The master logo is the most important visual representation of the brand. Universally recognised, it quickly and easily conveys all of our key brand values. Wherever practical, this primary version of the logo must be used.

Need help with something? Contact: brand-enquiries@open.ac.uk

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Contents

Introduction 3
Our Mission 4
Our Values 5
The changing environment 6
The Open University today 8
The Open University going forward 10
Our Strategy 12
Delivering the Strategy 14
Introduction

The Open University is unique and makes a real difference to people’s lives. We lead the way in using innovation to create high quality flexible learning, underpinned and informed by excellence in research. We take pride in our Mission of being ‘open to people, places, methods and ideas’.

The Open University is the UK’s largest university with almost 200,000 students, and has been rated as one of the best in the country for overall student satisfaction. In the National Student Survey 2014, we received a rating of 91%, placing The Open University as one of the top ten universities in the UK.

This is the Open University’s Strategic Plan for the period 2012–2017. Originally formulated in 2012, it has been refreshed annually and this version of the Plan reflects the changes that have been made over time as a result of developments in the external environment and internally.

The most significant change has been the extension of the Plan through to the 2016/17 academic year. This extension reflects the continued relevance of the existing Plan and its central strategic intent to secure the mission and thrive as a University by delivering a step change in how effectively we help students achieve their study goals. It also reflects the change of institutional leadership, with both a new Vice-Chancellor and new Pro-Chancellor in 2015.

The core content of the Strategic Plan remains the same though dates have been revised and additional ‘2015 update’ sections have been added to reflect the progress and developments that have taken place since its creation in 2012.

The Strategic Plan 2012-17 is the means by which we secure The Open University’s Mission and thrive as a University within the new Higher Education environment across the four nations of the UK and internationally. It enables us to build on the success we have already achieved by being clear where we will focus our efforts over the coming years. Seven Strategic Priorities are identified as the key areas that will make a critical difference to the University’s ability to achieve this goal.

Responsibilities for the delivery of the Plan have been clearly defined and mechanisms have been put in place to enable the University to track progress and be able to identify when the objectives have been achieved.

We are committed to building upon the fantastic work that the University does in helping students achieve their study goals and in contributing to the enrichment of society as a whole. Everyone in the University has an important role to play in the achievement of the Strategy so that we can continue transforming lives through education.
Our Mission

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

**Inclusive**

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

**Innovative**

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

**Responsive**

- We respond to the needs of individuals and employers and the communities in which they live and work
- We are dedicated to supporting our students’ learning success
Securing the Mission

The changing environment

The funding and student finance regimes in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will become even more divergent from 2012-13.

In England, where the majority of our students live, the Government is:

- **Significantly reducing funding** – by 80% in the case of teaching funding for the sector.
- **Enabling Higher Education Institutions to increase fees up to £9,000 pa.**
- **Introducing loans for part-time students** – but only if they are studying for a qualification and at an intensity of at least 25% of full-time study.
- **Actively stimulating competition in the sector,** for example, by making it easier for commercial providers to obtain degree-awarding powers and encouraging the delivery of more higher education provision through further education colleges.

- **Increasing the competition for research funding** and concentrating it on centres of excellence.

The exact arrangements in Wales are yet to be decided although there is a commitment to introduce loans for part-time students. There are no major changes planned yet to the prevailing system of funding or financial support in Scotland. The future plans in Northern Ireland are not yet clear.
The Open University is impacted by this changing UK environment to a greater extent than most universities:

- We are the only institution which operates in each of the four nations within the UK.
- We are predominantly a part-time provider and the greatest competition for new entrants in England is expected in that market.
- We will lose at least £90 million of government funding overall, possibly considerably more.
- We have historically had a module-based rather than qualification-based offer.

Disruption and uncertainty in the sector is likely to continue for some time. Our Mission and on-going viability as an institution are at risk if we do not manage our response to these changes in our core UK market effectively.

2015 update

The developments anticipated when the Strategic Plan was originally formulated have played out broadly as expected. The key developments since 2012 have been:

- The decline in the part-time Undergraduate and Postgraduate markets.
- An increasing focus amongst students and government funders on employability.
- Increasing divergence between the UK nations.
- Increasing concentration and competition for research funding.
- The emergence, growth and evolution of Open Educational Resources and particularly of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).
- The slow emergence to date of private providers, including online enablers, but with the continued potential for future disruption.

The Open University is effectively managing the risks, threats and opportunities arising from these changes to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the institution.
The Open University today

The Open University approaches these changes from a position of strength. This includes record student numbers, a diverse student base, high levels of student satisfaction and strong differentiation from other providers. We have reach outside of the UK, with a number of established international partnerships and thousands of international students studying directly with us each year.

We have a strong reputation for research which enhances our academic standing and are proud of the contribution we make to wider society.
The University has unique capabilities and distinctive ways of working which enable us to compete effectively and which we will retain:

- We are focused on providing high-quality, part-time Higher Education to adults.
- We have an open access policy.
- We have a unique model of supported open learning.
- We are committed to extending opportunities for educational success to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

2015 update

The Open University maintains its unique capabilities and distinctive ways of working. A key development has been the University’s leadership in informal learning with the launch of FutureLearn and the continued development of OpenLearn, both of which extend free high quality learning opportunities to a wide-ranging audience.

- We are a trusted, well-known brand with unique reach, for example, through our partnership with the BBC and our strong presence on Apple iTunesU.
- We are a pan-UK University, operating at scale and delivering across each of the four UK nations.
The Open University going forward

The University will continue to welcome all types of student and we will maintain the diversity of our student base.

We will focus on those students that our capabilities make us uniquely well placed to serve, and where we can make the biggest difference:

• Employed adults without a degree who are looking for a higher education qualification to improve their careers.
• Adults without a degree who are not employed and are looking for a higher education qualification to help them get into gainful employment.
• Adults looking to enhance their knowledge or skills by studying one, two or more modules. This group is more likely to study for personal enrichment or for a mixture of leisure and career-related reasons.
• Employed graduates who are looking to increase their career prospects by studying for a postgraduate qualification.
Our primary effort through to 2017 will be aimed at helping students achieve their study goals. In particular, we will focus on offering coherent and supported routes to qualifications – including certificates, diplomas and degrees – alongside a modules-based offer.

This is critical because:

- The majority of our current and potential future students are studying in order to obtain valued qualifications.

- Research indicates that the availability of a government loan makes a big difference to students’ willingness to study at higher prices and only those studying for a qualification will be able to access government loans in England and probably in Wales. So our future financial sustainability is tied to our ability to support effectively those who are seeking qualifications.

- Governments’ long-term support to institutions is likely to be dependent on the perceived return on public investment, reflected in particular in student qualification completion rates and improved employment prospects.
Our Strategy

Our Strategy is underpinned by a commitment to our distinctive Mission.

Our Strategic Intent for the period 2012-17 is to secure the Mission and to thrive as a University by delivering a step-change in how effectively we help students achieve their study goals.
We will focus on seven Priorities across two different areas.

Seven Strategic Priorities have been identified as the key areas that will make a critical difference to the successful achievement of the Strategic Intent. These are grouped under two objectives: ensuring that we deliver an outstanding student experience, and enhancing the capabilities of the University. The way in which the Priorities support the achievement of the Strategic Intent is encapsulated in our Strategic Plan diagram.

**2015 update**

The expression of the student success objective has been honed to reflect the progress made in the delivery of qualification-focused study experience.

The wording of the financial sustainability objective has been refined to reflect the University’s focus through to 2017 on both income diversification and cost control.
Securing the Mission

Delivering the Strategy

The seven Priorities represent seven areas of particular focus, effort and change for the University.

Each Priority has a clear objective, a statement setting out how things will be different once the objective is achieved and a clear plan for how it will deliver. Responsibility for the achievement of each Priority lies with a senior executive. The University is tracking key performance measures for the successful achievement of the Priorities, as well as for the Strategic Plan as a whole.

The Strategic Plan is reviewed and refreshed each year in the light of progress that has been made and changes that we anticipate or experience in the external environment.

Through the execution of the Strategy we will ensure that the University builds on its success in transforming lives through education and continues to thrive and deliver its mission in a changing world.
Securing the Mission