

Sesame

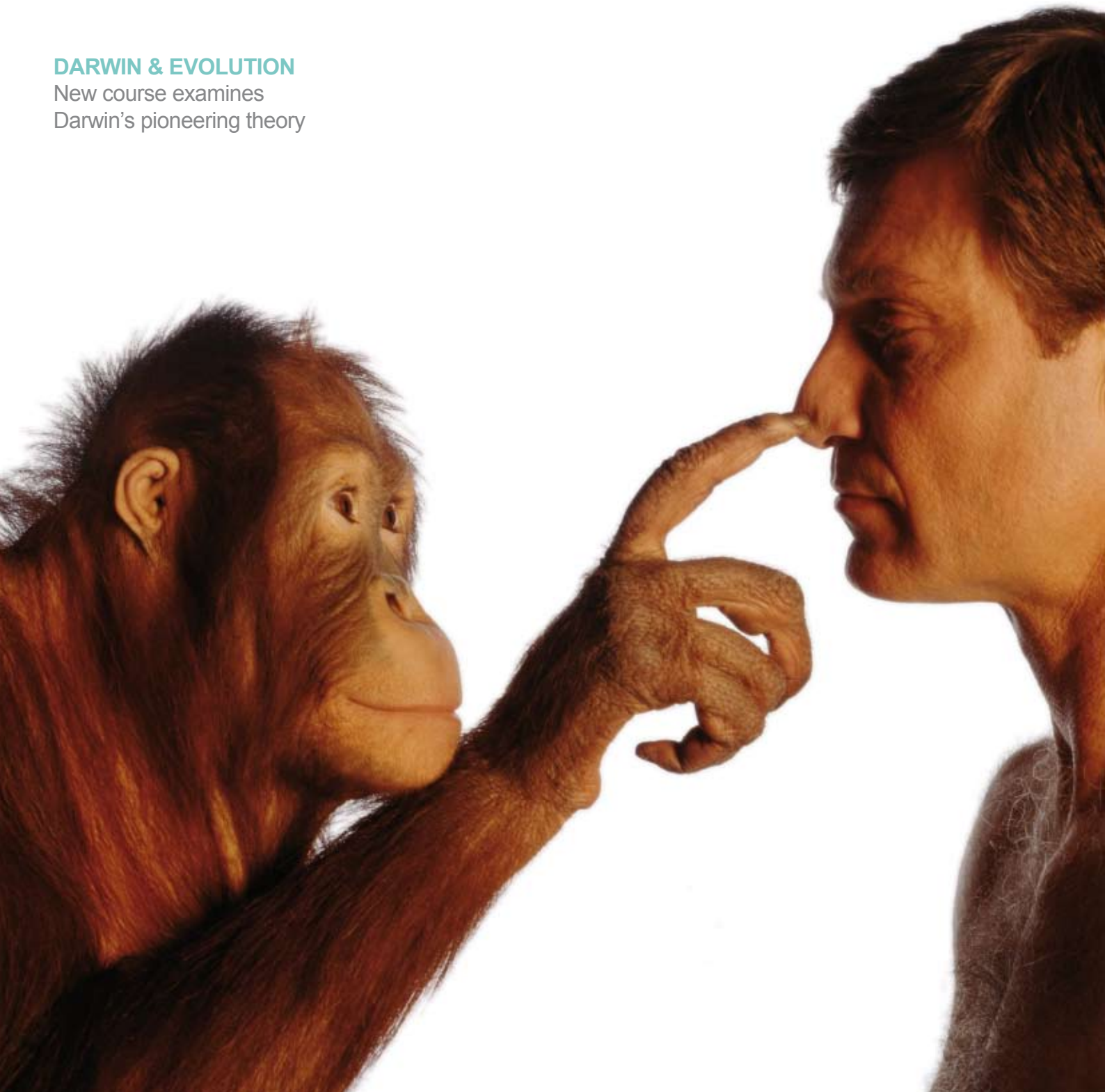


The Open University

Autumn 2008 Issue 238

DARWIN & EVOLUTION

New course examines
Darwin's pioneering theory



A JOB WELL DONE

Celebrating this year's
graduating students

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The expert view on why
food tastes of politics

OU GOES WEB 2.0

Introducing the OU's
new virtual campus...

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Welcome



IN THE PREVIOUS edition of *Sesame*, we told you that a brand-new website will be launching. We're excited to announce that Platform, the new online social media presence for OU alumni, students, staff and more, has launched – visit www.open.ac.uk/platform now!

Platform will deliver up-to-the-minute news from the OU, as well as expert OU commentary on national and international news. There will

also be features, interviews and more, delivered as articles as well as videos and podcasts from our team of journalists. But it won't just be content from us – we will also be giving you the opportunity to shape Platform by contributing articles, blogs, comments and more via a variety of methods. So this isn't just our 'platform' to inform, discuss, educate and rant, it's your 'platform' too. Turn to pages 10 and 11 of this issue to discover more.

As part of our campaign to improve communication while lowering our environmental impact, we're offering exciting new web and e-mail services. So if the OU doesn't have your preferred email address yet, please let us know so that you can benefit from these. However you receive your news from the OU we want to keep in touch and to hear from you. There are many more services and offers that we can bring to you.

More great news: the brand-new OU Life Screensaver has now officially launched, too. If you haven't downloaded it already, do so by going to www.open.ac.uk/oulifescransaver.

Enjoy this issue of *Sesame* and if you have any views or comments, log on to Platform to share your views. Alumni can also email their comments to alumni@open.ac.uk.

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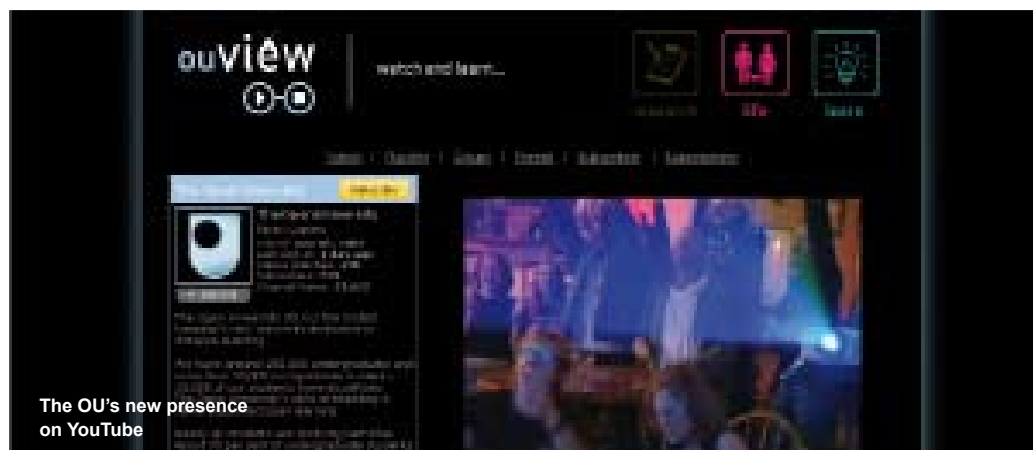
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Update

All the latest news from The Open University



Web

OU extends online vision

The University makes the most of social web

● 2008 HAS BEEN an exciting year for the OU's online aspirations. Not only has the University launched Platform, a brand new web community for students, alumni and more (see pages 10 to 11 for more details) but it has also announced several new online initiatives.

The University has enhanced its presence on YouTube, the online video sharing phenomenon, with the launch of its OUView channel. The new channel features over 300 videos, with educational content in the OULearn section and, in the OULife section, videos from students, alumni and staff.

It was also announced that the OU has partnered with Apple to offer people free downloads of OU course materials and lectures. This means you can listen to or watch OU podcasts

and videos on-the-go. More information can be found by visiting www.open.ac.uk/itunes

The University also launched a 'Fact of the Day' gadget with web giant Google with a link that lets people study a free OpenLearn course. To add the gadget, add iGoogle homepage (visit www.google.com/ig) then click 'Add Stuff' and search for 'Open University'.

Ian Roddis, Head of Online Services at the OU, said: "The social web is changing the way people interact and learn online. We've always used technology to help our community connect, but now they are able to make their own connections. There are a number of projects coming up this year which will take the best of the social web and make it relevant to people's lives at the OU."

Course connection Online networks

● Want to discover more about how online networked systems work? *Networked living: exploring information and communication technologies* (T175) explores questions such as: how can an email message find its way to the other side of the world in seconds? How can you browse the web while you are out-and-about? This course looks inside these technologies, explores how they work in a range of situations (including entertainment, transport and health) and considers where they might take us next.

Call +44 (0)845 300 6090 or visit www.open.ac.uk/courses for more information. Quote Sesame in any correspondence.

OU in the North

Northern lights

The OU in the North moves offices

● THE OU IN the North is moving to new offices in October from its current offices in Gosforth to the Baltic Business Quarter in Gateshead (pictured). The new premises will support over 5,500 students from across the north east and Cumbria and a further 5,500 students in continental Europe.

To celebrate the move and as part of the OU's 40th Anniversary in 2009, a mini-exhibition is planned of photographs, memorabilia and memories. David Knight, Regional Director of The Open University in the North said: "While looking ahead to the future, we would like to take this unique opportunity to celebrate our past and would like anybody who has worked or studied with us to get in touch and tell us their stories."

If you have any material, photographs or memories of the OU in the North from any time from 1971 to today, please contact Lizzie Roberts on +44 (0) 191 284 1611 or by email to e.roberts@open.ac.uk



OU Business School Alumni Association

OU Business School awards

OU Business School celebrates its people's achievements

● EACH YEAR, THE OU Business School celebrates the exceptional achievements of its students, graduates and tutors at a prestigious awards ceremony. This year's Awards and Alumni Dinner took place on 13 June on board the *Silver Sturgeon* on the river Thames.

Professor James Fleck, Dean of the OU Business School, hosted the event, which saw prizes awarded in the following categories: MBA Student of the Year – UK (Robert Parker); International MBA Student of the Year (Anna Ozeretskaya); MBA Student of the Year – Germany (Stefan Walke); Diploma in Management student of the

Year (Marc Hoche); Derek Pugh Award, Certificate in Management Student of the Year (Catherine Finney); Sally Aisbitt Award, Certificate in Accounting Student of the Year (Karen Little); BA in Business Studies Student of the Year

(Caroline Cable); Alumnus of the Year (Bart Knols); OU Business School Tutor of the Year (Loykie Lomine).

To read a short profile and comments from winners, visit the alumni website www.open.ac.uk/oubs-alumni



Some of the winners with James Fleck, Sir Emyr Jones Parry and sponsors

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Nursing success

OU's Faculty of Health & Social Care news

● ALMOST ALL OF the OU's first diplomats of Nursing in Northern Ireland have gone straight into employment as registered nurses. The students, who graduated at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast on Saturday 17 May, each gained either a DipHE (Adult Nursing) or DipHE (Mental Health Nursing).

One, Jackie Moore, an OU student nurse at Belfast City Hospital, has won the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Student Nurse of the Year 2008. Jackie was a nursing auxiliary for 14 years and a healthcare assistant (HCA) before embarking on the OU's Pre-Registration Nursing Programme.

The OU and UNISON recently co-hosted an event to celebrate several successful health and social care partnership activities in Northern Ireland, north east England and the north west, and to identify future activities. Professor Shirley Reveley,



Jackie Moore is pictured (centre)

Dean of the Faculty of Health & Social Care, was also a keynote speaker at the UNISON conference for healthcare assistants in June.

The OU and UNISON share a commitment to promote lifelong learning, skills pathways and workforce development together with a commitment to promote equality and challenge discrimination in the workplace. A new steering group has been set up to support the growing programme of work that the partnership is producing.

Computing

Get writing!

Chance to get published

● THE DEPARTMENT OF Computing is looking for 100 students and alumni to write a book. Each student will be asked to write around 2,000 words covering how the programming language Java can be used for computer art and graphics. Students will be asked to write it over a three month period between November 2008 and April 2009 as well as develop a computer program to accompany text.

The offer is open to any student who has completed an OU undergraduate or postgraduate course that teaches or uses Java or any student that has Java programming experience.

The book will then be assembled by OU academics and edited. Students interested in contributing to this project and are interested in a painless introduction to authorship should email MCT-Mass-Writing@open.ac.uk for further details.

Just In...

ELQ update

For the latest updates on the OU's plans for responding to the Government's decision to cut ELQ funding, make sure you regularly log onto www.open.ac.uk/platform

New dictionary launched

Professor Andrew Porteous's new edition of the *Dictionary of Environmental Science & Technology* was launched in June. Professor Porteous joined The Open University in 1970 to establish its Environmental Engineering programme, and has devoted the last six years to rewriting and updating the book previously published in 1991.

OU postgraduate student receives award

OU student Claire McGuire has been acclaimed by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland. She was awarded a certificate and a cheque for £1,000 for being the best OU Postgraduate Certificate in Education student in Northern Ireland (among those completing in 2006/7). She received the award at the degree ceremony in Belfast.

New forum for disabled

A new forum has been created on the FirstClass main signpost called the Disabled Students Group Updates. The OUSA Disabled Students Group is open to all disabled students, and provides mutual support within closed online forums. You can join by writing to OUSA Controller on the FirstClass Conferencing system or by visiting <http://ousa-dsg.open.ac.uk>

New financial support deals

A helping hand

New deals in the academic year 2008/9 are offering even more support – particularly for students in Scotland and Wales

● THE GOVERNMENT'S Individual Learning Account (ILA) Scotland scheme has been expanded to give a boost to eligible students who are studying 60 points or more. A new ILA learner account gives these students up to £500 towards their course fee. And eligible students who are studying less than 60 points can still claim up to £200 under the existing ILA scheme. You can apply for an ILA if you are earning £18,000 a year or less, or on certain benefits. Unlike some other schemes, incomes of other members of your household aren't considered.

OU Student Services manager Kate Main said the new £500 ILA is an "excellent development" for OU students. She said: "If you meet the eligibility criteria, it can be a big help with course fees. Some OU students could be studying for as little as £5 a week."

"For students on very low income or benefits, the part-time fee waiver scheme is still available," she added.

For advice on financial support for study with the OU in Scotland ring 0131 226 3851 or go to www.open.ac.uk/finaancialsupport and click on Scotland. To apply for the ILA schemes, contact ILA Scotland on 0808 1001090, or go to www.ilascotland.org.uk

Students in Wales who already receive financial support may be eligible for one of three new allowances or grants. The new Parents' Learning Allowance, Adult Dependant's Grant and Childcare Grant are non-repayable. If you've already applied to the OU for financial support this year, you don't need to do anything – your

eligibility for these new benefits will be assessed as part of your financial support application.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the first time there's financial support for new students on low incomes studying the OU's Openings courses. For people with no previous experience of higher education, it is available on top of the existing support for those receiving certain state benefits. In addition, each year the OU Supporters' Fund supports over 1,000 students studying Openings courses.

The government already provides financial support for students in England, Northern Ireland and Wales doing 30 points or more at undergraduate level, as long as they don't already have a degree. You can qualify even if you are working and have a household income as high as £30,000 (more if you have dependants).

There is much more limited support available for OU students outside the UK in the Republic of Ireland and continental Europe. And

students with a disability, medical condition or specific learning difficulties may be able to get help with extra study costs regardless of income.

Fees & Financial Support assistant manager Amy Wilkins told *Sesame*:

"Financial support is not just for students on the very lowest household incomes. We know that not all eligible students apply, although the situation is improving. It may be because they think, wrongly, they will have to repay, or because they think they can't be eligible because they're not on benefit."

"Every year, the financial support packages are subject to change, so even if you have applied for financial support before and not qualified, it's always worth checking out what you could be entitled to."

To find out more about financial support for OU courses visit www.open.ac.uk/finaancialsupport. To find out more about the OU Supporters' Fund visit www.open.ac.uk/fundraising



Insight OUSBA Update

If you pay your course fees via OUSBA (OU Student Budget Account), don't forget that you now have to fill in new OUSBA paperwork each time you start a new course. OUSBA, the OU's "register now, pay later" credit service, is concerned that some students may still be unaware of the important administrative changes it has recently introduced to comply with the latest Consumer Credit Act.

In the past students have been able to set up a single OUSBA agreement and direct debit at the beginning of their OU study and use it to pay for all their subsequent courses.

But now each individual course that you pay for via OUSBA is treated as a separate loan, and you have to take out a new OUSBA agreement and make a new direct debit instruction each time you start paying for a new course. This applies to all courses which started from March 2008.

Students are sent OUSBA forms along with the paperwork they receive when they register for a new course. If you only want to charge part of your course fees to OUSBA, phone +44 (0) 845 300 6090 to receive a new OUSBA agreement for the revised amount.

The changes won't affect the course payment service that OUSBA offers. Opening an OUSBA account allows you to defer payment of an OU course you have registered on until it starts, and then you can choose between paying off the amount in full, or paying in monthly instalments with interest. For more details of OUSBA and the recent administrative changes go to www.open.ac.uk/ousba

James May interview

Sky's the limit

Top Gear presenter James May explores flying cars, petrol made from air and other Big Ideas in a new OU series for the BBC, *James May's Big Ideas*

● HOW DID *James May's Big Ideas* come about?

I suggested to the BBC it would be interesting to do a programme on energy. They thought that was a bit too specific, so they suggested we pick three subjects and make three programmes. The subjects are energy, the future of personal transport, and the BBC came up with robotics.

Tell us more about energy...

Energy is fascinating because it is at the core of what has civilised human beings. I think all this business about saving energy is a bit misguided, because it's a pretty clear theme running through history that bits of the world prospered when they had energy, and the more they prospered the greater their energy consumption had to be. The world is full of energy but we've only managed to tap into a tiny amount of it. It's a very complicated subject and we've only just given a sniff of it in the programme. But there are some fascinating things. For instance, we went to see some rather

bonkers scientists in Albuquerque – they hope that if they can concentrate the sun in a very small area, they can extract water vapour from the air and turn it into a hydrocarbon fuel.

What's your scientific background?

I'm interested in technical ideas, especially new ideas, new machines and the

you realise the subject is worthy of a bit more investigation.

So are we supposed to take the ideas in the programmes seriously? Can a car fly?

Flying cars are an idea that has been around for 100 years. I do believe one day we will move around in the sky. There is this vast space above our heads. What we need to do is to find an easy and safe way to

wind and solar power, but it's not alternative energy, it's just energy and we need to find ways to tap it, and when we do, we will have more energy than we can ever imagine. It will be a great day when that happens.

Robotics is also a subject you explore...

Robotics is more of a problem. One of the robotics scientists I talked to said robotics is a perfect way to learn about the human body – the more they try to make robots work, the more they realise how complicated the human machine is. It is so refined and sophisticated we can't replicate the means of controlling it with algorithms and computer programs. Robots and computers, at the moment, are very good at doing the things we don't do so well, like making calculations very quickly, but they're useless at the things we do brilliantly, like playing football, playing the piano – even turning our heads. We need a new dawn in computer intelligence, a 'machine instinct' and no one knows how it will happen.

Are you on a mission to popularise science?

I've always quite liked the idea of doing programmes about popular science. I've always been a fiddler with mechanical things, I like to understand the way they work, the principles behind them, and I like to think I'm quite good at putting these across to the casual audience – although things like robotics and energy are quite complicated to put across.

James May's Big Ideas, academically advised by OU academic Tony Dixon, will be shown on BBC TWO this autumn. Check listings for details.

“I do believe that one day we will move around in the sky”

principles and philosophy behind them. I actually trained as a musician. I have an amateur dilettante interest in physics, I'm not very good at chemistry and not good with electricity. I'd like to understand more about it.

Is the series 'educational'?

We hope it's educational, but it's not like a course module. The subjects are very big and treated in a very broad way – you can't do something in enormous depth in an hour. The idea is to inspire you and make

move around it, and we have not done it yet. We don't know exactly what kind of vehicle it will be – I don't think it will be a mini-Metro with a propeller.

We do have one flying car in the programme, from the 1950s, which does fly. The issue is how you control it in the air if you don't want to end up with a massive disaster – think how some people drive on the ground! With energy, I think we will eventually change our attitude to what it is. 'Alternative energy' is applied to things like



TV feature

The price of old age

A new documentary offers an insight into what it's like to grow old in the UK

● A GATED COMMUNITY set in green fields offers all the facilities of a cruise ship – restaurant, shop, bar, gym, swimming pool, jacuzzi, computer suite, hobby room – all under one roof. Welcome to Lovat Fields Retirement Village in Milton Keynes, one of dozens of so-called 'extra care' housing schemes for the over-55s that are springing up around the country.

A new six-part OU/BBC documentary series offers a vision of what life may be like for many of us as we grow old in the UK. Its researchers spent months getting to know the 300

are involved in researching identity and environment in later life. The rise of extra care housing is partly due to the concept of 'active ageing', says Sheila, with people viewing retirement as an opportunity to move to a more pleasant environment and enjoy activities which they may not have had time for in their working lives.

But it has also been spurred on partly by the negative image of traditional residential care homes. "That whole sector of provision evolved from the Victorian workhouse and although residential homes

"In focus groups, people are saying extra care is a great idea"

residents of Lovat Fields.

It's a timely topic. Extra care has been a familiar concept in the USA and Europe for years, but has only recently been seen by the UK government as a solution to an ageing population and the rising costs of care. It has just announced an extra £80 million funding to support the creation of extra care housing in England, including £3.5 million for a second development in Milton Keynes. Since 2004 the Department of Health has approved funding for 86 extra care housing schemes in England.

Academic advisors to the series are Sheila Peace, Professor of Gerontology, and Dr Caroline Holland, both from The Open University's Faculty of Health and Social Care, who

have moved on, they have had a bad press," Sheila says. "The Department of Health and the Housing Corporation have been looking at what happens in America and Europe and thought 'there is a better way'."

There is also a homegrown precursor to the extra care movement in 'sheltered' and 'very sheltered' housing schemes that have developed from the 1960s onwards. These schemes generally catered for older people who needed some support but not the more intensive care provided by these residential homes. Extra care is supposed to cater for both. People entering extra care schemes buy different levels of 'care package' according to their needs. If their care needs



change, they simply upgrade – or downgrade – their package. "If you are living in extra care and you break your hip, you can upgrade your level of care, and then step it down again as you get better," says Caroline. By contrast, if an elderly person breaks their hip and has to go into a care home, the odds are they will remain there.

Extra care is also attractive to couples. And for widows and widowers who have been living isolated on anonymous housing estates, extra care can provide much-needed companionship and a new social life, she says. "At Lovat Fields there are loads of things to do: outings, games, quiz nights, arts and crafts, keep fit."

There is no doubt that extra care is popular – there's such a long waiting list to get into Lovat Fields that a second development is planned. Research by both academics also points in the same direction. "In focus groups, people are saying extra care is a great idea, they have more companionship, a better sense of security, and it's more convenient," says Sheila. "But there are a few unknowns, such as how well they will actually be able to cope with

people with severe dementia."

And there are many people who don't want to move as they grow older, but want to stay in their own homes as long as possible. How do we provide for them? Linked to the series, The Open University is carrying out an online survey to find out how much people know about the options and services available for caring for the elderly. To take part, go to www.open2.net/caresurvey. The series is due to be broadcast on BBC ONE in the autumn. Check listings.

Course connection Health and social care courses at the OU

The Open University has a range of Health and Social Care courses looking at issues surrounding ageing and care. They include:

K202 Care, welfare and community, K336 Exploring ageing and K337 Maximizing older people's potential.

Call + 44 (0)845 300 6090 or visit www.open.ac.uk/courses for more information. Quote Sesame in any correspondence.

Brand-new website

Platform... your virtual campus

Platform *n* 1 a raised floor or other horizontal surface, such as a stage for speakers 2 a raised area at a railway station, from which passengers have access to trains 3 the declared principles, aims of an organisation or individual 4 the thick-raised heel sole of some high-heeled shoes.

The OU's brand-new social media website, **Platform**, has launched and we want you to get involved. It's not only your chance to see and hear what's going on with all things OU-related, but to meet each other and us, to share your ideas and experiences and help drive Platform's future. Get on board by visiting www.open.ac.uk/platform

/ LATEST NEWS /

Web equals immediacy. We all know that when a news item breaks, it'll break on the internet first. It has always been a frustration that any news we publish is usually old news by the time we go to print. The **Platform** News section will bring you OU-related news as it happens as well as OU expert commentary on breaking national and

international news. Up-to-the-minute content will also include an online calendar of events and scheduled webchats. All this great news content will also link to relevant courses and related items such as interviews, features and more. More importantly, you'll have the option to comment on all the news we feature...

/ JOIN IN /

You OU students and alumni are a lively bunch! No, really, you are! So why would we want to waste that energy? One of the great things that has come out of the web is user-generated content. Blogs, videos, forums and more, giving everybody the chance to have their say. So **Platform** is going to do just what it says on the tin: give you

a platform. There are loads of ways you'll be able to do this: you can submit material online for publication; you can post in the forum; you can have your say in online polls, and you can add comments on, and rate, any of the articles we produce. And if you're a keen blogger, we may want to link to your online thoughts.

/ HAVE FUN /

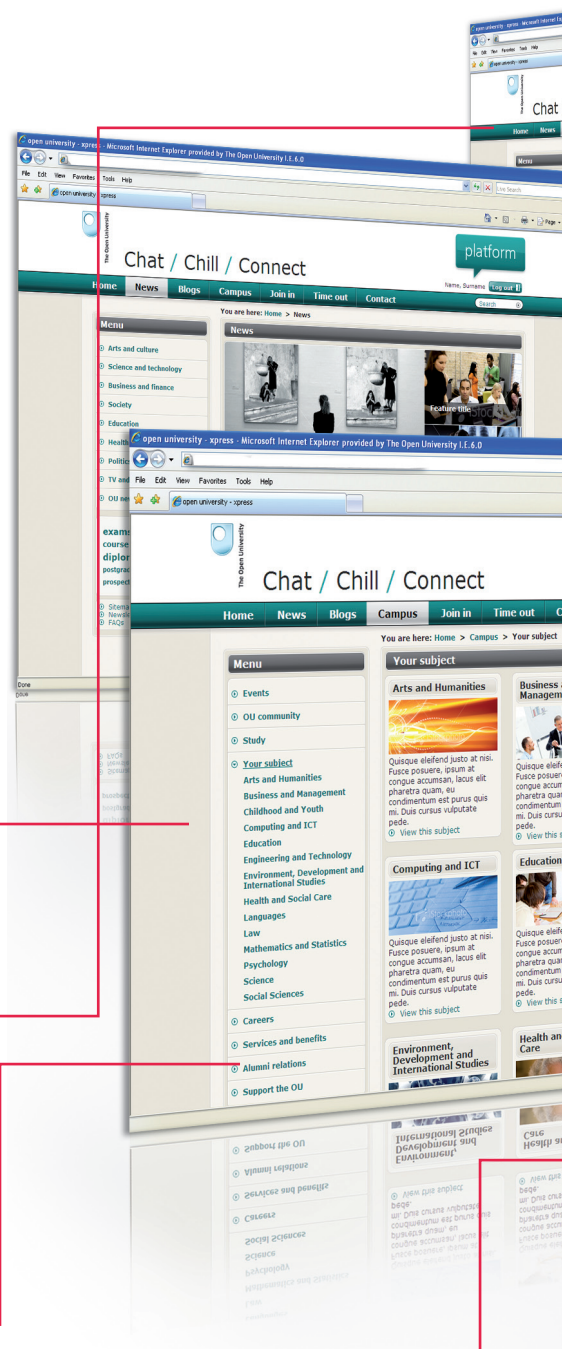
We know that there are times when you just want to relax and have a bit of fun, so we've created an area where you can do just that. The Time Out section has quizzes, competitions and interactive games to great special retail offers, such as those featured on p35 of this issue.

/ YOUR SUBJECT /

Last year, lots of you took part in reader research and told us you want to know more about what's happening in your subject areas. **Platform** gives you just that opportunity with areas dedicated to your subject with content ranging from faculty news to 60-second lectures.

/ SUPPORT THE OU /

We know you're active supporters of the OU and its social mission, so this section explores how you can get actively involved by volunteering, donating and lobbying. You'll also find out what a difference your donations have made to others and discover how you can carry on making a difference with your financial support.





/ MORE THAN WORDS /

Words are great, aren't they? But when you combine them with sounds and images... well, that's when they really come to life. So as well as written articles, on **Platform** you'll also get podcasts and videos, from formal news items to the rawer, and sometimes live, reports. All short, snappy and easy to digest in your busy day-to-day lives.

/ STUDY SUPPORT /

The Campus section of **Platform** is going to be a place where you can find all sorts of support, from study tips to useful links – all designed to make your everyday life and study that much easier. And remember, there'll be many other students and alumni on **Platform**, too, so peer support and that community feel is going to be a big bonus.

www.open.ac.uk/platform

We've got mail!

Please email your letters to sesame@open.ac.uk or post to Letters to the Editor, *Sesame*, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit letters. Letters will be permanently available to read online at www.open.ac.uk/platform. A £20 book token is awarded for the published star letter

Star letter

DON'T COMPARE GRADES

I work as a full time teacher whilst completing a degree in Psychology with The Open University. Teaching provides useful opportunities to listen to your own advice and learn from the mistakes made by students that you are teaching.

At the beginning of every academic year, Year 12 students (doing AS courses) enter lessons with a wonderful sense of optimism. They have finished their GCSE courses, have successes under their belt and for the first time are learning because they have chosen to stay in education. The point is they have fresh eyes, new ring binders and youthful curiosity.

Then after two weeks a change often takes place. Some of the students suddenly look burdened and their good intentions drain away. They have received their first essay back; they ignore the numerous comments in the margins and look straight for the grade. Before pondering how they feel about it, students can be heard whispering fervently around the room asking each other, 'What did you get?' I decided when I went to a summer school last year not to exchange grades with other OU students. I felt that grade comparisons with other students would only ruin the experience. This problem affects AS students: the burden of grade comparison wears them down.

My advice to anyone starting an OU degree is to adopt a policy of not exchanging course grades: don't ask others and don't offer your own, tempting though it might be. Remember why you chose to start the course in the first place; those reasons haven't changed because three other people, with wholly different career aspirations, have a different grade to you.

IAN MITCHELL

IPSWICH



ANTARCTIC FRAGILITY

Thank you for my first copy of *Sesame*. I am an OU graduate and much prefer this format to the previous issues for alumni only. I look forward to the next issue. I have been to Antarctica, so my eye was caught by the references to an article in the winter 2007 issue 'Our man in Antarctica'. I was lucky enough to go with a FIDS (Falkland Island Survey) reunion trip. FIDS is the forerunner of BAS (British Antarctic Survey). Ninety-six of us boarded an ice-breaker and were able to visit old bases not on the usual tourist route and were royally hosted by present-day BAS employees on working bases. The environmental impact of

tourism, strictly regulated, was felt to be justified if people went home with a heightened awareness of the fragility of the area and spread this information to others. We experienced terrible storms with two days at hurricane force and came home with a much greater respect for the people who work in Antarctica, and an incredible sense of how special it is.

PAM GOODING, TAUNTON

PRIME TIME STUDYING

I have been studying with the OU for more than three years now and have lost count of the people who have asked me whether I have to watch TV programmes at 4am! "Have you watched *Coast?*" I ask. Most people are surprised when they realise they have been watching an OU co-production!

I mention this only because I was really pleased to see that there was a new programme that started on BBC FOUR in June – *Fossil Detectives* – which fits very snugly into my

RESIST TEMPTATION

Your article about plagiarism in the Summer 2008 *Sesame* was very welcome. As a student member of the Central Disciplinary Committee, I see first-hand the attempts by students to gain advantage by copying other people's work.

What is probably not so well understood is the trouble that students who let their work be copied get into. It is not always possible to determine who has copied from whom, so students who naively lend their TMAs to fellow students may be required to fully explain their action to the committee, or may even have their TMAs failed for containing copied material. To protect oneself from a charge of plagiarism, students must keep their own TMAs confidential and only share them with their tutors. If your work is stolen or compromised you should let your tutor know immediately.

BERNIE DOESER, CORNWALL



ILLUSTRATIONS: BO CREATIVE

current course, *Geology* (S260). It made me realise how fantastic current OU programmes are. *Coast* is a prime example. It's great for budding geologists like me, but with human interest stories as well as history and smatterings of biology and several other 'ologies' (as the TV ad used to say!) It's prime time studying for sure!

ROSS WHARTON, FELTHAM



DEATH OF THE TUTORIAL?

Are the dwindling numbers attending tutorials significantly worrying, or not? As I reach my 50s, the old saying is so true: 'the more you know, the less you realise you know'. Tutorials are an opportunity to mix with other OU students, gain further insights into the course of choice, meet your tutor and gain from cross-pollination of ideas and knowledge. At a recent tutorial, I was the only attending student. Although the one-on-one experience was a

privilege, where was everyone else? To contain costs, perhaps the OU could schedule tutorials at major centres? They play a crucial role in our studies. Please don't do away with them.

DIANA HARRIS, LEDBURY

Tessa Holroyde, Head of Residential Schools and AL and Teaching Service, responds: I can understand how disappointing it must have been to be the only student at this tutorial – for the tutor too. Unfortunately this does sometimes happen – for a number of reasons.

Certainly the lower student numbers on higher level courses does mean that we can't afford to offer as much 'local' face-to-face tuition as we might like, although regions/nations make every possible effort to locate tutorials in accessible and convenient places. However, location of tutorials is only one of many reasons why students don't attend, and of course many courses are now offered completely online. I'm not sure that we should be 'worried' by student behaviour - it may just reflect changing student requirements.

We continue to keep our tutorial provision under review and aim to meet student needs as far as possible within financial constraints.

URGENT ACTION NEEDED

As a regular green blogger (vowlesthgreen.blogspot.com) I noted with keen interest the report that OU Professor Bob Spicer is of the view that scientists cannot accurately predict future climate changes ('Climate Changes', page 19, Sesame, Issue 237).

However, having read the full research paper given as a reference, I feel it would have been fairer to him and more factual to add that his findings suggest that we are currently underestimating future climate change. It would have been fairly easy for a reader to interpret 'cannot accurately predict future climate changes' as meaning that there is no climate change or that changes now documented by the IPCC are exaggerated.

This would be a negative message to send out when we need to be acting much more urgently to tackle our changing climate according to the best available scientific evidence.

GLENN VOWLES, BRISTOL

PASSING ON KNOWLEDGE

I finally completed my BA in Humanities with Art History in December 2006. This also coincided with my retirement, after 40 years, from full-time employment. Not knowing what I was going to do with all the 'leisure' time I had now acquired, I joined the University of The Third Age (U3A) in January 2007.

They are always looking for Study Group Leaders to run courses so I started to run a Study Group in Italian Art (1280–1550).

I now have a core of members who have become interested in a subject which they knew little about.

In April this year I joined our local U3A Executive Committee as Public Relations Officer. All of this as a result of studying for a degree with the OU.

So a big thank-you to the OU.

GWEN WRIGHT, HARROW

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

I have volunteered at a British Heart Foundation charity shop. I worked one morning a week on the till and it is very rewarding. Customers often like to chat and it is a great way to interact socially while raising money for vital heart research. I have also made good friends among the members of staff who make working there a pleasure.

They are always in need of volunteers so I would recommend volunteering to anyone of any age, especially those who need a break from study or paid work to do something completely different that is fun and of great worth to the charity or organisation concerned.

I love working there and aim to do more voluntary work in the future.

MAYA HORNICK, LONDON

NURSING SOME PRIDE

I am one of those folk who did a degree with the OU just for the fun(!) of it, to keep my mind going in my 50s.

Recently I was asked in an official capacity, as part of a medical review chat, what was the highest level of education I had reached. So, for the first time since my graduation in May 2007, I was able to inform the nurse, who started to say, "School exams...?" that I had a degree from The Open University. I did feel proud!

PAULINE BEARCOCK, PRESTON



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Spotlight on new evolution courses

OU celebrates Darwin

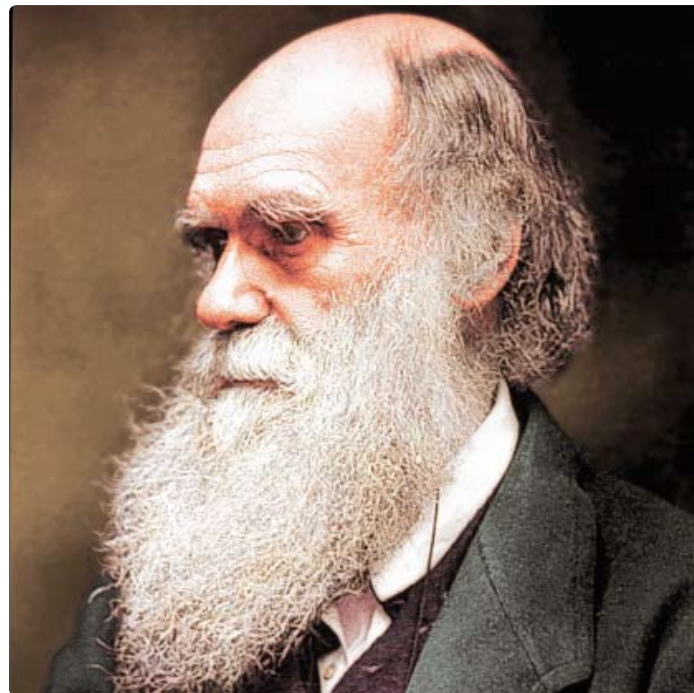
2009 marks the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Darwin, who sparked one of the greatest revolutions in the history of science. The OU is celebrating the works of Darwin in the best way it knows: through education. Darryl Khajepour reports.

● **ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES**, first published in 1859 by the English naturalist, Charles Robert Darwin, is one of the most influential scientific publications of all time.

Although there is evidence of the concept of evolution as far back as Classical Greek and Roman times, Darwin's theory proposed the more compelling argument of natural selection – 'survival of the fittest' in genetic terms – and was supported by profound new research.

In celebration of both the bicentenary of Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, The Open University is offering a new level 1, short course *Darwin & evolution* (S170). Starting in February 2009, it will form part of several existing courses that address the work and legacy of Charles Darwin, including *Evolution* (S366) and *Philosophy and the Human Situation* (A211).

Dr Peter Skelton, course leader of *Darwin & evolution* and chair of the honours-level



OU-authored book, 99% *Ape* – *How evolution adds up*, as the core material and foundations to the teaching, the course offers an explanation to modern evolutionary theory and a fascinating case history of the origin of humans and the way our minds work.

The book, which is edited

illustrate Darwin's methods, as well as web-based exercises and an online study guide.

The course also examines the flaws in 'intelligent design' – the contention that God is the creator behind the universe and all creatures.

"They will explore our own origins and the genealogy of all living things," commented Jonathan, "and also study some of the key turning points in evolutionary history."

Although prior knowledge of the sciences is not a necessity, entrants to the course should be prepared to understand basic principles of biology, chemistry and geology, and be comfortable with using simple multiplication and division.

More information on this course will be available soon at www.open.ac.uk/courses. Please quote Sesame in any correspondence.

Insight Darwin200

Commissioned by the Natural History Museum, Darwin200 is a nationwide celebration of the life and works of Charles Darwin.

Over 90 organisations across the UK, including The Open University, are hosting a number of events and exhibitions between July 2008 and November 2009 to mark the occasion.

Lord Rees of Ludlow from the Charles Darwin Trust's Science Advisory Panel believes that the innovative thoughts of Darwin are as important to our lives today as they have ever been.

"Charles Darwin's concept of evolution through natural selection is one of the most illuminating scientific ideas of all time," Lord Rees says.

"As an iconic figure, Darwin is matched only by Newton and Einstein."

The Open University will also be a partner in a special BBC season marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin.

The University is co-producing three of the series in the season which cover the impact and legacy of Darwin's theories and ideas. This includes *Andrew Marr On Darwin's Legacy* (working title) which will explore the radical impact of Darwin's theory not only on science, but also on society, political movements and religion.

For more information visit www.darwin200.org

"The course offers an explanation to modern evolutionary theory"

undergraduate course *Evolution* (S366), believes the course has a lot to offer those who are new to the sciences.

"This course explains and explores the science of evolution for those with little or no scientific background," Peter told *Sesame*. "It is ideal for people who wish to find out more about the scientific basis for the Darwinian theory and its implications for us today."

With the use of an

and co-authored by Professor Jonathan Silvertown of the Department of Life Sciences who is internationally renowned for his research into the evolution and ecology of plants, makes use of colour illustrations and clear diagrams to provide a comprehensive introduction to evolution and the latest thinking on the subject. It is also accompanied by a series of three television programmes on DVD, which

Politics, media and war

Spotlight on 9/11

Exploring the geopolitical causes

● **STARTING IN OCTOBER 2008, *Politics, media, war: 9/11 and its impacts* (D271) is a 15-point course that explores the consequences of key events in history while examining the role the media plays in defining the nature of potential global risks. It also explores how the British state balances security and civil liberty in the face of a terrorist attack. By looking at the geopolitical causes of 11 September 2001, the course also views the response, both military and political, of the UK, US and their allies to such threats.**

The level 2 course offers an interesting introduction to the changing nature of war and terrorism. Registration for the 12-week course closes on 3 October 2008.



Politics, media and war

Teaching step-by-step

OU launches new phonics course

● **THE OPEN UNIVERSITY** has launched a course on teaching literacy through a linguistic phonic approach for teachers and other educational practitioners. The course combines the OU's expertise in supported distance learning with Sounds-Write's know-how in teaching linguistic phonics. This has created a highly effective programme for teaching reading and spelling

to beginning readers in KS1, and as a catch-up method for those who have fallen behind with their literacy development.

The course is fully congruent with the recommendations of the Rose Report (2005) and is compatible with the DCSF's Letters and Sounds programme.

To find out more visit:
<http://www.open.ac.uk/cpd/index.php?q=node/7>

New sport course

Sport makes the world go around

Has the Olympics aroused your interest?

● **HAS WATCHING THE Olympics** made you even more interested in sport and its effect on the world? *This sporting planet* (D170) could be the course for you, giving students the chance to investigate the links between sport, society, culture and politics.

This level 1, 15-point course highlights why sport is so important in the world today and how it contributes to society, as well as looking at why sport is political as well as fun. The course aims to develop students by enabling them to reflect upon the social significance of sport. Delivered online and through hard copy text, it will give students the opportunity to

apply social science concepts to sporting case studies.

The 12-week course starts in October 2008 with registration closing very soon on 3 October.



Technology-enhanced learning

How technology enhances learning

● INTERESTED IN THE latest debates and practices in educational technology? Then a new course starting in February 2009 could be for you.

Technology-enhanced learning: practices and debate (H800) is for those professionals involved in e-learning or 'technology-enhanced' learning whether in education, business, heritage, health or of non-formal learning activities. The course covers a range of learning technologies, and explores the processes of designing, implementing and evaluating technology-enhanced learning.

The materials for H800 have been created by a team of leading-edge researchers and teachers in the Institute of Educational Technology. All materials and tutoring are online. As well as individual study, students will be



encouraged to seek out new networks and sources of information on the internet – from e-journals to e-communities, from social bookmarking to the furthest edges of the web. This is a 60 point course at postgraduate level and counts towards the Masters in Online and Distance Education. This 32-week course starts in February 2009 and the deadline for registration is 6 February 2009.



Family Fortunes

New course scrutinises family life

● *Family meanings* (D270) gives students the opportunity to study families and personal relationships, important in both professional and personal life.

Family life and relationships will be scrutinised and students will get the chance to debate what 'family' means.

Case studies will be used in the form of interviews with people discussing their

everyday lives, with students being given the opportunity to explore how important family is. This 15-point course is relevant to a range of jobs and professions that engage with families and policies concerning them, providing a sound foundation and knowledge of family studies. The course starts in October 2008 with registration closing on 3 October.

Course updates

All things Welsh

The OU is celebrating everything that's Welsh by launching its *Small country, big history: themes in the history of Wales* (A182) course. This joins a new Welsh language course, *Croeso: Beginner's Welsh* (L196) which was covered in the previous edition of *Sesame*. Divided into four themes – Mythology and Tradition, Culture, Society and Nationhood – the 15-week course starts in April 2009 with registration closing on 27 February 2009.

Spotlight on digital media technology

The developing technology of digital media is changing our private, social and business lives. *Technologies for digital media* (T325) enables you to understand and interpret how this has come about, by analysing the technology behind digital media as well as some of the social, ethical and legal issues. The 30-point course starts in February 2009 with registration closing on 17 December 2008. It is suitable for students with knowledge of communication and computer technology as well as knowledge from level 1 and 2 courses/studies.

Debating heritage

A new 15-week course *Heritage, whose heritage?* (A180) will give students the chance to engage in debates and campaigns about heritage objects and places. It will also help participants to identify and understand the key issues affecting heritage decision-making, allowing students to develop analysis, communication and investigative skills. No previous experience is necessary and this is a

15-point level 1 course which can count towards a degree. The course starts in April 2009 with registration closing on 27 February 2009.

Legal eagles

A new 10-point course from the OU, *Starting with law* (Y166), will give students an insight into the legal system, how laws are made and how they affect our everyday life. The course will explore the importance and effects of law, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the individual, beginning with childhood, through to adulthood and finally into old age. Registration closes on 20 October for a November 2008 start, with more presentations planned for the rest of 2009.



Ready for a change?

Learning to change (Y165) is an ideal course for people who are delving into a new chapter in their lives, whether that be returning to study or taking a different direction at work. The 10-point course helps people to build on the skills they already have while also teaching new learning skills, such as active reading and using evidence, communication, problem solving and organisation. To see a video interview with the course manager, Dr Jonathan Hughes, visit www.open.ac.uk/platform

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Spotlight

Lovely jubbly

Dyslexia didn't stop Patrick Jubb from graduating in one of the toughest academic disciplines, Law. Now his ambition is to support socially excluded youngsters, he tells Tracy Buchanan

● AT SCHOOL, PATRICK Jubb was an under-achiever who used to play up in the classroom to avoid studying. He went on to do a variety of jobs – school caretaker, drayman, circus skills teacher – all with one thing in common. They didn't involve much reading or writing. "Dyslexia is a short-term memory issue and can affect all interaction and functioning," says Patrick. "And like mental health it's a hidden disability that many people think they are adapting to, but actually they don't even notice it manifesting."

While teaching circus skills at the Kent Circus School, Patrick was inspired to go into youth work – which then led him to the OU to study social policy. "When I started studying with the OU I was working in children's homes with young people. I used to get my books to read while the kids went shopping with another member of staff," he recalls.

"Getting my DipHSW [Diploma in Health and Social Welfare] helped me get work in the Youth Offending Team, and gave me an understanding of the needs of this client group."

A big help with his early

study was his "study buddy" Stephanie – a study buddy is something Patrick would recommend to all new students.

After achieving his Diploma, Patrick then decided to study Law. "It was more vocational and led to two or three career paths, including becoming a solicitor. I had borne witness to the level of representation young people received in Kent and, somewhat naively, thought I could change all that."

He found Law "really hard" – and he was not alone. "When I started the first year, I attended packed lectures in Canterbury."

"Four years later at our last lecture, seven people turned up. Only eight attended the degree presentation ceremony."

The former under-achiever is proud of the fact he can now put the letters LLB (Hons) (Open) after his name. "I'm as proud of the Open as I am the Hons," he says. But he's not stopping there. In September he starts a research Masters in Philosophy (Criminology) with his local university, with the aim of a career in criminal justice, supporting socially excluded young people. Patrick says that, while the OU has an excellent disability support team, he has



Patrick Jubb with his father-in-law, who provided much valued support...

recommendations for making studying a bit easier for dyslexic students. For example, emailing more correspondence, especially forms. "That way you can organise them and use text-to-speech, if you prefer it. For a dyslexic person, forms are a small hell."

Exams can also be tough as

they require an effective short-term memory. "Recent research into dyslexia has shown that it is caused by a misfiring short-term memory."

Patrick will always be a fan of the OU. "It's a great organisation helping people from all walks of life to achieve their dreams."

Smiles galore!

The *Sesame* and alumni teams enjoyed visiting a host of award ceremonies around the country this year. Here's just a few of the many people we met...

London

● ROYAL NAVY OFFICERS

Lieutenant James Capps and Sub Lieutenant Robin Kenchington were two of the Royal Navy officers who were presented with a Foundation Degree in Military Aviation Studies at the Barbican, London, in April.

Lt. Capps, 27, said: "I have every intention of turning this Foundation Degree into a full degree and then in service life,

if I choose to go for high-ranking promotion, to be in a position where I have two full degrees should stand me out from my competitors."

Sub Lt. Kenchington said: "With the Foundation Degree it's enabled me to convert two years of training, working pretty hard in some pretty demanding environments, into something which is accredited by a civilian company."



Birmingham

● NAOMI CLARKE

"The support I got from my tutor was fantastic," says Naomi Clarke, 37, from Liverpool. Currently a teaching assistant, Naomi had always wanted to study for a degree and joining the OU meant she could do that while continuing in her employment. "I used to sit up until 2am in the morning with a laptop and a text book, but that's what I chose to do and at least with the OU way of studying you can do that."



● CHRISTINE JACKMAN

Mum of two Christine Jackman chose to study an MBA with the OU because of the flexibility it gave her. "I wanted to take control of my career," says the marketer who works mostly in education. "Institutions see my MBA qualification and instantly know that I'm qualified to help them." And the disciplines that she learned while studying her MBA have been helpful in setting up her own company, Purple Tree Communications.



● LT CDR BRUCE RUSSELL

"The mental disciplines that you get from study for a PhD really helped me in my day-to-day work," says submariner Lt. Com. Bruce Russell. He joined the OU in 1999 and it was, perhaps unsurprisingly given his profession, the flexibility to study at times that suited him that was the major draw. He chose to study History because "I've always been an engineer and something related to the Arts was completely alien to me."



● SUKIE BILKHU

New mum Sukie Bilkhu, 31, studied a Masters degree in Psychology, which took three years. "It was tough at times, but it was worth it," she says.

She had to work full-time during her study and couldn't afford to change her work commitment, so that was the main reason for studying with the OU. "I did my undergraduate psychology degree seven or eight years ago and I wanted to update my knowledge."



PHOTO CREDIT: LUKE BEAMAN AND MIKE FINN-KELCEY

Torquay

STEPHANIE GILL

Stephanie Gill, 27, is delighted she chose to study with the OU straight after leaving college.

She says: "I studied alongside work, so I'm already earning more money than a lot of my friends who went to traditional 'brick' universities as they're still working their way up. Plus, I have no debt!"

Currently a secretary, Stephanie is hoping to use her degree to become a primary school teacher.



HAYLEY PERHAM

A school leaver at 16, 30-year-old Hayley Perham had great support from the company she worked for while studying for a degree with the OU. In fact, the director recommended the OU after he completed a psychology degree with the university.

Hayley says: "It was great to tackle a degree and be able to try some different subjects. Family history really interests me so I was able to pop a short course in to boost my points."



Harrogate

JAYNE ROGERSON

It is possible to have it all, according to Jayne Rogerson, 26, who chose the OU over going to a traditional university.

"I took a year out after my A levels before going to university. I got a job working in a hospital laboratory and it was there that I realised that it was what I really wanted to do. I moved to Glaxo SmithKline as a lab technician and they supported me to do a life sciences degree with the OU."



MALCOLM GARLAND

They say the best things in life take time – and new graduate Malcolm Garland, aged 77, proved it when he collected his OU degree 36 years after he first signed up as one of the OU's first students in Yorkshire!

"I felt the OU was a great idea and I was determined to join." The former engineer was then waylaid when he started his own business and it wasn't until after he retired that he thought of returning to studying.

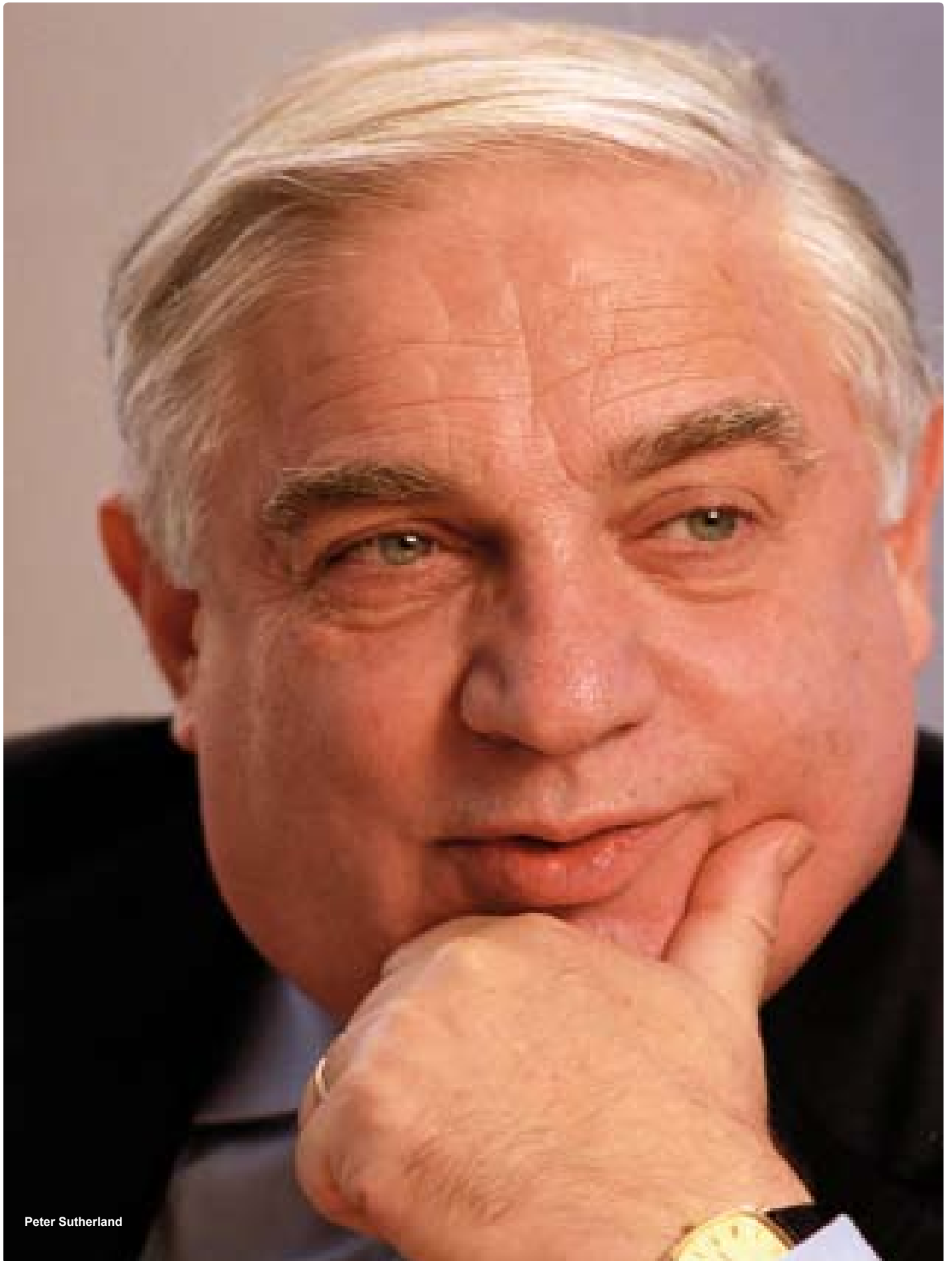


Portsmouth

COLIN BARNES

They really are keeping it in the family – Colin Barnes and his son, Ian, graduated together in Portsmouth. They were presented together to the presiding officer, Will Swann, with Ian gaining a BSc (Hons) and his father a BA (Open). It's Ian's second degree, having earned his first 16 years ago – he's now working on his Masters.





Peter Sutherland

A global affair

Scott Russon met Peter Sutherland, the current chairman of BP and an honorary graduate of the OU, to discuss retirement, globalisation and his support for the OU's New Openings project in Ireland

● **PETER SUTHERLAND** has had a long and distinguished career that includes being the former Attorney General of Ireland, Irish European Commissioner, European Commissioner for Competition and Director-General of the World Trade Organization. In January 2006 he was appointed by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan as his Special Representative for Migration – an issue that Sutherland is passionate about. He's the current Chairman of both Goldman Sachs International and BP, and Chairman of The Ireland Fund of Great Britain. Oh, and he's an Honorary Graduate of the OU, too!

Here he talks about his plans for the future, his interest in the subject of globalisation, and his thoughts on the OU's New Openings project in Ireland, which offers free introductory courses to marginalised parts of Irish society...

You retire as BP chairman next year. What plans do you have for the future?

I've gone through various phases in my life and I have done a varied number of things, and I don't intend to stop when I retire as Chairman of BP. I have continuing involvement, particularly in the public sphere, in terms of migration and development policy with the UN. Issues and areas like that will remain important to me in the public service space, including the fact that I am Chairman of the London School of Economics – which I intend to continue to be active in and enjoy very much.

Are you planning to slow down at all?

Hopefully I'll have a little bit more spare time but I don't intend to create voids in terms of activity. I'm 62 years of age and I think people should continue working either on a voluntary or other basis much later on in life; otherwise you are opening up an area of inactivity that is not desirable from many points of view. So, no, I don't intend to slow down.

Have you always been driven and passionate about work?

Well, I wouldn't say that I have always been passionate about work but I have been passionate about activity. The areas which in many ways have been most fundamental to me have been the areas of public service, and I remain passionately committed to, for example, European and global integration – i.e. the process of globalisation. I have also been very involved with education; I was the one who proposed the ERASMUS programme [*which supports academic mobility of higher education students and teachers within the European Union*] and that has remained an area of interest for me, particularly in the context of Ireland. While I'm a universalist, I am also passionate about my own country.

And this is partly why you have chosen to support the OU's New Openings project in Ireland?

That's right. I think The Open University's idea and its potential value in Ireland is very considerable. Just as with many other countries, Ireland's future depends on education. The percentage of Irish people

leaving school and taking up third level education is significantly higher than, for example, in England. However, there are issues that have to be grappled with in terms of the level of that quality of education. There is also a continuing issue in regard to the engagement with deprived elements in society or those that have not benefited from the Irish education system, such as the migrant community and those that for one reason or another have lost the opportunity of education – and the stimulation and satisfaction that comes from it. To my mind, the OU is probably the most successful example of what it does that exists in the world today.

The expansion of the OU and considering it part and parcel of the Irish educational scene seems to me to be highly desirable and should be supported.

How did your interest in globalisation come about?

It was the extension of the logic of Europe itself. Jean Monnet [*regarded by many as a chief architect of European unity*], in his seminal work on European integration, said that he thought it was a first step in creating a globalisation of systems and, I believe, values.

I think we are living through an extremely challenging time but also a time, which if viewed constructively is the best of times and, with climate change and a whole range of issues including migration, potentially the worst of times.

Do you think there is enough effective global cooperation on the big issues?

It's constantly challenging. As

we speak today, we don't know how the week will end. With the example of climate change, the debate is at a very early stage and balancing the interests of north and south, rich and poor is going to be the biggest political challenge the world has ever faced. And the consequences of failing to deal with it are horrendous. It's difficult to be sanguine about it on the basis of past evidence about the world's capacity to deal with challenges like this. I think there are huge issues out there, and in my own small way I want to be involved in them.

To find out more about the New Openings project and the support it is currently seeking, please contact Rachel Fulcher in the OU's Development Office on +44 (0)1908 659556 or visit www.open.ac.uk/fundraising

Course connection **Living in a globalised world (DD205)**

It is common place now to say that the world has gone global. This innovative geography-led course will give you an understanding of some of the challenges of a globalised existence and complex, global situations. *Living in a globalised world (DD205)* is a 60-point course. Registration closes 12 December for a February start. Call +44 (0)845 300 6090 or visit www.open.ac.uk/courses for more information. Quote **Sesame** in any correspondence.

OU Support

The OU Supporters' Fund

● AS PART OF a re-focus of fundraising activity, the OU Foundation closed at the end of May 2008.

Fundraising activities will carry on as normal and donors will be supporting the University through a newly established OU Supporters' Fund. It will continue to help provide educational equality for all through scholarships, bursaries, support for disabled students, University strategic projects and to help develop the OU's educational work in Africa.

Explaining the move, a Development Office spokesperson said: "The OU Foundation is transferring its activities to The Open University, following a decision by its trustees to wind up the Foundation. The Charity Commission has given its consent to this transfer and all future gifts will continue to be applied for the benefit of the University."

Who benefits from donations?

Donations help to fund students with anything from

their course fees, travel costs and books, to additional expenses like childcare to help a parent attend a tutorial. Last year, donations provided scholarships and bursaries worth more than £480,000 giving thousands of students help reaching their goals.

Donors have also been helping to support the work of disabled student services; last year £160,000 went towards the Digital Audio Project, developing audio technology for students who find it difficult to use print.

Insight Matched Funding - great news for future students

The government plans to match-fund your donations - for every £3 you give, the government will give the University £1. This is fantastic news means that your donations can go even further, reaching out to even more students.

If you'd like more information or would like to make a donation, please do get in touch using the details on the opposite page.

Your valued support

Legacy supporters get personal insight

Legacy tours offer a unique and inspiring way for supporters interested in legacy giving to explore our campus

● THE OU PLAYS an integral role in many students' lives, so it's no surprise that many people feel a real affinity with the OU!

One of the ways in which alumni and supporters choose to recognise the role the University has played in their lives and the lives of others, is by leaving a legacy in their Will. It's not often that students and alumni get the chance to see the OU campus for themselves so legacy tours are being offered to those who are interested in remembering the OU in their Will.

These tours are incredibly popular, bringing supporters of the OU together to see the work that goes on and how supporting the OU through a legacy really can

make a difference.

This year the OU held two campus tours visiting a number of sites around the University, from the truly inspiring CEPSAR (Centre for Earth, Planetary, Space and Astronomical Research) to Disabled Student Services (DSS), where visitors were able to see first-hand the equipment that had been purchased with legacies left to the University.

Visitors on one tour also had the opportunity to look at the University's purpose-built mobile assessment centre. Karen Hart, Legacy Officer said: "The Campus tours are a great opportunity to meet our supporters and show them their University. People travel all over the



Supporters are pictured during a legacy tour with the OU's Vice-Chancellor (fourth from the right) and Karen Hart, Legacy Officer (far left).

country to join us and it's a real privilege to meet them and hear how the OU has affected their lives and inspired them to want to make a difference."

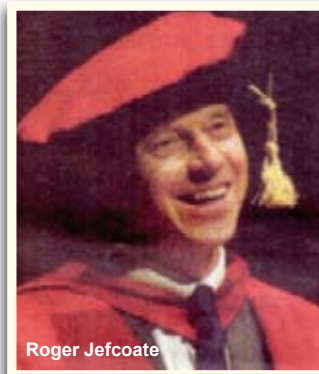
If you're interested in leaving a gift in your Will or would like to find out more, please contact Karen Hart by calling +44 (0)1908 659141 or emailing k.l.hart@open.ac.uk

Three donors tell their stories

A worthy cause

Many people have made special donations to the OU, whether it be in the form of regular donations or one-offs. *Sesame* spoke to three of these donors about their remarkable stories

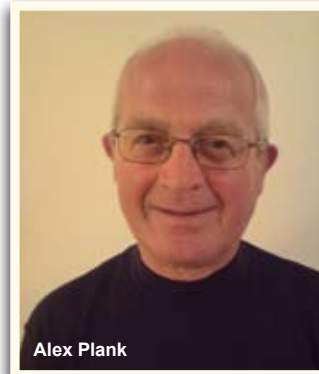
● **ROGER JEFCOATE** HAS long proved to be an inspiration to the OU and its students, particularly those with a disability. He has campaigned to improve educational opportunities for disabled people through technology from the early 1960s when Roger played a key role in the invention of Possum, the world's first remote control system for severely disabled people, at the National Spinal Injuries Centre, Stoke Mandeville Hospital. He then went on to promote and fund a wide range of special needs technology such as adapted computers and communication aids. Roger's involvement with the OU began when he became its first adviser on technology for disability and was awarded an honorary degree in 1980. He has since dedicated his time – now entirely voluntary – to improving the lives of disabled people by supporting several national healthcare charities



Roger Jefcoate

vibrancy, its enthusiasm, its support for thousands of disabled students is remarkable. For this reason and because of my OU honorary degree – which has proved really helpful in my work – we continue to be keen advocates and supporters.”

ALEX PLANK enrolled with The Open University in the early 1980s while working as a senior shift supervisor with British Rail. “I came to realise that lack of formal qualifications might hold me back from progressing further in my career,” he said. So Alex



Alex Plank

he found himself becoming more confident, which led to him moving into a junior management role and, after six challenging years, he finally graduated in 1989.

“Even after all this time, I still feel an attachment to the OU,” says Alex. “A few years back I became a donor and pay a small monthly sum to the OU. This money goes to help students through the OU and is a very worthy cause. My reasons for this are simple: it is a thank you for all the help I received during my studies and, perhaps selfishly, it gives me a good feeling. Go on, try it!”

SHOSHANAH AVIVAH left school with no qualifications to get her first job stacking shelves. She recalls: “I used to watch the OU programmes on TV when I was 13 or 14, but I never dreamed that I'd actually end up studying here.”

The reason why she never thought she'd achieve this dream is that Shoshanah suffers from fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis, which causes a lot of pain and sometimes makes it difficult for her to write or type at a computer.

But the OU made it possible for her to study, with the DSS



Shoshanah Avivah

(Disabled Student Services) paying her a home visit to assess her needs. From this assessment, she was given a computer with voice recognition software, a special chair and a footrest. She said: “The support I received from the OU helped me immensely with my studies.” Shoshanah graduated in April 2007 with a BA (Hons) in Humanities with Religious Studies. She said: “When I showed my doctor that I had graduated, he said that I had achieved my degree against all odds – I was very proud.”

“Even after all this time, I still feel an attachment to the OU”

and establishing the Roger and Jean Jefcoate Trust, which has made generous donations to the OU's Audio Recording Centre (ARC), as well as to the DAISY project mentioned on page 41.

His wife, Jean, is also a real asset to ARC, visiting weekly for many years to read course materials for print disabled students (see page 41 for more information).

As Roger says: “The OU really struck a chord – its

decided to begin his studies with the foundation course – *Living with Technology* (T101).

Living with a hearing impairment, Alex found that his hearing aids did not always allow him to follow what was being said at tutorials or associated OU broadcasts. But, as he says, “the OU kindly provided me with transcripts throughout my six years of study, and alleviated a lot of the stress.”

As Alex's studies progressed,

Supporting the OU

To make a donation
Fundraising Assistant
+44 (0)1908 655044
ou-alumni-fundraising@open.ac.uk

Sponsoring a Bursary or Scholarship
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Continuing professional development

21st Century learning

The OU's guide to continuing professional development

● TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY learning is changing rapidly. No longer is there a need to spend hours in a classroom. With developments in online learning you can manage your study with complete flexibility to suit your lifestyle and needs. Whether you decide to undertake a prolonged period of study towards a degree or just need to enhance or learn new skills in a few hours, the OU can help.

The OU's Centre for Professional Learning and Development (CPLD) is the central focus for work-related learning at the OU. The centre takes the expertise and content of the OU's degree courses and crafts them into shorter professional development courses, ideal for busy professionals at work. CPLD

document I could use in my job. And because I was able to learn at my own pace, I matched my study with the pace of the projects I was working on."

The courses are designed to allow people to develop their skills and can be used towards their professional development requirements. Hence they are often referred to as continuous professional development or CPD.

The range of online courses is extensive, covering more than 50 topics in strategy, leadership, people management and communications as well as more specialist areas such as travel planning and food science and technology. The courses can easily be reversioned and blended with more traditional forms of

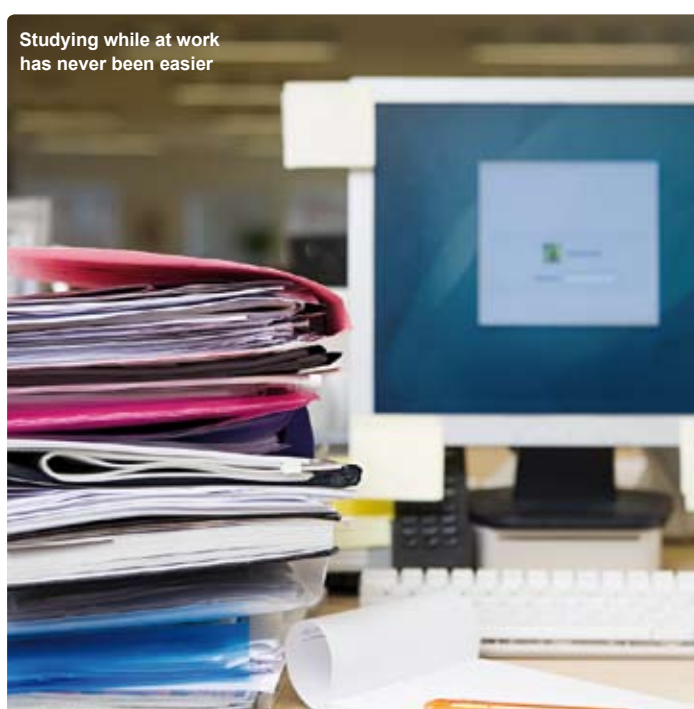
"My study became a working document that I could use in my job"

also works with employers to design bespoke programmes of learning as an investment into that organisation's workforce.

The courses are starting to revolutionise workplace learning. Paige Bramley, a project development manager for the Derwent Community Team, which develops community regeneration schemes in Derbyshire, took CPLD's *Managing Performance through People* course. She said the study changed her whole way of thinking: "It was excellent for so many reasons. It developed me as a person and as an employee and taught me particular techniques and processes, but best of all my study became a working

classroom-based activities for corporate clients or groups of learners to meet specific learning objectives.

Organisations that have already benefited from working with the OU include Addaction, Britain's largest specialist drug and alcohol treatment charity; Airbus, one of the world's leading aircraft manufacturers; Asquith Nurseries, a nationwide provider of childcare and education for children under five; Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust; NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council; leading organisations in the Scottish broadcasting industry such as Scottish Enterprise, BBC Scotland, SMG Television and Channel 4; and Reuters, the largest



international news agency.

Reuters, which filed more than three million news items from 197 bureaux in 132 countries in 2007, employs the help of The Open University to equip new managers with the skills, knowledge and confidence to get the most out of their role. Working closely with Reuters, the OU's CPLD was able to develop the skills of the new managers while they worked, by creating a pilot which was delivered to journalists and support teams across the world, including many on the front line.

Jenny McFarlane, a financial controller for a financial services organisation who took a CLPD course with the OU, whole-heartedly believes most managers need to raise their game and that CPLD courses will instil a strong sense of strategic context when carrying out their day-to-day work. She said: "In my opinion, some aspects of business

education teach people more and more about less and less, even where those people have a limited range of work responsibilities. After all, they should have an awareness of their employer's strategy in order to guide their activity appropriately."

She adds: "With the OU, you know the quality is there. I'd have no qualms in recommending other members to go for it – it's been prepared well, the modular format provides learning in bite-sized pieces, and it's just about as jargon-free as it could possibly be. And where there are more challenging concepts, it forces you to think long and hard about important issues."

To learn more about the work of CPLD and to see the full range of courses and how to register for them, go to the dedicated OU at Work website at www.open.ac.uk/cpd. Alternatively, call +44 (0) 870 900 9577.

Study and work

Studying and working – a perfect partnership

As well as courses designed specifically to help employers in their area of work, those in full time or part-time employment can still benefit from study with the OU by working towards either an accredited qualification, such as a diploma

or degree, or a certificate of successful completion from one of the CPLD online courses. Plenty of support is offered, including a tutor, Student Services staff, fellow students as well as access to OU Library facilities.

Students will learn in their own time by accessing course material, working on course activities and writing assignments, and in many cases they're supported or even sponsored by their employers.

Case study

Taryn

For Taryn Clements, the combination of previous work experience and the fact she'd already signed up with the OU helped her get a job with the Environment Agency and sponsorship for further studies.

Now a pollution prevention and control officer, Taryn, from Taunton, worked briefly for the prison service before seeing an advert placed by the Environment Agency.

"I went for a day's interview and they thought it was great



that I was studying with the OU.

"They loved the fact I was already studying for a relevant qualification, and realised how hard studying from home can be, so they really valued it."

Taryn's employers

sponsored some of her studies and said her job and study complemented each other: "My employer wanted to support me further in my degree so I got some financial help there. The Environment Agency also helped me with my projects, allowing me to use other aspects of my work for my Open University studies as well. It was ideal.

"It helped my job no end because I didn't know much about report writing when I started the degree. I had to write more reports for my assignments, so the two went hand in hand."

Case study

Puvan

Learning while at work was an ideal option for Puvan Mudali, a manager at a disability charity. It provided an opportunity to see things from a different angle.

"I chose a CPLD course on Applied Strategic Thinking because it gave me the tools, frameworks and ideas to help me influence strategic thinking in my new role. Things were getting a little rusty since I last did my exams," he said.

"In my current job, I'm involved in looking at long-term plans and creating ways to improve financial performance. The company was taking stock of its current position and looking at its long-term survival in the light of a changing business environment. Issues such as potential automation – due to some manpower shortages – and new legislation on corporate governance and public accountability, were all being considered. So what the syllabus offered was quite relevant to me."

He added: "My position had been newly created to ensure a professionally qualified person was at the helm to implement new financial systems and policies and streamline existing procedures. Strategic planning had just been incorporated, while new procedures on risk assessment were being introduced. I've been able to learn about contemporary terminology and techniques of approaching strategic thinking and planning in a methodical manner, which has greatly helped all aspects of my work."

Spotlight on Senate Exemplar for other universities

It was exciting to hear that the University is being used by Apple as an exemplar for other universities wishing to take part in this Apple iTunes U project.

Material from over 30 courses is currently available with ambitious plans for even more course materials as well as information on research activities to become available over the next few months. With over 111,332 full downloads made within the first 11 days, this is a fantastic addition to the OU's suite of communication opportunities.

There was further good news as the Open University's OpenLearn project received the award of the Innovation Prize at the recent Commonwealth of Learning conference in London.

The Student Support Review is ongoing, and it is anticipated that the pilot phase of the review will start in early 2009.

Members of Senate were assured that any students taking part in the pilot would be offered support and assistance to ensure that their experience was not detrimental to their studies.

There was encouraging news on student numbers – it is anticipated that overall targets will be exceeded, although numbers in Scotland and Wales are still a cause for concern.

Veronica Summers, Alumni Senate Representative.

If you would like Veronica to represent your views at Senate please email alumni@open.ac.uk title 'Senate'

For more information on sponsored studies visit www.open.ac.uk/cpd/index.php?q=node/34

More discounts for OU alumni and students

Visit our website for more information on offers and for links to all discounts at www.open.ac.uk/platform/member-benefits (click on 'offers', then 'member benefits'). If you are unable to access the website please call +44 (0) 1908 653815 to request a flyer.

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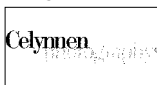
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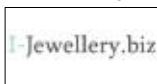
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Are we fuelling ourselves?



Stephen Potter, Professor of Transport Strategy at the OU, argues that it's time that we all faced up to reality: high fuel costs are here to stay...

● ENERGY ISSUES ARE hitting newspaper headlines more than ever. Protests about the increasing cost of gas, electricity, petrol and diesel are being joined by objections about the further restructuring of car tax. Many throw up their hands in horror, arguing that we have to carry on driving as we always have because car use is – essential and that is that...

During the past few years, my colleagues and I have been involved in a series of research projects and studies with transport practitioners on long-term transport trends, transport taxation and what sort of transport is needed for a sustainable, high-energy-cost

But have we now reached the point where we can no longer fool ourselves?

If we are to move to an energy-efficient, low-carbon transport future, how can we as individuals get there? Firstly, we have a habit of using transport inefficiently; a luxury many will be unable to afford in the future and collectively is environmentally unethical. An RAC survey indicated that up to 20 per cent of mileage is unnecessary: we use our cars to go on short trips where walking is viable, or we don't co-ordinate trips properly (e.g. we drive to a shop to check if it is open rather than ringing up). A second thing is 'eco-driving':

“When buying a car, most people pay little attention to fuel consumption”

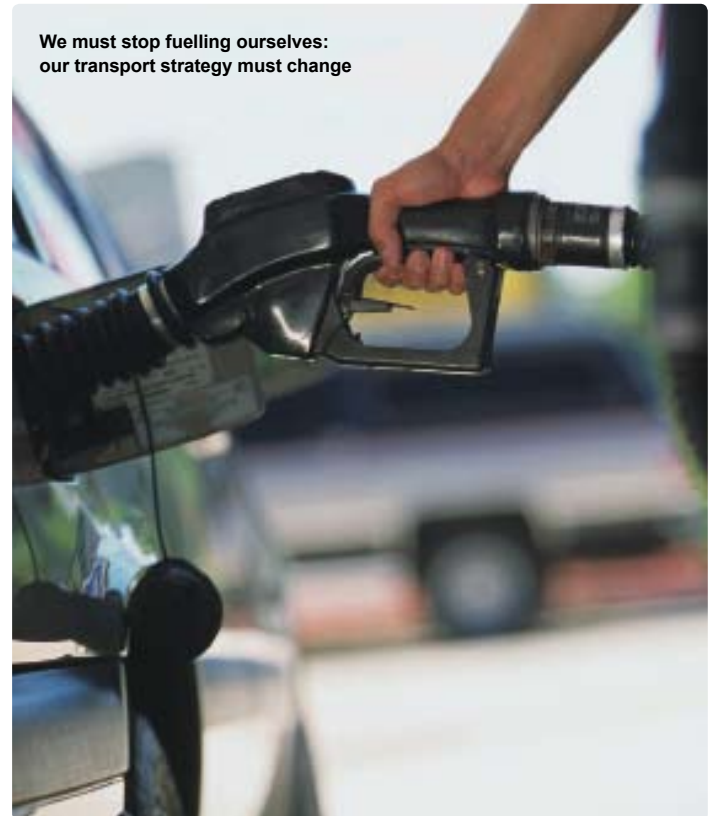
world. This has all revealed one undeniable truth: the problem is less about technical solutions and more about our willingness to accept that change is needed.

And it's not as if we haven't been warned. For decades, reports and research have signalled that the era of cheap energy will eventually end. But our reaction to such forecasts, both individually and by our government, has been to balk at the whole idea – certainly as far as transport is concerned.

Rather than facing up to the ugly truth, we instead moan and call for the government to cut fuel duties so we can carry on as usual, living our *Top Gear* lifestyle of excess and waste.

keeping tyres pumped up, not accelerating hard and driving a bit slower. That can cut our fuel bills by 10 to 20 per cent on all the car trips we do need to make.

Research also shows that when buying a car, most motorists pay little attention to fuel consumption. That is now changing and the tax system seems to be crucial in altering our attitudes. In Holland, they have higher petrol costs than the UK, plus a hefty 42 per cent car-purchase tax. This is then cut by €1,000 for the most fuel-efficient cars and raised by €450 for gas guzzlers. All this has led to a car fleet some 20 per cent more fuel



efficient than the UK's.

Demand for more fuel-efficient, low-carbon cars is starting to accelerate, which, in the medium term, will filter through to the second-hand market. So, on top of a 20 to 30 per cent fuel cut by short-term actions, another 20 per cent cut is achievable through buying more fuel-efficient cars. But governments should not be let off the hook. We really need measures that reward people for buying low-carbon cars (as in Holland) and regulations that get industry to market low-carbon cars.

Travel patterns can also adjust in the medium term – for example, where people shop or take their leisure. Over the years we have gradually adjusted to cheap cars and cheap fuel by travelling further. In the medium to long term we will similarly have to adjust to high fuel prices by gradually substituting long trips with more local destinations, which might be triggered when our jobs change or we move house.

The real danger is denying that we are entering a 21st-century reality where transport

costs will be high and the related climate change crisis has to be addressed.

Unfortunately, our gut reaction is to still try to maintain our 20th-century behaviours rather than to face up to our 21st-century responsibilities.

Course connection Energy for a sustainable future (T206)

If you are interested in energy issues, such as transport, then **Energy for a sustainable future (T206)** may be for you. The 60-point course explores issues such as energy sources, energy consumption, energy conservation, the role of new technologies and how we can move to a sustainable energy future. Registration closes 17 Dec 2008 for a February 2009 start. Call +44 (0)845 300 6090 or visit www.open.ac.uk/courses for more information. Quote **Sesame** in any correspondence.

Research

A round-up of the latest news from The Open University

The school of rock...

Life on Mars?

OU space expert helps plot significant mission to the Red Planet

● THE GUARDIAN CALLED it “the most audacious and technologically challenging space mission since the Apollo programme landed on the moon.” It was referring to the proposed International Mars Sample Return Mission, which would cost £8bn and include cooperation between NASA, the European Space Agency and others to bring back rocks and perhaps even microscopic samples of life from Mars.

Monica Grady, Professor in Planetary Sciences at the OU, co-chaired the expert panel that wrote the mission proposal. She believes that this mission is vital as a forerunner before being able to send people on a mission to Mars.

“If you can’t bring a rock back, you are not going to be able to bring people back,” she says. “There’s a real feeling that bringing samples back from Mars is absolutely essential if we are going to continue our Martian exploration programme.”

Professor Colin Pillinger of the OU told the *Guardian* that samples returned from the Red Planet would mean scientists would be able to carry out more sophisticated analysis of the rocks, and permit a more detailed search for simple Martian life forms. But it came with a warning: “You have to be very careful not to bring anything back that might be harmful to Earth.”



Leading OU space expert Monica Grady believes a mission to Mars to collect samples is essential

Other news

Baby on board

● IMPORTANT RESEARCH findings about motherhood were debated at a recent conference. The Making of Modern Motherhood research project, led by the OU’s Professor Rachel Thomson and Dr Mary Jane Kehily, looked at what it means to become a mother in the 21st century and how it changes women’s identities. See the report findings at <http://tinyurl.com/5zypsd>

Survey about old age

● THE UK’S ELDERLY population is increasing and the issues surrounding the cost and quality of care are becoming more widespread. The Open University is conducting an online survey to gauge public attitudes to care, health, accommodation and many other issues associated with ageing. The survey can be found at www.open2.net/caresurvey

No flies on us

● SCIENTISTS WORKING AT the OU and the University of Oxford have found a fast and effective way to investigate important aspects of human ageing. Dr Robert Saunders of the OU’s Faculty of Science is part of the team that has discovered a gene in fruit flies that can be used to study the effects that ageing has on DNA. This research will help us to understand the ageing process.

Mission to Saturn

● THE INTERNATIONAL NASA/ESA Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn has been extended by two years, meaning more opportunity for OU scientists. “Our involvement in the mission has exceeded our wildest expectations and now there is a chance for science to discover even more,” says the OU’s Professor John Zarnecki. The mission was scheduled to cease in July 2008.

Food for thought

OU academic Geoff Andrews of the Faculty of Social Sciences talks to Scott Russon about food, glorious food, as he dishes up a spicy fusion of gastronomy and politics...

● CELEBRITY CHEFS SUCH as Jamie Oliver, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Gordon Ramsay have brought a number of issues related to food and its consumption to the table in recent years. Two of the most prominent concerns are the food our children consume at school, and the ethical question of how poultry is reared. Add into the mix the issues of nutrition, obesity, fair trade, organic, seasonality, not to mention increasing food costs and shortages around the world, and the subject of food has never been tastier. OU academic Geoff Andrews of the Faculty of Social Sciences talks about these and other issues related to his new book *The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure...*

What can you tell us about the Slow Food movement?

Slow Food has its origins in left wing politics in Italy in the 1970s and 1980s, though the term was first used following a demonstration in 1986 as a response to the setting up of a McDonald's in the centre of Rome. The concern at the time was that fast food was expanding, while local food and food traditions were seen to be under threat. The Slow Food (SF) movement is raising a number of concerns about food around the world and there are now over 80,000 members in 130 countries, including the US, Europe and developing countries.

Most people wouldn't associate such a strong link between food and politics... Well, I'm not sure I agree. The headlines of many

newspapers, for example, have food at the centre of many concerns – such as the global food crisis, concern over obesity and health, etc. Also there is more coverage of farmers' markets and local produce. It's true that people may not see that as overtly political but it is asking questions about the origins of food; the links between food consumption and poverty; and making connections between food and the environment. And in the case of Jamie Oliver, his very public intervention has touched upon a whole range of issues that people feel strongly about. So I think food has become a site of politics in a new and broad way.

With Jamie Oliver's TV campaigns in mind, it does feel like people's relationship with food has developed rapidly in Britain during the past couple of years...

The relationship of politics and food has grown in the public awareness, partly because Jamie Oliver is a charismatic and incredibly popular figure. And perhaps his intervention in the school dinners debate was made in a way that was beyond conventional politicians – he made a connection with the public that politicians are unable to do. Remember that consumers are also citizens. I think there are so many things now that are making people think about food, about the quality of life, and the pleasures of food – people have become much more discerning about food. The Slow Food movement has touched on a particular way of living; not only a way of eating



but a way of life. How we eat is a reflection of how we live.

There are clear tensions though between this desire for change in consumption and the economic cost...

There are issues about cost; about who can afford to eat from local stores and farmers' markets, and obviously it is true that the prices are higher than in supermarkets. But you could argue that the prices are higher because people are paid a just price for the goods that they produce. In that sense you could say that it is an egalitarian decision to shop locally: you are thinking about the environment and social justice. But it's also a big cultural choice. To some extent, it's a question of education and thinking more seriously about food. I think SF is situating its appeal partly as

a way of helping to educate people about food.

Is education the key to changing food habits?

Education is a crucial part, particularly with the newer generations. When I was in the US travelling for my book I visited school garden projects and city farms that have been set up where kids, in many cases taken from quite rough estates, are given the chance to look after the produce and learn about the environment and so on and it has quite a life changing effect. The composition of the members of the SF movement is a mix – chefs, self-taught gastronomes, anti-global activists, farmers, foodies – who become politicised. In that sense the new politics of food is distinctive because of the people that it is reaching. And it appeals across the political



“The Slow Food movement has touched on a particular way of living – not only a way of eating but a way of life”

and ideological boundaries.

The Slow Food movement is also about protecting food heritage, but has Britain not lost a lot of its traditions?

That's definitely the case. I think we have lost part of what we might call our food culture, which needs excavating. In Britain, and also the US, it's about rediscovering food traditions, and it's interesting that there are more oral histories from people who used to be food producers or from families who consumed in different ways. This is part of rediscovering culture in general, and food is a crucial element of the cultural landscape. I think one of the things that we are now finding

with the new interest in food is this historical approach; we do have good food traditions in Britain, but where are they? Now they are beginning to be uncovered again. It's worth mentioning that SF has a presidium scheme where it works with local producers where quality products, based on important local knowledge and traditions, are said to be at risk. In Britain the SF movement has helped support and promote products such as Cornish pilchards and sardines, the Perry drink in Herefordshire, and Old Gloucester beef, and these are prestigious products of outstanding quality. So there is quite a lot of work within the SF about the historical origin of

food and this is becoming very important for a nation that perhaps has lost many of its important food traditions.

Did the BSE crisis have an effect on some of those traditions, such as the use of cheaper cuts of meat in certain dishes, etc?

One of the interesting outcomes of BSE and other crises is that we don't know who the experts are any more. Scientists have come up with different reasons for the causes of BSE and as in many other cases we don't know who to believe. As I argued in my book, food is the archetypal expression of this post-modern ambiguity about knowledge and how we live. What we've found is that there are other kinds of experts: there are food producers and farmers whose knowledge we should value perhaps as much

as the scientists'. There has been a shift in this way; we need to learn from what SF calls the “intellectuals of the earth” – people who know the land, know the food, know their culture – and their knowledge and experience are often just as important as that of the scientists in white coats.

To what degree are the leading political parties concerned about food production and the public's consumption?

The trouble with politicians is that they are always thinking about short-term electoral advantages. I think they understand that food has become very important in politics and so they are taking it seriously. But it is whether they have the breadth of understanding or willingness to engage with what is a big global question, which isn't going to be solved by one government or the other. It's dependent on global cooperation. I think in Britain SF could have a bigger profile because it has a clear agenda based on the principles of good, clean and fair products; good, demonstrated by quality; clean, because it's environmentally sustainable and fair means a just price for the producer. These are important principles and I think there is a strong possibility of the SF movement becoming an important source of information as well as a movement for political change.

Is one key to some of these issues ensuring that British farmers and fishermen have greater support?

I think they should. Rural communities have been neglected by governments, particularly governments of the left who traditionally put their emphasis on their core supporters who tend to be from urban areas. I think with the next election what you will see is what is broadly called middle England being stronger than

in the past on quality of life issues. And I think the future of farming is going to get more attention than it previously has, partly because the way in which rural communities are suffering in many ways and also because more people are aspiring to escape the fast life.

Does the influence of the supermarkets mean that they are the most powerful factor in being able to shape consumer behaviour?

They are powerful and they dominate the food sector, but what we have seen in recent years is that consumers also have powerful political voices and supermarkets now have to respond to the demands and desires of their consumers as well. They are all trying to show how environmentally sustainable they are and how they are responding to demands. So I think alternative consumption is one area where people are asserting themselves in politics. We hear a lot about political disengagement, where people no longer participate in official politics or join political parties, but the area of consumption has become highly politicised, which is good for society and good for democracy. It also means that supermarkets won't have it all their own way in the next few years – the rise of the farmers' markets is one such example.

There's an argument that poorer countries are being aided by their exports and to halt or significantly reduce that commitment is morally questionable. What are your thoughts on that debate?

This is a good question, as on the one hand there is the question of fair trade, and there's a similar argument about organic produce – if it has to travel a long way then does the organic issue become less relevant? The SF movement puts the emphasis on developing local producers and works with producers in



“Supermarkets won't have it all their own way in the next few years”

developing countries. It's not just about getting a fair price that's important, they want to see young farmers going back to the land and developing long-term projects. If it's done on a large scale, then it's questioning the sanity of a world where rising obesity coexists with famine and where people are sending things from one country to another to be packed and then sending it off to another to be consumed, and all the environmental costs that includes. These are the sort of issues that people will need to discuss in the years to come: what do we mean by fairness and sustainability if it includes food travelling a long way? There are numerous issues raised by this.

This year Gordon Ramsay called for restaurants to be forced to serve seasonal food. Do you support his call?

I support it in general. It's very difficult to do and I'm sure that his restaurants don't do that completely. But generally it's a good development and I think it's not just a reflection of his enlightenment but it reflects the way in which things have changed in a wider sense in

culture generally. I think his statement is in line with other developments by people like Jamie Oliver and with the arguments from environmentalists. There is much more awareness and people are questioning where food is coming from: it's started slowly but it's going to carry on. His statement reflects a wider concern for people wanting local produce. I think it reflects a growing desire on the part of the British public, in this case, for the pleasures of food and eating. In Britain we have quite a repressed view of pleasure. I think things are changing. People don't just want to work long hours, they want quality of life even if it means lower wages – they'll make that sacrifice if it gives them more time or enables them to eat well. I think there is that shift that some people are now thinking more about the quality of life and less about work.

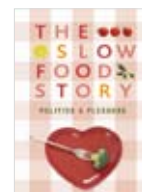
What is likely to be the next big issue related to food?

Obviously, the global food crisis is likely to continue and this will bring more scrutiny of government policies and hopefully more evaluation of our lifestyles. At a different

level I think we will see more demand for local markets. There might be a change in menus with more British food restaurants rather than gastro-style pubs and perhaps more interest in micro-breweries. Also, the allotment movement is developing and if young people can become interested in allotments and other things then we are on the road to significant changes.

Are there any plans for an OU course related to what we've discussed today?

I'm keen to develop a food, culture and society course over the next couple of years and I would like to hear what students thought and whether that is something that would interest them.



The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure is out now.

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Scholar's address

RIP religion?

Is religion really history? Or is there more than meets the eye? That's the question the OU's Professor of Religious History John Wolffe argues in his inaugural lecture, 'Is religion history?'

● **STUDYING THE HISTORY** of religion can help us make sense of the contemporary world, the OU's Professor of Religious History John Wolffe argues in his inaugural lecture, 'Is religion history?'

By the end of the 1980s there was a widespread perception that religion was "history" in the popular sense of that word: "forgotten and irrelevant".

Formal membership of the Church of England had declined in 50 years from 3.4m to 1.4m and redundant places of worship across the country were converted to new uses.

But during the past decade-and-a-half, says Professor Wolffe, there have been numerous signs that this view was misplaced. Churches were focal points for mourning the death of Princess Diana in 1997; the new Christian right is a major force in the US; Christianity has gathered strength in the southern hemisphere and east Asia; and Islam has become a major factor in the turbulent politics of west Asia and north Africa.

But it was the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7 that most emphatically reversed the perception that "religion is history" – even though most scholars of religion believe those events have little to do with mainstream religion.

There is now major public concern and anxiety over questions of religion, but there is also, says Professor Wolffe, a climate of "confusion and doublethink". Commentators disagree as to whether religion is in resurgence or decline, and even on the definition of religion. The present-day world "is collectively confused and



fearful about religious commitments and influences that it does not adequately understand. Actions intended to neutralise religious difficulties have a disconcerting tendency to inflame them further."

In this situation, he says, it will help us to understand that religion is history, not in the sense of being irrelevant, but in the more neutral sense of history as denoting past events. A historical perspective will give us a better and more balanced perception of religion's role in the contemporary world.

To take one example, Professor Wolffe says, studying anti-Catholicism in mid-19th-century Britain reveals striking parallels with present-day antagonism to Muslims. "Contemporary recognition of

complex and varied picture of church attendance. This "patchwork quilt" of congregations can only be understood by a detailed study of local history and circumstances. Local variation is still significant today, and overall statistics of Christian decline can obscure the numerous instances of successful, growing churches.

Professor Wolffe also argues that a long-term view of the relationship between religion and national identity throws light on some of the apparent contradictions and confusions of the current situation. "The most historically distinctive feature of Britain in our own time is not so much the decline of religion," he asserts, "but a sense of heightened tension, and sometimes confrontation, between the religious and the secular." So while organised

"Overall statistics of Christian decline can obscure instances of successful, growing churches"

the exaggerated and irrational nature of much Victorian antagonism to Catholicism should stimulate a caution towards similarly alarmist views of the future impact of Islam." And this, he says, applies not just to popular opinion and the media but also to the views of academic commentators like Samuel Huntington and his "clash of civilisations" scenario.

Historical legacies continue to exercise a significant influence on present-day religious behaviour. A study of the landmark 1851 Census of Religious Worship reveals a

Christianity may be in statistical decline, there is a greater assertiveness by both groups on opposite sides of the more polarised religious/secular divide – which makes religion more visible.

He concludes: "There is a significant potential role for history in facilitating a realistic response to contemporary religious challenges. Religion is history, but like history itself it is certainly not dead and buried, but very much alive and kicking."

You can view Professor Wolffe's lecture in full at <http://stadium.open.ac.uk>

Support

Studying isn't easy. In this section, we offer you support and guidance

Exam tips

How to fail your exam

As your parents may have told you, the only way to get you to do something is to tell you how **not** to do it. So as the exam season approaches, we give you a few tips on how to fail an exam...



● DO NOT EAT breakfast

Breakfast is said to be the most important meal of the day. Countless studies by very clever boffins (who have no doubt passed many exams, so are not to be listened to) have revealed that a good breakfast feeds the brain and leads to a better performance. So, if you're really serious about failing your exam, you must keep away from this evil meal on the morning of your exam!

Revise at the last minute

OK, so many of us have passed an exam by doing exactly this, so you have to approach this one very carefully. We recommend pulling an all-nighter revision

session the night before your exam, preferably with copious cups of coffee to aid you, ensuring you get absolutely NO sleep the night before. In fact, why not go the whole hog and almost 100 per cent guarantee failure by replacing that coffee with several pints of strong ale or large glasses of wine.

Turn up at the wrong exam

Or even better, the wrong test centre. As the old adage says, 'if you fail to prepare, prepare to fail', so avoid preparation at all costs. Do not take a map of the area with you, do not know where the car park is and do not know where the exam room is. Not only will you increase your chances of turning up at

the wrong place, if you do eventually find it, you'll be so stressed that you won't be able to focus. Perfect!

Don't bother reading the question on your exam paper

This is an easy one. It's the ultimate mantra of exam advice, drummed into us from an early age: 'You must take time to read each question.' But no, for those amongst us who dream of failing our exams, there's nothing we love more than writing down absolutely everything we learnt regardless of the question asked.

Spend more time answering the low mark questions

We're not talking brain science here, students. You have, say, four questions to answer in two hours. It goes without saying that you should spend three hours and 45 minutes answering the one with the lowest points, OK?

Do not give the impression you've read any course materials

This is a great way of winding up academics and examiners. They've put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into producing course materials, so they are not going to take kindly to exam answers that suggest a student has never in their life read these materials. So try to forget everything you've learnt and

read throughout your course and instead use, say, the last episode of EastEnders as a reference point. Or even something you heard Terry Wogan chatting about on Radio 2 that morning.

Bring the right (wrong) equipment

Pens really aren't that important. You can borrow one from other students, after all. I'm sure they'd welcome the break from concentration. Calculators that store text will go down a storm with invigilators. Hey, why not go the whole way and bring your laptop so that you can surf the web for answers? Oh, and remember to keep your mobile phone switched firmly ON.

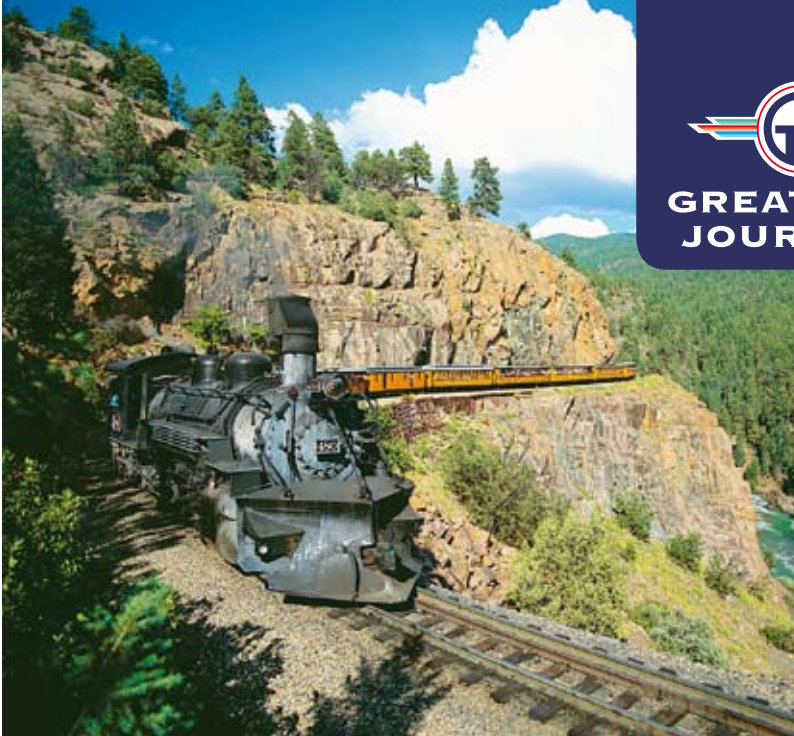
Don't leave any signs of your having been in that room

As any good OU spook knows, it's essential that you don't leave any trace of your presence in the exam room. Therefore, do not write your personal identifier and examination number on the answer book. The scripts are meant to be anonymous! And, of course, never ever tie your scripts together. We all know that this work is willingly undertaken by OU staff.

P.S. Please note that the author accepts no responsibility for the consequences of any mistakes that may arise as a result of a sense of humour failure.



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Digital Audio Project

Narrowing the great divide

Sesame discovers more about the OU's Digital Audio Project which will provide educational materials for students who are unable to read standard print

● THE DIGITAL AUDIO Project is managed by the Disabled Student Services (DSS) team at The Open University and part funded by Alumni donations. It is a three-year programme to investigate, create and distribute digital talking books (DTBs) by utilising the technological innovations created by the global standard – the Digital Accessible Information SYstem (DAISY). As a result, DSS will be able to provide a wide range of educational materials in a high-quality alternative format for students who are unable to read standard print

Audio recordings

Currently more than 100 OU courses are available from DSS as audio recordings, together with study guides, examination papers and other relevant teaching and learning materials. Recording academic course materials is a time and labour-intensive process: an entire OU course can take up to a year to record.

Analogue format

Approximately 60 per cent of the recordings are produced in an analogue format and distributed to students as audio cassettes. Even when produced to professional standards, with the document layout explained and cue and review markers used, this medium is difficult to navigate. Additionally, a 60-point OU course can require up to 150 audio cassettes.

DREAM/ReadOut technology

The remaining 40 per cent of recordings are produced using an 'in-house' digital recording technology – the DREAM (Digital Recording of Educational Audio Media

ReadOut system. Recently, however, it has become clear that the DREAM/ReadOut system has reached its upper operational limits.

The Digital Audio Project

DAISY DTBs delivered by the Digital Audio Project will offer a greatly improved learning experience. For students with a print disability, a DAISY DTB will allow access to complex OU educational materials by creating an accessible and navigable reading structure by comprehensively linking audio, all levels of text, and images.

Commercially available software also allows you to change the format and colour of the text, the background colour and the speed of audio voice, and even insert bookmarks and add notes. In addition, by utilising DAISY DTB technology DSS will have the ability to efficiently output mp3 files, podcasts, Braille and large print files.

Could you be a volunteer?

People kindly contribute their time by reading OU materials in the Audio Recording Centre in DSS. This is the preferred method of delivering text in an audio format, as the natural intonation of the human voice is favoured for study purposes. The downfall of this is that it can take months for the material from one course to be recorded. A way around this is to use synthetic voices (or a mixture of both), of which the team currently uses two: Daniel and Emily.

DSS has spent the first year researching and testing the potential and limitations of DAISY technology. They are now moving forward into trials, with student volunteers investigating and defining features of the assistive technology and helping to evaluate the final products. Andrew Thomas, Project Manager for the Digital Audio

Project, said: "The OU has an exciting opportunity to truly widen participation by providing print-disabled students with greater access to its publications in a wider variety of accessible formats. In addition, the benefits of DAISY technology are certainly promising in attracting non-disabled students who increasingly want to explore different methods of accessing educational materials."

To find out more visit www.open.ac.uk/disability/digitalaudioproject

The OU Supporters' Fund annually supports the work of the OU's disabled Student Services team. The Roger and Jean Jefcoate Trust, for example, made a generous donation to the OU's Audio Recording Centre and the DAISY Project.

To find out more or make a donation, visit www.open.ac.uk/fundraising

"The Digital Audio Project will offer a greatly improved learning experience for students with a print disability"



Employment tips

Employer focus



Ian Wright,
Metropolitan
Police
Careers Team

● What sort of career does the Met offer?

There are two strands to a career in the police: police officers and police staff (civilian staff). One of the biggest strengths of a career in the police is the number of different roles you might perform during your service. All police officers start the same way, out on the street dealing with the day-to-day policing matters, but after their two year probation is complete they can apply for specialist posts, such as Diplomatic and Royalty Protection, and Traffic. For police staff, the list is extremely varied as the Met also needs all the departments that any large organisation would require – such as HR, finance and resources. People are encouraged to move between departments to give them variety and interest throughout their careers.

Do OU students or graduates work for your organisation?

With more than 50,000 people working for us we have plenty of OU students and graduates in the organisation. We are obviously keen on OU people joining because the fact that they are studying with the OU demonstrates a drive and energy that we welcome.

What skills and attributes do you look for in applicants?

People applying to become police officers have to pass a competency-based assessment where they will be tested on the following: resilience, problem-solving, customer and community focus, personal responsibility, teamwork, communication and respect for race and diversity. Applicants for police staff



“One of the biggest strengths of a career in the police is the number of different roles you might perform”

positions will be assessed in different ways depending on the role they are applying for, but we are looking for people with good communication and team skills, and a wide cultural awareness.

How does your graduate programme work?

At present we have the High Potential Development Scheme that is aimed at tomorrow's senior officers. You don't have to be a graduate to apply to be on the scheme but, if successful, you would be required to study for a degree if you did not already have one. The scheme is tailored to individual requirements and people are encouraged to move laterally as well as up through the ranks.

What tips would you give to people wishing to join the Metropolitan Police?

Whatever role they are interested in, they should find out background information about the organisation: our website is a good place to start (www.metpolicecareers.co.uk).

If people would like an insight into the organisation, they could join us as a Volunteer Police Officer (Special Constable) or as a volunteer, details of which are available on the website. Both roles are unpaid but would be an excellent addition to a CV and provide practical experience of the organisation. People wishing to join as police officers should see our website for details of upcoming recruiting events.

What are the benefits of joining the Met?

We offer a range of benefits that include a choice of pension schemes, interest-free season ticket loan, generous holidays and access to an active sports and social club.

Our starting salary for 2008 is £29,847 on completion of initial 31 weeks' training. All police officers get free travel on buses, the London Underground, the Docklands Light Railway and national rail services within 70 miles of Charing Cross.

Career service news

New publications

The OU Careers Advisory Service has brought out new editions of some of its publications. This includes *The Career Planning and Job Seeking Workbook*, which take you in a progressive series of steps through the process of career review and choice. *Becoming a Teacher* has been updated to help students who are seriously considering a teaching career.

Website award

The OU Careers site recently won the HE Careers Service Website of the Year 2008, awarded by AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) and HECSU (Higher Education Careers Services Unit). Visit www.open.ac.uk/careers

Publications Survey

The Careers Advisory Service wants to hear from you if you have ever looked at any of the OU's careers publications. They want to hear from students, alumni, staff and enquirers to help find ways to improve them. A short questionnaire has been devised to help gather feedback at www.open.ac.uk/careers/publications.php

Survey on employers and older workers

A recent survey carried out by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development looked at what employers were doing to make themselves more appealing to older workers. While many had introduced initiatives, these were often ad hoc and only dealt with specific issues. It warns employers not to neglect the training and development needs of older workers, who have a great deal to offer, and may want to learn new skills in order to do this.

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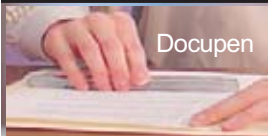


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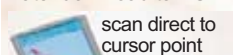
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