

sesame



The Open University

Reaching the OU community worldwide

Spring 2006 Issue 229

A singer's story



Is your job taking you in the wrong direction?

Is it time to rethink your future?

Are you looking for a new and exciting challenge that gives you a better quality of life?

Do you want to have a rewarding career as well as the potential to earn an excellent income?

Then look no further



Become a LighterLife Counsellor

LighterLife operates a weight-loss Programme specifically designed for people with three stone or more to lose. Did you know that there are 13 million obese people in the UK? Each has their own reason for being overweight. Could you help them understand why?

We are expanding our network of Counsellors throughout the whole of the UK and are looking to recruit motivated self-starters to run their own business under the security of our national brand.

This business opportunity offers comprehensive and accredited training (with an 80% LSC Career Development Loan available), business support and personal development, whilst providing a medically approved weight-loss Programme that offers an income of £50K+.

If you have a real desire to help people change their lives then call Hayley or Katie for an information pack on 0870 4424744 or email: new@lighterlife.com

www.lighterlife.com



COMMENT

CONTENTS

INTERDEPENDENCE DAY

UNLESS you have been living under a rock these past few months you can't have failed to notice the recent media frenzy surrounding increasing energy prices and the impact this will have on the British home and business owner. **sesame** examines this issue by talking to OU Research Fellow Steve Lunn who is one of the key players behind Britain's first wind farm project in Oxfordshire, and former OU student Peter Bennett who believes if we are to sustain our present energy consumption then nuclear power is the way forward. Our current energy crisis along with climate change and globalisation are just some of the themes at the OU's Interdependence Day set to take place at the Royal Geographical Society in London on 1 July. If you are interested in attending please see the story on page 6.

Last year the OU came top in the first-ever National Student Survey which asked students how satisfied were they with their Higher Education Institution. The OU ranked first on overall satisfaction, assessment and feedback and organisation and management out of 128 HEIs. The OU also ranked highly for its quality of teaching. Just how satisfied you all are was the subject of a recent Course Survey research project carried out by the university's Institute of Educational Technology. Of those surveyed, 95 per cent of students said they were satisfied and 61 per cent very satisfied with their overall study experience with The Open University. For the full story see page 5.

Meanwhile, students going to conventional universities this year are shunning the traditional 'academic' subjects in favour of more vocational ones. This news prompts **sesame** to start a debate: what are universities for? How far should what we study be related to the 'real' world of work and citizenship? Is it whimsical or self-indulgent to suggest that benefits of higher education are intangible and un-measurable (or indeed immeasurable)? Write or email **sesame** with your views.

Yvonne Cook, Editor



Windpower: Are wind farms the answer to the UK's future energy crisis?

Editor: Yvonne Cook
email: Y.M.Cook@open.ac.uk
telephone: +44 (0)1908 653011

Assistant Editor: Sheila Forman
email: S.K.Forman@open.ac.uk
telephone: +44 (0)1908 653761

Creative Director: Maxine France
email: M.D.France@open.ac.uk
telephone: +44 (0)1908 652585

Head of Publications: Debbie Dixon
email: D.M.Dixon@open.ac.uk
telephone: +44 (0)1908 652451

Published by: The Open University.

The editorial content of this magazine was correct at the time of going to press. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the prior permission of the publishers.

Views expressed in articles are those of the contributors and not necessarily of **sesame** or The Open University. Publication of an advertisement or loose insert in **sesame** does not imply Open University recognition or approval of the goods or services advertised.

sesame
The Open University, Walton Hall,
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA
email: sesame@open.ac.uk
telephone: +44 (0)1908 653761
website: www.open.ac.uk/sesame

Printed by: Artisan Press, Leicester
ISSN: 0267-033X

Advertising: McMillan-Scott
email: David@mcmslondon.co.uk or
John@mcmslondon.co.uk
telephone: +44 (0)20 7878 2300

News round-up	Pages 4 - 7
On the road again Cover story	Page 8
Lose your maths phobia New course	Page 9
Letters Your views	Pages 10 - 11
Epidemic of fear Research	Pages 12 - 13
Playing it by your rules Living with Asperger's	Pages 14 - 15
Teens want to chat FirstClass for under-18s?	Page 17
Running on empty The energy debate	Pages 18 - 19
Bright young things High achievers	Pages 20 - 21
Bienvenue à Caen The best way to learn French	Pages 22 - 23
No refuge for Kermit Many species can't be saved	Pages 24 - 25
Help for book hunters When you just can't find that text	Page 26
Reaching for the stars Latest news from space	Pages 28 - 29
Smile Support	Pages 30 - 31
Virtual Employment Fair Careers	Pages 32 - 35
Crossword	Page 36
WITH THIS ISSUE – OU STUDENT Not the end – but a new beginning – A round-up of the Open University Students Association's latest activities	Page 37

Celebrate culture this summer with the OU

CALLING all culture vultures – The Open University is sponsoring cultural festivals across the UK in 2006.

The Cathedral Quarter Festival, Belfast, 27 April - 7 May. takes to the streets with the cream of local, national and international artistic talent. The focus this year is on World Cultures and highlights include a Bollywood Brass Band and a group of Tuvan Throat Singers. Literary talks, readings, debate, comedy, theatre and music all combine in a fast-paced, exciting programme of events. www.cqaf.com or call +44 (0)289 023 2403.

Brighton Festival, 6 - 28 May. The largest multi-arts festival in England celebrating its 40th anniversary. The 2006 festival features more than 700 events across theatre, dance, music, books and debates. To mark the centenary of the birth of Samuel Beckett The



See everything under the sun at Brighton Festival

Picture: David Gray

Open University is sponsoring *Access All Beckett*, a programme of classic Beckett prose pieces performed by the internationally renowned Franco-Irish company Gare St Lazare Players. The recitals will be performed in site-specific locations, taking Beckett out of the theatre and into the city. www.brighton-festival.org.uk or call +44 (0)1273 709709.

Swindon Festival of Literature, 1 - 13 May. Authors and speakers not only from the world of literature but also from politics, science, sport, entertainment and television contribute to this exciting festival of exploration and ideas. Highlights include the Clive Brain Memorial Lecture, the Swindon Performance Poetry Slam Competition and the Children and Families weekend. The OU will be running a creative writing workshop at this event. For further information visit www.swindonfestivalofliterature.co.uk or call +44 (0)1793 771080.

The Hay Festival, 26 May - 4 June. Following on from the success of last year's partnership, the OU will once again be sponsoring the Hay Festival. Hay will be hosting some wonderful first-time visitors this year, including poet Seamus Heaney, Iranian Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, sculptor Antony Gormley, artist Howard Hodgkin, Princess Michael of Kent and writer and cooking star Madhur Jaffrey, as well as celebrating new work from some old friends such as Maya Angelou, Simon Schama, Margaret Atwood and John Pilger. The OU will be running creative writing workshops at Hay; please look out for further information. or call 0870 990 1299 and quote 'Open University'.

Shrewsbury Summer Season, 1 June - 3 September. The Shrewsbury Summer Season incorporates a myriad of events including the first Shrewsbury Folk Festival, an extensive music programme, free concerts, outdoor theatre and the Young Summer Season. This diverse festival celebrates cultural and artistic enterprise from the medieval era to modern times. The OU will support creative writing workshops; for more details visit www.shrewsburysummer.co.uk or call +44 (0)1743 281218.

Tell us about your learning journey

SO why are you studying with The Open University? When the going gets tough, what keeps from you dropping out? Has the experience changed you?

A new research project called Learning Journeys is seeking answers to questions like these and wants to hear from Open University students. The research, funded by Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales, will compare the experiences of students at the OU and two other institutions: Staffordshire University; and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), who promote access to

adult further education and higher education for disadvantaged groups.

Influence courses

"We would like Open University students to contribute the story of their own learning journey to the Learning Journeys website," said Jonathan Hughes, a lecturer in the OU's Centre for Widening Participation.

"By hearing what motivates and keeps students going, these stories become a resource for other people who may be thinking about their own learning.

"We hope that an awareness of student learning journeys will influence the way the university designs and delivers its courses. Finally, we hope that these student voices will help policy makers to realise that lifelong learning policy has to reflect the diversity and complexity of each individual student's learning journey."

The website already contains research and case studies relating to students at the three institutions. To read this, or to contribute your own story, go to www.open.ac.uk/cwp/learning-journeys/

Happy but hard-worked

THE vast majority of students are happy with the OU, but substantial numbers find study takes longer than expected. Ninety-five per cent of students who responded to the recent Courses Survey said they were satisfied, and sixty-one per cent very satisfied with their overall study experience with The Open University.

The results from the November 2005 Courses Survey also show that students are highly motivated to gain an award, with 82 per cent reporting that they were studying their course as part of a programme of study to achieve an OU qualification or award. The Survey also found that:

- 98 per cent of students were satisfied with course choice information in OU publications or OU websites, while 83 per cent were satisfied with the advice and guidance from an OU member of staff.
- 48 per cent of students found the amount of time studying their course more than expected and 57 per cent fell behind the study calendar – around the same level as reported in 2004.
- Personal motivation was the most important factor in keeping students going (96 per cent), followed by support from family and

friends (71 per cent) and an extended deadline/special arrangement (63 per cent).

● Learning materials are highly rated by students – particularly the course guide (97 per cent satisfied) and the printed teaching material (96 per cent). 72 per cent or more were satisfied with all printed and electronic components provided in support of their learning as part of their course.

● 85 per cent of students were satisfied with tutor support on their course overall. 87 per cent were satisfied, and 60 per cent very satisfied with tutor support received at tutorials. 85 per cent reported that feedback from their tutor improved their understanding of the course.

The Courses Survey is carried out by the Student Statistics Team in the OU's Institute of Educational Technology, who sent out questionnaires to 38,497 students on 122 courses and achieved a response rate of 49 per cent. Using the survey results, the team will continue to work with the OU's Student Services and Central Academic Units to investigate ways of improving student retention rates and the quality of the learning experience.

Run your own world weather system

HELP predict our future climate by taking part in the world's largest online experiment, as part of the BBC's current *Climate Change* television season.

You can download an individualised version of the Met Office's global climate model, which will run automatically in the background whenever your home computer is switched on. It can be run on Windows or Linux operating systems.

Mass experiment

If you want to see how your climate is developing you can bring up the graphics to keep track of your climate prediction model. Data is uploaded automatically and sent to scientists who are collating the results of climate prediction models running on thousands of home computers. The results will be unveiled this summer as part of a whole series of Climate Change programmes across BBC TV channels.

The experiment is being monitored by scientists at The Open University and Oxford University. The more people that take part by running their own individual model, the more accurate the climate prediction will be, they say. The OU's Professor of Earth Sciences Bob Spicer, said: "We are all part of the climate change problem, but by participating

in this experiment we can also be part of finding a solution."

To download the climate prediction

model, and find out about the OU/BBC Climate Change TV programmes, go to www.open2.net/climatechange/



Paul Rose, presenter of Meltdown, a programme in the Climate Change season

PVC’S VIEW

Research that reaches out

THE OU supports a vibrant research portfolio and fosters research teams who compete with top-ranked institutions in the UK and worldwide. Perhaps the most publicised of our recent research projects were the Beagle mission to Mars and the stunning Cassini-Huygens Titan mission – enterprises that evidence our world leadership in exploration research. This leadership is evident in many other research areas. The OU currently hosts the £4 million national Economic and Social Research Council Identities Programme investigating identity and conflict. Through this and related programmes the university is a major contributor to the UK social policy debate.

Benchmark

The OU is also at the forefront of research in so-called ‘convergence knowledge media’, which looks at human/computer interactions. And human health is a key research theme. The OU Brain and Behaviour Group recently identified a molecular species associated with memory function, and is now involved in clinical trials in the management of Alzheimer-like neuro-degenerative disorders. Another exciting example is the collaboration between the Medical Research Council Dunn Human Nutrition Unit in Cambridge and The Open University’s Department of Chemistry. This has revealed a link between the consumption of red meat and the risk of bowel cancer, and identified a possible screening tool for early diagnosis of this disease.

The research outputs of both staff and students benchmark the OU as making a major contribution to the intellectual currency of a discipline, and to a broader debate around key issues affecting the social, political and geographical well-being of individuals, communities, cultures and nations. And the OU is unique among universities in achieving wider educational outreach through our partnership with the BBC, and the online learning portal [open2.net](#)

Brigid Heywood,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
Research and Staff

NEWS

More news online at
www.open.ac.uk/sesame

More news online at
www.open.ac.uk/sesame

NEWS

IN BRIEF

Gift of learning

IF you’ve ever felt your Open University experience is so special you’d like to share it – now you can.

The OU has launched a Gift Voucher scheme that allows you to buy a family member, friend or colleague their choice of an OU short course.

Launched on 14 February, the Course Vouchers come in two price ranges: an Orange Voucher (£115) lets the recipient choose from one of five 10-point Level One courses on: *Life in the oceans; Mammals; Fossils; Introducing astronomy; Human nutrition*. With a Purple Voucher (£135) their choice is extended to include five arts courses: three in the ‘start

writing’ series (*family history, fiction, poetry; Shakespeare; Leonardo Da Vinci*). Vouchers bought now are valid for courses starting up to 31 May 2007.

The scheme is the brainchild of the university’s Marketing department who say their inspiration comes partly from the students themselves. “Our market research suggests that there are students who are asking family and friends to give them money for Christmas and birthdays to support their OU study,” said Tracy Carlton of Marketing. “Vouchers are another way to do that.”

But they also aim to introduce more people to the joys of OU study – and the underlying theme is that study is a joy and a life-enhancing experience.

“We know there are students who have studied a course and got a lot out of it, and want to share that experience with someone else,” said Tracy. “The idea is that learning is a pleasure – when you give someone a gift, you give them something they will enjoy.”

The scheme also gets over the point that Open University courses, unlike those at a conventional university, are open entry, she added. “Level One courses should be accessible to anyone interested in the subject.”



Celebrate Interdependence Day

GOOD news on climate change or globalisation is hard to come by. We seem to be faced with a ceaseless flow of bad news stories about threats beyond our control.

Now an ambitious project being led from within the OU’s Geography Department aims to change that. “We’re living in an interdependent world – ecologically, socially, economically, but our way of thinking hasn’t caught up with that,” argues Joe Smith, chair of the Interdependence Day project. “The project aims to throw light on what interconnectedness means for politics, science, technology and culture. But this isn’t just about analysis. We want to spotlight new thinking that has the power to change the world for the better.”

And all interested Open University students are being encouraged to come and take part in the first Interdependence Day event on Saturday 1 July at the Royal Geographical Society in London. The emphasis will be on participation, debate and learning.

There will be well-known speakers offering ‘Declarations of Interdependence,’ a fast-paced solutions workshop that will ‘Save the World in Sixty Minutes’ and a mini film festival where filmmakers will showcase their work. But there will be plenty of creative side events including arts and poetry workshops, music and performance, an ‘Earthly Sins Confessional’ and more. There will be a ‘Doctor’s Surgery’ where you can book an appointment to diagnose and solve the world’s problems. Displays will offer state of the art design and technology for sustainability.

The event is just one part of the Interdependence Day project. A series of publications, seminars and young researcher workshops are scheduled. The aim of all this is to help us all to find our way in an increasingly interdependent world.

Tickets for the Interdependence Day event are £6. For more information on how to take part, see www.interdependenceday.co.uk or email Jan Smith at j.f.smith@open.ac.uk or telephone Jan on + 44 (0)1908 654456.

Islanders face fees hike

STUDENTS in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man will see their OU tuition fees more than double from next year.

As residents of states that do not pay tax to the UK government, the students are not entitled to the fee reductions enjoyed by UK students, according to the Higher Education Funding Council, which pays grants to universities to subsidise UK students’ fees.

The students have been given advance warning in a letter from the OU of the increase, which will come into force in the academic year 2007/08 and will see them paying the same fees as overseas students – often double and sometimes three times the costs incurred by UK OU students.

Guernsey student Helen King, who is currently working towards her second degree with The Open University, told **sesame**:

“Hopefully I will be able to carry on with my MA, but if the fees are going to double I don’t know whether I will be able to.

“It is not the OU who is trying to make us pay more. What we need is more support from the local authorities.”

Distance

Helen, who is taking a year off from studying for an MA in Philosophy, added that if the fees had been at continental level when she did her first OU degree, which was in Literature and Philosophy, “I might not have been able to justify doing it.”



St Helier lighthouse, Jersey. The Channel Islands are independent of the UK

She said distance learning is ideal for Guernsey, where there is plenty of employment but limited local higher education facilities. Many Channel Islands students go to the UK to attend university.

Celia Cohen, who is the Regional Director for The Open University in the South,

which covers the Channel Islands, said the OU will be looking at ways in which it might assist students affected by the changes in the fee regime, but said no definite course of action has yet been decided.

The OU has just over 1,000 students in the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

Sesame Student Awards

THE Open University has decided to postpone the **sesame** student awards until 2007. Please see future issues of **sesame** for details of award categories and nomination forms.

In the meantime if you would like to receive further information please email your contact details to the **sesame** team at sesame-awards@open.ac.uk or write to **sesame** at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Defence contract

THE Open University and Cranfield University are to work in partnership to deliver postgraduate education to members of the armed forces. Up to 400 defence personnel annually will study MBA courses with the OU in conjunction with the Defence College of Management and Technology (DCMT) based at Shrivenham, the centre for postgraduate education for military personnel.

Lecture calendar

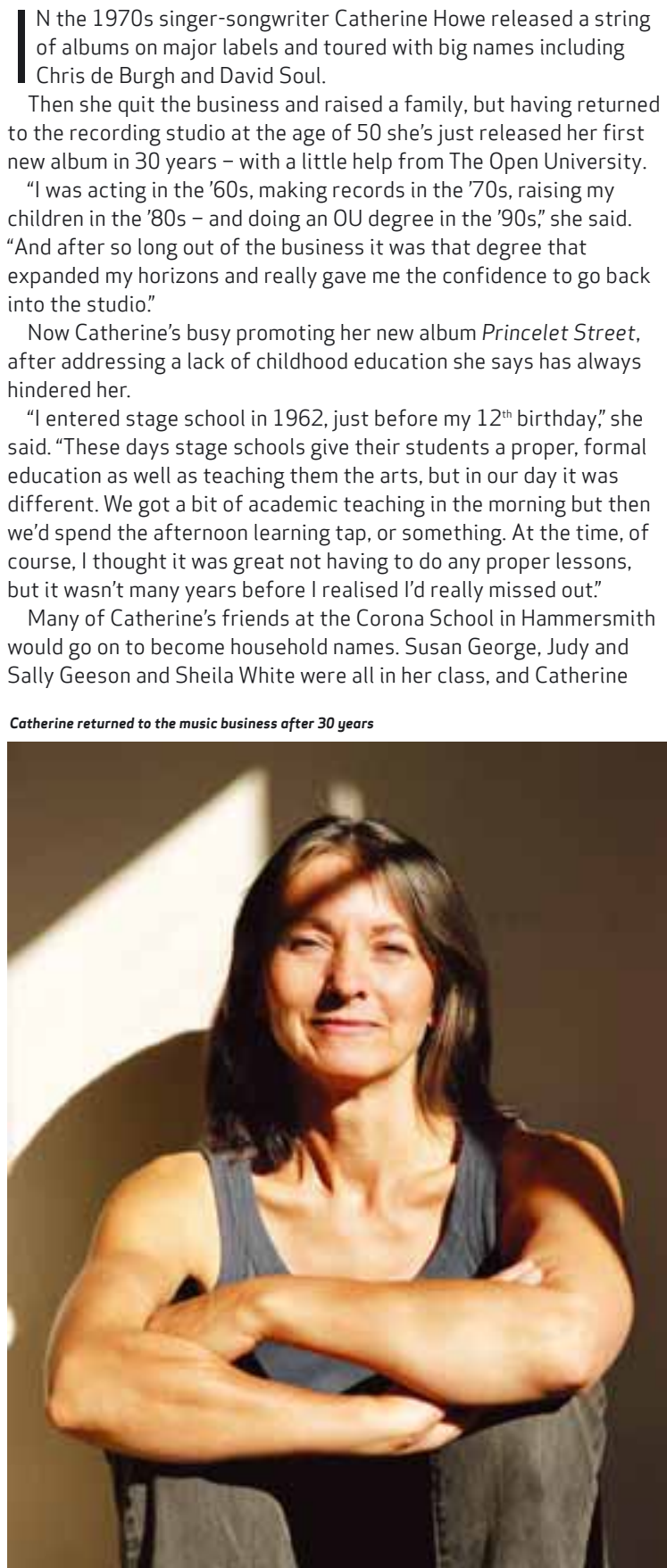
DETAILS of this year’s inaugural lectures by newly-appointed professors at the OU’s Milton Keynes campus can be found at www.open.ac.uk/inaugural-lectures Lectures are free and open to all students. They can also be viewed after the event via the internet. The subjects of 2006 lectures include language, history, politics, business and education.

OU Staff and Student Golf Challenge

STUDENTS and alumni are invited to join OU staff for a day of golf at the Millbrook Golf Course, Bedfordshire, on Thursday 18 May 2006. There is a fun 9-hole scramble in the morning, of teams put together on the day. Then the main event is in the afternoon – individual, full handicap Stableford over 18 holes for the OU Trophy. The event is supported by the OU Club, so golf plus coffee, bacon butty and lunch costs only £20.

Students and alumni, who must have current handicaps, can enter by contacting Andy Harding by email at a.v.harding@open.ac.uk or by telephone on+ 44 (0)1908 653328.

On the road again



IN the 1970s singer-songwriter Catherine Howe released a string of albums on major labels and toured with big names including Chris de Burgh and David Soul.

Then she quit the business and raised a family, but having returned to the recording studio at the age of 50 she's just released her first new album in 30 years – with a little help from The Open University.

“I was acting in the '60s, making records in the '70s, raising my children in the '80s – and doing an OU degree in the '90s,” she said. “And after so long out of the business it was that degree that expanded my horizons and really gave me the confidence to go back into the studio.”

Now Catherine's busy promoting her new album *Princelet Street*, after addressing a lack of childhood education she says has always hindered her.

“I entered stage school in 1962, just before my 12th birthday,” she said. “These days stage schools give their students a proper, formal education as well as teaching them the arts, but in our day it was different. We got a bit of academic teaching in the morning but then we'd spend the afternoon learning tap, or something. At the time, of course, I thought it was great not having to do any proper lessons, but it wasn't many years before I realised I'd really missed out.”

Many of Catherine's friends at the Corona School in Hammersmith would go on to become household names. Susan George, Judy and Sally Geeson and Sheila White were all in her class, and Catherine

Catherine returned to the music business after 30 years

herself soon landed roles in a number of TV shows including *Dr Who*, *Z Cars* and *Dixon Of Dock Green*.

“But that never interested me,” she said. “I'd only gone to stage school for the music, and I quit acting and concentrated on my songwriting.”

That, too, was a success, her first album in 1971 attracting the attention of major label RCA. She toured with and opened shows for, among others, Chris de Burgh, David Soul, Randy Edleman and former Amen Corner frontman Andy Fairweather-Low.

But when her records didn't sell in sufficient numbers (“I later found it was because they weren't actually being made available in the shops.”) record company bosses kept urging Catherine to change her image. “They kept saying ‘write country and western – write songs like Dolly Parton! Dolly Parton's great, but that wasn't me – and that was the end of that.”

“You've got to have some knowledge of where you come from, what you are. I'd missed out on an education and didn't have that”

And so Catherine went home to Yorkshire and raised her family, but something kept nagging at her. “I knew there was something missing,” she said. “I needed mental stimulation. I kept writing songs, but especially if you're creative, you've got to have some knowledge of where you come from, what you are. I'd missed out on an education and didn't have that.”

Then in 1994 an aunt suggested Catherine do an OU course. “It sounded good in theory, but I was worried that I wouldn't enjoy it, and certainly worried that I wouldn't be able to do it,” Catherine said. “But from my very first meeting I thought ‘this is me. This is where I want to be.’”

Catherine studied the arts, and developed an interest in history and religious studies. She immersed herself in her studies. They changed her life. “It was wonderful to absorb such knowledge,” she said. “I was fascinated in particular by history and the religious questions and that's remained an interest.” She's just finished writing a book on Secular Society founder George Jacob Holyoake, about whom she first learned during an OU course. “It's filled in gaps in my knowledge. But it has also broadened my horizons and given me a sense of confidence in my convictions. And that regained confidence shaped my songwriting – and sent me back into the studio.”

So anyone who enjoys *Princelet Street* will have the OU to thank. “The whole experience just made me think in a completely different way,” said Catherine. “There's a bit of everything on there – pop, folk, jazz – but the songs are more rounded, they reflect many of the things that I've learned – that the OU has taught me.”

Catherine plans to promote her album with a number of festival appearances and a possible tour, and says she now intends to stay in the music business and release more albums. But she hasn't ruled out other ambitions.

“I would absolutely love to come back to the OU,” she said. “I was looking at a course only a few weeks ago. It's given me so much. I'm sorely tempted to do it again.”

Princelet Street by Catherine Howe is available, priced £13.99, at www.catherinehowe.co.uk or from all major retail outlets.

Lose your maths phobia

WE want people to feel confident about using maths in their everyday lives,” said Hilary Holmes, Course Chair of the new 10-point Openings course Y162 *Starting with maths*.

Y162 is targeted at people who have basic numeracy skills, but may need help with more involved mathematics that are useful in everyday situations – such as fractions, percentages, graphs and using a calculator effectively. A basic scientific calculator is supplied with the course materials.

“Whether you're working to a budget, or doing some DIY, or creating a spreadsheet, or any number of other everyday tasks, it's important to be able to understand maths,” said Hilary. “But we also want to show maths can be fascinating and fun.”

The course includes everyday examples of situations in which maths can help, including a case study of how a conservation society uses maths to promote their cause; some

brief historical snippets on how numbers and maths have been used in the past, and some fun mathematical puzzles. The course even begins with a quick lesson in Sudoku using a tiny 4x4 grid, as opposed to the usual 9x9.

Have a go

“We hope it will encourage students to start thinking mathematically, as well as setting the scene for other activities in the course,” said Hilary. “The historical aspects are important too. It took mathematicians hundreds of years to put some aspects of maths, such as negative numbers, on a firm footing, so it's not surprising that some people find these quite difficult to understand when they first meet them!” The course also demonstrates how an understanding of maths can help people to make decisions and communicate ideas quickly.

“To a lot of people maths can be

intimidating,” added Hilary. “But one of the key things we want to encourage students to do is just to have a go and to realise that it's okay to get stuck with a problem and even make mistakes. Everyone does – it's what you do afterwards that counts. One of the main themes of Y162 is helping students to develop strategies, including looking at problems in different ways.”

The course is useful for anyone who is interested in developing their maths skills or is studying another OU course for which a better knowledge of maths would be an advantage. It is also ideal preparation for students wanting to progress on to MU120 *Open mathematics*.

As with all Openings courses, Y162 has been designed to help people develop their study skills and build confidence as well as getting a taste of a particular subject area.

First presentation June 2006, registration deadline 15 May. Presented four times a year.

Advertisement

Shamed By Your English?

A SIMPLE technique for acquiring a swift mastery of good English has just been announced. It could double your powers of self-expression. It could pay you real dividends in business and social advancement, and give you added poise, self-confidence and personal effectiveness.

Many people do not realise how much they could influence others simply by speaking and writing with greater power, authority and precision. Whether in business, at social functions, or even in casual conversation with new acquaintances, you could dominate each situation simply by using the right word in the right way.

For example, when you are presenting a report, training a child, fighting for a cause, making a sale, writing an essay, or asking for a rise . . . your success depends upon the words you use.

Yet thousands of talented, intelligent people are held back because their powers of self-expression do not equal their other abilities.

But now the right words are yours to command! A free booklet, “Good English — the Language of Success”, tells you all about a remarkable home-study Course which can give you a swift mastery of good English in just 20 minutes a day.

Never again need you fear those embarrassing mistakes. You could quickly and easily be shown how to ensure that everything you say and write is crisp, clear, *correct*.

This amazing self-training method can show you how to increase your vocabulary, speed up your reading, enhance your powers of conversation, and tremendously improve your grammar, writing and speaking — all in your spare time at home.

What's more, you could command the

respect of people who matter, because you could learn how to use English accurately, impressively, incisively — to cut through many barriers to social, academic or business success.

For your free copy of “Good English — the Language of Success”, and proof that this unique home-study method really works, simply post the coupon below — NOW. You have nothing to lose, not even a postage stamp, and you may gain a great deal by sending for this free booklet. Just phone 0800 298 7070 free or post the coupon below. Or you can send an e-mail to: SSE86E@bowdenhall.com.

Free Booklet Coupon

To: Practical English Programme, (Dept. SSE86T), FREEPOST, Marple, Stockport, SK6 6YA.

Please send me your free “Good English” booklet.

NAME.....
(Mr./Mrs./Miss)

ADDRESS.....

.....Postcode.....

POST TODAY OR CALL 0800 298 7070 FREE
OR E-mail: SSE86E@bowdenhall.com
with your name and postal address

No stamp needed in U.K.

LETTERS

Elusive feedback

THE new exam feedback system (sesame 228, p22) raised some queries.

I THINK it is an excellent idea to give feedback to students. However, why is access to it only provided on the StudentHome page? What about those of us who don't have access to the internet or those who like me, can't get past the first page of the website due to its not liking my password or the dozen others that I've requested? Could the feedback not be sent in the post along with the exam results?

Esther Newton
Thatcham, Berkshire

I'VE been a student with the OU since 2002, studying IT and Computers. In December 2005 I received my course result for my latest course. It did not mention anything about the new exam performance feedback that the OU is now making available for 28 days. I did not receive any other notification of this new service and so was quite surprised to read about it in the latest issue of **sesame**. I immediately went online to check, but unfortunately, the 28 days had already passed and the information was no longer available.

I think that when the OU offer new services such as this, students shouldn't have to find out about it only from **sesame**. This lack of information meant that I lost the chance to see my feedback. Not everyone checks their StudentHome web page on a regular basis. The OU should have mentioned this in the course result letter.

Helen Agiantritis
Athens, Greecee

GLENN DICKINSON, STUDENT SERVICES, REPLIES:

IT WAS decided at a very early stage in the development of this system that the university would not be

providing performance profiles on paper. At the time, we were working towards the 2006 date originally set by the university by which all students would be expected to have internet access. Although this date was subsequently deferred, this system was too far developed to revert to paper-based operation.

I take the point that students for whom there was a performance profile may well have found it useful to have notification of this on their course result letter. However, we had to balance this against unduly raising expectations amongst the 25,000 or so students who would receive the same general letter but for whom there was no profile.

I also appreciate that the performance profile was not widely advertised in advance. The target date of 2005 was a very challenging one for us and we could not guarantee being able to deliver the system any earlier.

Why no set texts?

SINCE I had the time (four months to be exact) for my literature course to start, I felt I would be doing a good use of it by getting on with the reading of the 16 set texts for the course. I therefore phoned my local OU branch to enquire about the library service of the OU. I was assured there is one, but to my surprise none of the titles in my set texts list that I am required to read are stocked there. I was therefore helpfully advised by the OU staff to try and place my reading books list in any local town library. When I did that I was told that I could be waiting four months before any book might happen to come their way, if at all.

May I ask what is behind the avoidance of stocking your library with set texts? Does it make any difference to you if students buy their set books or borrow them?

Shantasya Carlisle
Dromore, Belfast

NICKY WHITSED, DIRECTOR OF LIBRARY SERVICES, REPLIES: UNFORTUNATLEY it is not possible

for the OU regional centres to stock the full range of set texts, but there are a number of ways in which the OU Library Services can help. We describe these in full on page 26.

Give a bit of OU

WHY does the OU not produce gift vouchers? Family and friends can then purchase these for students to offset against course fees, books and other services that the OU charges for. A suggestion to put to the marketing committee?

Chris Noonan
Hove, East Sussex

JULIE WILKINSON, MARKETING COORDINATOR, REPLIES:

THE OU has launched a pilot campaign to offer a small range of short courses as vouchers – five arts courses and five science courses. See the story in this sesame, page 6.

Snail mail

AS I wait to begin my eighth year of study with the OU, I can't

help reflecting on the eternal problem that seems to arise in dispatching course materials to students outside the UK.

Every year, for every course, we students in Europe have to wait at least two to four weeks longer than UK-based students to receive our course materials.

Often students contact the OU to complain – whereupon a second set is despatched by express service and delivered within 48 hours. The original set will then arrive eventually, bearing labels from Malmö or some similar Arctic outpost, having presumably travelled by the slowest boat in the Baltic!

This situation has been the norm throughout my seven years of study with the OU and for all sets of course materials. We in Europe pay more than twice as much for our courses as UK students (a £260 course in the UK costs £695 in Europe in 2006) and complete them without the benefit of face-to-face tutorials (though e-tutorials are very useful), but we are provided with audiovisual materials. It seems to me that

other people had.) The two ladies who were invigilating commented on my cushion so I explained my circumstances to them. It is them I wish to thank and commend in this letter. Their kind gestures were very much appreciated by me; they bought and served me tea during the exam, encouraged me and tried to make me both emotionally and physically as comfortable as possible.

They really made the experience very positive for me and I will always remember their support.

The Open University should be proud and recognise what wonderful people they have on the ground.

Delphine Picovici
Murroe, Co.Limerick

the least the OU could do would be to use a fast system of dispatch for our course materials to ensure that we get them, if not at the same time, then not more than a few days later than UK students. After all – sending out second sets by courier when first sets are still chugging across the ocean is hardly economical is it?

Gill Ewing
Preuschdorf, France

CHARLES CLEVERDON, DISTRIBUTION MANAGER, REPLIES:

IN COMPARISON to the number of mailings despatched, only a very small percentage are actually delayed in the system; however there have been concerns amongst students, and the university, about deliveries of course materials to some areas of continental Western Europe and Ireland.

Swiss authorities have been demanding customs duty on packs, but with other countries it is more difficult finding out where the delays occur; however a full-scale review of all international mail services will be conducted over the next three months. This will involve extensive testing of various services and if any student who has previously experienced delivery problems would like to take part in the monitoring exercise, please contact me by email, c.w.cleverdon@open.ac.uk, quoting PI and country. Distribution is committed to ensuring that course materials are delivered in accordance with study schedules and to improve the service generally to non-UK students.

Burdened by study

I AM currently studying LZX194, Spanish and English (online) and LZX140 (online).

While I am thoroughly enjoying these courses and the materials provided, I thought I had signed up to an 'online course'. My job means carrying a suitcase at all times, now on top of this I must carry a notebook, two exercise books, cassettes, CDs, videos and CD player (cassette player while nightstopping).

Surely an online course should be just that? It would be better to have written material on a website; listening tasks can be opened in Macromedia (or similar) and videos viewed in Flash etc.

This way only a laptop needs to be remembered and carried! Are there any plans to change the format of these so-called 'online' courses?

Sarah Morphew
Marlow, Bucks

TITA BEAVEN, DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES, REPLIES:

WHILE I am delighted you are enjoying the courses and the materials, I am sorry you were expecting something slightly different. The course descriptions do explain what is included in the course: the materials are presented though coursebooks, audio CDs etc. while the tuition for the LZX version is via Lyceum, our online audiographic programme. So the courses are not online.

Some of the suggestions you make about delivering the courses through a website are great, but you must remember that not all our students have the computer spec needed to follow a course like that at the moment. From 2007, the university strategy will assume that all students have a computer with a DVD-Rom player and internet access, and you will be pleased to know that the courses we are planning for the future make a lot more use of the available technology.

We are currently working on the new version of L(ZX)140 *En rumbo*, and this will include a DVD-Rom with all the video and audio and associated activities. However, there are some strong pedagogic reasons for having some of the materials on paper, so in the new courses we will not dispense with paper study guides and books. We really think the balance between old and new media will make the course much more interesting and attractive.

We're no Luddites!

THE student whose tutor refuses to use email provoked a strong

response from tutors.

WE are sorry that the writer of the letter in the last issue of **sesame** (issue 228) which appeared under the rather inflammatory title *Tutor's e-allergy* feels hard done by in face of his/her tutor's quite reasonable and permissible adherence to what we're told is procedure on non eTMA courses, but even sorrier that the letter appeared in your publication without some official response in support of the tutor.

We decline to receive students' work via email except in extenuating circumstances and after consultation with our staff tutors, but we certainly have no e-allergy.

Not only are there sound, practical reasons for such refusal (printing costs vs additional screen time, for instance) but there are aspects of the paper TMA submission process that make regular acceptance of students' work by any other method awkward to say the least.

Perhaps you could actively present us as people who strive to do our best for the students, within the framework of our contract, exercising flexibility and supporting the principle of *openness* to the best of our ability, rather than as intransigent Luddites who cannot or will not handle technology? You might also like to point out that we sent this letter by email...

Karen Angelosanto, Robert Barnwell, Pat Crawford, Guinevere Lohneis, Pat McIntosh-Spinnler, Jane Mitchell

AS an OU Associate Lecturer, I sympathise with James Hayes (**sesame** 228) on electronic submission. However, what is there to stop a weak student being in cahoots with an AL, slipping them some money and sending them a TMA in Word which the AL can then rewrite to give the student a better mark?

I am personally in favour of students printing out their TMAs and actually reading them on paper before mailing. It would save some of the horrible gaffes created by overuse of the spellchecker (the Roman emperor 'August', anyone?) and let the students see more clearly what they have written; on-screen editing causes many paragraphs to become meaningless or repetitive.

I am expected by the OU to write marginal comments at the appropriate place in the margins; I can't do what the OU expects me to and do what Mr Hayes would like.

Associate Lecturers are all in the 21st century; however, I have students who only have access to a computer at the public library.

Moreover, I have taken TMAs with me and marked them on trains and planes to permit a rapid turnaround, which I could only do on a laptop if the OU decided to buy me one.

Martin Nichols
Associate Lecturer, London

DR MARK PITTAWAY, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING, ARTS FACULTY, ADDS:

FROM 2007 a new policy will be implemented across the university, which will mean that students on all but a tiny minority of Arts courses will have the option to submit their TMAs electronically.

Please send your letters to: Letters to the Editor, sesame, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. Fax: +44 (0)1908 652247 Email: M.D.France@open.ac.uk Include your address and daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit letters. £20 book token for published Star Letter £10 book token for published letters

RESEARCH

Epidemic of fear

IN 1816, an endemic but relatively manageable disease mutated into a killer form, somewhere in Bengal, India. Just as bird flu threatens to do today, it swept west across the world, entering Britain in October 1831 via the port of Sunderland.

Asiatic cholera (also known as cholera morbus) killed thousands in the United Kingdom in the two great outbreaks of 1832 and 1849, and caused panic and rioting across the country. Now a new research project on the cholera riots has been launched – and is looking for help from **sesame** readers willing to do some local research.

“We need people in as many counties as possible to trawl through local newspapers for the years 1832 and 1849, to identify incidents of riots associated with Asiatic cholera,” said Michael Holland, The Open University History graduate who is co-ordinating the project. “We do not necessarily need historians or people with a research background. An ability to record

incidents is the main qualification.” They will also be looking for information about the disease’s spread and treatment.

“There were no effective preventative measures or treatment for cholera and patients were bled and given brandy”

Fear was the spur for the riots – there were no effective preventative measures or treatment for cholera and patients were bled and given brandy, which we now know would have heightened the dehydrating effects of the disease. Rumour and disinformation also played its part – there was a widespread, although unfounded, belief among the poor that doctors were taking cholera victims from their homes to hospital in order to use their bodies for dissection.

The research is being carried out in conjunction with the OU’s Family and Community History Research Society (FACHRS), as well as tropical medicine

specialist Geoff Gill of Liverpool University and medical doctor Sean Burrell. Michael, who was academic co-ordinator for FACHRS’ groundbreaking project on the Swing Riots (see **sesame** 227, p13), hopes the countrywide research will yield new historical evidence about this pandemic and its social effects.

And with the threat of bird flu hanging over the country, studying the past may also provide clues to the future. Michael said: “A bird flu pandemic could lead to unrest, although I would not like to say it would go as far as it did then.”

For more information or to take part in the Cholera Project, email CholeraProject@aol.com or ring +44 (0)1702 464199.

Follow it up: Epidemics and disease can be studied with the OU. U205 *Health and disease* is an interdisciplinary 60-point course suitable for anyone with a general interest in this area; S320 *Infectious disease* is a 30-point course aimed at those with some background in biology or health sciences.



A nineteenth century engraving of a patient in the last stages of cholera

RESEARCH

Discovering how we used to read

THE Open University is spearheading the creation of a unique database which will throw light on the history of an activity very familiar to OU students – reading!

The Reading Experience Database (RED) project has recently won a grant of £292,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to expand its activities and it is seeking more contributions from people with historic evidence of reading.

RED is managed by Professor Bob Owens and Dr Mary Hammond in the OU’s Literature department, jointly with Professor Simon Eliot of the University of London. It looks at what, where, and how Britons were reading between 1450 and 1945.

“There has been a lot of theorising about reading as an activity,” said Bob, “but without reference to any kind of empirical data.” One theory is that people used to read out loud, even when reading only to themselves, and

the switch to the modern practice of silent reading came in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. But to support this and other ideas more evidence is needed, and the RED team hope to find it.

Anyone can contribute to RED, which is the only one of its kind in the world. It logs references to reading in printed records, letters, journals, diaries, commonplace books, and notes written in the margins of texts.

The database currently holds around 6,000 records but with the grant, which will fund two research fellows, the RED team hope to boost it to at least 25,000 entries. They will also make its resources available to researchers everywhere.

Do you have any evidence of reading (not just books, but magazines, posters, anything written) before 1945? Or do you have access to diaries, family papers or anything else containing evidence of reading? If so, Bob and Mary would be

delighted to hear from you. You can contact them and contribute to RED at www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/

Follow it up: publishing history and the readership of novels is a theme in the OU course AA316 *The nineteenth century novel*. AA810 *The postgraduate foundation module in literature* includes specific reference to the RED project.



Here's a credit card that works as hard as you do.



The Open University

0% pa balance transfer rate (a handling fee applies) for the first five months from account opening – which could potentially save you money if you transfer balances from other credit cards and store cards.

24-hour customer service – got a query? Need to talk something over? We've got helpful people working in customer services to give you the facts any time of the day or night.

Online account access – no queuing in banks, no limits on opening hours, you've got access to your details on-line whenever you need them.

Chip & PIN – bad news for fraudsters; our credit cards come equipped with the latest technology to ensure that all your purchases are as secure as possible.

24 million MasterCard outlets worldwide – accepted just about everywhere, from New York restaurants to the garage at the end of your road.

Call FREE now quoting reference AOUV

0800 015 2204

Lines open Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 9am-6pm

or visit www.beneficialcard.co.uk/open_university

Beneficial

Subject to status and conditions and only available to UK residents aged 18 years and over with a permanent UK address. Beneficial is a trading name of HFC Bank Ltd. HFC Bank Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Registered Office: North Street, Winkfield, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 4TD. Registered in England number 1117305. Member HSBC Group

0% per annum on Balance Transfers fixed for 5 months from account opening (a handling fee applies).

Typical
14.9% APR
Variable



Playing it by your rules

Two students describe the experience of living with Asperger’s syndrome, a form of autism

WHEN you hear the word ‘autistic’, what do think of? Maybe you imagine someone like Dustin Hoffman’s character in *Rain Man*, or a person who avoids contact with other people or collects strange objects. Your impression of autism could be more positive and you may envisage a person who is academically gifted in some way. The chances are that when you think of the term ‘autistic’ you don’t think of someone like me.

“A friend recently said to me that my greatest disability is my ability. To all intents and purposes I seem fairly average: I’m a lecturer, I play in a band, I drive, I have

friends, and when TMAs and exams aren’t looming, I have a social life. The thing is, I find it a bit harder than the average person to keep up with this life, I’ve just got good at hiding the fact that I’m struggling.

Cut off
“Neurotypicals (NT’s, non-autistic people) are complex creatures and it’s taken years for me to understand their rules of social interaction. The fact that the correct response to ‘Do I look fat in this?’ is ‘No!’ regardless of the evidence to the contrary, seems nonsensical to me. I’m not good at figuring out the correct responses in social

situations and find it exhausting and confusing. Nevertheless, as I’ve grown older and have observed more NT behaviour, I’ve acquired vast quantities of data on this subject which are carefully stored in my ‘social behaviour database’, otherwise known as my brain. I can now handle small social groups but occasionally still misread situations and respond inappropriately. Although I’ve come a long way from the little girl who refused to speak for fear of being laughed at, it’s all an act and I still feel like I’m stuck in a bubble that insulates me from understanding the intricacies and pleasures of relationships.

Jai-Jae St Léger: her phenomenal memory is of little use in exams

Photo: Neil Hobbs



“Asperger’s affects me in less obvious ways too. I’m incredibly literal, and although I realised some time ago that the phrase ‘I’ll only be a minute’ doesn’t actually mean ‘I’ll be 60 seconds’, I still struggle with the ambiguities of language and lack the imagination to extemporise when instructions aren’t precise. (Several years ago I spent half-an-hour wandering outside a tutorial centre because the name on the sign outside wasn’t exactly the same as the one I’d been told by my tutor and I wasn’t sure what to do.) Also I’m constantly distracted by everyday phenomena; I have synaesthesia and occasionally ‘hear’ colours and shapes and ‘see’ sounds.

Amazing memory
“Then again, apparently I have an amazing memory. Not just for useful information like dates, but for completely inconsequential information; I can recall all the registration numbers of all the cars every member of my family has ever owned. It might seem like a godsend for exams but actually it’s of little use, because by the time I’m accustomed to

the hum and glare of the fluorescent lights, the large multi-coloured frieze on the wall (which sounds like saucepan lids being struck together), and the feeling of the fabric of the chair through my clothes at least an hour has passed. It can take hours to construct a paragraph as I think in pictures and concepts, not words, and trying to describe these intelligently takes time. The result, and probably one of the few indicators of how Asperger’s affects me, is that my exam scores are much lower than my TMA scores. Hmm, maybe I’m not so unusual after all...”

● Jai-Jae St Léger, the author of this piece, has just finished TA225 *The technology of music*, which she studied simultaneously with A214 *Understanding music*.

GAY’S STORY
GAY’S fear of faces is so great she has had to learn not to look at other people when she is actually speaking to them. If she does, she develops physical symptoms from headaches to stumbling – “perhaps the most awkward one is the quality of my speech, which can become totally incoherent”, she

says. She also finds people difficult to read. “I am by no means sure whom one is allowed to say hello, or smile at.” When she was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome at the age of 48, after experiencing panic attacks, it came as a relief. Having a medical label for her condition allowed her to be herself.

None of this has stopped Dr Gay Eastoe from being a high achiever – despite struggling at school, she has a BSc in Geology from Leicester University and a PhD in Experimental Petrology from Sheffield University, as well as a BA in Science and Maths from the OU. Married with four children, she is also a keen runner, swimmer, fell walker and cyclist and does voluntary work at local schools.

Gay’s latest achievement is to publish a book which, she hopes, will encourage other autistic people by demonstrating how much her approach of “never giving up” has allowed her to achieve. *Asperger’s Syndrome: My Puzzle*, by Gay Eastoe, is available from Authorhouse, tel: 0800 1974150, www.authorhouse.co.uk price £9.30, ISBN 1420874594.

 isic student card



isic
stuffed full of
discounts

make the most of your student
days, grab an ISIC
and enjoy a massive range
of savings and benefits

don't miss out
get your ISIC today for just £7

www.isiccard.com
available online, at your Student Union, school, local student travel outlet or STA Travel branch

The Nuclear Power industry is promoting itself as the solution to global warming.

The New Internationalist takes a closer look.

- Is Nuclear safe?
- Where is the waste going?
- Why do Governments spend billions propping up the industry?
- What if equal subsidies were given to renewable energy?

FREE
3 MAGAZINES &
WORLD MAP
With our NO-RISK
trial offer!

We are offering you the chance to try the New Internationalist free for 3 months. Full of carefully researched articles, interviews with the leading experts and the facts you need to form your own opinion. Each month the **NI** tackles one pressing issue, breaking it down to give you a clearer picture. From **Migration to Trade**, **China to Islam**, **Civil Liberties** to **Climate Change**. The New Internationalist gives you a fresh perspective. Call 01858 438896 (quote code 2200)

POST TO: NEW INTERNATIONALIST, FREEPOST MID17880, MARKET HARBOROUGH LE87 4JF



The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that take part in the Direct Debit scheme. The efficiency and security of the scheme is monitored and protected by your own bank or building society.
- If the amount to be paid, or the payment dates change, **NI** will notify you at least 14 days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by **NI** or your bank or building society, you are guaranteed that your branch will pay a full and immediate refund.
- You can cancel this direct debit at any time by writing to your bank or building society.

☒ **YES send me three issues FREE** I wish to take up your offer of a free trial to the **New Internationalist** magazine. Please send me copies of the next three issues of the magazine and my free gift. If I decide not to subscribe I will write and let you know within ten days of receiving my third issue. If I wish to continue I need do nothing. Starting from the first of the following month my account will be debited quarterly, until I cancel in writing, with the **NI** subscription price – currently £8.85 (or £9.85 if delivery outside UK).

Name _____ Address _____
Postcode _____



INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT

Please fill in the form and send to New Internationalist FREEPOST MID17880 Market Harborough LE87 4JF

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager _____ Bank/Building Society _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Name(s) of Account Holder(s) _____

Bank/Building Society account number

Branch Sort Code

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

☐ Occasionally we allow carefully screened organisations to mail our subscribers. If you would prefer not to be mailed by anyone else please tick this box.
This free trial offer only applies to direct debits. Annual subscriptions for £32.85 UK / £37.85 overseas may also be paid by cheque, VISA or Mastercard.
New Internationalist Publications Ltd. Reg. in England No. 1005239. Reg. Office 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW.



Originator's Identification Number

9 8 4 4 4 2

Reference Number – to be completed by New Internationalist

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay **New Internationalist Publications** Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with **NI** and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature _____

Date _____

2286

PEOPLE

Teens want to chat

ONE of the OU's youngest students has called for an online conference exclusively for learners aged under 18. Harrison Gregory (pictured below) says the fast-growing number of school pupils taking OU courses means there should be an avenue for youngsters such as himself to talk to each other in their own online OU chatroom.

"I feel there's a real need for this facility," said 16-year-old Harrison, who has completed the Openings course A178 *Perspectives on Leonardo* and is about to start the level 2 course A297 *Reading classical Latin* – all while simultaneously studying for his A-levels. "We can join in other conferences but it would be good to have a forum in which to discuss the issues of doing the OU while still at school, and how different people plan the combination of studies."

One main reason for wanting the conference, said Harrison, from Rotherham, South Yorkshire, is that older people don't know what it is like to learn in two different ways at the same time. "Many OU students study while they're working and a lot of other students can relate to that," he said. "But we spend our day at school learning in a classroom environment and then in our spare time we'll learn on our own, in a completely



Online conferencing: safeguards needed for under-18s

different way. At school I and my fellow pupils will discuss the work we're doing and how we're getting on – it would be nice to be able to do that with people my own age at the OU."

The OU began offering its courses to school pupils nearly 10 years ago and now as many as 2,000 under-18s are thought to be doing Open University courses. Harrison, who is taking his level 2 course because he wants to study the classics at university and his school does not offer Latin A-level, says some people seem against giving such young students their own discussion forum.

"Some say it's not appropriate, others think that it will make younger students vulnerable," said the teenager, who was inspired to study by watching his father Steve do his own OU degree. "But I'm sure there would be safeguards as there are in other young people's chatrooms. I've heard of one OU student who's only 12, whose mother has volunteered to monitor a conference, which sounds sensible to me. As a 16-year-old I'm not necessarily going to have a lot in common with students who are so much younger than myself, but I think we should all have the opportunity of a platform."

Steve Clayton, assistant secretary of the OU's Student Services, told **sesame**: "We have two groups of OU students under the age of 18. There are just over 2,000 students on the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme. These students are supported by their schools and the university to study an OU course alongside their AS/A level studies. There is also a very small number of individual students studying at home under special arrangements. In consultation with OUSA, the Open University Students Association, we are reviewing policy for online access for both these groups, and new guidelines are expected by April this year."

"We need to ensure that the guidelines will enhance the study experience of our youngest students, enable them to feel part of the wider OU community, and offer reassurance to them, their parents and teachers that we are not exposing students to unacceptable risks through online access." ● Are you a school-age student who would like to see a conference set up specifically for you? Are you a parent or teacher of such a student? Email **sesame** with your views at sesame@open.ac.uk or write to **sesame** at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.



DEBATE

DEBATE

RUNNING ON EMPTY?

Climate change, rising gas prices, a new generation of nuclear power stations... energy is a debate which can only get hotter over the next few years. Below we report on an innovative alternative energy project backed by individuals from the OU, and (right) we hear from a former OU student who argues that alternative power sources can never be a complete solution to our energy needs



Could windmills replace gas and oil as a major energy source?

THE first onshore wind farm in the south of England will be operating by early next year – and almost half of its board work for, or graduated from, The Open University.

Steve Lunn, an OU research fellow in Science and Technology Education, Science graduate Kim Littlewood and Law graduate Jean Nunn-Price are among those behind Westmill, Britain's first wind farm to be wholly owned by a community co-operative.

This means that there is no corporate or commercial investment in the Wind Over Westmill project, which is being financed entirely by a share flotation. "By financing the project in this way, the profits aren't going to commercial companies with fat cat directors. Surpluses will be paid to shareholders," said Steve Lunn.

Use now, pay now

Steve, a member of Friends of the Earth, learned of the opportunity for the project near his Oxfordshire home after supporting a similar farm, Baywind, which began operating in Cumbria in 1997. "We heard that a farmer, Adam Twine, had been in contact with Baywind because he was interested in putting a wind farm on his land at Watchfield, Oxfordshire, and he was looking for local people to form a co-operative. So I signed up."

The result is Westmill Wind Farm Co-operative Ltd, which intends to buy and erect five, each up to 1.3 Mega Watts, wind turbines to generate electricity which can be metered and sold. Pollution-free electricity will be produced for 2,700 homes and, says the co-operative, avoid the release of 10,400 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum generated from fossil fuels, such as oil and gas.

"The bottom line is that we need to have a sustainable economy, and that means having sustainable energy," said Steve. "The questions around a project like this are 'could we use this energy for ever?' – and we can – and 'what would happen if everybody did it?' And if everybody did, we wouldn't be reliant on nuclear energy or gas, and we wouldn't be mortgaging the planet's future."

Steve believes that a mix of renewable energy sources – wind, tidal, biomass, hydroelectric and so on – is the way forward. "I think we should pay for what we use, not make future generations pay the price of our cheap electricity, in terms of climate change, with fossil fuels, or waste, with nuclear power.

"It means having a lot of small power stations, rather than a few big ones. This is a very robust system, because it doesn't just rely on one source, and power is generated close to where it is used, which means less is wasted sending it around the country.

"All the surveys we have done indicate that 80 per cent of people like windfarms and think they add to the character of the countryside."

The sales of the shares, which will fund 60 per cent of the project (the rest coming from a bank loan), realised £1 million in just seven weeks and the co-operative, part of the national community-owned renewable energy company Energy4All, is comfortably on target to

sell the £3.75 million of shares it needs to get started, according to Steve.

Steve and his colleagues want the project to be a "first step" in encouraging other communities to follow their example. "We want to go on from here, every time proving and improving the model," he said. "We're keen to help people who want to start similar projects.

"Imagine if we had 1,000 such farms in Britain, all using free energy that isn't going to run out, and all run by co-operatives, for the good of communities, without any commercial concern taking all the profits. We want to plough money back into similar schemes – to look at other sources of renewable energy and develop these ideas."

Find out more about the Westmill project by visiting www.westmill.coop The site also contains the co-operative's share prospectus.

Can alternative sources such as windfarms supply all our future energy needs? OU student Peter Bennett, a chartered mechanical engineer, says that as a result of studying the OU's T206 Energy for a sustainable future, he believes, reluctantly, the answer is – no.

TONY Blair, an outgoing Prime Minister serving on the eve of what could turn into a power crisis, has reopened the nuclear debate. The catalyst for all this is the recent problems with gas supplies. The Germans and French have raised the prices on the rental of the pipelines going through their countries, and a shortage of supply coupled with the increase in demand has seen some large suppliers' costs rise more than threefold, overnight. The knock-on effect has been felt immediately in the rising prices of goods.

Gas, once praised for its "clean and cheap" supply to consumers, has become a poisoned chalice. The rising costs and usage will only filter down slowly to the general public, but, once the gas has gone, how do we cook? Or heat our homes?

We will need to return to electricity for both (new houses cannot be adapted for oils or coal by design, without hugely expensive modifications), all of which has to be generated. Even our environmentally friendly electric cars need carbon-based electricity.

When I studied T206 with the OU I felt sure I would find acceptable answers to the question – wind power, tidal barrage, solar power – but I did not. If anything it raised even more questions, which were answered by looking at the effects of their employment. The conclusion is that they "contribute" but cannot "replace".

Power vacuum

Let's look at the most widely known, wind power. We would need an area the size of Scotland to generate it. Then there are the materials costs: steel prices rise on a daily basis because of the Chinese need of it, and we would need millions of tonnes. Hundreds of thousand of miles of cabling would have to be laid for distribution. Then there is the vast effect on the environment due to the square miles needed to be dug up. And the right weather is needed: low winds and the turbines won't turn, high winds and they have to be shut down.

There are plans to look at putting these types of propeller-driven generators out at sea. But again all the above applies, except now we have to add maintenance to the list of huge costs. And what would environmentalists say to the effect it would have on whales, dolphins, and fish routes? What effect would it have on our beleaguered fishing industry as their nets get caught? The global military may be somewhat unenthusiastic due to problems with submarines.

Then there is the only other probable source of alternative power, solar. Well, no, this it seems is even more improbable. We in the UK

are simply in the wrong place on the Earth. When we need most power is in the winter, which is when we have the most darkness and cloud cover. And only about 20 per cent of our houses are south facing to make the most of the sun.

The rest of the alternative power sources just simply cannot produce the amount of power we need. And they all seem to wield the biggest axes for environmental damage, such as tidal power – the proposed Severn Barrage.

Only one answer?

So the picture is grim. We have to remove the gas power stations which will cost millions to decommission. Coal-fired stations will, I doubt, ever be built again in the UK (mind you, we said that about nuclear). So what we have left is a single contender, nuclear. Small nuclear power stations could be built in old disused quarries, out of sight. Their power generation per station is up to 1000s of MW. No large cooling towers to worry about (and please, cooling towers give off steam, NOT smoke as often implied). Nuclear industry technology has come on in great strides since Chernobyl; as far as I am aware there has been no major nuclear incident in Western Europe, which, considering how many nuclear power stations we have, is impressive.

The nuclear industry has to show the public that it has thought about the decommissioning of its power stations, and the disposal of its waste, with the same level of attention as it has paid to the generation of the power that pays back its investment. And as members of the general public we have a responsibility to take part in the discussions. And remember, a nuclear power station takes around eight to nine years to build and come online so time is really running out, and having to import power into a desperate country will cost us in more ways than one. I would like California's weather, but not its black-outs.

Peter Bennett works for Spirax Sarco

T172 *Working with our environment: technology for a sustainable future* is a 30-point introductory course which explores the range of environmental issues, including energy. T206 *Energy for a sustainable future* is a 60-point course which allows students to research a sustainable energy project for their own home, workplace or community. For more information visit the website at www.open.ac.uk/T206/ The OU's Energy and Environment Research Unit focuses on education and research in this field. See <http://eeru.open.ac.uk/>

Learning a new language ?

Get Digital Satellite TV & Radio Stations of your chosen nationality fed direct to your living room or study. Includes UK, European, Asian & Arabic Channels, covering, News, Music, Politics, Travel, General Entertainment. You name it we'll find it. SDS have standard **Free to Air** or **FREESAT** boxes right up to **Twin Tuner PVRs** that allow you to record all of your important programmes automatically. Ideal for **OU TV** broadcasts.

£99 UK Next Day Carriage £10 or UK Standard Installation £99.

System includes 60cm mesh minidish, wall bracket and Lemon Digital Satellite Receiver

Call **SDS** on **01271 325777** or visit **www.ousat.co.uk**

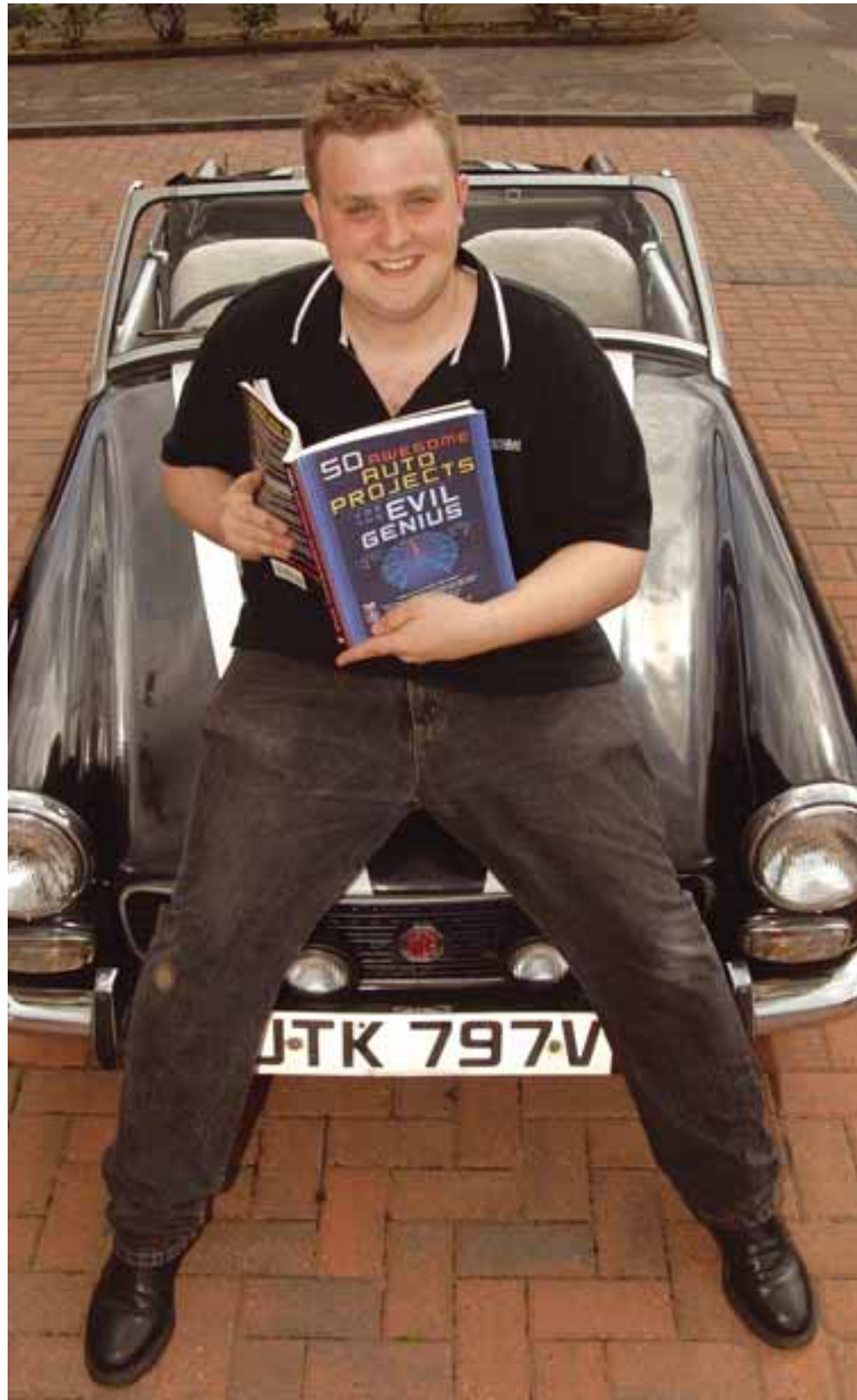
digital **SDS**, Unit 5, Brannam Crescent, Barnstaple, Devon. EX31 3TD

PEOPLE

PEOPLE

Bright young things

Who said today's teenagers are apathetic? **sesame** talks to two students under the age of 20 who simply can't get enough to do



GAVIN HARPER is on track to complete his OU degree in three years, while holding down a 20-hour-a-week part-time job. On top of that, he's landed a four-book deal with an American publisher. And to cap it all, he's only just turned 19.

"I just love what I'm doing and The Open University has supported me every step of the way," said the teenager who, if his study plan works out, could become the OU's youngest ever graduate. "I've had nothing but support from the moment I approached the London regional centre when I was 16."

Gavin (pictured left) left school in his home town of Upminster with 11 GCSEs and his future seemed to be mapped out when he got a job with a large engineering company, but the training offered was disappointing so Gavin decided to take control of his own education and contacted The Open University.

Guidelines waived

The OU has guidelines concerning students as young as Gavin and, although he wanted to clock up his credits as fast as possible, the region restricted him to two 30-point courses in his first year. "But I quickly proved I could do that, and I really enjoyed it, so I found three more short courses and got a total of 90 points," he said.

So last year he was allowed to do 120 points, which he successfully completed, along with three 10-point courses over the winter. He is now starting two third-level courses which should give him his BSc in Technology this year.

Gavin is already planning ahead. He wants to teach and has already completed a Part I placement on the OU's Student Associate Scheme, which enables people to try teaching to see if they are suited to the profession.

And that's not all. A keen car enthusiast, last year he contacted an American publisher pitching an idea for a 'how-to' book about installing modern gadgets in older vehicles. "I bought an old banger of a Mini when I was 13 and of course it didn't come with any of today's cars' comforts – central locking, electric windows, cruise control etc – so I wanted to work out how to put them in, and

the book is helping people to learn to do that, doing up old cars with modern gadgets," said Gavin. And last September, *50 Awesome Auto Projects for the Evil Genius* hit the shops – with an offer from the same publisher to write further books. Gavin is now working on *Build Your Own Car* and *50 Model Rocket Projects for the Evil Genius* and will shortly be starting on *Solar Energy Projects for the Evil Genius*. "The T172 course will be a really useful grounding for writing this book," he says.

50 Awesome Auto Projects for the Evil Genius by Gavin Harper is published by McGraw Hill.

We believe that if Gavin completes his degree next year as planned he will, at 19, be the youngest ever holder of a full Open University degree – unless you know different! If you or anyone you know graduated younger than this, let us know! Email us at sesame@open.ac.uk

Fluent for flying

SIXTEEN-year-old Patrick Murray couldn't

fit learning a language into his school curriculum, so he did an OU course instead.

The schoolboy's GCSE options involved a choice between Italian and Geography and Patrick chose the latter. But he was also desperate to learn a foreign tongue – so signed up for The Open University's beginners' Spanish course L194 *Portales*.

Patrick (pictured right), who attends St Paul's Catholic High School in Manchester, was put in touch with the OU by the school's Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator Nuala Wilson. He studied L194 mainly from home, but every two weeks an OU tutor came to the school to help him with any queries.

"It was all very well organised but I think it helped that I'm quite good at studying by myself," he said. "It did get difficult in places – at one point I was doing OU work and my school work, and doing exams with the Air Cadets, and it was also quite hard during the holidays because I didn't see my tutor. But once I start something I finish it."

And he did – and now Patrick is looking to further improve his Spanish skills, possibly through the OU again. "I've always wanted to

be a commercial pilot," he said. "That's why I'm in the Air Cadets – I've done flying and gliding training with them – and I plan to do aerospace engineering at university. And there's no doubt a language such as Spanish will also really help me."



The ancient world revealed through expert eyes

Archaeology and ancient history holidays, in style and comfort

- ❖ unusual, often unique, itineraries
- ❖ the best lecturers, comprehensive field notes
- ❖ hand-picked hotels, good local food and a relaxed atmosphere
- ❖ fully inclusive tours, or Bare Bones holidays with greater independence.

Prehistoric rock art, iron age bog bodies, Classical temples, Roman mosaics, Byzantine churches, and much much more...

Call for a brochure or visit our website

01722 713800

www.andantetravels.co.uk

Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

- Art and Professional Practice MA*
- Art and Business MA*
- Creative Digital Media MA*
- English Literature MA
- History MA
- Humanities MA
- International Children's Literature MA*
- Nineteenth-Century Studies MA
- Performance Studies MA
- Sociology MA
- Postgraduate Certificate in Local & Community History
- Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Development: Dynamics of Domestic Violence *to be launched in 2007

- Courses run in the evenings and can be studied on a flexible, part-time basis
- Weekend and day schools also available
- Mature students welcome
- APL system means students can build on already completed H-level modules
- Applications for PhD and MPhil research degrees in these subjects are also considered
- Excellent facilities including £1m Digital Arts Centre and modern Drama Studio

For further details call: 01905 855141 or e-mail: study@worc.ac.uk

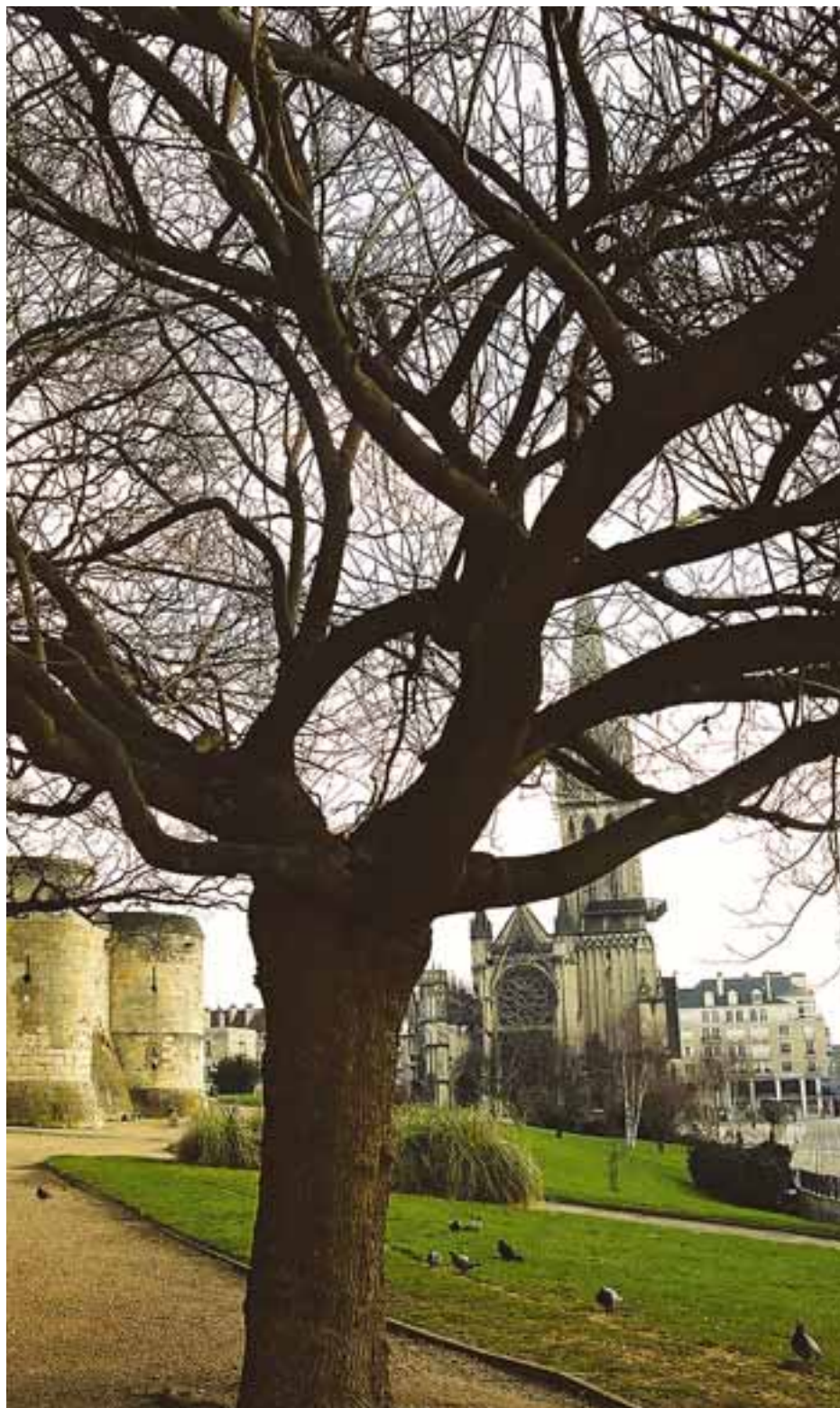
www.worcester.ac.uk

COURSES

COURSES

Bienvenue à Caen

‘Learn a language’ is on so many people’s to do list, but often falls by the wayside. But many OU students are succeeding by taking a week out at the Action in French Summer School



THE base for the *Action in French* Summer School is the campus of Caen University, in Normandy, but the most important classroom is the ‘open air’ one – the town of Caen itself. In theory, at least, students speak nothing but French from the welcome reception on Saturday evening, to their departure on Friday afternoon.

A typical day at Caen begins with speaking French – over breakfast. Then it’s into class for 45 minutes of *phonétique* – that is, pronunciation practice – before the day’s main activities. Each day has a theme which is based on an aspect of French culture and the Caen locality. So on Monday, for example, it’s *La Vie Quotidienne* – daily life. On Wednesday, it’s *Histoire* – history. The theme gives a purpose and adds interest to all the activities.

Open air classroom

On Tuesday it’s *Ecologie, Habitat* and *Voisinage*. The morning is spent talking and finding out about places in general, and Normandy and Caen in particular, while at the same time developing skills in description, expressing opinions and using the future or conditional tenses. Classes are grouped according to students’ levels of French, and as well as the OU or Caen tutor (the teaching is shared by the OU and Caen University) each class has a tutor assistant who is a native French speaker.

After lunch it’s off on the tram to the ‘open air classroom’, which this afternoon is a locality of the student’s own choice – they can even venture outside Caen if they wish. It’s an opportunity to follow up a topic that interests them – anything from Norman architecture to trainspotting – and use their French by noting down what they see and hear. Their research will be the basis for an oral presentation given later in the week.

Evenings are free – you can attend the optional grammar session, or you can do your own thing. There may be an activity on campus – a film, live music, a disco – which appeals, or the tutor assistants may organise a night on the town. Many students gravitate towards the popular bar.

It may be hard work, but the week includes a sightseeing trip to Bayeux and one afternoon (Wednesday) which is completely free. As well as tuition and materials the price includes accommodation and all meals on campus – but not your bar bill!

Top tips for fluency

STUDYING a language doesn’t always mean you can use it, as many tongue-tied language students have found. So what’s the secret of becoming an effective foreign language speaker? **sesame** asked OU French lecturer Elodie Vialleton, a native French speaker who also speaks English, and some Spanish and German, and has 10 years language teaching experience.

She said: “Part of the problem is the way languages used to be taught in schools, with a lot of emphasis on rules and grammar.

“Nowadays language classes are much more communicative, the focus is on speaking and interacting with someone else. It doesn’t matter if your grammar isn’t perfect, if you can get the message across. And hopefully, the classes are more fun.

“It is also about learning strategies for coping with what you know – so for example if you don’t know how to conjugate a verb, you can make a sentence without the verb.”

“Anybody who is interested can learn a language. You may be better at some things,

and not so good at others, but the thing is to focus on what you are good at.”

And Elodie’s top tips for learning a new language? “You need to immerse yourself in it. By going to the country, if possible, or by listening to the radio, finding articles on the web – although this is more difficult if you are a beginner.

“You need to enjoy it – it is much easier to learn something you enjoy. And don’t focus on things you find difficult; try to use what you know instead of letting what you don’t know stop you.”

CASE STUDIES

BEVERLEY DEAN took up learning French again after a gap of 26 years. After being made redundant she took an evening class in conversational French to brush up her skills, but one of her fellow students suggested they do the OU residential course in Caen. Beverley, from Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts, jumped at the chance. She told **sesame**:

“I loved it. If you want to learn to speak French fluently, I think a course like this one is the only way to do it.

“It’s a little bit daunting at first, going up and speaking to strangers in a foreign language, but you really get into it and by the end of the week you don’t even think about it because you’re doing it all the time.

“In the evenings after you’ve done your studies there’s a choice of things to do. You can watch films (in French) or attend optional grammar lessons, which is what we did. You just get into the culture and the language in much more depth than you would if, say, you went on holiday. Of course we did slip into a bit of English in the evenings – even though we weren’t supposed to! – but otherwise we spoke French for an entire week.

“The tutors were really first class and we learned so much. Caen’s lovely, too, with two abbeys, a museum, a river and an old town. It was fantastic value for money – and we rounded it off by going on to stay with a friend in Brittany for three days. That was good fun too – and because the course had made conversation in French so natural, we ended up speaking a lot more of the language there than we would have done!”

TIM FLEMING, a civil servant from Bracknell, Berkshire, started studying French with the OU so that he could converse more confidently over the phone with colleagues in France and Belgium. It was while doing *L192 Beginners’ French* that he heard about the course in Caen and was soon packing his bags for a week in Normandy.

Tim said: “I started with the OU with rusty A-level French from 15 years ago, but constant conversation in the language does your skills a power of good – especially when you’re talking to native speakers in their own country.

“It’s a confidence thing – you start off the week being a bit hesitant but you become so immersed in the language that by the end of it you’re no longer planning what you’re going to say next – it’s much more spontaneous. You find yourself thinking in French.

“We were in the classroom in the morning but in the afternoon we were given assignments which involved us going out on to the streets of Caen to talk to locals about the history and culture of the town.

“You don’t get the same result if you just go to France on holiday. You might try a few phrases but a lot of the time you probably try to get by on as little of the language as possible – and certainly if you’re on holiday, within your family group you will speak English.

“We spoke French all week, even to each other, and it really developed our skills. Obviously the classroom sessions were in French, and then we would speak to the locals in the language. Although the first time we went out we started explaining to a man that we were students who wanted to practise our French by talking to him, which amused him – it turned out he was an American!

“When we came back from our assignments, our debrief was in French and then in the evening we would go to bars and restaurants and order and talk to each other in French. It was total immersion and it worked wonders.

“But not only is the course good and the tutors excellent. We also had a great time. The sun shone throughout the week, the food was excellent, Caen has fascinating pockets of history and is in a beautiful part of Normandy – and there are some wonderful beaches. And of course if you did want to go on holiday in France, you could tag it on afterwards, which is what a few of my fellow students did. I’d recommend this course to anyone studying French – I’d go again like a shot.”

LXR122 Action in French (10 points)
One week French Summer School in 2006
Caen University, France. Price £435.
Weeks starting 8 July, 15 July, 22 July and 29 July in 2006.
For details, check www.open.ac.uk/action-in-french
or phone +44 (0)1908 654160 or +44 (0)1908 654164.

RESEARCH

RESEARCH

No refuge for Kermit

*It is time for conservationists to face the fact that many species can't be saved from extinction, says Professor **Tim Halliday**. The best they can hope to do is record them before they disappear*

As long ago as 1962, Rachel Carson predicted a "Silent Spring" if humans did not change their relationship with the natural environment. For many amphibians, the silent spring is now a reality, and in many parts of the world the calls of frogs have been silenced.

This is happening at a time when public and scientific interest in biodiversity has reached an unparalleled level, as realisation increases that planet Earth is entering the sixth major episode of extinction in its history.

My own interest is in amphibians (frogs,

toads, salamanders, newts and caecilians), a group of animals that appears to be bearing the brunt of the current biodiversity crisis.

In the last 20 years, several species have become extinct, most famously the Golden Toad (*Bufo periglenes*) of Costa Rica.

"Amphibian declines are but one symptom of a profound malaise affecting global supplies of fresh water"

The Golden Toad's disappearance around 1989 exemplifies two important features of amphibian declines: first, it happened very

quickly, the species going from relative abundance to extinction over only three or four years; second, it occurred in a national park, a protected area set up to preserve biodiversity.

It was thus clear, 15 years ago, that the Earth's amphibians are subject to a process that cannot be explained simply in terms of habitat destruction.

The recent Global Amphibian Assessment co-ordinated by IUCN, the World Conservation Union, concluded that a third of the world's 5,743 known amphibian species are threatened with extinction. At

the level of individual populations the situation appears equally dire. Data gathered by the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force (DAPTF) reveals that of 3,020 amphibian populations monitored in recent years, over 20 per cent have declined, and one in 10 has become extinct.

These figures are clear evidence that natural systems which support amphibian life are collapsing. Amphibians are dependent, to varying degrees, on access to clean fresh water habitats for their survival; the recent dramatic amphibian decline suggests that all is not well in these ecosystems.

In 2004, the World Wildlife Fund reported that biodiversity in the world's fresh water habitats halved between 1970 and 2000. This makes fresh water the most threatened of the world's natural resources, more threatened even than tropical forest.

Amphibian declines are thus but one symptom of a profound malaise affecting global supplies of fresh water, on which all terrestrial biodiversity, and human life, depends.

Concern for biodiversity has long been the domain of conservationists, and the dramatic decline among amphibian species suggests that the efforts of the conservation community are failing. It is clear that the mainstay of conservation, the protection of habitat, is no longer sufficient to ensure the survival of many species.

There is a widespread culture of denial about this situation, not least among conservationists, who must take a lead in alerting humanity to the current extinction crisis. The reality is that many thousands of species will become extinct in the near future; so perhaps it is time to face this reality and to replace the "conservation paradigm" with the "extinction paradigm".

For recent extinctions, such as those that wiped out many island birds at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, identifying the causes was a relatively simple matter.

Human settlers and their attendant rats, cats and dogs destroyed their habitat and hunted them to extinction.

For frogs and toads that rapidly vanish from apparently pristine, protected areas, the causes are much less easy to identify.

The accumulating evidence, from many scientific studies, reveals a complex of interacting and largely invisible factors, including climate change, chemical contamination and elevated ultraviolet radiation, against which protected-area status is totally ineffective. To make matters worse, many amphibians are becoming prey to a highly virulent disease called chytridiomycosis which, probably with the help of humans, has found its way to almost all parts of the world.

Similarly enigmatic declines and extinctions are occurring in other habitats, notably in the oceans. Even if they had plenty of time and money, conservationists could only hope to protect a few of the many species that face imminent extinction.

It is the responsibility of biologists, I suggest, to admit that the conventional view of conservation – that we can and should preserve at-risk organisms – is simply untenable.

What we can and must do is document the decline and disappearance of species that cannot be saved, so that at least some kind of record of them will be preserved.

Tim Halliday is Professor in Biology at The Open University and International Director of the IUCN/SSC Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force.

This article first appeared in the *Green Room*, a new series of environmental opinion articles running weekly on the BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4582024.stm>

● Follow it up: ecology and related issues are covered in OU courses U216 *Environment* and S328 *Ecology*.

Bearing the brunt of a biodiversity crisis: a red-eyed rainforest treefrog



www.open.ac.uk/oulifescransaver

OU Life
Screensaver

Keep up-
to-date



SUPPORT

Help for book hunters

For most students, the course materials supplied by the OU provide more than enough reading matter. But if you need further texts and can't find them, the OU Library has some suggestions



The Open University's regional centres keep collections of OU course materials, but they are not able to provide a full range of library services. The main Library Service is centred at Walton Hall in Milton Keynes.

However, Open Library www.open.ac.uk/library offers students an extensive online library, which includes a substantial and growing number of electronic books. It is worth checking the electronic books collections, especially for reference works.

The OU Library has a policy of acquiring all course set texts, but while we do provide a postal loans service to tutors, regional office staff and housebound students, due to the sheer numbers involved (potentially 200,000 students) we are not in a position to offer postal loans to all students, although we do make such loans in exceptional circumstances.

Other sources

We also offer advice on local academic and public libraries available to OU students. Information about library services for students is available on the Library website (see 'Libraries near you').

Many students find it useful to have their own copy of course set books. It is possible to buy them at a discount from Eddington Hook: www.eddington-hook.co.uk

Another option is the second-hand OU course materials and bookselling service, University Book Search: www.universitybooksearch.co.uk Students can register their requirements for course books and also re-sell them when they have finished the course.

If students are having difficulty getting hold of books, we would advise them to contact the OU Library helpdesk on +44 (0)1908 659001, Mon to Thur, 9am-5.30pm, Fri, 9-5pm, or lib-help@open.ac.uk for specific help. We are committed to providing a quality library service to students and are always happy to deal with any individual queries or suggestions that people may have.

Don't lose out on discounts

ARE you taking advantage of available student discounts? OU students are automatically members of the Open University Students Association (OUSA) and are now eligible to apply for the new joint OUSA/National Union of Students (NUS) card, which for a fee of £10 entitles holders to a range of discounts on goods and services.

In addition, those who are studying at least 60 points for a minimum of 15 hours a week can apply for the ISIC (International Student Identity Card), which entitles holders to discounts in the UK and abroad.

OU students in the past have sometimes experienced difficulty when applying for the ISIC – which is obtainable through the travel company STA Travel – in convincing staff dealing with the application that they do qualify. Tony Barretto, a London-based student studying towards a BSc (Hons) in Computing and IT, contacted **sesame** after one such experience. Following a phone call from **sesame**, STA have now emailed all their UK branches reminding staff that OU students who fulfil the conditions above are entitled to the card.

Tony, who now has his ISIC card, told

sesame what is required to get it. "I did not need an additional letter as I took my confirmation letters and course descriptions provided by the OU. Though it would be advisable to ask the OU centre office to provide a letter stating the number of points and your study period."

He adds that UK-based students should consider getting the NUS card as there are places in the UK which do not recognise the ISIC card but will accept the NUS one.

For more information about the cards see: www.nusonline.co.uk/about/nusassociatecard/ousa/ or www.isic.org/

The COPERATIVE BANK

Customer led, ethically guided

To readers of Sesame

Want more from your loan?

- **Want a great deal?**
rates of just **7.2% APR (Typical)**
- **Want to borrow with a conscience?**
from a bank with a unique ethical policy
- **Want a first class service?**
we'll give you an instant decision

7.2%
APR (Typical)

Phone

0800 591 682

Lines open Mon to Fri 8am – 9pm, Sat 8am – 8pm and Sun 9am – 6pm.

(Quote ref: 791/1027)

Applicants must be UK resident and aged between 21 and 69 years of age.

Credit facilities are provided by The Co-operative Bank p.l.c. (Registered No. 990937) of P.O. Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP and are subject to status. The Bank reserves the right to decline any application or offer a loan at a rate that differs from those advertised. Interest rates are correct as at 02/06. Calls may be monitored or recorded for security and training purposes.

The Co-operative Bank is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (No. 121885), subscribes to the Banking Code, is a member of the Financial Ombudsman Service and is licensed by the Office of Fair Trading (No. 006110).

current accounts	savings and investments	credit cards	mortgages	loans	insurance	business banking
------------------	-------------------------	--------------	-----------	-------	-----------	------------------

Reaching for the stars

*The Open University is going further and further into space. The Edinburgh Science Festival in April will hear two scientists from the OU's Planetary and Space Sciences Research Institute (PSSRI), Professor John Zarnecki and Dr Ashley Green, talking about a new mission to Mars, the first results from the Cassini-Huygens probe which landed on Titan and robotic space missions. **sesame** has a sneak preview*

Back to Mars

THE Open University is off again on another mission to Mars – on the most ambitious exploration ever planned of the red planet.

ExoMars, which is part of the European Space Agency (ESA) Aurora exploration programme, aims to put a research station and a rover vehicle on the Martian surface in 2013, to spend around five years studying our neighbouring planet.

As well as the longest study of Mars, it will be the most in-depth – the rover will be equipped with a drill capable of digging down

two metres, making ExoMars the first mission to probe significantly beneath the planet's surface, where scientists believe evidence of life is most likely to exist.

"ExoMars has three unique selling points: longevity, mobility and depth," says Professor John Zarnecki, Professor of Space Science.

"The rover will be able to cover one kilometre a day – by comparison, the US rovers currently operating on Mars have done about six or seven miles over the years they have been there."

Scientists from PSSRI will be working on

three of the research instruments for ExoMars. They will be taking the lead in building the ultraviolet (UV) spectrometer which will measure, for the first time, the amount of deadly UV radiation bathing the surface of Mars. The measurements could tell scientists how far below the surface life would have to go to escape the UV, which damages the DNA in living cells.

European on Mars

PSSRI is co-leader in the meteorological project which will measure air pressure, temperature, wind speed and direction and other aspects of the Martian weather. "We hope to be able to do this over several seasonal cycles," says Professor Zarnecki. "Mars has definite seasons and we want to see how it varies. A Martian year is about two Earth years, so six earth years will give us three Martian seasons."

The third project PSSRI will work on is the drill which will throw light on the evolution of Mars by revealing whether there is heat coming from its centre. A hot core would show that Mars is like Earth, still in a state of flux.

The Aurora programme, of which ExoMars is only one stage, is even more ambitious. Its ultimate goal is to put European astronauts on Mars, although this will be some decades in the future.

Travel to Mars can be a risky business. Beagle 2, the Mars lander which OU scientists were involved in designing and equipping, failed to report back after separating from its mother ship in December 2003. Evidence from NASA images of Mars suggests it may have been damaged after landing in a crater.

The new Eden?

SCIENTISTS in Cassini-Huygens mission control were amazed by the 'Earth-like' images beamed from Saturn's moon Titan, more than a billion miles away from Earth.

"It is remarkably Earth-like in some respects, with similar geological processes," Professor Zarnecki said. "There are lots of complex molecules on the surface. We do not yet know how complex – how far along the road to being the building blocks of life."

Scientists did not expect to find life on present-day Titan because it is so far from the Sun, and endures temperatures hovering around minus 170 degrees Centigrade. But four billion years from now it could be 'the new Eden', as Professor Zarnecki puts it.

"When the Sun becomes a red giant the oceans on earth will boil away. Titan will warm up and could be the best place to live. The conditions for life are there, waiting to be triggered."

Before the Huygens probe was launched from the European Space Agency (ESA) Cassini spacecraft, no-one had ever seen the surface of Titan. But scientists planning the mission knew it had unusual qualities including an atmosphere thicker than Earth's, containing nitrogen as its main constituent, just as on Earth.

The Huygens lander collected data for only two and a half hours, while descending through Titan's atmosphere on 14 January 2005, and a further 72 minutes sitting on the surface. But scientists will be learning from its findings for the next 20 years, says Professor Zarnecki – until the next mission to Titan.

Robot pioneers

IF we ever find traces of life outside Earth, it will probably be a robot that makes the discovery – according to Dr Ashley Green of the OU's Robotics Outreach Group.

While human beings have only ever set foot on one extra-terrestrial body – the moon – robotic probes, orbiters, landers and rovers have visited and studied every planet in our solar system, except Pluto, to which a NASA mission was launched in January 2006. Robots are also heading for comets, and one robot, the Pioneer 10 probe launched in 1972, was still sending signals back to Earth from beyond the solar system in 2003.

Tough but slow

But for closer planets like Mars, the future is for humans and robots to work together, said Dr Green. "The surface of Mars is very dangerous to humans because of the cosmic radiation.

"Even if we do send humans there, robots would have been there first to build them underground habitats and process carbon dioxide to produce oxygen." Martian explorers would use robot vehicles when travelling the Martian surface, to minimise their exposure to the deadly radiation. Robots would help them cope with the toxic Martian soil and sub-zero temperatures.

Robots may be tougher than us, but the idea they could replace humans completely is 'still in the realms of science fiction', said Dr Green. "It takes a minimum of four minutes for radio signals to go from Earth to Mars, so operating robots remotely is not feasible.

They have to be able to operate on their own." And although the NASA rovers Spirit and Opportunity, currently working on Mars, can navigate, avoid obstacles and search for data, they can't match up to a human explorer equipped with eyes and hands and brain. "What the Mars robots take several weeks to do, a trained geologist could do in a couple of hours," said Dr Green.

But with humans unlikely to be on Mars before the 2030s, even according to the most optimistic projections, it is robots which are spearheading the search for life. The Cassini-Huygens mission, which

"What the Mars robots take several weeks to do, a trained geologist could do in a couple of hours"



Professor John Zarnecki: looking for life

carried the Titan probe, was the most complex robotic mission ever. But plans are already been made for an even more ambitious probe to Europa, one of Jupiter's moons, which probably has deep oceans beneath its icy surface which may be capable of harbouring life. "We will need a robot which can generate heat to burrow into the icy surface of Europa and then land a submersible vehicle to swim around in the water," said Dr Green.

While robots are searching for life in space, here on Earth they are helping to recruit the next generation of space scientists and

engineers. Part of Dr Green's role at The Open University is to run events around the country where young people can take part in simulations of robotic space

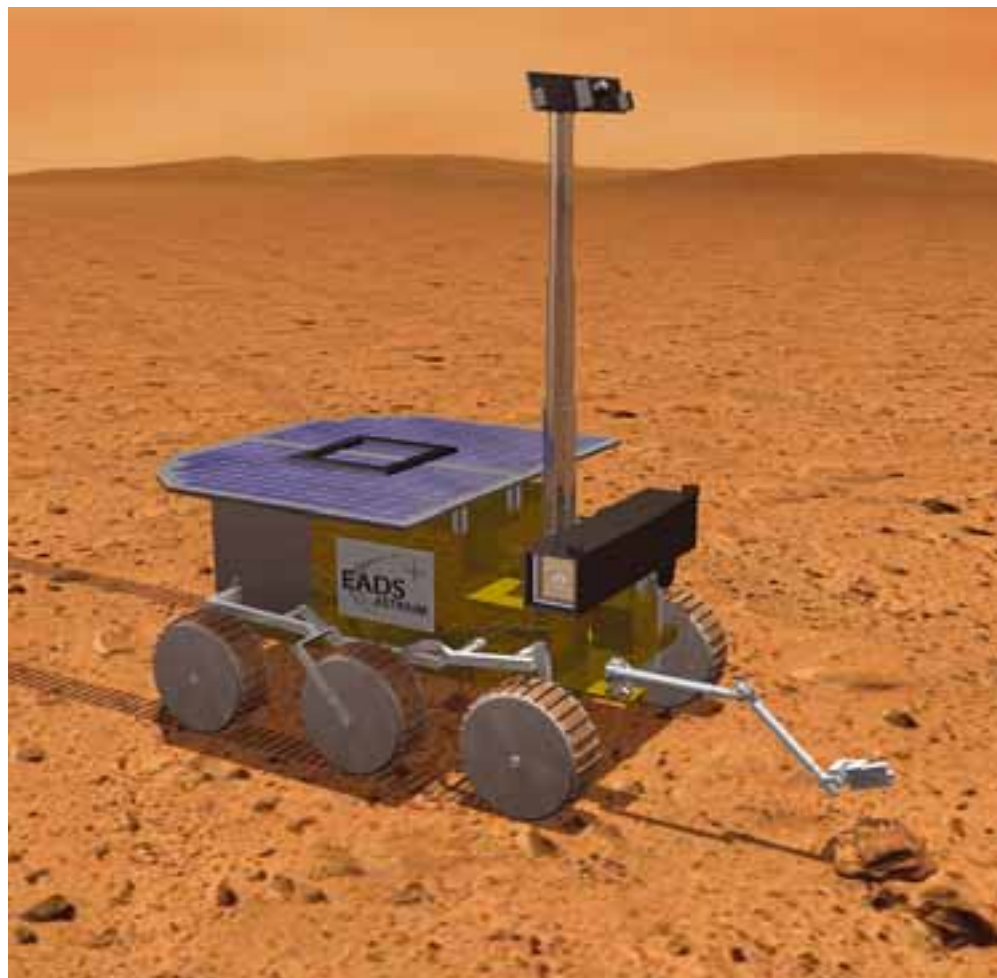
exploration. "It is a good way to get youngsters excited about science because it involves three things that interest them: robots, space and the search for life."

Edinburgh Science Festival runs from 5 to 16 April. Professor Zarnecki and Dr Green will be speaking on 8 April as part of the Festival's Milky Way strand. For details and a programme see www.sciencefestival.co.uk

For more on robots in space see <http://robots.open.ac.uk/space>

Artist's impression of the ExoMars Rover which will probe beneath the Martian surface

© 2004 University of Wales, Aberystwyth and EADS Astrium Ltd.



FIFTH COLUMN

SUPPORT

SUPPORT

OU promotes respect



I DON'T know the statistics but I would guess I'm in the minority of OU students with a first degree from a 'traditional' university. That

doesn't make me special but it has allowed me to sample student life on both sides of the fence.

Reading about the OU's success in achieving the highest overall satisfaction rate in the first National Student Survey in **sesame** (Winter 2005) caused me to wonder "does the OU deserve this accolade and if so why?" In answer I arrived at something far less tangible than a questionnaire allows.

Yes, it is bliss to go to tutorials where there are enough hand-outs for everyone, TMAs are returned with in-depth feedback and you can download reading lists and past exam papers. But where I think the OU really deserves credit is for the ethos it creates – study without the competitiveness that seems inherent in traditional universities. In my previous student life I continually endured the question "What mark did you get?" which, when I answered, was met with gloating or despondency. In two years with the OU not one fellow student has sought this information.

Why? I believe it's because they appreciate that whether I know more or less than they do really isn't important. The way the OU provides teaching and support demonstrates a recognition that students are on an independent journey. In turn I think this teaches students to respect this in each other.

Have a great journey, everyone.

Samantha Browne is studying A310 and has an LLB with Honours from the University of North London.

Do you have a gripe or would like to share something interesting? Send us an article of no more than 250 words to The Editor, **sesame**, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or email sesame@open.ac.uk Include contact details and a daytime telephone number. We pay £50 for each contribution used.

Smile as you cross off number 438

*An American author has made a million by writing about making lists. Could this be because lists are the nearest thing to a busy student's Holy Grail, asks **Ormond Simpson**?*

ONE day I'm going to write a best-selling sequel to the *Da Vinci Code* called *The Baldock Cipher*. Baldock is a little town in Hertfordshire and I think the Holy Grail is buried there. You see, Baldock's original name is 'Balzac', the Old French form of Baghdad (yes, really. Would I kid **sesame** readers?). This is because the Knights Templar founded it in the 12th century as their English HQ, naming it after their international HQ in Baghdad. So when it came to hiding the Holy Grail where better than Baldock?

This came to mind because I was looking at my 'To Do' list the other day and found "Find Holy Grail, make million pounds, retire" at number 438. But there may be a quicker way to make money. An American, David Allen, has made a million dollars by – you guessed – writing about lists. He calls it the 'Getting Things Done' system and charges \$595 a seminar. Easy money, you might think, but there is some sense in the idea. One of the difficult things about being an OU student is all the stuff that competes for your time and attention alongside your studies. All this uncompleted stuff creates distraction and stress just by being there. The best way to get rid of that stress is to get the stuff out of your head and on to a list.

Start by writing down everything you've got to do. Divide your list into whatever categories you like – mine has headings *Work* ('Write article for **sesame**'), *Home* ('fill hole in window frame'), *Deadlines* ('1 April – conference paper due'). Then I have subsidiary lists – *Things to be done today* ('phone daughter') kept by my phone, and *Things I've just thought of* ('make dentist's appointment') on a scrap of paper in my shirt pocket. This sounds complicated but works for me – you choose what suits you. If you like the Web you can use www.tadalist.com/

Now the useful bit. You don't have to complete one thing on your list before moving on to another. When you've got a little time you just take some small actions on any of the things on the list that will move them forward.

For example, this article has been written over several weeks in 10-20 minute bursts. Now I can do the nicest thing with lists which is to scratch this item off completely.

And if you're passing through Baldock late one night and see a shadowy figure at the crossroads with a spade you'll know that number 438 on my list has finally made it to the top...

● Recently we did some research among new students thought to be at risk of dropping out of their courses. We found that students who kept going when others faced similar problems dropped out were those who had good support networks – especially from immediate families, but also from friends, workmates, employers and other students. There was someone close they could turn to – not for tutoring assistance but for morale-raising and practical help.

We learnt from this the importance of support networks for students and the need for the OU to help families and friends to support 'their' students as effectively as possible. So you will find advice for 'Families and Friends' on the OU's website www.open.ac.uk/family/, and a leaflet in the FirstClass Info Centre (Conferences>Open University>Info Centre>Advice>Families and Friends), which you can show your family or friends, on how they can help you with your studies most effectively. If you don't have access to the internet send me an SAE labelled 'Helping your student' and I'll send you the leaflet.

And of course one of the most effective supports is mutual study – get them to join you as OU students...

Ormond Simpson is Senior Lecturer in Institutional Research in the OU's Institute of Educational Technology.

Ormond's address is c/o Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Recipe for success

*Getting better grades isn't rocket science, but some students do overlook the obvious, says **John Kirkaldy***

IF two OU students meet, it is almost certain that it will be about 10 seconds before they come to topic number one:

how can you get better grades? Here are 10 tips for achieving this, based on 26 years teaching with the OU. Be warned, you will receive no earth-shattering advice (nearly all of what follows would be called by Basil Fawlty, "the Bleedin' Obvious"). It is just that a sizeable number of students ignore these commonsense procedures.

1 Read the entire TMA or assignment booklet. Do not read just the assignment, but the whole background to the course. You will get lots of good advice. Use it.

2 Read the question very carefully. Ask yourself, what is it wanting? What is the point?

3 Most courses give you helpful hints in answering the question. Ignore them at your peril.

4 When I become Dictator, tattooed on every OU student's wrist will be the magic mantra, "THINK, PLAN, WRITE and

REVISE". Note: *writing is number three*. The further up you go, the more important these four steps become.

5 Learn from your tutor's feedback. Once you have got over the excitement/disappointment of your latest grade, go through your assignment with a fine toothcomb. If you don't understand, ask. If you want a long discussion, book a time that is mutually convenient. If it would help the marker, send him/her a copy of the assignment. Don't go on making the same mistakes!

6 Does the tutor mark to prescribed criteria? Yes, course teams issue briefing notes which lay out how assignments should be marked. In Arts subjects (my area) there is inevitably a subjective element. I would like to see the assignment – marking briefing notes from previous years made available to students.

7 Does the OU check up on how tutors mark? Yes, all tutors have assignments picked at random and then double-marked.

As monitor for one course, I have to say that these are taken very seriously indeed. (Somebody else monitors me!) Exam marking is internally and externally verified. No system is perfect, but I am impressed by how fair the OU tries to be.

8 Good presentational skills make a good impression! Make your work easy and pleasant to mark.

9 Understand the system. If you are unhappy with your grade, discuss it with your tutor. You have the right of appeal.

10 Practice makes perfect! Remember the first time that you tried to drive a car or cook a Sunday roast? You will, if you bear in mind the above, get better over a period of time.

P.S. I came across my files from my university career a few weeks ago and I found that I had broken nearly all of these rules at some time!

John Kirkaldy is an Arts tutor in Region 03, the South-West

From cooking the Sunday roast to producing a TMA, practice makes perfect



Virtual Employment Fair

In the first of two articles we look at some of the issues for OU students looking for employment opportunities, and how the OU Careers Advisory Service is working to provide more services to students who want to change or progress their careers

MANY companies highly value OU qualifications – in fact 50,000 employers have so far sponsored their staff to study with the OU. But feedback from students and employers has indicated that there is work to be done in raising the profile of the OU as a concentrated pool of talent from which to recruit, whether at degree or any other level.

The main issue the Careers Advisory Services has identified so far in our conversations with employers is that many don't know very much about the OU, or haven't even considered our student population. While the OU Careers Service is working to raise awareness by developing contacts, visiting employers and placing articles in professional magazines, students need strategies to deal with employers who don't have a good understanding of what the OU is about. Here are some suggestions:

- Focus on the skills you have gained as a result of your degree
- Highlight the amount of work that goes into achieving your qualification – made all the more impressive if you are bringing up a family and/or working at the same time.
- Make it clear that you attend tutorials, take part in group activities, take exams and have to hand in assignments on time.

No A levels?

A big issue for OU students who do not have A levels, or who did not achieve their potential at that stage in their study, is the requirement from recruiters for A level or UCAS points. Be aware that there can be flexibility on this, particularly if you are able to provide evidence of work experience.

The Association of Graduate Recruiters has just released the results of a survey of its members which reveals that recruiters are having difficulty finding the right graduates to fill management positions and say they need applicants with work experience. Those

who have worked and studied at the same time have the additional evidence that you can put in long hours and cope with the concentration needed to be successful at part-time study. Contact the employer direct and discuss this with them to see if they are willing to consider you.

Online vacancy service launching

This summer, the Careers Advisory Service is offering an online vacancy service, which students will register to use, holding details of job vacancies and employers who are interested in recruiting OU students. There will also be a Virtual Employer Fair where employers can provide the OU with more in-depth information about their company, including case studies of employees, presentations about their training programmes and links to their websites. Details to follow in the next issue of **sesame**.

In the interim, students can access vacancies and information about careers fairs and events by logging into our Career Advisory FirstClass conference; companies who have recently advertised with us include Co-op, Cadbury-Schweppes, HBOS and Network Rail. Visit www.open.ac.uk/careers/conferences for more information.

Local opportunities with SMEs

Many OU graduates find employment opportunities with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). There are a number of regional initiatives running that aim to match up students and SMEs. For details of these visit the Careers Advisory website and search for Regional Vacancies.

West Midlands Careers Day

Students in the West Midlands and surrounding areas are invited to attend a Careers Day being held at the regional centre in Birmingham on Saturday 3 June. Further details at www.open.ac.uk/careers

Options with a Degree in... History

THIS is the first in a series of brief articles looking at the career opportunities in subject areas popular with OU students. You can find more details in the Options series produced by Graduate Prospects. (Visit www.prospects.ac.uk/links/options to see the full range of subject areas covered.)

Related careers

Graduates in history often enter careers which do not specify a particular degree subject for entry. The following, however, offer the chance to make use of specific skills developed during the study of history: academic librarian, archivist, chartered accountant, local government administrator, marketing executive, museum curator, teacher and solicitor. To find out more about specific careers visit www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations

Transferable skills developed while studying history

This will partly depend on the specific courses studied, but will include: competence to manage large and diverse quantities of information; understanding and analysis of issues; capacity for argument debate and speculation; the ability to base conclusions on statistical research.

When it comes to promoting yourself to employers, never assume that they will know exactly what your subject entails (unless they have studied it themselves). It is crucial to identify all the skills you have developed from study, work and in other parts of your life and be able to provide evidence from your experiences as proof of your competence.



SPEAK A FOREIGN LANGUAGE? SPEAK IT BETTER!

Join the thousands of professionals and international travellers who depend on *Champs-Elysées*, *Schau ins Land*, *Puerta del Sol*, and *Acquerello italiano* to help them stay in touch with the languages and cultures they love. Designed to help you dramatically improve your listening comprehension, vocabulary, and cultural IQ, these unique European audiomagazines are guaranteed to reenergize your language study—or your money back!

Each audiomagazine consists of an hour-long programme on CD or cassette. You'll hear interviews with prominent Europeans, segments covering current events and issues, as well as features on contemporary culture and beloved traditions. An accompanying booklet contains a complete printed transcript, a glossary averaging 600 words and expressions translated into English, plus extensive background notes.

Because each audiomagazine is a periodical, learning never has to end. Every edition serves up new voices, topics, and vocabulary. The result: you build fluency month in and month out.

To help you integrate language study into your busy life, we've made each audiomagazine portable. Work on language fluency while commuting, exercising, cooking—anytime and anywhere you want!

Best of all, each programme is put together by professional broadcasters, journalists, and editors who have a passion for European languages and culture. That enthusiasm comes through in every edition. From New York to London to Singapore, our subscribers tell us no company produces a better product for intermediate and advanced language learners. Ring for more information, or order at www.audiomagazine.com



INTRODUCING Champs-Elysées Plus!

Accelerate your study of French with *Champs-Elysées Plus*, a new enhanced package. Available now, *Champs-Elysées Plus* includes the basic *Champs-Elysées* audio programme, the transcript and glossary, and a printed workbook with grammar exercises. In addition,

you receive a CD or cassette (your choice) with audio exercises to help you with comprehension and vocabulary building. Audio flash cards of key words and expressions prepare you for listening. Several features from the programme are read at a slower pace to make them easier to understand. And audio comprehension exercises help you make sure you've understood everything you've heard. And just for fun, we've added a special feature—in English—in which we explore various aspects of the French language. Use this supplement on the go and see how fast your French progresses!

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE: You have nothing to lose if it's not for you, let us know within 6 weeks and we will completely reimburse you.

Other special audiobooks and products available from Champs-Elysées:



Balade en France
A stroll through France

An armchair trip to 18 destinations – the best of French history & culture. (Book & 2 x CD)



Conversations françaises:
Les relations transatlantiques

A perspective on anti-Americanism, globalisation, and the Iraq war. (Book & 1 x CD)



Voces de España:
la historia del siglo XX español

A unique history of Spain in the 20th century. (Book & 3 x CD)

Champs-Elysées, Spike Island, 133 Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6UG



Champs-Elysées
AUDIOMAGAZINES



“Better than a language course.”
—about.com

**YES, Please rush
me my first
audiomagazine!**

Champs-Elysées (French)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 editions on tape, £59	<input type="checkbox"/> On CD, £69	<input type="checkbox"/> with C-E Plus, add £22-50
	<input type="checkbox"/> 11 editions on tape, £109	<input type="checkbox"/> On CD, £129	<input type="checkbox"/> with C-E Plus, add £45-00
Schau ins Land (German)	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 editions on tape, £59	<input type="checkbox"/> On CD, £69	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplement, add £15
	<input type="checkbox"/> 11 editions on tape, £109	<input type="checkbox"/> On CD, £129	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplement, add £33
Acquerello italiano (Italian)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 editions on tape, £69	<input type="checkbox"/> On CD, £81	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplement, add £18
Puerta del Sol (Spanish)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 editions on tape, £69	<input type="checkbox"/> On CD, £81	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplement, add £18

(All prices include P&P within the UK and overseas)

Balade en France	<input type="checkbox"/> With subscription order, £19-95	<input type="checkbox"/> As a standalone purchase, £29-95
Conversations françaises	<input type="checkbox"/> With subscription order, £13-95	<input type="checkbox"/> As a standalone purchase, £19-95
Voces de España	<input type="checkbox"/> With subscription order, £26-00	<input type="checkbox"/> As a standalone purchase, £39-95

(Outside the UK please add £6 P&P for each publication)

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____

Address _____

☐ Cheque enclosed (payable to Champs-Elysées Ltd.)

Debit my VISA / Mastercard / American Express/ Eurocard / Switch / Diners

Card No. _____

Expiry Date. _____ Issue _____ (Switch)

Credit card orders may be faxed on 0117 929 2426 Outside the UK call +44 (117) 929 2320

☐ Tick if you do not
want to receive mailings
of offers or services from
other carefully selected
companies.

WWW.AUDIOMAGAZINE.COM

0800 833 257

POST TO: CHAMPS-ELYSEES, DEPT. OU106, FREEPOST LON 295, BRISTOL, BS1 6FA

CAREERS

Career links

CAREER Links is a networking scheme offered by the OU Careers Advisory Service where we match up students wanting to enter a career (Seekers) with other members of the OU community who are already working in those careers (Helpers).

We are really in need of more Helpers, particularly in the areas of psychology, environmental work, health and nutrition and, in Scotland and Ireland, social work.

It is never possible to guarantee that we can match you immediately with someone working in your area of interest but this will be done as soon as we can.

You can either register online at www.open.ac.uk/careers/links or pick up a postcard from your regional centre. If you have any questions please email Career-Links@open.ac.uk

Careers Q&A

Will age make a difference to my chances of getting a job?

Age discrimination exists, there's no denying it. In October 2006 the government will be publishing new Age Discrimination legislation which will make it illegal to recruit on the basis of age. We have to be realistic and recognise that change won't occur overnight, but at the very least the legislation will force employers to reconsider who and how they recruit then it will be a first small step on the way to changing attitudes.

There are some careers for which experience is crucial – and therefore there is an assumption that you won't necessarily have come straight through the education system. In other cases life experience itself is highly valued for e.g. counselling or social work. The key is to be thorough in

your research when deciding which area to move into. Don't rely on assumptions, speak to people who are working in that area and develop contacts. If you're not sure how to go about this visit the Networking pages on the Careers Advisory Service website (look in the 'A to Z') at www.open.ac.uk/careers See also Career Links (page ??)

You will find a page on Mature graduates on the Careers Advisory Service website www.open.ac.uk/careers (look in the 'A to Z'). This includes advice on how best to promote yourself.

Do you have any questions for OU Careers advisor Ellen Cocking to answer in future issues of sesame? Email sesame@open.ac.uk or write to: Careers Q&A, sesame, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.



CASE STUDY

Janet Wasserstein

Janet found that the reputation of the OU stood her in good stead when impressing employers – as far afield as the USA.

"I left school at sixteen with six "o" levels and in 1972, the second year of the Open University's existence, I signed up. Eight years later I got my BA Honours degree in the arts and social sciences. The experience quite changed my life.

Despite having always lived in London, in 1982 I found myself in Boston, Massachusetts where I still live. I had previously worked at the American Embassy in London on cultural exchanges.

Boston in 1990 presented a difficult environment in which to search for a job. I applied to an organisation that produced interactive educational television programmes for school students. There were hundreds of resumes for this administrative position, yet mine made it to the top of the pile: the director had noticed I had an OU degree. At interview I was asked many questions about my OU courses. I got the job and stayed for nine years.

In 2001 I came across an online ad for a communications and development officer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's distance education center. Once again my OU degree was discussed during the interview. So twice my OU experience got me a solid foot in the door. The director of the center and MIT Professor Richard C. Larson states: "In the 1970s the OU was one of the first institutions to provide access to higher education by teaching from a distance and its degrees are widely respected here in the United States."

I have now worked at MIT for nearly five years and am Associate Director in the Office of Foundation Relations (<http://web.mit.edu/frads>). I match MIT projects with philanthropic foundations that might support them often in areas of educational technology. I keep in touch with distance learning issues and have given presentations about MIT educational technology initiatives at conferences where participants often ask about my OU background. The most recent presentation, was at Madingley Hall, University of Cambridge at an OU-organised international distance education conference.

The OU gave me a love of learning that continues to this day. I went on to do a Master's management degree but still think about doing a PhD one day. Professionally the degree opened doors for me particularly in the United States and at a prestigious university such as MIT. Also I have developed an interest in distance education as a discipline.

So in Boston we say Go Sox (the Red Sox baseball team) but I would say to any student Go OU! It will change your life in ways you cannot predict."

competition

sesame crossword competition

Win **£75** cash plus a copy of the **Chambers Dictionary**

TAKE a break from those course units and have a go at **sesame's** spring crossword competition.

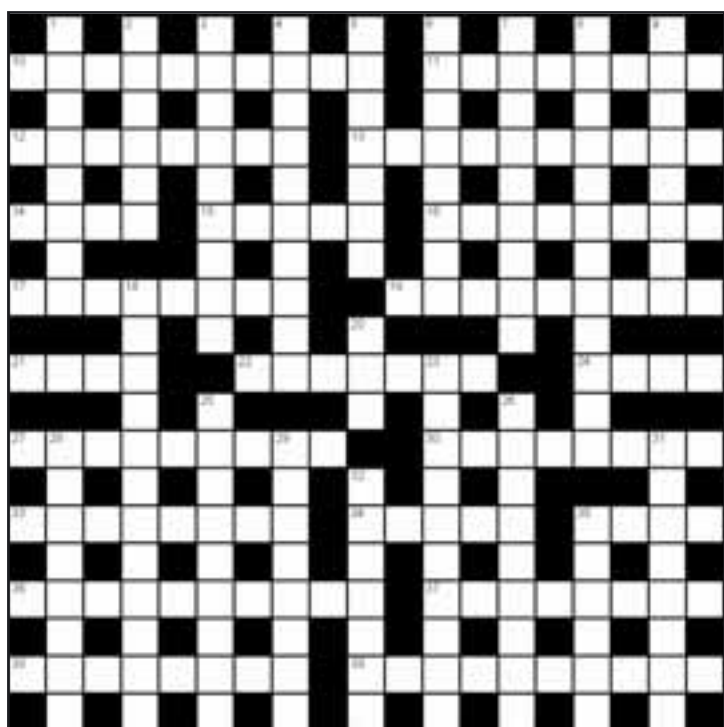
Senders of the first three correct

solutions drawn out of the hat on 8 May 2006 will receive a copy of the *Chambers Dictionary*.

In addition, the first one drawn will receive

£75 cash courtesy of **sesame**. Winners will be notified by telephone or email.

Details of *Chambers Dictionaries* can be found at www.chambers.co.uk



SESAME SPRING CROSSWORD ENTRY FORM

Send your entry with the completed coupon to:
Cullen Crosswords, 19 Cyncoed Place, Cardiff, CF23 6SG
Closing date 8 May 2006. Only one entry per person.

Name: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____ Tel Number: _____
Email: _____

Across

10. Charge a supporter opposed to a holiday area (5,5)
11. Toothless type sustained by the workers (8)
12. Semblance I know not so much about! (8)
13. Read threat to blow up e.g. The Pyramids (10)
14. Treatment used in tribal medicine (4)
15. Demon from one continent can put off tourists at first (5)
16. The Pony Express's first new recruit (8)
17. Stays too long in the bathroom tub? (8)
19. To dominate the conversation is extreme (9)
21. Old war hero having to grow old and abandon talking (4)
22. Protest the devil's not quite devilish? (7)
24. Wine that's like fire (4) 27. River low – just a covering on the bed (9)
30. Religious wonder-worker wants nothing Catholic to be carried around (8)
33. People feeling regret about old French battle (8)
34. Primate – one replacing duke in House (5)
35. Something in the kitchen to drink swiftly (4)
36. Navy meat's nothing if it's sweet (5,5)
37. The French back new unit-trust that's humanitarian (8)
38. One back in the team? (8) 39. Taking shape (3-7)

Down

1. Golden rod standing firm in the past (8)
2. The way to enlarge hole in spout (6)
3. Denied agent's involved in a plot (9)
4. Show support for string players' activity (4-6)
5. Suite of mine with a painting that's framed (7)
6. Start fishing – for a snapper! (8)
7. Read the *Daily Mail* (unauthorised version)? (5,4)
8. Pianists will normally accept unpleasant consequences (4,3,5)
9. Rubbish Democrat is utter failure (8)
18. What an ant will have buried (3,4,5)
20. This horse is presumably not a chestnut (3)
23. Wave in the wake of reserve ship (10)
25. Unemployed labourers Nick will find work for (4,5)
26. Second application gives rise to role in play (9)
28. Self-confessed procrastination marks the infidel (8)
29. Learned area of person affecting knowledge (8)
31. Wicked sibling eats in (8)
32. To show brilliance a good mind is needed (7)
35. Watergate clue is incorrect (6)

Christmas crossword winners

The winner of our Christmas crossword was F. H. Foxall from Kingsbridge, Devon who wins £75 plus a copy of the *Chambers Dictionary*. The two runners-up were Ruth Kehoe from Linlithgow and Barry Wilsher from Sandy, who each receive a copy of the *Chambers*

Dictionary.

Answers - Across:

1 Narcotic, 6 Sadist, 9 Kipper, 10 Arrested, 11 Leonidas, 12 Permit, 13 Chess problem, 16 Pallas Athene, 19 Borsch, 21 Immortal, 23 Kinetics, 24 Tennis, 25 Bootle, 26 Excuse me

Answers - Down:

2 Asides, 3 Capon, 4 Tiredness, 5 Classes, 6 Scrap, 7 Desirable, 8 Specimen, 13 Cold sweat, 14 Rheumatic, 15 Palomino, 17 Trieste, 18 Racism, 20 Heine, 22 Rings

OU STUDENT

Edited by

Joan Jones

The official publication of the Open University Students Association

Joan Jones

Not the end – but a new beginning

BELIEVE it or not it is two years since I took over as Editor of *OU Student*, and on the final day of the OUSA Conference to be held on the Open University campus at Walton Hall, Milton Keynes from 7 - 9 April I will be handing over the reins to a new President, who will also take over as Editor of this publication.

In some ways the ending of my Presidency is like completing an OU degree and I am not seeing it as an ending of one phase of my life, but more as a beginning of the next. I am looking forward to some of those pleasures that have been denied to me because of lack of time. I am planning to move house, spend more time with my grandchildren, start studying an OU Master's programme, take on a more demanding role within my career.

"I hope I have equipped my successors with the tools and inspiration to carry on the work I have started"

On the other hand I am looking forward to seeing what a new President will bring to the role, what innovations and insights they might have and the direction the Association will move in the near future. Of course, I am hoping that my values of openness, transparency, teamwork, experimentation and encouraging members' participation are respected and will be upheld. Right now, as with a final course of a degree, I am hoping I have done enough to be judged successful. Though how well I have really done will probably not be known for a year or two because one of my unwritten primary tasks has been to make sure that the Association has the right people, with the right skills, to take over now and in the future. Are YOU going to be included amongst OUSA members who make a difference in the future?

I had a good start as my claim of being the first President elected on the OU Campus is coveted by my predecessors, but I want to give credit to them too because they had a part in shaping the Association into what it is today. It is obvious that there needs to be change to bring it into the 21st century and I am acutely aware that wholesale change cannot happen overnight, but I hope I have equipped my successors with the tools and inspiration to carry on the work I have started. One thing I promised was that I would listen to students and, during my two year term, I have managed to visit



Not the end – but a new beginning

from page 37

students in each of OUSA's sixteen regions, for degree ceremonies or visiting branches or regions. I also managed to visit residential schools in the six regions in mainland UK that host them, I don't think I could have done more in the time available to me to reach out to students but if I did not manage to reach you then I hope I can do so now.

Achievements

So in a nutshell what were my main achievements? Well, I managed to nurture an unique association with the National Union of Students (NUS), which not only gave you access to the Associate card and the valuable discounts available, but also showed the Government we meant business with regard to funding for part-time students in Higher Education, not only for OU students but across the board. Then closer to home, I negotiated a good deal with the University on the representation of students in its academic governance



Have you got yours yet? The NUS/OUA Associate Card

structure, emphasising practical considerations, for example students having other life commitments, such as working and studying. I also led a review of OUSA's own structure and have proposed changes which I hope will lead to better integration between participation by traditional face-to-face methods and virtual media, therefore increasing participation by students.

I was privileged to have been invited to a two-day OU curriculum seminar in February so I can tell you there are exciting times ahead with new courses being planned in various fields such as ethics, waste management, archaeology and forensics, to mention just a few. So OUSA will be looking for students with these interests to become representatives and ensure that courses and programmes are developed in line with



Sir Bryan Nicholson, Pro Chancellor and Brenda Gourley, Vice-Chancellor with Joan at Paris Graduation 2004

student needs. And this is where I am really jealous of YOU. From April I will have to retire and move into the background and, like a parent with a child leaving home I will have to watch from the sidelines and offer support only when it is asked for. Whereas YOU could be part of the action, part of the bigger picture, working within OUSA and making a difference to the future of the OU. I have had my day but please make sure you don't waste yours – give your life a new beginning and make contact with OUSA now.

JOAN JONES
PRESIDENT, OUSA



Arriving for branch meetings in Dublin – really – its not a porky!

A big thumbs up for the NUS-OUA Associate Card

If you haven't got your NUS-OUA Associate Card yet you're missing out on the hundreds of student discounts available nationwide.

OUSA members have been flocking to buy a card over the last six months and many report long lists of places where they've gained a student entry rate and numerous shops willing to provide student discount. The card will guarantee a 10 per

cent saving at HMV, TOPSHOP/ TOPMAN and Pizza Hut to name just a few of the negotiated arrangements in place. It seems that the NUS-OUA Associate Card really is the one to be seen with.

In fact this card is proving to be so valuable that OUSA wants to give one away free!

Just write to tell us *How you use yours?* What discounts has it got for you? The most

unusual/unexpected place you've used it in? What discount you wish it could get for you? Or even *Why I decided not to get a card.*

All letters received on this subject will be put into a draw with the winner receiving a subscription for next year's NUS-OUA Associate Card.

Send your letter to the usual address marking your envelope

'How you use yours' to arrive by 1 May.

Want to apply for a card now? For an application form and details of offers and benefits available to card holders visit www.nusonline.co.uk/associate or call the hotline to request a form on 0870 242 2458 making sure that you quote Open University.

Conference debates

WITH OUSA Conference on the horizon it is good to see that there will be some strong debates on matters important to students. Subjects include asking the Open University to:

- Provide publications, including certificates and awards, in the language of choice.
- Develop appropriate support services for students with mental health problems and hearing impairments
- Ensure that any future online conferencing system takes into account the social needs of OU

students

- Ensure out-of-hours contact is available with Regional Advisers
- Enable payment of all courses via OUSBA Accounts
- Review Study Centre provision against a minimum standard of facilities
- Provide better feedback following examinations, including return of exam scripts

There are some changes being requested with the structure and organisation of

the Students Association too, with motions covering:

- Re-organisation at a local level to attempt to increase student participation and engagement
- Review the size and membership of the Executive Committee
- Voting for the President and Deputy President by all students electronically.

Keep an eye on the OUSA Website at www.ousa.org.uk to see whether these ideas will be accepted by the delegates.



EDUCATION MATTERS

Become a representative

THIS will be my last contribution to *Education Matters* as Vice-President Education. It's been an interesting, challenging two years, made even more fascinating by students who have taken it upon themselves to give something back to OUSA, to become involved in our contribution to university matters or have broken the mould by getting in touch and talking about the issues affecting their study. This last group of students has proved invaluable and I sincerely hope that they continue to make that valued contribution.

Bologna Agreement

Having recently attended a presentation at the University campus in Milton Keynes on the Bologna Agreement, the whole idea is becoming an exciting prospect for the OU. Reluctance within most UK Universities means there is indeed room for one University to take the lead and become the spearhead of the Bologna Agreement movement. Will it be The Open University? Only time will tell. In the mean time, our need to understand the Bologna Agreement, its potential and challenges, continues to grow. The Bologna Agreement is intended to create a common platform for flexible, transferable education, which would enable holders of qualification/s to exercise effective mobility between the signatory countries without the worry of whether their qualifications will be recognised. If you want to find out more about the Bologna Agreement, try the UK Presidency website: www.eu2005.gov.uk or the Bologna Secretariat website: www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna

Opportunities within OUSA

Our team of Central Representatives sit on University Boards and Committees on our behalf. Their role is important in communicating student views to the heart of the University, whilst using the opportunity to improve their own skills. Central Representatives

can find themselves extending and improving their own skills in areas of committee representation, professional performance at committee meetings, public speaking, dealing with and using academic committee papers, producing reports, supporting others, team work and self development. Becoming a Central Representative produces an opportunity to produce additional elements for a curriculum vitae as well as the increased confidence and self-esteem that many of our Representatives experience.

Diversity is a key element in our Central Representative Team and so we welcome students from all walks of life and backgrounds. Training and ongoing support is provided throughout the year by both myself and key members of the team. No special experience or qualifications are needed, and each application is considered individually. Why don't you get involved and find out more about your university by representing your fellow students?

We have several existing vacancies at the moment, in particular for Postgraduate and Research students, so please get in touch with us at the OUSA Office, where we will be able to answer any queries that you have and send you an application form.

REBECCA ROSENTHAL
VICE-PRESIDENT,
EDUCATION, OUSA



Frequently asked questions

Got a burning question about the way the OU works? Want to know more about OUSA? Send your questions to the OUSA Office

What is Student Support?

Student Support covers everything that facilitates the student learning experience. This includes funding for courses; ensuring disabled students have the resourses to provide them with a level playing field; and dealing with issues surrounding exams and tutorials, to name but a few.

The University has a robust support system aided by tutors and staff at regional centres and Milton Keynes. In addition, the Open University Students Association (OUSA) has a support network of central and local volunteers. As The Open University (OU) is such a large organisation students can benefit from contact with another student who has experience of the system!

For queries relating to your current course, the first port of call is always **your tutor**. If you are struggling with your course content, or getting behind with your studies and need an extension for a Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA), always talk to your tutor first.

If you have a query relating to your tutorial support contact your



regional centre. They can help; though the following frequently asked questions and answers might also give you some guidance.

I have emailed my tutor with an urgent question and s/he has not replied. My TMA is due very soon, what should I do?
Initially, make several attempts to contact your tutor and be aware of the time of year. Your tutor may be taking a summer holiday! If this is not successful the best course of action is to contact Student Services at your regional centre, they will attempt to find someone with experience of your course to offer advice.

I am moving house, what do I do? Who should I tell? Will I get a different tutor?
You can contact either your regional centre or Walton Hall with your change of address. Whether you change tutor or not will depend on how far away you are moving and how far into your course you are. For example, if you are moving from London to Manchester at the beginning of your course it would be better to change tutor and easier for you to attend tutorials but if you only have one month left before your exam it might not be beneficial for you to change tutor.

*For other issues you may need to contact different departments of the University at **Walton Hall**, for example:*

I am thinking of applying for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), but the thought of the assessment is putting me off, can you tell me what it will be like?
“I can assure you there is nothing whatsoever to worry about in the assessment. The people who carry out the assessments are experienced in disability issues and are usually very sympathetic towards students with disabilities.

The gentleman that assessed me was the Disability Advisor for Plymouth University. He rang me up to make an appointment to visit me in my own home. No medical examination was necessary. He asked me how my disability affected my studies and put my answers onto his laptop. He also made some suggestions himself which was more that I had expected. After a few days he sent a copy of his recommendations to me for my approval before forwarding them on to the DSA office. Providing the assessor’s recommendations are in line with the rules of the DSA office, what they recommend will be granted”. *(Provided by Christine Fitze who has recently gone through the process)*

Can I buy my equipment from the money I am allocated from the DSA?
If you have been assessed and the Disabled Students Allowance Office has approved the assessor’s recommended requirements then it is possible that you can obtain the equipment yourself. However, please ensure that you contact the Disabled Students Allowance office before making a purchase.

OUSA can also support you. For example,

What help can OUSA provide?
There are several ways to get in contact with other students for

support and direction to the right place.

Peer Support Online provides an anonymous and confidential service through the FirstClass Conferencing system. Volunteer students can help with one-off queries or you can request ongoing support to help you through a course. There is a vast amount of experience within the group who will ensure that you get support from the right person in the team. Peer Support Online can be found directly under the OUSA icon on FirstClass.

Student Support Links are part of OUSA’s regional support arrangements. They can help you with anything relating to your studies that comes under the umbrella of student support. **Disabled Student Links** can help with any issues that affect disabled students. You may have a query about Disabled Students Allowance or access to a tutorial venue. Both these roles are there to offer confidential moral support and can direct students to the right place within the University to help you resolve stressful situations.

Student Academic Links represent each faculty and are there to help with academic queries and also feed back student views through our central representatives to the University.

The **Enabled Students Group** is dedicated to improving OUSA’s ability to effectively represent disabled students. Students who are disabled, defined by the Disability Discrimination Act, can join the group. If you have experiences to share and would like to contribute to the change process please contact the OUSA Office for further information.

Is there any funding available to complete Postgraduate studies?
There is very little support available for Postgradute studies but you should always contact the University first to see if there is anything available to you. OUSA have a small charity, The Open University Students

Educational Trust (Ouset), which may be able to provide some financial support for OU graduates wishing to complete a post-graduate qualificate. Contact the OUSA Office to see whether you meet the criteria.

I need photographic identification for my exam. Can OUSA provide this?
OUSA provides its own free membership card, which can gain you some discretionary discounts. See the ‘contacts panel’ for further details.

Alternatively it offers the NUS/OUSA Associate Card, which costs £10 per year and includes specific negotiated discounts and services. Both of these are accepted by the OU as valid identification for exams. Applications can be downloaded from the www.ousa.org.uk or contact the OUSA Office for further details.

CHRIS BELL
VP STUDENT SUPPORT

Dates for your diary

If you would like to see your event advertised here, please contact the OUSA Office. Deadline for the next issue of OU Student is Wednesday 4 May.

National Events

OUSA Conference 7 - 9 April 2006, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

Local Events

Bournemouth & Poole Branch *First Thursday of every month*, 8.30pm, Grasshopper Pub, Poole Road, Lower Parkstone, Poole. Details Neil Walkling: neil.walkling@ntlworld.com
Web: www.bournemouthpoole.co.uk

Bristol Branch *First Wednesday of every month*, 8.30pm, Horts Tavern, 49-50 Broad Street, Bristol and *Third Tuesday of every month*, 8.30pm, The Cornubia, Temple Street Bristol. Details: Kate: 0117 955 1992. Web: www.ousabristol.org.uk

Cheltenham Branch *Second Wednesday of every month*, 8.30pm, The Somerset Arms, Leckhampton. Details Alli: Alli12177@aol.com

Chippenham Branch *Second Monday of every month*, 7.30pm. Pheasant Public House, Chippenham (corner of A4 & Hungerdown Lane). Details Pauline Lock: paulinelen@pau-lin.freemove.co.uk

Devon South Branch *Second or third Wednesday of every month*. The Ship, Preston, Paignton. Details Peter: Petergibbo9@aol.com

Exeter Branch *Third Wednesday of every month*, 7.30pm. Mill-on-the-Exe, Exeter. Details Margaret: margaret@margaret35.wanadoo.co.uk

Glasgow & West of Scotland Branch *First Tuesday of every month*, 7pm, Bon Accord Pub, North Street, Glasgow. Details Catherine Macmillan: 0141 339 7906.

Gloucester Branch
First Thursday of every month, 8.00pm, The Fountain Inn,

Westgate Street, Gloucester. Details Paula: 01452 750416.

Haverfordwest Branch *First Thursday of every month*, 7.30pm, Haverfordwest Cricket Club, Dale Road, Haverfordwest, Pembs. Online branch meetings will also be held via FirstClass on *Monday 10 April - Sunday 30 April*. And *Monday 10 July - Sunday 30 July*. Details Nikki: nsc54@student.open.ac.uk

Kendal Branch *First Monday of every month*, 7.30pm, Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal. Details Brian Wright: 015396 21567.

Manchester Branch *Second Tuesday of every month*, 7.30pm, Lass O’Gowire, Charles Street, Manchester. Details Alan: 0161 292 7209 or al.kinsey@tiscali.co.uk

Oldham Branch *Third Saturday of every month*, 3.30pm, Toby Carvery (Chadderton Park Inn) on Broadway, Oldham. Families (including children) welcome. Details: Gary: 0748 112 7017.

Plymouth Branch *Third Tuesday of every month*. Winifred Baker Court, Addison Rd, North Hill, Plymouth. Details Pat: ousaplymouth@yahoo.co.uk

Portsmouth Branch *First Tuesday of every month*, 7.30pm. Toby Carvery, Copnor Rd, Hilsea. Details Keith: keith.2.grant@bt.com

Southend Branch *First Thursday of every month*, 7.30pm. The Royal Navy Association Club, 73-79 East Street, Prittlewell, Southend-on-Sea. Details Albert: albert.beaven@blueyonder.co.uk

Weald Branch *Tuesday 27 April*, Meeting and social gathering, 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Opera House Pub, Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells. Details: wealdousa@yahoo.co.uk

West Cumbria Branch *Last Sunday of every month*, 7.30pm. The Howgate Inn (on the A595 between Whitehaven and Workington). Details Tony: parkerstbees@aol.com

Gifts galore

OUSA is pleased to announce that its Presentation Gifts 2006 brochure featuring prestigious products such as crystal, commemorative jewellery and clothing, including the ever popular graduation t-shirt, is now available. Students who are graduating this year please note that if you register for your ceremony less than four weeks before the ceremony date, we will

be unable to include your name on the graduation t-shirt.

A full range of OUSA merchandise can be found at the organisation's webstore at www.ousa.org.uk

Donations from the profit on sales are made to The Open University Students Educational Trust (Ouset).



OU Student, the publication of the Open University Students Association, is edited by the OUSA President. Most of the articles are written by students of the University. It is produced on OUSA's behalf by The Communications Group of The Open University. Editorial enquiries and contributions should be addressed to: Als Ryan, Open University Students Association, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6BE. Telephone: +44 (0) 1908 652026 Fax: +44 (0) 1908 654326 Email: ousa@student.open.ac.uk OUSA website: www.ousa.org.uk

IF YOU WANT INFORMATION ABOUT OUSA PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Discounts for the OU Student

The OUSA Membership Card will help gain you discounts and student concessions on goods and services. You may also get discount rates for theatres, cinemas, museums, leisure centres etc. It has also been accepted for rail travel in Europe (although not yet in the UK unfortunately) and in many European venues. The card can be used as proof of OU student status when using student union facilities of other universities where OUSA has a reciprocal agreement and for OU exams. All OU students are eligible, so apply for one today. Remember, it's free! We will need one passport size photograph, proof of student identity/ correspondence with student number and a 2nd class stamp for return of your card (or include 20p designated for the purpose if you send a donation for Ouset). Documents will be returned with your card.

Ouset DONATION

Ouset, The Open University Students Educational Trust, is a registered charity, administered by OUSA, and is designed to help Open University students in financial need. Its funds are almost entirely generated by donations and fundraising activities of fellow students. Any donation is welcome.

☐

REPRESENTATIVES ON CENTRAL COMMITTEES

If you are interested in representing your fellow students on Open University central committees and boards, please tick the box.

☐

SUPPORT LINKS

Tick the box for further details about becoming a Student Support Link, Disabled Student Link or Student Academic Link (circle area of interest).

☐

REPRESENTATIVES AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

If you are interested in being a rep at residential schools in the future, please tick the box for a recruitment pack and application form.

☐

ENABLED STUDENTS GROUP

This group is open to all those disabled students interested in helping OUSA to achieve its equality policy. Please tick the box if you are interested in receiving details of how to register with the Enabled Students Group.

☐

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Tick the box for details of how you can represent OUSA at an OU Graduation ceremony.

☐

Please allow 28 days for delivery of all OUSA Services.

ORDER FORM

OUSA information is recorded on computer. OUSA is registered under the Data Protection Act.

Name _____ Student Number _____ Region _____ Catchment Area Number _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Daytime Tel No _____

Signature _____

Date _____

I include a donation to Ouset.

Please send completed form and enclosures to:

OUSA Office, (SESAME 229) PO Box 397, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6BE Fax: +44 (0) 1908 654326.

READER HOLIDAY OFFERS

JERSEY SPRING FLY/DRIVE

Save up to 40% off normal prices.

STAY at the famous Merton Hotel and enjoy a four-night visit for the price of two! Facilities include entertainment, superb all-weather leisure dome with indoor pool, fitness centre, bars and lounges, restaurants, lift and car park. This special offer is valid for breaks commencing either Sunday or Monday, although extra nights can be added to extend your stay. Please note family rooms are not included in this offer. Prices start from £221 per person to include flight from Gatwick or Southampton (other airports on request), four nights B&B at the Merton and car hire based on two adults sharing a group A vehicle, excluding petrol, CDI and local taxes. **Holiday offer C160/OU**

CORNWALL ESCAPE

Save up to 40% off normal prices.

JULIOT'S Well is a three-star holiday park situated in Camelford, near Launceston and just four miles from the nearest beach. There is a range of accommodation including country cottages, timber lodges and static

caravans. Amenities include a swimming pool (mid May to mid Sept), bar, non-smoking restaurant offering a takeaway service, children's play area and games room. There's also a varied entertainment programme during the season. Prices start from just £79 per unit for seven nights in a static caravan in April. Short breaks also available with four nights for the price of three starting from just £49 per unit. Further details on Juliot's Well can be found at www.breaksincornwall.com but for these special prices to **sesame** readers quote **Holiday offer C161/OU**

CORFU IONIAN EXPLORER 2006

The charming village of Arillas on the northwest coast of Corfu makes an ideal holiday resort for couples and families.

THIS special explorer holiday includes private airport transfers to/from Arillas, self-catering in the privately owned Elena-Stella apartments, a full-day boat excursion to one of the offshore islands, a half-day excursion to explore Corfu town or Sidari, plus one Greek evening meal (three



Jersey beaches

courses with wine). Charter flights are available from most UK regional airports and prices start from £335 per adult for seven nights based on four sharing a two-bedroom apartment. **Holiday offer C151/OU**

For further details contact ABTA and ATOL bonded operator, Travelsmith Ltd. ABTA V1290. ATOL 1917. Telephone +44 (0)1621 784666 quoting the holiday offer number.

AMBITION^m

**Build on your accountancy skills
and achieve your career vision**

If you have the drive and ambition to become a Chartered Management Accountant the CIMA Professional Qualification will ensure you develop a truly successful, interesting and diverse career.

Successfully completing the Open University Certificate in Accounting will allow direct entry to the CIMA Professional Qualification.

CIMA has been voted the 'Best Student Body' by readers of Pass magazine 2004.

To find out how CIMA can power your career, go to www.cimaglobal.com/ou or call +44 (0) 20 8849 2251.

CIMA



Scan Text & Pictures. Anywhere!



Slide DocuPen down the page. It scans diagrams, pictures & stores 100 A4 pages of text. Anywhere!

Run C-Pen, Wizcom Pen or IRIS pen scanners, line by line, over text in a book. Transfer the text directly to a document for immediate editing. Or store up to 1500 A4 pages in a scanner pen, then later transfer the text to a PC for editing.

DataMind
.co.uk
Innovative Data Storage & Transfer

Save Time with mobile Scanners!

When you are studying, researching or at work use scanner pens to capture and edit important text. Anywhere!

If you use office based, scan books, without spine shadows, with Plustek OpticBook 3600 - £179

C-Pen scans to the cursor point

C-Pen: 20 £85, 600c £170, 800c £230
DocuPen: £150, Wizcom Pen Elite £130,
Reading Pen £180, IRIS Pen £150.

www.DataMind.co.uk
email: sales@datamind.co.uk
tel: 0870 770 0848



Freelance Research Interviewers

NatCen, the largest independent social research organisation in Britain, is looking to recruit Freelance Interviewers to assist with research amongst members of the public on social and public policy issues.

After comprehensive training you will visit pre-selected addresses and will interview people in their homes, recording their answers onto a laptop computer.

We offer:
Competitive pay rates; flexible work assignments; paid training and travelling expenses.

You need:
To be a strong communicator who enjoys meeting new people. Interviewing requires your availability for a minimum of 20 hours a week (including some weekends and evenings). You will also need to have access to a car and landline telephone.

In addition to the above - if you are fluent in English and can read and speak either Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali/Sylheti or Welsh we would also recommend your application.

For an information pack and application form please contact us on 01277 214438 (office hours only).

Email: fieldrecruitment@natcen.ac.uk.
Short listed applicants will be interviewed locally.

Reg Charity No: 1091768
www.natcen.ac.uk



SOCIETIES & CLUBS



Could you be one of our Group Travel Organisers?

If you belong to a club, association or special interest group and are a proactive member of the group with an interest in travel, why not consider taking on the role of Group Travel Organiser? We arrange quality group travel for groups of 40 or more offering a range of short break itineraries to Europe. What's in it for you? With a group of 42 both the Organiser and their guest travel free and with bookings of 80 or more we offer an excellent reward scheme. Contact us for your Group Organiser Starter Pack.

0871 222 5747 sales@ecttravel.com
www.ecttravel.com

London Region Arts Club

Serving Students of the Open University

MID YEAR DAY SCHOOL, 2006

Saturday 20th May, 10am to 4pm at Waterloo Centre
Kings College Annex, 150 Stamford Street, SE1

Seminars led by OU tutors for the following courses:
A103 A207 A210 A211 A214 A215 A216 A217 A218 A219 A220 A221 A296
A297 A300 A354 A424 AA300 AA302 AA305 AA306 AA307 AA309 AA310
AA312 AA314 AA316 AA318 AS208 U210

COST: LRAC Members £20, Non-Members £25
(After 23 April: Members £25, Non-Members £35)

Apply to Val Pretlove (LRAC-S): 10 Brunswick Hill,
READING, Berks. RG1 7YT Tel:0118 950 5457

Please indicate course number, cheque payable to 'LRAC' and SAE.
Pre booking is ESSENTIAL
We reserve the right to cancel courses if we have insufficient bookings

STUDY WEEKENDS 2006

At St Mary's University College, Twickenham

4th August – 6th August:
A215
Bookings to: Doug Hawkins,
15 Lake Avenue, Billericay, Essex CM12 0AJ Tel: 01277 624929

11th August – 13th August:
A207 A210 A217 A218 A220 A300 AA310 A354
Bookings to Jenny Mayo,
15 Pennyfields, Brentwood, Essex CM14 5JP Tel: 01277 218459

18th August – 20th August:
A216 A219 A297 AA302 AA305 AA309 AA314 AA316
Bookings to Jill Grant,
38 Fitzjames Avenue, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 5DD Tel: 020 8655 1041

COST: Standard Accommodation £150, En Suite £180
(+£10 temporary membership for non-members of LRAC)
For: tuition, full board and accommodation from 5pm Friday to 4pm
Sunday

Send £25 deposit (£10 non-refundable) to addresses above.
Please make Cheques payable to 'LRAC' and enclose SAE.
Specify course, dates and accommodation required.
Booking closes 25th July

Visit our website: **lrac.co.uk** for further details

OU Law Society

For all students with an interest in law. Annual membership includes quarterly magazine with academic articles, legal news, course & career info & info on OULS events including court visits & mootings.

To join send CHQ/PO for £8 (UK) £10 (O'seas) payable to OULS, c/o K Dunlop, 42C Clouden Road, Cumbermauld, G67 2EW.

For more information visit <http://oulawsoc.spymac.com>

Open University Development & Environment Society

*Revision Weekend
for U213, U216 and DU 310
8th-10th September 2006*

*University of Greenwich,
Medway Campus*

*Enquiries to:
Janet Sharp, OUDES
16 Tappan Drive, St Mary's Island,
Chatham, Kent ME4 3SY
Tel: Day 01474 333366
Evening 01634 891007
Email: Janetsharpy@yahoo.co.uk*



OU Geological Society

Supports all Earth Science Courses

Field trips, lectures & revision days run from 18 branches throughout the UK & Europe

Also, regular newsletters
Annual Symposium and Journal

Subscription £18p.a. details from
Membership@ougs.org
or phone 01913 865973
Society details: www.ougs.org

Let's Get Physical!

*Join FUSION – The OU
Physics Society*

Stay fit with the Fusion Newsletter and attend events across the UK.
Open to all.

*Annual membership just £7 (or
£18 including Institute of Physics).
01273 505550*

membership@oufusion.org
www.oufusion.org

OU PS

The Open University Psychological Society

ED209, DSE212, SD226, D317, DD303

What can OUPS offer you?

Overview Days April/May (for selected courses)
London University, Birkbeck College/St. Mary's College,
Basingstoke

Further details see www.oups.org.uk

13th May 2006 Event Day Forensic Psychology London
A full day of seminars from various experts incl. Paul Britton!
23rd–25th June 2006 Nottingham University
Four full weekend programmes are offered – three summer schools and a conference running in parallel:

❖ *D317, SD226 and ED209 Mini-Summer Schools*
Don't miss out on the Summer School experience this year.
Top tutors will help to bring the course together for you in these popular summer school weekends.

❖ *Conference on the Eye Witness Testimony*
A wide variety of speakers covering a wide spectrum of issues associated with the key issues of Eye Witness Testimony.

For more details/to book contact
Irene Baumgartl, PO Box 404, Bromley, BR1 2WW
email – info@oups.org.uk Tel: 0208 315 0049
or see www.oups.org.uk
Charity Registration 282744



OU Travel and Study Society

Alix Mackay, 64 Buckingham Rd,
Brighton BN1 3RQ
Eve Tel: 01273 775077

STUDY WEEKENDS
B823 7-9 Apr Brighton
AA318 24/26 Mar London
A216 May London
AA316 July Brighton
Plus, Sept Brighton w/ends for ANY course!

STUDY TOURS
A354 AA309 AA318 A216 A219 AA305
ALL OU tutors: send for full programme, SAE appreciated!

ALSO, STUDY TOURS
for general interest: students, grads, staff... only £1 to join!!!
Cheque to OUTS Society.

SMALL ADS

Computer Software

Students and others to whom the University distributes computer software as part of their course materials are reminded that the University only confers upon the original recipient of the computer software a NON-TRANSFERABLE licence to use it in conjunction with the University's materials. The licence specifically states that the original recipient of the computer software MUST NOT in any way transfer the computer software package(s) or the use thereof to any other person or body by means of sale, loan, sub-licence, lease or any other method. Any unauthorised use, copying, distribution or adaptation of computer software package(s) issued by the University is an infringement of intellectual property rights and is illegal.

Care should be taken when replying to small ads. Readers should be aware that no vetting or screening is carried out on the persons who place these ads.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Publication of any advertisement or loose insert in **sesame** should not be taken to imply University approval or recognition of the goods or services offered. In particular courses advertised by other institutions relating to Open University courses are not in any sense part of those courses: nor, in the Univerity's opinion, is attendance at any privately arranged course necessary for the successful completion of Open University studies.

Personal

The World in your Mailbox!

Are you looking for pen friends?
Please write to:
International Pen Friends
12 Hillmead
Crawley/West Sussex
RH11 8RR/UK
www.ipfuk.com

Holidays

Americas

ORLANDO. Three bedroom, 2-bathroom villa with private screened pool, Disney 15 minutes and Sea World 20 minutes away. Just £325 to £375 per week. Tel: 01278 683 300. Email: richard.gcg@lineone.net

Europe

ALPUJARRAS, ANDALUCIA: Beautiful, spacious village house, stunning panoramic views from roof terrace. Ideal for walkers/study leave. Email: casadelasollas@tiscali.co.uk Website: <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/casadelasollas>

BRITTANY, PONTAVEN: Well-appointed 2-bedroom apartments in charming historic town; an important destination for art lovers. River walks and beautiful beaches. Email: micheal-joseph.lunnon@wanadoo.fr Tel: 0033 298 091 508.

CYPRUS – PAPHOS – KISSONERGA: New 3-bed, 2-bath apartment, pool, SAT TV, all mod cons. Sea views. Sunsets. Email: paphoshols@hotmail.co.uk

CYPRUS, PAPHOS: New 2-bedroom apartment, 20-metre pool, gardens, SAT TV, all mod cons. Walking distance to amenities. Email: paphoshols@hotmail.co.uk

DORDOGNE: 2-bed cottage, sleeps 5 plus infant, all mod cons. Large garden, heated pool. Peaceful, beautiful countryside, ideal for relaxing, sightseeing, walking and cycling. Activities, restaurants nearby. From 320 euros per week all in. Tel: 0033 553 520 497. Email: john.chell@libertysurf.fr

DORDOGNE: Renovated 18th century Perigordia farmhouse with self-contained annexe. Sleeps up to 10, private pool, gated garden, comfortable and well-equipped, situated in National Park. For availability special deals and prices Tel: 01730 821 866. Email: davidjwalsh2005@yahoo.co.uk Website: www.dordogne-holiday-cottage.co.uk

GALICIA, SPAIN: Farmhouse/organic smallholding. Portugal 5 minutes, Santiago/Porto 1.5 hours. House sleeps 6, garden and pool. Farm produce. Tel: 01948 840 632. Website: www.casavella.co.uk

ITALY, UMBRIA: close to Lake Trasimeno: Well-equipped country house, sleeps 4/5; ideal for touring Sienna, Florence and Assisi. Tel: 01223 891 919.

LANZAROTE, Costa Teguisse: New 2-bedroom, 1-bath apartment on gated development. Tel Chris or Karen on 01625 431 373. Mobile: 07881 614045. Website: www.lanzarotesun.net

LUNIGIANA (northern Tuscany): Beautiful house, own pool, spectacular mountain views. For pictures and full details visit: www.villatoscana.org

NORTHERN PROVENCE: Spacious family house in rural Drome –

Srpng 2006 SESAME 229 45

sleeps 6 to 8. Swimming, canoeing, walking and language tuition. Tel: 01728 830 719. Email: francinem13@yahoo.fr

PERPIGNAN/CARCASSONNE areas: Choice of 4 self-catering holiday homes, 1 with private pool. Sleep 6, 7, 10, or 16. Easy access to Mediterranean. Excellent comfort and equipment. Tel/fax: 0141 423 5760. Email: cdjay@btinternet.com Website: www.southofffrancegites.co.uk

SHORT BREAKS TO EUROPE for groups – could you be a group travel organiser? Look under Societies & Clubs for more information. Website: www.ecttravel.com

SOUTH LOIRE/POITOU: In the heart of beautiful medieval village with river, cliffs, castle ruins etc. Officially 'Un des plus beaux villages de France'. House fully equipped. Four double bedrooms. Three bathrooms. Sleeps 8/9. Small garden/patio. Ideal for walking, cycling, boating. Futuroscope. Brenne. Available for rental July/August. £400 per week. Also in same village B&B all year in 15th century house with pool. Tel: 00 353 49 48 86 80. Email: jnlanders@hotmail.com Website: www.saintcroix.com

THE REAL SPAIN: Gorgeous Andalucian mountain cottage(s) 10km from coast, £140 per week or £220 per week for two houses. Fly to Almeria, Granada or Malaga. Email: kate.danziger@care4free.net Tel: 020 7733 5006. Website: www.casacatalina.co.uk

TUSCANY, Bagni Di Lucca: Detached villa with pool and excellent views. Conveniently located to visit Florence, Siena, Pisa Lucca coast. Four bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, sleeps 8. Tel: 01908 282 240. Mobile: 07836 316 509.

TUTOR'S VILLAGE HOUSE near Aubigny-sur-Nère, central France. £195 per week inclusive. Château, wine region. Two and a half hours to Paris. Sleeps 4 plus children. Tel: +33 248 588 260. Email: wnwindy@aol.com or write: Windy, 16 Grande Rue, 18380 Ivoy-le-Pré, France.

TWO-BEDROOM FLAT to rent in Luxor, Egypt for £150 per week. Near Nile, Luxor and Karnak Temples, Valley of Kings. Optional tour guide available £40 per week. Belly dancing and photography holidays organised. Website: www.everythingegyptian.co.uk

UMBRIA – TUSCANY: Holiday flat on organic farm near lake Trasimeno, Florence, Sienna, Assisi; £60 per person, per week. W Hain, Birket Str no. 2, 89312, Gunzburg, Germany. Tel: 0049 822 1368 522.

UNSPOILT LA GOMERA: One-bed seaside apartment. Pool, private terraces, near beach. Tel: 020 8677 6212. Email: valley1@onetel.com

VARYKINO: Beautiful four-bedroomed, half-timbered detached house, deep in the Normandy countryside, but within easy reach of coast, Paris, Bayeux etc. Sleeps 8. From £175 + electricity. Available throughout

10x faster Internet for just £24.99 a YEAR

Why suffer with a slow Internet connection?
You need ONSPEED.

www.onspeed.com

UNIVERSITY students rely on the Internet more than ever these days. A painfully slow connection can hold back your research and mean you spend more time waiting for web pages and emails to load than you do actually writing assignments. ONSPEED is a simple, inexpensive and reliable solution to a slow Internet connection and thousands of cash strapped students are already feeling the benefits of ONSPEED.

"An amazing piece of software"
PC Answers

ONSPEED is a quick and easy software download that significantly increases the speed of your existing Internet connection – Dial-up increased by 10 times and Broadband by 5 times. There's no need to upgrade your hardware or do anything to your phone line, and no need to change your existing Internet Provider.

The ONSPEED service uses superior compression technology developed by the US military and NASA to help data travel faster – so your web pages and emails come through in a fraction of the time. In a test by Internet Advisor magazine, ONSPEED increased a standard Dial-up connection from 30kb per second to around the 300kb per second level – well into Broadband territory for a fraction of the cost and none of the hassle. If you already have Broadband,

you can use ONSPEED to get a significant speed boost, up to 5 times the speed of your current connection.

"Once you've used ONSPEED you won't want to surf the Net without it"
Internet & Broadband Advisor

At just **£24.99 a year**, ONSPEED won't break the bank, and if you compare it to around £200 a year for a Broadband contract, it's an essential purchase for Dial-up users. You won't be tied into a contract and there is no set-up charge because ONSPEED doesn't require any extra hardware and you can set it up yourself without any expert computer knowledge. Just in case, you can call the ONSPEED technical support centre on a standard rate number for assistance 7 days a week.

★★★★★

ONSPEED is available to purchase securely and download from:

www.onspeed.com

It takes just two minutes to install from start to finish and is covered by a 14-day money back guarantee. So join over 500,000 happy ONSPEED customers today.

