

Your data and Learning Systems websites

The Open University has to store some personal data about you in order for systems to work. Personal data is information that relates to or identifies you as an individual, and the most basic is your account, also known as your 'user profile'.

The University's learning systems are primarily made up of a Moodle-based virtual learning environment, or VLE. Your VLE Profile includes your forename, surname, email address and a Personal Identifier (PI).

As you interact with the learning systems (e.g. by adding content to a forum or taking a quiz) you are adding data (content, interaction logs etc.) to the OU learning systems. The system will also, over time, maintain a record of which websites you have access to and which you have accessed and participated in.

As in real life, think about what you share

Whilst interacting with and adding content to the VLE you must be consistent with the [Student Computing Policy](#) but is otherwise your choice. We advise you to be cautious. Some VLE websites are open to the public, so be wary of the information you share or content you add.

Therefore, avoid sharing any data that can personally identify you, for example, your date of birth, mother's maiden name or details about where you live.

The Open University processes your data in order to deliver our services to you and also support you, to manage operations effectively, and to meet legal requirements. Reasons include, but are not limited to, purposes of administration, delivering services, communicating with you, quality assurance purposes, the compilation of statistics and the fulfilment of public safety and other legislation.

Aggregated data concerning user engagement may be reviewed by University staff for the purposes of quality assurance and asset review.

Accessing your data

You are legally entitled to access the information The Open University holds about you as an identifiable individual, including any information you have added to websites. You may obtain some of this information yourself. For example, you may download content you have added (like forum posts) using the 'export' feature of VLE tools.

If you wish to obtain all the information The Open University holds about you, then you need to make a 'subject access request' (SAR).

This can be done by contacting our Data Protection Officer using the contact details below. Any other queries about the way we process your personal information should be directed to our Data Protection Officer.

- Email: data-protection@open.ac.uk
- Telephone: +44(0)1908 653994
- By post: The Data Protection Officer, PO Box 497, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AT.

More information about how the University uses your data can be found in the [Help Centre](#), with additional information in [Student Privacy Notice](#).

Learning Systems website data retention period

The University stores your profile information (name, email, username, PI) and any information you have added to Learning Systems websites (for example your quiz responses or forum posts). This is to support you in finding the right course to study and to provide more tailored support should you subsequently register to study a module with the University.

To enable us to provide this support, we will retain student data for up to 42 months and guest user data for 24 months. This is because users may take 12-24 months to register on a module/qualification and students are entitled to take lengthy breaks during their studies. Should you have any queries regarding user data, please contact our [Data Protection Officer](#).

To help preserve the privacy of inactive users, if you have not accessed the OU Virtual Learning Environment for 18 months, then only information legally required by the University will be kept in your VLE profile: forename, surname, PI and email address. The system will also apply the following settings:

- 'Email display' will be set to 'Hide my email from non-privileged users'
- 'Profile visibility' will be set to 'Hide my profile from everyone'
- any additional profile data will be deleted, such as profile picture, interests, and social media links.

VLE Profiles and enquirer data retention period

The learning systems do not require to keep details of inactive users forever, therefore the system will periodically check and remove VLE Profiles that were created for enquirers who then never went on to study with the OU.