-evaluation report.

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**University-industry collaboration: case study**

Working with Scottish Water, The Open University has developed 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 are 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 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.
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

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 OU 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 OU in Scotland acts as the Vice-Chancellor’s Delegate in Scotland and is responsible for the provision of services to students based in Scotland.

The OU 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.

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 OU in Scotland is working towards submitting its Climate Change report to the Scottish Government in November 2016.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>2014/15 FTE</th>
<th>2014/15 %</th>
<th>2016/17 target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 21</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 and over</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,177</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability declared</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability not (yet) declared</td>
<td>1,742</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity unknown</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care experience</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMD quintile</th>
<th>2013/14 FTE</th>
<th>2013/14 %</th>
<th>2014/15 FTE</th>
<th>2014/15 %</th>
<th>2016/17 target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most deprived (SIMD20)</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two most deprived (SIMD40)</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credit transfer awarded</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HN FTE at start</td>
<td>277.0</td>
<td>264.6</td>
<td>314.9</td>
<td>326.0</td>
<td>326.0</td>
<td>326.0</td>
<td>326.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% HN FTE at start</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OU Outcome 4
A sustainable funding model for the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme.

SFC Outcome 5
An improvement in the retention and success rate of learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progression</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrant headcount</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>2,314</td>
<td>2,525</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returner headcount</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression rate</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The academic years shown in the table are the year of entry for each cohort.
Completion
The proportion of new and continuing undergraduates who completed a module presentation at the first opportunity; those who defer are treated as non-completers for this purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrant</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing student</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of OU students satisfied with overall quality of their study experience in the National Students Survey</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Target 2016</th>
<th>Target 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of records passed to back on course Scotland service</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>2,309</td>
<td>2,022</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of early leavers the service has successfully interacted with</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of those whose records have been passed to back on course Scotland going on to full guidance stage</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 new undergraduates on STEM modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2014/15 FTE</th>
<th>2014/15 % FTE</th>
<th>Interim 2015/16 FTE</th>
<th>Interim 2015/16 %</th>
<th>Target 2016/17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STEM module</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-STEM module</td>
<td>1,307</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>1419</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcome Agreement between the Open University in Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2016-17

On behalf of the Open University in Scotland:

Signed: 
Print name: Susan Stewart
Position: Director
Date: 20/06/16

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed: 
Print name: Laurence Howells
Position: Chief Executive
Date: 28 June 2016