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Reaching the Open University community worldwide

OU scheme to meet needs of bright students

The Open University today gives up to 500 of the brightest pupils in more than 60 schools an early start to their higher education study while still at school. Those pupils are taking a wide range of the university's courses at first year undergraduate level as part of its Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS), either to broaden or add depth to their school curriculum. It is aimed at those who may have done particularly well in their GCSEs, who are highly motivated and who would benefit from being stretched academically. Potential students apply through their schools, the support of which leads to students' success.

The scheme was pioneered in 1996, when pupils at Monkseaton Community High School in Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, took one of the university's maths courses; it has been registering students ever since.

Dr Liz Manning, Assistant Director (Quality and Learning Support) at the Open University in the North, is among staff overseeing the YASS project. She said: "The Open University welcomes the report's approach that learning and study be appropriate to a pupil's individual stage of learning, rather than their age.

"The experience of the OU shows that many of the bright and highly motivated students involved in YASS so far respond enthusiastically to university study at this first year level and the different approaches to learning that they encounter.

"The benefits of the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme to its students are manifold. Taking part in the scheme can bring increased self-confidence and improvements in personal organisation, planning and independent learning.

"The scheme also gives students the opportunity to encounter new subject areas or approach familiar subject areas from a different standpoint. Students' credit for their YASS courses does not count as points for university entry, but can be transferred for their higher education level studies."

The Young Applicants in Schools Scheme has support from the DfES, the Specialist Schools Trust and the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth. Courses in social sciences, modern languages, mathematics, science, computing and technology are available.