



The Open
University

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2013



Published: November 2013

The equality scheme objectives and action plans to which this report relates are available from The Open University's Equality and Diversity website at www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/

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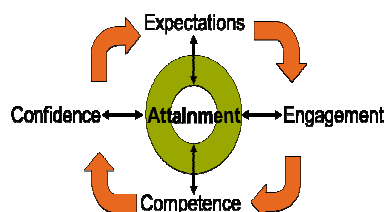
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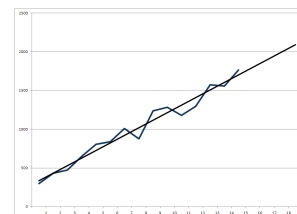
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For the first time, we report progress against the specific and measurable, outcome-focused equality objectives that we published in April 2012. After the first year, we can demonstrate significant progress across the majority of these, with clear plans in place across all nine objectives.

In this section, we have also shared some of the feedback we received from equality organisations in the past year.

Latest trend data published

In addition to this annual report, we have once again published a significant volume of information in our separate Equality & Diversity monitoring reports. They contain a comprehensive set of tables and charts for governance, staff and students, across a wide range of participation and progress indicators at an institutional level.



The monitoring reports are published on our Equality and Diversity public website at: www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity

Introduction

Following the transformation of student finance and fees across the sector, the OU has retained its position as the provider of flexible, affordable and high quality higher education, with an increased focus on supporting more students to complete their qualifications. Our student body continues to diversify, for example we now have more than 20,000 disabled learners, and our age profile is changing as we become increasingly attractive to younger students.



FUTURELEARN

The launch of FutureLearn¹ in 2013, a wholly owned company of the OU and the first UK-led platform to provide MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), confirms the OUs position at the forefront of advances in UK higher education. It will provide free online courses, widen participation and promote lifelong learning. FutureLearn partners include over 20 of the best UK and international universities, as well as institutions with a huge archive of cultural educational material, such as the British Museum.

Through all of this change, we are unwavering in our commitment to the pursuit of 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.

Unconscious bias – a force to be reckoned with

A great deal of effort and attention has been given to making progress against the University's equality objectives since they were published in April 2012, including direct involvement from senior leaders in championing and leading them,

allocation of financial resources, and commitment of people through project teams and working groups. This effort has delivered results, with six of the nine objectives showing movement in the desired direction, and several far exceeding the agreed performance indicator.

Despite these commitments and achievements, it is true to say that much of the work is remedial. It focuses on the consequences rather than the causes of inequality. The causes of inequality are multiple and complex, and include historical disadvantages experienced by particular groups, the opportunities available to a person based on social, economic and cultural circumstances, direct discrimination arising from overt prejudice, and indirect discrimination arising from policy and common practice that has unintended consequences.

These causes have a common root, which help to explain at a fundamental level how inequality arises, how it continues to manifest itself, despite our intentions to eliminate it, and despite the resources we commit to counteracting its effects. That common root is unconscious bias.

Unconscious bias arises from the stereotypes, both positive and negative, that are pervasive in all societies. Stereotypes, or simplifications of individual identities into group identities, help us to make sense of the world through categorisation.

As individuals progressing our careers or study goals, we are affected by what is termed 'stereotype threat', which affects the opportunities we seek, our confidence to engage in particular social situations, and as many studies confirm, our actual performance in carrying out tasks, including job interviews and exams.

Likewise, as individuals with responsibilities for managing people, assessing performance and marking students work, we are affected by the expectations we hold about different people, which are shaped by group categories and the stereotypes attributed to those categories. Despite our individual and collective desires to be free and unaffected by these, we are influenced at a subconscious level, affecting our judgment and decision-making.

¹ Visit FutureLearn online at www.futurelearn.com

Introduction

Deconstructing stereotypes

Our work to reduce and eliminate inequalities is therefore inadequate, without a specific focus on unconscious bias, and at the OU we have decided to give this greater attention through a new project positioned under the University's People and Culture strategic programme. The People and Culture programme aims to build staff capabilities in order to strengthen the agility and performance of the University.

It is too early to outline the specific elements of the new project, but research has identified some practical measures that help to surface and tackle unconscious bias. We therefore expect to deploy some of these mechanisms, for example:

- Implicit measurement techniques, which uncover people's actual beliefs and attitudes, rather than their socially desirable responses in a non-confrontational way.
- Staff learning and development that develops the competence needed to challenge language and behaviours that arise from stereotypes.
- Communications that contradict negative stereotypes, including associating positive and successful attributes with under-represented and under-performing groups.
- Active portrayal of diverse role models – students and staff who are demonstrating our values and contributing to organisational success and wider society.

Tackling unconscious bias is not the only solution to tackling inequality, but as a fundamental cause of inequality, it cannot be ignored. Surfacing our personal and institutional biases can help us to understand hidden realities, and be more mindful when making decisions that affect individual opportunity².

² The OU is grateful to Tinu Cornish for generously sharing her wealth of knowledge on this topic. For further information visit <http://differentwithdifference.com>

Our 2013 annual report

In 2012, we developed a new style for our annual report, which was widely acclaimed by many stakeholders and we have therefore retained the format this year.

The **in-brief** section provides a snapshot of a wide range of projects and activities distributed across all the functions of the University.

This year our **in-depth** sections look at our existing policies and services that ensure we respond positively to individual needs and circumstances in relation to religious observance, and pregnancy and maternity. We also share with you the work we have been leading over the past year to improve policy and guidance in these areas.

We report **performance** against our 2012-2016 equality objectives for the first time and the **feature sections** provide more detail for three of these:

- Great Expectations is a key project under our *ethnicity and academic attainment* objective.
- The feature, Young at Heart, tells you about our work to highlight the valuable contribution made by our younger academics and how this complements the experience of our older staff.
- Our work to advance careers for female academic staff is also featured.

We have once again included a section on **mainstreaming equality**, which highlights some examples of our work to embed equality in University processes, so that due regard to equality is considered as a matter of normal University business.

We hope you enjoy this year's report and, as always, we encourage and welcome your active involvement in achieving our vision of an inclusive University community and society.

Tony O'Shea-Poon
Head of Equality, Diversity and Information Rights

In brief

OU wins 'Best 50+ continuing education provider' award

For the second successive year the OU has won an award for 'Best 50+ continuing education provider' in the 50+ Awards 2012, voted for by the public. The 50+ Awards 2012, organised and presented by the 50+ Show, are based solely on internet nominations and votes of people aged over 50.



Transgender policy and guidance implemented

The OU's transgender policy and guidance for staff and separate policy and guidance for students were approved in July 2013. The new procedures have been established to ensure clear, effective and confidential support that meets the individual requirements of affected staff and students. The policies and guidance will be communicated to tutors via TutorHome, students via StudentHome and staff via the Human Resources intranet.

Launch of OU led FutureLearn³

FutureLearn, announced by the OU in December 2012, is an independent company that will increase access to higher education for students across the UK and the rest of the world through the provision of free massive open online courses (MOOCs). FutureLearn announced its first international partnerships with Australia's Monash University and Ireland's Trinity College Dublin, bringing the number in June 2013 to 26 partnerships with universities and cultural institutions, including the British Library and the British Council. **FutureLearn** will begin to deliver online courses to students across the world from September 2013.

OU Web Standards and Governance site launched

The launch of the Web Standards Governance website provides a new resource for Web development teams to help them ensure they are creating standards-compliant sites. It contains information about the OU's current web standards and the governance structure around them. Web standards are increasingly important as they provide consistency and accessibility for website users.

Revised Student Charter launched



Martin Bean, OU Vice-Chancellor, launched the revised Student Charter⁴ in April 2013. It sets out how members of the OU community, both staff and students, should work together so everyone can benefit from a shared set of values. The Student Charter, made up of four sets of OU community members' responsibilities, has been developed jointly by University staff and the OU Students' Association with input from more than 500 people. The first of four principles in the Charter is that we treat each other with dignity and respect which is fully aligned to the principles in the University's Equality Scheme.

³ For further information about FutureLearn go to: www.futurelearn.com

⁴ To see the revised Student Charter go to: <http://www.open.ac.uk/students/essential-documents/our-statements-of-service>

Dementia Symposium

A national symposium, hosted by the OU's *Science Faculty* in May 2013, brought together key researchers from across the UK who are working in the field of dementia. The symposium showcased the range of research perspectives that are contributing to the understanding of dementia, providing a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas within and across disciplines.

Diabetes awareness

To coincide with World Diabetes Week in June 2013, the OU iTunes U channel promoted a selection of its content on Diabetes, explaining what it is like to live with and care for someone with diabetes. At least 171 million people worldwide have diabetes and this figure is set to double by 2030. This chronic condition, which occurs when the body cannot produce or effectively use the insulin it needs, can be the cause of many serious health complications leading, amongst other problems, to blindness, foot ulcers and kidney failure.



Image: freedigitalphotos

Supporting Health Extension Workers in Ethiopia

OU Science Faculty academics, in collaboration with Addis Ababa University, organised a stakeholder meeting in January 2013 on mental health training in Addis Ababa, as part of its work to improve the education of Health Extension Workers (HEWs) in Ethiopia. This meeting brought together key stakeholders in mental health care to share ideas on how to enhance HEWs knowledge, attitudes and practice in the field of adult mental health problems and child developmental disorders. The outputs will feed into an on-going research project, supported by the charity Autism Speaks, to enhance existing training material for HEWs.

OU awarded over £210,000 for students in Botswana

The OU has secured £214,700 funding from the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission to support 15 students from Botswana on the *MSc in Advanced Networking*. The Botswana Government has identified a need for Computing and IT graduates and has been investing in their education, working alongside providers such as Botho College. A number of the graduates are now registered to study the OU Master's degree.

African farmers' education programme launched

A programme developed by the OU to support African farmers was launched in the House of Commons in March 2013. Farm-Ed⁵ aims to make a step-change in agricultural education in Africa by providing access to free *Open Educational Resources* on agricultural practice and policy. It was launched at an all Party Parliamentary Group on Agriculture and Food for Development, with an event attended by over 40 people from Government, international Non-Government Organisations, the agriculture sector and representatives from the OU. Farm-Ed is a partnership with the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Greenwich, The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) and others.



Image:freedigitalphotos

⁵ For further information see: <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/international-development/ido-africa/farm-ed>

In brief

Getty Foundation Award

The OU in Ireland has been awarded a grant of £60,000 from the Getty Foundation to extend its “New Openings: Working with Schools” programme with disadvantaged young people in Belfast, by providing education in a safe and supported environment. The programme will commence in 2013/14 and will provide places on Openings Programmes for two years.



Image: Karen Parker

Scottish Government Autism Initiative

The Scottish Government has allocated £50,000 annually for the next three years to fund almost 200 students in Scotland to study the OU's *SK124 'Understanding the Autism Spectrum'* as part of a wider initiative to promote the Scottish Government's autism strategy.

Carers' event at OU in Wales

The OU across the UK has identified Carers as a widening participation priority group. *The Open University in Wales* hosted a Carers' education and skills event in October 2012. The event, built on the success of the Carers Education Project, which has been running since 2010, and won the main prize at the UK-wide Universities Association for Lifelong Learning Awards in 2012. Carers, policymakers, adult learning providers, representative groups and charities came together at the national centre to share experiences and provide information about the learning support that is available.

Older People and Online Social Interactions

In collaboration with Age UK Milton Keynes and JISC TechDis, the OU's *Faculty of Health and Social Care* is investigating the role of online social interactions in supporting people aged 65 or over to avoid or overcome social isolation, and to maintain and develop social connectedness. A participatory workshop discussed usability and accessibility aspects of website design for older people, with a specific focus on age-related impairments and also examined online safety issues and the implications for older people and the people who support them.

Adult Returners' project

The 'Adult returner journeys through Higher Education to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers' project in the South-West seeks to provide exemplars of mature adult returners, many with non-standard qualifications, who have successfully graduated in STEM subjects at South West universities and progressed onto STEM-related careers. Case studies are being prepared and disseminated widely through existing online resources and will provide role models in order to stimulate interest in STEM subject degrees.



Image: Andy Hendry

Positive Role Model Award for Age

The OU celebrated the contribution of extraordinary people in our society by sponsoring and presenting the Positive Role Model Award for Age at the first National Diversity Awards, held in Manchester in September 2012. The awards recognise and reward the achievements of inspiring and dedicated individuals and grass-roots community organisations that tackle issues of inclusion and social justice. The winner of the OU-sponsored award was *Michael Burton*, a sports tutor at the Grimsby Institute in Yorkshire, who was nominated for his outstanding work with entry level sport learners to assist them in both their educational and personal lives.

Access to Success programme exceeds target

The target for the intake on the new Access to Success programme, aimed at widening participation was exceeded for March 2013. Access to Success is an OU scheme, jointly funded by the Government's National Scholarship Programme and the OU, to attract students who live in England, are from households with an income of less than £25,000, and have little or no previous higher education experience. A total of 2,166 students were recruited for March 2013, reaching 114% of the original target.

Studies of ageing masculinities: still in their infancy?

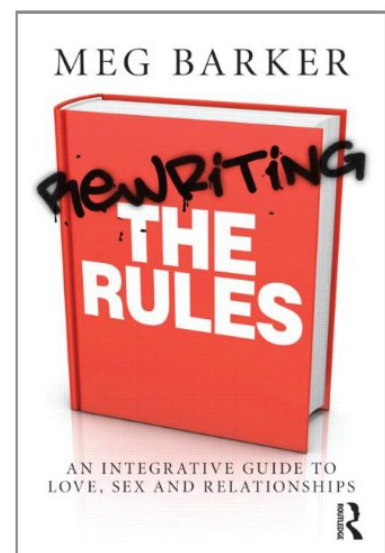
The OU's Centre for Ageing and Biographical Study research group (CABS) organized this one day seminar on the studies of ageing masculinities in February 2013. The event brought together scholars from different disciplines to consider the contemporary social lives of older men. Sociological and gerontological research concerning men's ageing remains piecemeal and under-theorised despite recognition of the gendered nature of ageing. This workshop showcased current research in this area with the aim of forging a multi-disciplinary network of scholars, practitioners and end users interested in men's ageing, and generating future research collaborations.

"The Truth about Mental Health"

The OU collaborated with the BBC World Service Health Check team to bring a series of six programmes during May and June 2013, highlighting novel and innovative ways being used around the globe, to treat and cope with mental illness. From Africa to Asia, the Middle East to Europe, the series explored radically different attitudes and definitions of mental health and mental wellbeing.

Book on modern relationships wins award

A book on modern relationships by OU Psychology Lecturer *Dr Meg Barker* has triumphed in the Erotic Awards 2013. "Rewriting the Rules" which explores the complicated and contradictory 'rules' of love in the 21st century, won the award's Academic category for its "high quality, sex-positive, inclusive and unique" approach. The book challenges the more traditional views of love and discusses how there are diverse ways of being sexual and relating to others. The Erotic Awards are an annual celebration of sexual creativity and diversity with the goal of helping society become more open-minded about sex and more accepting of sexual diversity.



In brief

Ensuring reasonable adjustments for staff accommodation moves

A checklist has been developed by Estates which is used to identify individual accessibility needs or requirements. The checklist provides a guide for Estates accommodation staff and staff who are responsible for moves within buildings or across campus. A specific question 'Do you feel Estates meet the needs of staff with a disability within your Unit/Department?' was added to the Estates Customer Survey to identify whether individual adjustments for disabled staff are perceived as satisfactory.

Improved advice and guidance for disabled students

The Learner Development Team has incorporated specific advice and guidance for disabled students and those who are carers into student-facing sites that support module choice. The Student Help Centre has been expanded to include FAQs on assistive technologies and support for additional requirements. A short video on the support available to disabled students has also been produced.

Awareness raising event on disabled student support

A staff awareness raising event was held at Walton Hall in December 2012. The aim of the event, which included a seminar on alternative formats and assistive technology, was to enable staff to find out about support and services for disabled students including: Visual Impairment support; Library services; Residential schools; Curriculum accessibility; Audio Recording Centre; Alternative formats; Communication support and OU Students' Association services.



Image: John Birdsall

Improvements to Small Equipment Loan Scheme

The Disability Resources Team have addressed two significant aspects of the process - stock turnaround and dispatch times. A new contract has been agreed with a national provider of Assistive Technology. Since August 2012, there have been significant improvements in the speed and quality of service to students using this scheme. Students are telephoned within 10 working days of taking receipt of their equipment so that we can monitor how well the loan meets their requirements.

Audio Recording Centre

The *Disability Resources Team* has worked with faculty academics to enable the audio recording of examination papers for print-impaired students. Module team Chairs and other academic team members have been trained to read around 100 papers since April 2012. Throughout these recording sessions they were able to experience directly a range of accessibility issues and make essential changes. The team of volunteer readers has been strengthened as many of those involved have offered to read more generally for the Audio Recording Centre in the future.



Image: Karen Parker

Mainstreaming report

Our approach to mainstreaming

Alongside our work to drive change through specific equality objectives, we continue to work to embed equality through core processes and functions. Our approach to mainstreaming is built primarily around our annual planning process, whereby each unit sets out plans for the year ahead, including equality and diversity plans. Below we have provided examples of the activities led by four departments in the past year to mainstream equality further.

Learning and Teaching Solutions

Usability and accessibility testing is carried out for all Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) developments via the Institute of Educational Technology (IET) against current standards. This ensures that new VLE tools are not released unless they are shown to meet accessibility standards. Moodle and Structured Content have been further rigorously tested by IET against the standards. Considerable work has been done to improve JAWS and other assistive software readability of Structured Content. Subtitles as well as transcripts are provided as standard with all video material delivered. The approach is supported by a dedicated alternative formats intranet site and developer forum. Accessibility is now effectively planned into new module production in a more systematic and consistent way than ever before.

Information Technology

A new development standard has been designed and rolled out to ensure new systems continue to be reviewed for compliance with accessibility standards when designed. The Project Management Office undertakes compliance checks. Testing process and procedures are embedded within the Software Development LifeCycle that was implemented in November 2012 so that equality and diversity requirements are part of the test approach documentation produced for projects.

Open Media Unit

Those responsible for commissioning media platforms now seek to ensure that they have access to presenters and actors from diverse backgrounds, so that programmes are representative. OpenLearn has incorporated the W3C web accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.0) into standard documentation. They have been specifically added to: third party brief (sent to agencies when they are invited to bid); new feature functional specification; project specification and plan. This is to ensure that accessibility is made explicit before design and scoping commences. It not only ensures internally commissioned content meets best practice, but it is particularly useful for projects involving external agencies, who will need to demonstrate that they have met our standards.

Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

The Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is introducing a process for monitoring the Widening Access and Success priority group performance indicators in a more systematic way. This will involve several review points throughout the year with a range of stakeholders within the Pro-Vice-Chancellor offices, to identify any issues for the Pro-Vice-Chancellors during their analysis of the indicators at regular monthly meetings. The Faculties' equality and diversity and widening participation plans for 2013/14 will be reviewed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellors and detailed feedback provided prior to submission of final plans to the relevant Planning and Resource Officer.

Performance

In April 2012, the OU published specific and measurable, outcome-focused, equality objectives⁶, signalling clearly the priorities identified for inequalities to be reduced over a four-year period, between 2012 and 2016.

The objectives were developed following an audit of inequalities, and agreed by the Equality and Diversity Management Group, following both internal and public consultation.

The objectives focus primarily on the characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity and gender as we have robust monitoring systems in place for these characteristics. Objectives eight and nine however set out our plans to improve monitoring, policy and guidance for other characteristics.

The objectives establish clear accountability for delivery and we are pleased to report significant progress after the first year. The information that follows provides an overview of performance for our nine objectives, while **feature sections** later in this report provide more detail for three of these.

Obj. 1: Maintain the proportion of new disabled undergraduates
SAE⁷: Director of Marketing and Sales
KPI⁸: Maintain a 3-year average of 3.4%
2013: Well above target, achieving 10.5% at the beginning of 2013
Status: Green

Obj. 2: Increase the satisfaction of disabled students
SAE: Director, Institute of Educational Technology
KPI: Increase from 82% to 84%
2013: Achieved target 2 years earlier than expected
Status: Green

Obj. 3: Reduce the ethnicity attainment gap
SAE: Director, Teaching and Learner Support
KPI: Reduce the difference from 28.8% to 25.8% by 2014/15
2013: Gap is 28.9% for 2011/12 year
Status: Amber
See page 12 for a feature on this objective.

Obj. 4: Increase the proportion of younger academic staff
SAE: Director, Academic Planning and Resources
KPI: Increase staff aged 35 and under from 12% to 14%
2013: 11% at June 2013
Status: Red
See page 18 for a feature on this objective.

Obj. 5: Increase the satisfaction of ethnic minority staff
SAE: Director of Human Resources
KPI: Reduce difference in intention to leave from 14% to 10%; reduce difference in job satisfaction from 9% to 6%
2013: Difference in intention to leave reduced to 10% and difference in satisfaction reduced to 4%; achieved in 2012, 2 years earlier than expected
Status: Green

Obj. 6: Increase the satisfaction of disabled staff
SAE: Director of Human Resources
KPI: Reduce difference in job satisfaction from 6% to 4% for internal staff; reduce difference from 7% to 5% for Associate Lecturer (AL) staff
2013: Difference for internal staff reduced to 5%; difference for AL staff eliminated in 2012 survey
Status: Green

⁶ The objectives are published in full at www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity

⁷ SAE = Senior Accountable Executive, the role responsible for delivery of the objective

⁸ KPI = Key Performance Indicator

Performance

Obj. 7: Reduce the gender pay gap
SAE: Deputy Director of Human Resources⁹
KPI: Reduce difference from 8.5% to 6.5%
2013: No change; further analysis has identified that the key issue to be addressed is the proportion of women in senior academic roles. This objective will be reformulated with a new KPI in 2014
Status: Red
See page 24 for a feature on this objective.

Obj. 8: Improve equality monitoring information for staff and students
SAE: Head of Equality, Diversity and Information Rights
KPI: Introduction of monitoring of caring responsibilities, return from maternity leave, religion or belief, and sexual orientation
2013: Monitoring of religion or belief, sexual orientation and caring responsibilities introduced in 2013
Status: Green

Obj. 9: Improve equality policy and guidance for staff and students
SAE: Head of Equality, Diversity and Information Rights
KPI: Improved policy and guidance relating to gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and caring responsibilities
2013: New staff and student policies introduced for gender reassignment; new student policy introduced for pregnancy and maternity; work underway to increase awareness of key religious festivals in order to avoid clashes with University events; work on caring responsibilities to commence in 2014.
Status: Green

⁹ From 2013/14, responsibility has transferred to the Director, Research, Scholarship and Quality

Recognition

The OU achieved the Athena SWAN bronze award in April 2013 and the judging panel commended our application, stating that it was a strong submission with excellent data presentation and honest reflection. Athena SWAN is the charter that supports the careers of women in science, technology, engineering and maths in higher education and research. See page 24 for further information.



In a letter to the Vice-Chancellor, Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, acknowledged the considerable efforts made by the OU to ensure that our Equality Scheme meets high standards of good practice. The Commission approved the University's revised Equality Scheme in June 2013, one of the first UK-wide scheme to be approved by the Commission for functions in Northern Ireland.



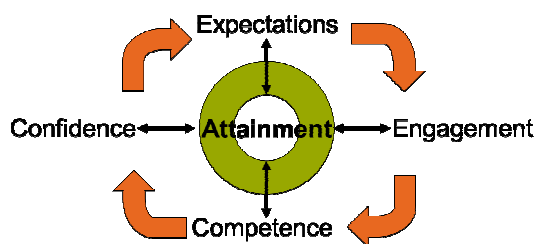
At around the same time, Alastair Pringle, Director of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Scotland wrote to the Director of the OU in Scotland, stating that he was impressed to read about the work that the OU has done to embed equality in the OU's Outcome Agreement for Scotland, and said that the principles adopted to apply the specific equality duties in Scotland represented a very positive approach.



The OU has ‘Great Expectations’

Reducing the ethnicity attainment gap

One of the University’s priority equality objectives is to reduce the ethnicity attainment gap between the proportion of White students and Black students obtaining a ‘good pass’ at undergraduate levels 2 and 3, which determine overall degree classification. In 2011/2012, around 20% of Black students achieved a good pass compared with around 49% of White students, which is a similar difference to the higher education sector as a whole.



The “Great expectations” project

The OU is participating in a collaborative project with the Higher Education Academy and seven other universities, taking action to address the attainment gap. Each university is taking a different approach with the idea being that collectively, progress can be made on understanding what types of interventions can deliver results. The OUs approach focuses on staff development.

A significant body of evidence points to the impact that expectations can have in raising attainment. Tutors who actively communicate high expectations, while also challenging any low expectations that students have of themselves, will help to create positive environments that achieve positive outcomes.

To date, workshops have been run with about 100 tutors and an information and resource website has been developed.

Tutors’ awareness of the impact of their expectations and subsequent behaviours is being raised and they are being given the tools to strengthen engagement and develop students’ competences in key tasks. Small successes and the use of multiple ‘micro-affirmations’ will help students increase their confidence. Put together, research suggests that this will ultimately raise students’ attainment.

Unconscious bias

Two projects are underway to assess the impact of unconscious bias on student results.

The first is a computer-aided statistical analysis of a core level 1 Arts module, reviewing student assessment scripts for several years. It will attempt to find correlations between results, ethnicity and the quantity and quality of written feedback. The results may have implications for the assessment and marking guidance provided to tutors.

The second study, still at planning stage, will assess whether ethnic or cultural bias exists in tutor marking because of the stereotypes that might be associated with student names. The experiment will consist of assigning names of different ethnic and cultural origins to assessment scripts and having them marked by a number of staff. The results may have implications for how scripts are currently marked at the OU.

English language development

English Language and Academic Literacy resources are available to tutors and now better organised through a new Tutor website. Tutors have access to tools to provide feedback on language development needs to students. A wide range of academic language resources are also available to students.

The OU’s new access modules include an English language diagnostic and advice for students, and academic use of English is a key skill developed through the module learning.

In depth...

Pregnancy and maternity



“Pregnant students face particular challenges in the educational system, particularly in relation to finances and taking time out”

Meet the parents

National Union of Students, 2009

Pregnancy and maternity

Advancing equality

Pregnancy and maternity policies and guidance for staff

The OU has comprehensive policies and procedures with regard to maternity, paternity and adoption leave and pay for staff. A 'New and expectant mothers operational standard' is in place to protect staff from being exposed to significant risks at work. There is also a Contingency Leave Scheme designed to support internal staff to deal with an emergency or unexpected situation, and an Unpaid Career Break scheme for internal staff with caring responsibilities. In addition there are statutory Parental Leave provisions, which provide for fixed amounts of unpaid parental leave for male and female staff for the purposes of caring for a child, and statutory Dependants Leave which entitles staff to reasonable time off without pay to deal with an emergency involving a dependant.

Resting and baby changing facilities



Image:freedigitalphotos

Resting facilities for new and expectant mothers are available in Occupational Health on the Walton Hall campus and include a bed, a chair as well as hand washing and toilet facilities. Baby changing facilities are also available. National and regional centres also ensure the provision of suitable facilities for new and expectant mothers for rest, ideally close to hand-washing and toilet facilities. Two centres (South and South East) have a dedicated first aid room which includes a bed and chair. In other centres staff are encouraged to use common room areas, meeting rooms, pod and learner support areas.

Campus nursery

Mulberry Bear Day Nursery is a work-place nursery based at the OU Milton Keynes campus with 54 places for children ranging from babies to school age. The nursery is committed to providing high quality childcare and education through play in an enriched environment and shares a unique relationship with the OU, providing cost effective childcare to university employees.

Flexible working

The Government has set out proposals to extend the statutory right to request flexible working to all employees with 26 weeks service or more from 2014. Currently this right applies only to employees with parental responsibility for a child, or caring responsibilities for an adult.

The University already operates a considerable number of formal and informal flexible working arrangements for staff across many units, including part-time working, term-time working, compressed hours and home working.

In light of the Government's proposals we have consulted across the University on a set of flexible working principles to guide the development of future University policy and procedures in this area. A project team has been set up to carry this work forward with the aim of achieving greater consistency and transparency in decision-making across departments, clearer direction on acceptable practice in common circumstances and decisiveness in balancing individual requests with business needs, while ensuring processes are robust and fair.

Offering flexible working and responding positively to flexible working requests can help retain staff and widen the talent pool. A culture that is generally supportive of flexible working options can increase commitment and loyalty of staff, which can translate into improved productivity and performance.

Pregnancy and maternity

OU Childcare Voucher Scheme

Childcare vouchers are a Government initiative designed to help working parents save money on their registered childcare costs by reducing the tax and national insurance contributions payable from gross salary via a salary sacrifice arrangement. The OU operates a salary sacrifice scheme for staff through Computershare Voucher Services.



Image:freedigitalphotos

Improved pregnancy and maternity policy and guidance for students

A mapping of student provision, information, guidance and support related to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, adoption and IVF has been completed and considered by the University's Equality and Diversity Management Group (EDMG).

The mapping suggested that the University's existing arrangements for providing support for students across a number of key environments are extensive but that information is currently scattered and can be difficult for students to locate. As a result of this work, a policy and guidance document covering maternity and related needs for students has been developed to clarify arrangements and to bring a range of information and procedures together in one place and this has been approved by the Student Services Leadership Team.

New "Research Degrees Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Guidance" was also approved by Research Degrees Committee in January 2013 and is published on the "Research at the OU website". Key points from the guidance will be included in the Research Student Handbook.

Promoting understanding and good relations

'Protecting our Children'

The BBC documentary 'Protecting our Children', produced with the expert insight of OU academics, won three awards at the Royal Television Society Awards, West of England, in February 2013. The programme followed the work of Bristol's child protection teams over the course of a year to see frontline work first-hand and explore how the crises of the last decade have had an impact on their ability to safeguard children.

Barry Cooper and Lucy Rai, Senior Lecturers in Social Work in the Faculty of Health and Social Care were consultants on the series. Debbie Stringer, Senior Lecturer in Law, was also involved as part of the module team. The BBC documentary team were presented with the Best Documentary, Best Director and Editing awards for the programme. The series also won the Grierson Award for Best Documentary in 2012.

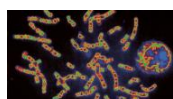
Pregnancy and maternity

Free online learning resources

The LearningSpace on the OU's OpenLearn¹⁰ website is home to free units of OU study available worldwide.

Detecting Down's syndrome in the unborn foetus

Intermediate level, 15 hours



The most common pregnancy screening tests carried out assess the risk of having a foetus with Down's syndrome. This unit discusses the analytical science behind the screening tests for this condition and the diagnostic tests available to confirm the presence or absence of Down's syndrome in the unborn foetus, which are offered if screening shows an elevated risk. This unit is an adapted extract from The Open University course *Analytical science: health, heritage and environments* (S240).

Early Development

Introductory level, 20 hours



This unit looks at the human being in the context of an individual life cycle, examining some of the processes that contribute to the formation of a new person. After a brief discussion of historical ideas about human conception, and about contraception to the present day, the Unit looks at the cells involved in the conception and development of a new individual and the early development of a new individual, along with some thoughts on women's experience of pregnancy. This unit is an adapted extract from *Human biology and health* (SK220) which is no longer in presentation

Understanding children: Babies being heard

Introductory level, 5 hours



This unit explores some of the things very young babies can do and how babies can contribute to family life and relationships from birth. The unit also looks at what they need from other adults and children, and what they can learn. This unit is from our archive and is an adapted extract from the OU course *Understanding children* (Y156) which is no longer in presentation.

Study at the OU

Some of our current modules¹¹ on child development, children and young people include:

Module name	Credits (A full-time year is normally 120 credits)	OU level
Understanding children and young people (Y176)	15	1
The early years: developing practice (E100)	60	1
Child development (ED209)	60	2
Working with children, young people and families (K218)	60	2
Working together for children (KE312)	60	3
Issues in research with children and young people (EK313)	60	3

¹⁰ <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

¹¹ For further information on OU modules and qualifications visit <http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/>

Pregnancy and maternity

Research at the OU

“Developmental Journal for Children and Young People with Multiple Needs”¹²



This newly-launched resource was developed by *John Oates*

and *Silvana Mengoni* of the OU's Child and Youth Studies Group in

the Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technologies, with a team of specialist advisers and consultants. It has been produced to help families and practitioners support the achievements of children whose development is affected by multiple factors that result in challenges to learning. It is based on the concept of a series of 'Can Do' cards which help parents and practitioners to observe, record and celebrate children's and young people's abilities, and to develop and strengthen these.

“Who's the Daddy? – ideas about fathers from a young men's prison”¹³



Drawing from an ethnographically-informed study of men's identities and social relations in prison, this journal article by *Rod Earle* explores the ways in which ideas about

fatherhood are institutionally deployed and personally experienced. Based on interviews and observational data in a young offender institution for 18 to 21 year-old men, the article considers young men's orientations toward being a father and their participation in parenting classes and a 'Fathers Inside' group.

“Troubled talk and talk about troubles: Moral cultures of infant feeding in professional, policy and parenting discourse”¹⁴



Helen Lomax examines the ways in which policy agendas and contemporary notions of the 'good mother' frame infant feeding

practices, rendering them a site of moral and interactional trouble for mothers. Drawing on analysis of mothers' talk with midwives during the first days of motherhood, the book chapter explores the ways in which breastfeeding confers a positive maternal identity, whilst choosing not to do so is associated with a deficit identity against which mothers' struggle to present themselves as good parents.

“Entitled to a sustainable career? Motherhood in science, engineering and technology”¹⁵

Sustaining careers and motherhood is particularly challenging in highly masculinised science, engineering and technology (SET) sectors. This journal article by *Clem Herman* and *Suzan Lewis* explores this issue using a social comparison theory perspective and draws on interviews with professional engineers and scientists from four companies in Italy, France and the Netherlands. It presents examples of three women who achieved senior roles despite working reduced hours and discusses combinations of conditions which may facilitate sustainable careers and caring roles.

¹² John Oates is Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS). Silvana Mengoni is Research Associate in FELS. The journal is freely available to download at: <http://www.ncb.org.uk/early-support/resources/developmental-journals/developmental-journal-for-children-and-young-people-with-multiple-needs>

¹³ Rod Earle is Lecturer in Youth Justice, in the Faculty of Health and Social Care. For further information see Open Research online: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/34133/>

¹⁴ Helen Lomax is Senior Lecturer in Leadership, in the Faculty of Health and Social Care. Further information is available at OpenResearch Online: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/31064/>

¹⁵ Clem Herman is Senior Lecturer in Telematics, in the Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology. Suzan Lewis is Professor of Organisational Psychology at Middlesex University. Further information about the journal article is available at Open Research online: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/31579/>

‘Young at Heart’ – diversifying our academic age profile

Young academics objective

Younger academics make a valuable contribution to the University that complements the experience of older academics.

The proportion of OU academic staff including researchers aged 35 and under was just 11% at April 2013, which is significantly below the sector average of 28%. While we receive a large volume of applications from younger academics, the proportion being shortlisted is lower than average.

The equality objective that will achieve a more diverse age profile is championed by The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic). It is particularly challenging as a result of low staff turnover and the need to retain experienced academics with significant research outputs.

Communications campaign

An internal communications campaign has been launched to raise awareness and to positively promote the contribution that younger academics make to the life and success of the University. Initiatives have included Spotlight interviews on the OU intranet and an event held in June 2013 to celebrate the work and achievements of younger academics. This event highlighted the strength gained by harnessing different capabilities and experiences of staff of all ages. The campaign will be mainstreamed through the University’s internal communications programme to ensure there is on-going reinforcement of the key messages.

Assessment of academic recruitment processes and practices

A review of Faculty recruitment processes and practices has been completed with the aim of removing any unnecessary or inappropriate barriers to the short-listing and appointment of younger applicants.

The findings and recommendations are being implemented from September 2013.

Improvements are expected to include: strengthening policy and guidance on composition of selection panels; producing best practice examples for job descriptions and person specifications for each level of academic post, and defining essential and desirable job criteria more fully.

Placement scheme

A new placement scheme is being developed in order to provide a pipeline of ‘home-grown’ younger academics, PhD and Post-Doctoral students, equipped with the skills, experience and knowledge that will improve their candidacy for early-career academic posts at the OU. The linkages with staff development programmes are currently being determined, so that the programme is integrated rather than stand-alone.



Image: Andy Hendry

Progress in academic units

While the overall profile has not yet changed, three Faculties reported progress in diversifying their age profile in the past year. The Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology decided to fill an academic post through a one year placement opportunity which was limited to applicants aged 30 or under. The Faculty of Health and Social Care have created Research Assistant posts which are attractive to younger and early career academics. The Faculty of Arts reported an increase in the proportion of younger academics as a result of raising awareness of the priority during recruitment activity.

In depth...

Religion and belief



Image: Angela Schröder

“The opportunity lies before us to work together to build a society rooted in values we treasure. But this society can only be built on a sure foundation of mutual respect, openness and trust. This means finding ways to live our lives of faith with integrity, and allowing others to do so too.”

*Code on Building Good Relations Between People of Different Faiths and Beliefs
The Inter Faith Network of the United Kingdom*

Religion and belief

Advancing equality

Monitoring

The OU has collected information for many years regarding staff and student age, disability, ethnicity and gender in order to monitor equality of opportunity and help create a more inclusive university community. As with many other organisations, we are now asking staff to inform us about their religion or belief, including if they do not observe any religion. Student monitoring of religion and belief is being undertaken through a redesign of the 'Profile' section on StudentHome to incorporate the new question and data was collected for the first time from July 2013.

The categories we have used for responses are based on those provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency, which will enable us to benchmark our profile with the rest of the higher education sector, and the question has an 'I prefer not to say' option.

Multi-faith prayer room

A multi-faith prayer room is located on the OU Walton Hall campus. This is suitable for use by individuals or small groups who wish to pray together or for those seeking peace for quiet contemplation. The prayer room is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm and can be booked in advance or users can just turn up. Whilst it is not possible for all regional and national centres to provide a dedicated room, the principle is that individual requests for facilities for prayer will be accommodated wherever possible.



Image: Sally Medway

OU Religious Festivals Calendar and guide

The OU's calendar and guide to the most significant religious festivals provides an important tool to enable staff to take account of the most significant festival dates in short-term and long-term planning of University activities involving staff and students. 'Significant' here refers to the impact on the workplace and learning environment, related to those religions with the largest populations in the UK (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism).

Taking account of these festival dates is a way to contribute to bringing about our inclusive learning and working culture, as well as helping us meet our legal obligations¹⁶. Staff and students who observe other religious festivals not included in the calendar are able to make their needs known.

For the festivals listed, the calendar provides dates; a brief description of each festival and a broad assessment of festival impact on staff and student activities using a flag indicator. Red = 'essential dates to avoid'; Amber = 'alternative arrangements may be required for some people'. The Calendar has recently been updated to include festival dates for 2014-2015 and there is a greater emphasis on avoiding Red flag dates.

¹⁶ The Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2010 which apply in Great Britain; the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 applies in Northern Ireland; and the Human Rights Act applies in the UK.

Religion and belief

Religious observance

The policy, with regard to time off for internal staff for religious observances, is that days other than public holidays should be allowed by managers but taken as part of the contractual holiday entitlement. Other examples of reasonable accommodations for religious observance for staff are outlined in the University's Annual Leave Policy.

Religion and Belief policy and guidance for students

The Equality, Diversity and Information Rights Team has begun to scope new policy and guidance on religion and belief for students. This work is part of our stated equality objective to provide greater clarity and transparency for students about the services and support they can expect to receive in relation to different needs and circumstances.

Promoting understanding and good relations

Free online learning resources

The LearningSpace on the OU's OpenLearn¹⁷ website is home to free units of OU study available worldwide.

Studying Religion

Introductory level, 20 hours



This unit gives an opportunity to think about some of the key concepts and methods of the discipline of religious studies,

with examples of different forms of religious practice and belief, mostly from Britain and India. The unit compares the ways in which boundaries are drawn (or not drawn) between what is held to be 'religious' and 'non-religious' in two different societies. This material is from our archive and is an adapted extract from *An introduction to the humanities* (A103) which is no longer taught.

Introducing the philosophy of religion

Intermediate level, 12 hours



This unit explores the meanings of the key terms 'God' and 'religion'; some key questions in the philosophy of religion; the difference between philosophical and non-philosophical questions about religion and

whether argument and evidence are even possible when we are thinking about religion. The unit notes the variety of possible ways of arguing for or against God's existence; distinguishes three different arguments; and describes and assesses one of them in more detail. It is an adapted extract from the Open University course *Exploring philosophy* (A222).

Religion today: Themes and Issues

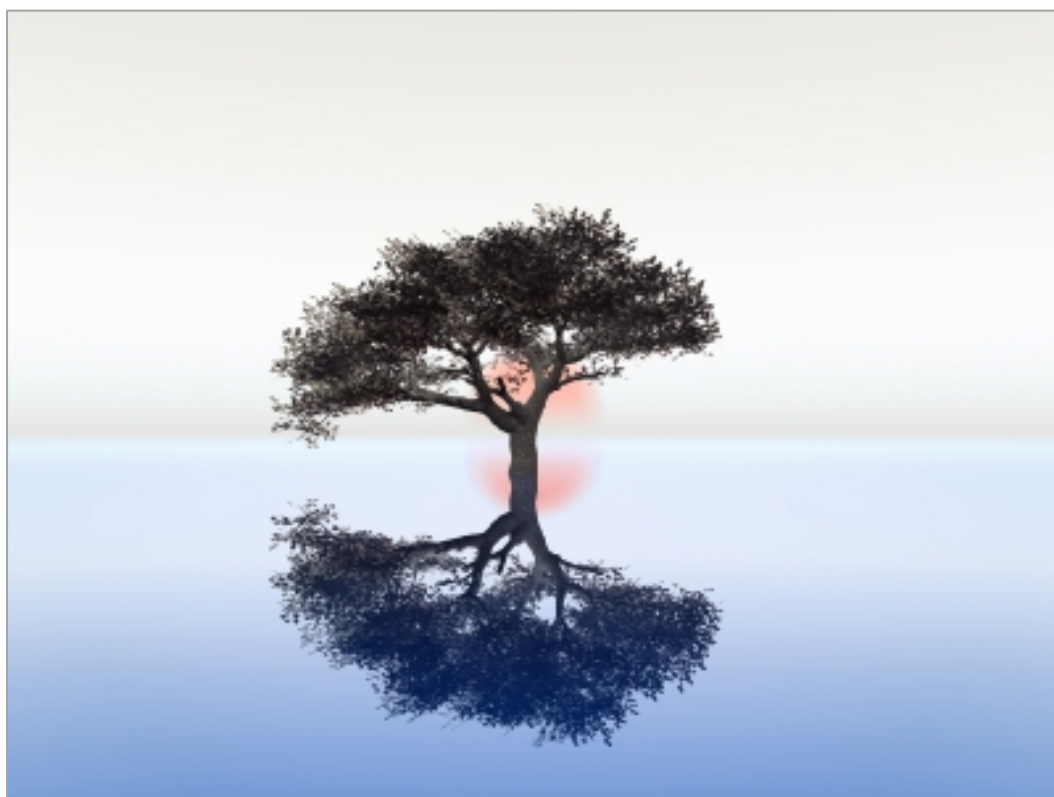
Advanced level, 15 hours



There is a widespread perception in the West that we live in a secular age, in which religion is at best an optional extra, if not a false delusion completely out of place. However, religion still arouses passion and causes controversy; it controls and transforms lives. An informed understanding of the contemporary world thus requires an appreciation of the role of religion in shaping ideas, world-views and actions that have an impact on the social as well as on the personal life of the individual. This unit gives a glimpse into this fascinating area. This material is from our archive and is an adapted extract from *Religion today: Themes and issues* (AD317) which is no longer taught.

¹⁷ <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

Religion and belief



Study at the OU

We offer a range of Religious Studies and philosophy modules¹⁸ including:

Module name	Credits (A full-time year is normally 120 credits)	OU level
The arts past and present (AA100)	60	1
From enlightenment to Romanticism (A207)	60	2
Introducing religions (A217)	60	2
Exploring philosophy (A222)	60	2
Why is religion controversial? (A332)	60	3
Thought and experience: themes in the philosophy of mind (AA308)	60	3

¹⁸ For further information on OU modules and qualifications visit <http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/>

Religion and belief

Research at the OU

“Food, Sex and Strangers: Understanding Religion as Everyday Life”¹⁹



This new book by *Graham Harvey* attends to more widespread religious activities than believing in or even worshipping deities. It challenges definitions of “religion” that emphasise “belief in God” because this is only one element of what only some

religious people do when they do religion. It is interested in the braiding of religiosity with other everyday activities and aims to provide a new foundation for studying religion(s) that does not give preference to themes arising from the history and polemics of only one religion.

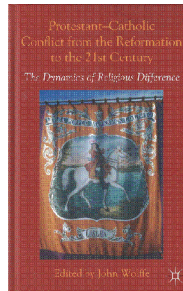
“Regina Jonas: forgetting and remembering the first female rabbi”²⁰



Regina Jonas (1902–44), who was ordained in Germany in 1935, is now widely recognised as the world’s first female rabbi. However, for almost 50 years after her death at Auschwitz in 1944, she was given very little, if

any, public recognition. Based on archival research, interviews and critical engagement with secondary literature, this journal article by *Stefanie Sinclair*, investigates a range of explanations why Jonas was nearly lost to historiography. It also considers the circumstances of the rediscovery of this controversial figure in the early 1990s and explores how she is remembered today.

“Protestant-Catholic Conflict from the Reformation to the 21st Century: the Dynamics of Religious Difference”²¹



This new book by *John Wolffe* takes a fresh look at the roots and implications of the enduring major historic fissure in western Christianity, which has had profound implications for culture, social life, politics and international relations across five centuries. New insights into the

historic dynamics of Protestant-Catholic conflict not only illuminate present-day contexts, such as Northern Ireland and the United States, where such polarities persist, but will also suggest instructive comparisons for approaching other seemingly entrenched conflicts in which religion is implicated, such as the perceived ‘clash of civilisations’ between Christianity and Islam.

“The Mahdi and the End-Times in Islam”²²



This book chapter by *Hugh Beattie*, begins by discussing the origins and historically significant features of Muslims’ ideas and beliefs about the Mahdi or ‘rightly-guided one’, and the figures and events usually associated with his appearance. The chapter goes on

to look at some of the religious-political movements which drew on mahdist discourses, including the Shi’ite Fatimids in North Africa and the Safavids in Iran, and the Sunni Muwahiddun in Morocco and Mahdawis in India.

¹⁹ Graham Harvey is an OU Reader in Religious Studies. For further information about this book see: http://www.acumenpublishing.co.uk/display.asp?K=e2013020109221902&dtspace=180:420&sort=sort_date/d&m=54&dc=103

²⁰ Stefanie Sinclair is a Lecturer in Religious Studies. Further information about this journal article is available at Open Research Online <http://oro.open.ac.uk/37655/>

²¹ John Wolffe is Professor of Religious History. Further information about this book is available at Open Research Online <http://oro.open.ac.uk/35654/>

²² Hugh Beattie is Staff Tutor in Faculty of Arts. Further information about this book chapter is available at Open Research Online <http://oro.open.ac.uk/35654/>

Advancing academic women's careers

Gender pay gap analysis

Reducing the gender pay gap was identified as an OU equality objective as a result of a pay analysis undertaken in 2011. Further analysis has identified that for most job types at the OU there is no pay gap, and differences are largely explained by the higher numbers of men or women in particular job categories and grades. There is however, a pay gap between male and female



academics at Professorial level; this is due to a disparity in numbers with fewer women attaining senior professorial levels. Currently around one third of OU professors are women.

Image: freedigitalphotos

New principles for academic and research staff promotion scheme

Senate has approved a new set of principles that will form a framework to underpin the development of a revised academic staff promotion scheme.

The principles arise from the need to ensure clarity about the requirements that a promotion case must meet in order to be successful, the need to establish equality of opportunity for promotion that takes into account individual circumstances such as part-time employment, sickness, maternity leave and other such absences, and the need to align the promotion scheme with existing policies, frameworks and quality standards both in the University and in the sector.

A working group has been established comprising representatives of the Academic Staff Promotions Committee, Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Deans. Further detailed work is underway and will include a consultation with stakeholders.

Career development programme for academic staff

It is acknowledged that there can be no short-term solution to addressing the disparity in numbers between male and female professors. One of the measures being introduced is a development programme to support career progression specifically for academic staff. The programme will be open to all academics, and it will have a particular focus on long-term career planning, developing understanding of the promotions process, and providing support and mentoring to raise confidence and resilience, which is expected to be valuable to female academics. Consideration is being given to how we will ensure that sufficient women are put forward and selected for this programme

“Crossing the boundaries: Gender, STEM and Employability reconsidered”

This seminar, in collaboration with University College London, Napier University and Sheffield Hallam University, was held at the OU in London in November 2012. The growing interest in employability presented a new opportunity to look at an old problem of how to support women into STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) employment. Women graduating in STEM subjects are less likely to go on to further study or employment in these sectors and more likely to leave the sector and work elsewhere. Moreover among those who do gain employment in these sectors, many leave after a career break and find it difficult to return. The seminar enabled reflection and discussion on current practice as well as theoretical concepts that could help to shape more effective interventions in this area and offer new ways to embed gender into STEM employability, policy and practice.

Advancing academic women's careers

OU wins award for supporting the careers of women



The OU has joined a host of top universities in the UK in gaining our first Athena SWAN Award. The Awards are given to universities, as well as individual departments that have shown good practice in supporting the careers of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in higher education and research

Our Athena SWAN Bronze Award recognises that the OU has a solid foundation for eliminating gender bias and developing an inclusive culture that values all staff. The Athena SWAN Award judging panel commended our application and commented that it was: "A strong submission with excellent data presentation and honest reflection demonstrating a clear commitment to change and a solid foundation for eliminating gender bias".



Over the next three years this work will continue and be developed across the university through an action plan.²³

²³ The Athena SWAN action plan is published on our equality and diversity website at: www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity

Martin Bean speaks at the OU STEM Women's Network

Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor was the speaker at the first meeting in June 2013 of the newly formed OU STEM Women's Network. The Network is part of the Athena SWAN action plan.

Martin was enthusiastic in his support for the Network, and for the Athena SWAN agenda which, he felt, very much reflected the OU's mission on openness.

"... as a University, we want our teaching and research to be world class, but that is not going to happen if we ignore the talents of half the population. The contribution of female academics to STEM subjects is absolutely essential ..."

Martin Bean
from the letter of endorsement for the
OU's Athena SWAN application

