



**The Open University in Scotland
Annual Review
2022**





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Cover caption

Highland piper Grant Milne has been able to successfully balance playing music and OU study to become a social worker. He is now involved in an exciting project to engage long-term offenders with traditional Scottish music.



Welcome

Welcome to The Open University in Scotland's review of 2022.

Throughout this report, we share highlights of our activity demonstrating how we help people from all parts of society to develop their knowledge, acquire new skills and achieve life-changing qualifications.

We support students to achieve their goals with outcomes that open up new opportunities in life and work. We help employers across public, private and third sectors to develop their workforces and build skills and enterprise. And across Scotland, we foster a community of over half a million learners who access free courses on OpenLearn or join our community programmes and events.

All of this makes a significant contribution to the country's economic growth and societal wellbeing.

In the context of global economic uncertainty, the cost-of-living crisis and pressures on public funding, the OU has a vital role to play. Our supported distance learning model is flexible by design, as relevant today as it was when the university was founded over 50 years ago.

Professor Paul Gray
OU Council Member for Scotland



Director's report

In 2022, we were delighted that our student experience was ranked joint first in Scotland in the National Student Survey, along with the University of St Andrews.

All of Scotland's universities take part in this annual survey which seeks honest feedback from students about what it has been like to study. We strive to provide a supportive community and teaching environment for our distance learners and this achievement is testament to the quality of the OU's model.

Equity and inclusivity have been key themes as we continue to drive forward opportunities for students regardless of age, income, geography and background. Many of our new undergraduates join us without the qualifications you would normally need to get into university and the majority study for free with a part-time fee grant.

With over 21,000 students, we are the fourth largest university in Scotland and the largest provider of part-time higher education. Our work in the last year has had wide reach

and impact with people studying in every parliamentary constituency, and in every corner of the country from Dumfries and Galloway to the Shetland Islands. Most graduates remain in the location where they studied, which means their talent and skills benefit local communities.

In the last year, we have also achieved the landmark implementation of permanent contracts for our Associate Lecturer staff working remotely across the country. In Scotland, this represents an academic workforce of over 500 staff, a vital knowledge powerhouse.

In challenging economic times, we are seeing the impact of cost-of-living increases on our students and doing all we can to support them through this crisis. This includes dedicated advice, discretionary funds, allowances and bursaries.

And there is much to celebrate. Our unique open entry model attracts students of all ages and backgrounds and most fit their study in along with family, work, caring and all sorts of other responsibilities. Many students have been on an incredible journey to get to where they are, and this has included facing the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic in recent years.

The Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow was alive with celebration when we came together for our degree ceremonies in 2022, the first in-person graduations for three years due to the pandemic. I was very moved to be able to host these ceremonies again, meet our graduates, and hear their remarkable achievements. We're very proud of them.

I hope you enjoy reading this review of the past year and please do get in touch if you want to hear more about our work.

Susan Stewart
Director of The Open University in Scotland



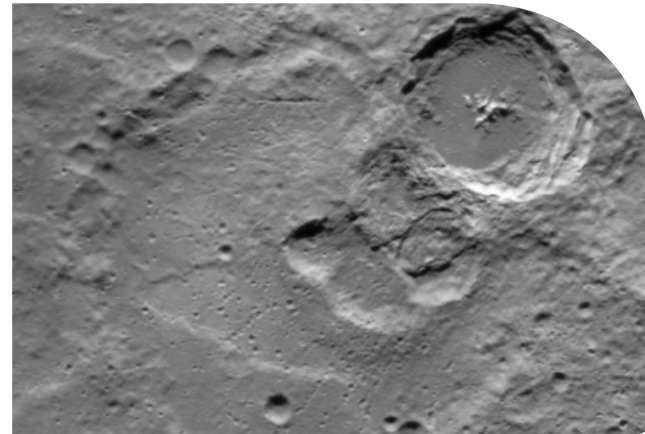
January

Our free learning platform, OpenLearn, turned 15 and celebrated record learning results. Offering 1,000+ courses and 15,000 hours of content, the site attracted one million visits from Scotland in last two years. A motion in the Scottish Parliament congratulated OpenLearn for providing “so many people with life-changing learning, new skills and greater confidence”.



April

Union learning rep Mel Gorrie received the 2022 Helen Dowie Award marking her delivery of the Communication Workers Union learning programme. The OU supported award was presented at the Scottish Trades Union Congress in recognition of Mel’s work to help union members to upskill and reskill.



February

PhD researcher Annie Lennox from Aberdeenshire named a crater on Mercury after the 17th century Scottish poet and songwriter Lady Carolina Nairne. Attracting global media attention, the crater was found during Annie’s research alongside a team of other OU researchers to map the surface of Mercury ahead of the BepiColombo spacecraft completing its orbit.



May

We launched support for Ukrainian refugees and people housing, caring for, or working with Ukrainians in the UK. The package, commended in a motion at the Scottish Parliament, included fee waivers for existing students, scholarships and the Ukrainian translation of free online courses offering practical support.



March

The touching story of comic artist, Gordon Shaw, featured in an OU co-production with BBC Scotland, Long Live My Happy Head. Diagnosed at the age of just 32, Edinburgh-based Gordon communicated his thoughts and reactions to cancer through his humorous illustrations, having nicknamed his tumour, Rick. Sadly, Gordon passed away shortly after the documentary was aired.



June

We celebrated our outstanding students with the first in-person Scottish degree ceremony since the COVID-19 outbreak. Honorary degrees were presented to journalist and equal pay advocate, Carrie Gracie; disability campaigner, Tressa Burke; social entrepreneur, Josh Littlejohn and one of Scotland’s most recognisable and beloved actors, Elaine C. Smith.



July

The Open University in Scotland achieved 90% for overall student satisfaction in the National Student Survey, ranking joint first in Scotland along with the University of St Andrews. We have taken part in the survey since 2005 consistently scoring highly in student satisfaction.



October

Three honorary graduates were recognised for their impact on society including Fiona Drouet, who after the death of her daughter, founded a charity to campaign against gender-based violence in colleges and universities, Sabir Zazai who dedicated his life to securing the rights of refugees and Professor Lynne Cadenhead for supporting women in business.



August

Adult learners will benefit from new study opportunities thanks to a partnership with Newbattle Abbey College in Midlothian. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding setting out a range of collaborative activities which will open up more curriculum choice and better study progression for adult learners. This means we now have collaborative agreements with 16 Scottish colleges.



November

Seventy-five senior pupils from secondary schools across the Scottish Highlands took part in a Mock COP27 to raise awareness and increase understanding of the landmark global political conference. It was organised in partnership with the Highland One World Global Learning Centre, Developing the Young Workforce Inverness & Central Highlands and Highland Council.



September

We led a major recruitment drive leading up to September, our largest student registration deadline each year. This included the Generation Change campaign with MTV featuring Glasgow based student Carly McCluskey who used her OU Business Management degree to launch a new vegan business.



December

The stories of women's often hidden struggles in the workplace across 120 years were given fresh prominence with the launch of our new online social history resource The Women and Workplace Struggles collection. Developed in partnership with Scottish Union Learning, it casts a new light on struggles women have faced through individual stories, experiences and perspectives.



Life-changing learning

We provide learning opportunities to people across Scotland offering quality and flexibility.

We are proud to help people from all parts of society to undertake life-changing learning. With over 21,000 students, we have students in every parliamentary constituency, across every corner of Scotland from Galloway to the Shetland Isles.

We work in partnership with other universities, colleges, schools, the NHS, social care, the third sector and employers. By collaborating with others, we connect with a far greater community of learners than we could reach solely.

We are continually seeking new ways to meet the needs of our students and learners through our core qualifications, accredited short courses and free OpenLearn content.

This year, we continued to develop our links with the college sector in Scotland to provide opportunities for college students to progress to OU study through cohesive, supportive progression routes. Our articulation agreements with colleges provided 850 students with pathways from HNC and HND level study to OU degree programmes. This supports students to

reduce the time it takes to complete a degree and avoid duplication of study. We have been working with Fife College and City of Glasgow college to provide opportunities for students to study OU modules on campus and we have launched a new strategic relationship with Newbattle Abbey College to support college students with a range of progression options.

We have worked closely with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to ensure that part time distance learning students are considered as part of the redevelopment of SQA qualifications.

Our Young Applicants in School Scheme has seen over 1,000 pupils from over 150 schools register for OU modules this year. With modules such as law, economics, accounting and modern languages on offer, pupils and teachers tell us that the programme helps prepare pupils for future university study.



Leeanne MacPherson

Route to nursing

When Leeanne MacPherson left school at aged 16 to work in a jeans factory, she never dreamed that one day she would have a degree in Mental Health Nursing.

Based in Cumnock in Ayrshire, Leeanne eventually went to college which led to an NHS Nursing Assistant role. The OU's flexible programme for healthcare support workers allowed her to study for her degree with costs for placements and study leave covered by the Scottish Government.



The OU course allowed me to remain employed full-time providing financial stability for my family whilst I was working towards my degree.



Support on first step

Over 500 people complete access modules each year, a starting point for those new to study. An OU access course gave member of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Steven Sutherland, the confidence to study law.

A campaigner on support for young people with autism and visual impairment, we highlighted his story in the MTV Generation Change campaign.

Student success

We support students to achieve their goals and open up new opportunities in life and work.

Our student support team, tutors and associate lecturers across the country are dedicated to ensuring the provision of a supportive community and learning environment. We were delighted this year that this has been recognised through our top ratings for student experience in the National Student Survey, first in Scotland alongside St Andrews.

Over the year, a range of activity helped students to connect, share their experiences and build a sense of community. This included consulting on our plans through the Scottish Student and Staff Engagement Group, a dynamic programme for Student Voice Week, and online Big Blether events run with the OU Students Association covering study confidence and wellbeing.

Supporting good mental health for both our students and staff was a particular theme for the year, marked by the launch of a new strategy aligned to the Universities UK #stepchange framework. It was delivered through a partnership agreement with the OU Students Association supported by the National Union of Students Scotland's Think Positive project. We enhanced support in Scotland by recruiting a specialist mental

health advisor and, with funding from Scottish Government, offered students one to one counselling through a virtual therapy service, and a wellbeing app.

We helped students to buy computers or other equipment through our Scottish Funding Council Digital Inclusion funding with support targeted towards students who are care-experienced, carers, estranged or without parental support. It was valued support as some students only have their phones or shared equipment to study with.

We enhanced support on careers and employability for students in Scotland with a new dedicated employer engagement manager in Scotland and we increased provision of dedicated careers consultations for Scottish students. As a result, over 4,600 students accessed careers and employability services, 87% used our employment platform Opportunity Hub with a fifth taking our individual careers consultations. We developed new relationships with 30 employers and almost 2,000 employment opportunities were promoted to students in Scotland, 50% more than the previous year.



Kathryn O'Donnell

Young ambition

After struggling with her health and leaving school early, OU study provided the perfect path to both degree and career success for Kathryn O'Donnell.

She chose the OU for its flexibility and at age 19 became our youngest graduate in Scotland in 2022. Through the OU's partnership with City of Glasgow College, she transferred HNC credit to join her Bachelor of Arts degree course in its second year.



This allowed me to start studying at such a young age; many of my friends are still at university, whereas I'm now a graduate with a job.



First post Covid degree ceremonies

The first OU in Scotland in-person degree ceremonies after Covid-19 restrictions provided us with the opportunity to come together and celebrate success.

Over 1,200 students graduated across four ceremonies in June and October, with many more attending virtual ceremonies. Half of those graduating in person were first in family to study at higher education.



Skills delivery

We help workers, employers and business to increase skills, employability, and productivity.

Skills are vital to ensure that Scotland's economy thrives, and we play a leading role in the delivery of workplace focused training that is flexible to individual and business needs. Three quarters of our undergraduates study while working either full-time or part-time

Over the last year we have worked collaboratively with businesses, local authorities, the NHS, social care, the third sector and trade unions to provide skills through multiple programmes driving recovery and growth. We target Scottish skills gaps in digital, coding, business, management and the green economy.

Businesses and organisations supported over 1,000 Scottish employees to study part-time with the OU. Over 120 workers in healthcare support level roles across the NHS joined our innovative path to nursing, allowing them to gain a degree part-time while continuing employment.

Almost 400 individual learners were funded to complete microcredentials by the Scottish Funding Council's Upskilling Fund, with almost a third of them living in Scotland's most deprived areas.

Almost 350 employees from 78 businesses have benefited from our online course provision through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF). As the only university that can access this Scottish Government funded programme, we offer training up to the value of £5,000 for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and, from autumn 2022, up to £15,000 for larger organisations. Over 86.5% of FWDF learners completed one of our leadership and business programmes.

We have developed new partnerships with the Scottish Tourism Alliance and eight Scottish chambers of commerce from Dumfries and Galloway to Moray with a Skills for Business Roadshow in 2023 to support more businesses in these areas.

We continually share our insight from these programmes to help develop further Scotland's future skills agenda, including this year an inclusive economic recovery event linked to the 10-year National Strategy for Economic Transformation.



Callum Mullen

Business success

Callum Mullen helped software developers Tank Studios successfully develop their business and generate new revenue streams after his OU learning.

While new to his role as Head of Sales and Marketing, Callum undertook an OU business marketing course supported by the Flexible Workforce Development Fund. This helped him in marketing the Epic Pen, a universal screen marker designed by Tank Studios that can be used to draw over any application on Windows and Mac.



The self-confidence I gained from completing the course then taking what I had learned and applying it within my career was extremely satisfying.



Union learning

Workers who might struggle to get training are able to access skills support in a way that works for them through our partnership with the Scottish Trades Union Congress and Scottish Union Learning.

The partnership creates opportunities for trade union members in complex shift patterns, in lower paid roles or in traditional industries.

Community reach

We make an impact in communities across Scotland, driving inclusion in every aspect of our work.

A key focus of our work is ensuring that people from communities across Scotland, including those most disadvantaged, can access learning and higher education to help improve their life opportunities. We are a sector leader in widening access with 41% of our new undergraduates living in Scotland's 40% most disadvantaged area, 26% declaring a disability and 23% living in remote or rural areas.

A project over the academic year helped build digital learning skills among Scotland's community and learning development sector, a vital workforce spread across third sector, social enterprises and local government. With support from Scottish Government, we created a free online learning portal and 168 learners undertook funded microcredentials in online learning. The project was delivered in partnership with Education Scotland, CLD Standards Council and the Digital Communities Award Team.

We also set up a training portal for community councillors across Scotland in partnership with the Improvement Service. It covered skills gaps identified by community councillors including digital, finance, sustainability, community engagement and business. We added links to OU resources

for Ukrainians in the UK recognising the work by community councils to support Ukrainian refugees.

In our innovative Unlocking Potential project, independent research was undertaken in South Lanarkshire and Dumfries and Galloway to identify barriers to further and higher education, awareness and attitudes towards education, and potential career pathways for those living in disadvantaged areas. This has led to a 'test and learn' project in 2023 in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council to explore how to open up access to opportunities in these areas.

Grassroots community projects included providing skills and employability training to young people through the Rangers Football Club Charity Foundation with funding from CashBack Scotland. We have also worked with Celtic, Dundee and Hibernian football clubs delivering innovative programmes in community.

Much of our work is supported by our network of 400 Open Learning Champions across Scotland, advocates drawn from community and third sector organisations who help people to access free online learning on OpenLearn.



Carol Hunter

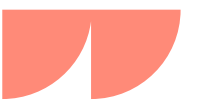
Overcoming barriers

Carol Hunter has overcome challenges to achieve not just one but two OU degrees, and is now inspiring others to study Carol, who has Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and from an adoptive background, was told as a young person that she would never achieve anything academically.

She dropped out of a traditional university after first year, worked in finance for 14 years before going back to college which led to an OU social sciences degree and a master in crime and justice.



It has opened up doors for me, not only professionally but personally it has completely changed my life, and I will be forever thankful.



Creative response to Black History Month

Union members in the Highlands and Islands took part in creative writing as we explored new ways of celebrating Black History Month. Over three days supported by Scottish Union

Learning, participants looked at art, readings and films linking the past to present experience of black workers. Then the OU workshop encouraged reflection through creative writing.

Societal impact

Our knowledge, research and innovation projects help address societal challenges.

We engage with partners and policymakers across Scotland on contemporary issues and use our expertise to support real-world challenges and aspirations, from industry to the third sector.

The Research Excellence Framework 2021 recognised the OU's commitment to societal impact with 82% of its research impact assessed to be 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent'. In Scotland, our work is supported by the University Innovation Fund via the Scottish Funding Council.

In 2022 we launched a new research strategy focusing on three crucial societal challenges: sustainability, tackling inequalities and living well. The strategy was informed by a survey of 1,000 young adults from across Scotland on the societal issues that most concerned them.

We worked with a variety of organisations to help them bounce back from the Covid-19 pandemic including the Crichton Trust, based in Dumfries and Galloway, where we offered courses for SMEs to promote wellbeing and resilience in the workplace.

In partnership with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, we explored societal progress linked to the COP27 summit and our Professor of Climate Change and Energy, Stephen Peake, presented five Inspiring People talks around Scotland. Art history academics worked with Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow to produce two short films to inspire learning about climate change from history, using art and artefacts to promote debate.

Our work influences innovative developments across multiple sectors. We hosted Scotland's annual Newly Qualified Social Workers Conference in May 2022 which explored themes of equity and inclusion for the social work profession.

New research with education practitioners informed our report Who, what, how, and why: Scottish education practitioners and online professional learning. This work is contributing to online professional learning development across the Scottish education sector. We collaborated with Education Scotland and Banff Academy to develop a first of its kind course for primary and secondary school teachers who want to embed Scots language and culture into their classroom and teaching practice.



Genuine Mwasha

Study inspires new charity

Orphans, street children and Tanzania's poorest are being fed and offered educational opportunities, thanks to OU graduate Genuine Mwasha's charity.

Genuine was inspired to start Scottish registered charity The Roof of Africa two years into his law degree. His confidence to set up his charity was fuelled by "the art of the possible" instilled in him by his OU tutor.



I studied to pursue my goal of ensuring justice for all especially the poor.



ZEST for learning

Our Zambian Education School-based Training (ZEST) project supported learning-centred teaching in over 400 primary schools in Zambia in partnership with World Vision with funding from Scottish Government.

We also launched an OU research project to better understand how six specific schools are implementing our school-based teachers' Continuing Professional Development programme in Zambia.

Public engagement

We foster knowledge and lifelong learning and build awareness of our work with stakeholders and advocates

We promote inclusive learning across a wide public audience from BBC co-productions to public events at festivals across Scotland with over 5,000 people joining in person and online knowledge exchange events each year.

Our partnership with the BBC continues to co-produce inspirational content which has brought learning to life for millions of people. In 2022, this included Scottish academics contributing to The Women Who Changed Modern Scotland presented by Kirsty Wark.

We engaged with a wide public audience through book festivals across Scotland, including the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Aye Write and Bloody Scotland. Our 'Douglas Stuart in conversation with Louise Welsh' sponsored event in partnership with Aye Write was his first UK appearance to launch 'Young Mungo'.

Intergenerational family audiences enjoyed a series of events inspired by science, engineering, technology and maths. We joined the Glasgow Science Festival to

host interactive family events on themes around wave power and climate change in Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Families took part in online and in-person events in partnership with the National Museum of Scotland during Maths Week Scotland on themes such as and over 900 pupils explored the mysteries of bridge building and the use of truss structures at the Bang Goes Dumfries and Galloway science festival.

We also engaged with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders in Scotland to ensure higher education policy, funding outcomes and media coverage are favourable to the OU in Scotland and its students. At the Scottish Parliament, as well as meetings, a stand and drop-in event, we've participated in committees, made eight formal submissions to consultations and delivered six bespoke policy briefings. With 83% of MSPs aware of OU in Scotland and 84% favourable towards our work, there have been four cross-party motions supporting the work of OU in Scotland.



Adam Hall

Sporting ambition

The flexibility of the OU's distance learning model supports many sports men and women to combine a high-profile career with degree success.

Scotland international badminton star Adam Hall is just one of the sports stars we highlighted this year inspiring others to take up OU study. He juggled a tough physical training regime and the pressures of the international badminton circuit alongside study deadlines for six years.

We athletes love working towards a goal and having that end result of a degree really motivated me to keep going. My study map has taken me to Denmark, France, Germany, Holland and possibly a few others!

Making maths fun

We launched a new app, Code Break, to introduce the maths of codebreaking and cryptography through a fun series of puzzles and challenges.

It was developed by a team of academics in the School of Mathematics and Statistics and Koko Digital with funding from Maths Week Scotland.

Our year in numbers



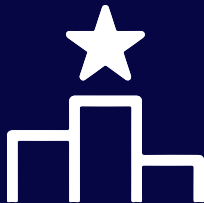
21,000+
students in Scotland



Fourth largest university in Scotland
in terms of student numbers



We have students in every Scottish
parliamentary constituency



Joint 1st in Scotland for student
satisfaction, National Student Survey
2022



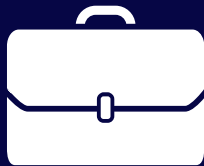
297,000+
visitors from Scotland to OpenLearn



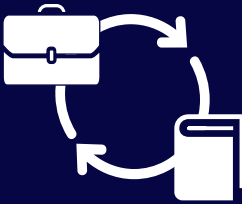
5000+
people participated in our
knowledge exchange events



1,000+
students are sponsored by their
employers to study with us



74%
of our students are in full-time
or part-time work



88%
of graduates in Scotland say OU
study supports their career goals



41 %
of new undergraduates live in Scotland's
40% most disadvantaged areas



23%
of OU students live in remote
or rural areas



26%
of OU students in Scotland
declare a disability

Our funding

The Open University in Scotland is funded as one of the 19 Scottish universities by the Scottish Funding Council. This is a summary of our funding for the last academic year 2021-22.

£25.3m
in Scottish
Funding
Council Grant

£24.9m
in fee income

Includes **YASS**,
our national
schools
programme

In addition to the core grant from Scottish Funding Council:

£1.3m
Widening
Access and
Retention Fund

£2.2m
Pre-registration
nursing

£558k
Capital
maintenance

£310k
University
Innovation Fund

£204k
Upskilling Fund

£156k
National
Transition
Training Fund

Up to £1m
accessible for
SME training via
Flexible Workforce
Development Fund

£168k
Disabled Student
Allowance

£104k
Support
for student
mental health
counselling



Footballer Erin Cuthbert, who plays for the Scotland women’s national football team and Chelsea FC Women, graduated with a BA Business Management Degree.

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Student data in this report relates to our last full academic year 2021-22.

Other data sources: OU Employability of Qualifiers Survey 2022 and National Student Survey 2022.

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