

sesame



The Open University

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Summer 2007 Issue 234

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Hot under the collar



THINGS are certainly heating up in the **sesame** offices and it's not just the summer temperatures! It seems the launch of our investigative series in the last issue really hit home. Since it was published, many of you have got in touch with not only your own stories about difficulties with high street banks but also a list of other topics we need to investigate.

One of these topics is plagiarism and in this issue the **sesame** spotlight swings over to the world of academic 'bootlegging'. Turn to page 12 to read more.

For those parents among you, the summer holidays can be a hard slog as your attentions are divided between the demands of your children and the demands of your studies. In this issue of **sesame**, we speak to three sets of parents about how they cope – and what advice they would offer to other OU students who have children at home.

We also welcome our new chancellor – Lord Puttnam – with a special interview, and talk to inspiring OU tutor and presenter Hermione Cockburn about her next presenting project on the award-winning OU/BBC *Coast* series.

So I hope you enjoy this issue and any activities you have planned for the summer!

Tracy Archbold, Editor

Time for celebration!

THIS is the time of year when the University is deep into degree ceremonies – with more than 30 ceremonies being held throughout the UK and further afield and over 11,000 graduates gaining degrees. It is a glorious and impressive sequence of celebration, managed by regional and central teams who bring each ceremony to life through a combination of flair and meticulous attention to detail. We don't have much ceremony at the OU but we certainly know how to do it well!

As a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, I have the extraordinary privilege of presiding at some of these ceremonies, meeting the students as they process across the stage, congratulating them and wishing them well. I also meet the special guests – local worthies, honorary graduates – and OU regional staff including the indefatigable regional directors.

Crowning event

Two memories always remain long after a ceremony is over. First: how special OU students are, with their everyday tales of adversity overcome, skilled management of multiple roles, modesty about their achievements. "How long did it take you?" I ask one of them. "Oh, six years, I'm afraid, but I did have a baby and change jobs along the way" she replies. "Are you going to have a rest now?" I ask another, who has just completed a Masters in Social Sciences. "Oh no", he replies, "I'm already enrolled for a PhD."

Second: how proud the region is of its students and how much it is the crowning event of the year, the place "where it all comes together" as one staff tutor put it. The special guests reinforce this, reflecting the links between the University and its local partners and supporters.

So good luck to all this year's graduates and students – and we hope to see you again soon.

Linda Jones
Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
Curriculum Awards

Helping hand

IS the cost of studying holding you back from learning more? You may be surprised to hear that from this September, if you study an OU undergraduate course in England and Northern Ireland and have a household income up to £30,000 (more if you have dependants) you could qualify for a financial award.

Financial support is also available to OU students in Wales with household incomes up to £26,000, and in Scotland for students with personal incomes up to £18,000.

In many cases, financial support can be

used towards your course fees (including resit fees); study expenses; computers or the cost of broadband; books or course materials; transport to tutorials or childcare costs.

Even if you are currently studying you may still be eligible to apply for a financial award retrospectively (at this year's rates) by contacting the Financial Support Team on 01908 653411 or visit www.openuniversity.co.uk/surprised for more information.

Hurry though – some of the funds are limited, so it pays to act early.

OU student 'Highly Commended'

OU student Andy Ross has won a 'Highly Commended' award at the SIE Student Enterprise Summit for his business idea.

The National Business Plan Competition is held by the Scottish Institute for Enterprise each year to foster talent from within Scotland's higher education institutions.

Andy's idea was of an environmental business – New Caledonian Woodlands Ltd – which is run on

social enterprise principles. The ultimate objective of his business idea is to purchase land which can be turned into a new nature reserve for Scotland through the income generated by the organisation.

Andy, who is studying towards a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Studies, said of the competition: "I'm so glad I've done it. It has given me confidence and shown me that if you want

something you have to set it within your sights and work towards your goal.

"The people advising us during the business plan process gave us really good advice and we are able to keep in contact with them. It was this access to expert help that made the difference. It doesn't really matter if you win or not. The whole experience was a prize in itself."

For more information go to www.sie.ac.uk



Andy (pictured top left)

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

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

He's done it!

Lenny Henry has successfully completed his BA (Hons) degree in English Literature. The comedian and actor took part in an Open University degree ceremony at The Barbican Centre in London, joining 900 other students who collected their awards.

Lenny said: "I am so proud that I have finally reached the graduation day for my BA (Hons) in English Literature. After six years of hard work, I can finally watch telly in the evening, go to the pictures. I can now read a book without having to put Post-it notes on every other page!"

Incredibly proud

"Hoorah! I'm also incredibly proud to be in such great company – when people have worked so hard like this, a ceremony like this is the ideal thing to celebrate their achievement."

Lord Puttnam, the new Chancellor of The Open University, presided over the ceremony. Lord Puttnam himself was installed at a ceremony at The Barbican Centre on Friday 27 April.

Lenny Henry has just completed the first leg of his 'Where You From?' UK tour, with more dates planned for the UK and Australia later this year.

He also hosted a BBC/Open University co-production for BBC ONE called *Lenny's Britain* which was aired in early June.

For more information log onto www.lennyhenry.com



You rate your courses experiences

THE End of Course Survey is carried out by the Student Statistics Team in the OU's Institute of Technology. 88 per cent of students who responded to the end of course survey in November 2006 said that their course had met their expectations and they were satisfied with their overall study experience with The Open University.

The results also revealed that OU students are highly motivated to gain an award, with 83 per cent reporting they were studying their course as part of a programme of study to achieve an OU qualification. The results from the survey also found that:

- 98 per cent of students were satisfied with course choice information in OU publications or OU websites, while 89 per cent were satisfied with advice and

guidance on course choice from an OU member of staff.

- 33 per cent of students found the amount of time spent studying their course was more than expected which is significantly lower than the figure reported in 2005; 72 per cent of students said they were able to keep up to date with the schedule in the course calendar.

- Teaching materials continue to be highly rated by students – 91 per cent of students were satisfied overall with the teaching materials provided on their course – in particular the role of printed teaching (94 per cent) and DVD/CD (80 per cent) material in helping them to learn effectively.

- 91 per cent of students received constructive feedback on their assessed

work and 88 per cent of students said the feedback was always prompt. 84 per cent of students were satisfied with the support provided by their tutor on the course.

Students on 162 courses responded to the survey with a response rate of 60 per cent for the newly designed and shorter survey, which was also offered online for the first time in 2006.

Shout about it!

Want to rave about an OU course you've enjoyed? Or have you got something to moan about? Make sure you send us your views by emailing sesame@open.ac.uk

IN BRIEF

Book launch

THE OU in Milton Keynes was the base for the launch of a new book, *Enhancing Social Work Management, Theory and Best Practice from the UK and the USA*, published by Jessica Kingsley and produced by academics at the OU and the University of Connecticut, USA. To find out more go to <http://www.jkp.com/catalogue/book.php/isbn/9781843105152>

University praised

THE University has been praised in *The Guardian's* new 'University Guide', which was published in May. The guide's comments include: "It might not be a typical university, but that doesn't stop The Open University from being at the forefront of academic life in this country."

Issue 233 competition winners

MRS S Deare from Suffolk was the lucky winner of the photographic competition we ran in the last issue. Amy Theerman from Leicester won the family ticket to the National Space Centre.

Czech and Slovak Republic agreements

THE OU has signed new partnership agreements in Czech and Slovak Republics. The deal will allow Open Management International (OMI), a management development organisation based in Slovakia, to present two OU Business School management courses – the Professional Diploma in Management and Professional Certificate in Management – through its network of centres in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Honour for OU's Trevor Herbert

TREVOR Herbert, Professor of Music and Arts Staff Tutor for Wales, received an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Music from HRH The Prince of Wales in May. The Fellowships are limited to four a year. Trevor Herbert, a former Foundation Scholar of the College, is regarded as the leading international authority on the cultural history of brass instruments.

Here comes the sun

THE extraordinary love-hate relationship of the British to the sun is explored in *Rise and Shine*, a new book by OU sociologist Dr Simon Carter. Beginning in the colonial era, when westerners were urged to wear thick pith helmets, spine pads and even dark underwear to ward off the tropical sun, he shows how in the 20th century sunlight became associated with health, leisure, beauty and even morality and manly virtues.

Dr Carter became intrigued by the topic while doing a research project on travel and health. He said, "When I talked to people about sun exposure they could reproduce the health advice very accurately, they knew the risks, but they said things like 'we don't feel we've had a proper holiday unless we get burnt'. This apparent contradiction seemed to need an explanation and it was this that led me to look at the history of sunlight'.

Holiday tan

The book sheds light on some fascinating, and some little-known, ideas and trends of the 20th century: the 'worthy tan', born of the growth of



Dr Carter explores the love-hate relationship with the sun

scouting and camping; the boom in 'heliotherapy' and 'actinotherapy' to treat scourges such as tuberculosis; the rise of movements such as the Sunlight League and the bizarre Men's Dress Reform League, linked to wider philosophies of social hygiene and eugenics.

And according to Dr Carter we still pay tribute to these outmoded beliefs and theories every time we congratulate someone on their holiday tan. "Old ideas don't just go away because something else comes along. A lot of the movements, like the

Sunlight League, died away, but their ideas were established very powerfully, and gained a relative independence."

He added: "I think there is a message for health educators who are telling us to avoid sunlight. If they want to change people's behaviour, they have to be aware of history, of how we got to where we are. Otherwise, the chances are they are on a hiding to nothing."

Rise and Shine: Sunlight, Technology and Health by Simon Carter is published by Berg. See www.bergpublishers.com

ALs named and praised

THE OU Teaching Awards took place on 30 April. The awards recognise outstanding contributions to meeting student needs, improving student retention and developing students' academic and learning skills.

The ALs who were given awards were:

Anne Armstrong, Christopher Ashley, Bärbel Brash, Audrey Brown, Kate Crawley R06, Lynne Dixon R05, Trevor Evans, Jo Haycock, Joseph Jennings, Alison McCaughan, Barbara Roberts and Catherine Wilkins.

OU Ethics Centre launches

THE OU launched a brand new Ethics Centre at its 'Ethics in Real Life' forum in May.

The new Ethics Centre will carry out research to clarify our understanding of key ethical concepts, design new courses to spread ethical understanding and promote public debate about the most pressing moral issues of our time.

Opening the forum, Vice-Chancellor Professor Brenda Gourley said her own experiences as a South African living under the "cruel and oppressive" apartheid regime, made her realise the responsibilities that universities have "to be beacons that reflect the very best of which the human spirit is capable".

Newly installed OU Chancellor Lord Puttnam launched an impassioned attack on the ethical standards of much of the contemporary media, which he said have led to an "Alice-in-Wonderland world in which facts are free but comments, attitudes

and, worst of all, prejudices remain almost sacred".

Sir John Drysdale, a director of the anti-corruption coalition Transparency International, highlighted the "baleful effect" of corruption. And Catherine Cameron, co-author of the Stern review on the

"The centre is setting up a directory of OU courses with an ethical component – 98 have been discovered so far"

economics of climate change, argued that climate change is the 'ethics in real life' issue facing the planet today, raising key ethical questions such as equity. Brad Hooker, Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Reading, and Jeremy Hunt MP also made interesting contributions.

Professor Tim Chappell, Director of Ethics Centre, invited everyone in the university with an interest in ethics to join and is also interested in hearing proposals for ethics

research. Four key areas have been highlighted: business; the environment; science; and childhood, education and moral development – but, said Tim, these are provisional "we will be interested to hear proposals in other areas". He added that the OU is a good place to be establishing a centre of excellence in ethics because it is founded on principles of social justice.

The Centre is setting up a directory of OU courses with an ethical component and a course on ethics is being developed in the Arts faculty, which is currently the Ethics Centre's main funder. An 'ethics at work' CPD course aimed at professionals in the workplace is also being explored. A complete ethics degree is "on the horizon" said Tim "but we want to see if the smaller initiatives work first."

More information about the Ethics Centre is available at www.open.ac.uk/ethics-centre

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WEB TOOLS GLOSSARY

Forums – These are online discussion spaces where you can write messages to the other members of your forum group and they pick them up and reply as needed. These normally focus on a specific topic. Forums are likely to be the most widespread web tool you'll use on courses.

Blog – A blog is an online journal where the most recent entry appears first. A blog entry is usually text but might also include images and links to websites. You might use this on a course to record your progress on a specific project.

Wiki – A wiki is an online document created by a group. You can easily add to or edit the text that is already there. The changes made by each contributor are recorded (see the case study below right).

ePortfolio (MyStuff) – This is like an online file-box which you can use to bring together all your learning and development work. It will then help you organise and reuse material for different purposes such as for an assignment or making your own CV. On some courses you will use an ePortfolio to create and store your notes and collect together work for accreditation or assessment.

SHARE YOUR ADVICE

HAVE you got any tips or advice to share with other students about making the most of online resources? If so, email sesame@open.ac.uk

New horizons

Discover more about The Open University's plans for a new virtual learning experience for you, its students

IT'S certainly an exciting time for The Open University in terms of its online developments. You'll have noticed that the OU is already offering you opportunities to do things online, moving away from letters and paper documents towards email and the internet.

And there have been some useful online services available via its StudentHome website, www.open.ac.uk/students, for a while now – for example, you may have had a chance to download etext versions of your course materials or checked your results online.

More is planned to enhance your studying experience. Through using the latest innovations in learning technology the OU is creating an integrated range of web tools and online services to support you in your learning. This will offer new ways for the OU community to work together. What will it mean for you? Some of the University's courses already make extensive use of online working. Over the next few years web tools will appear on courses across all subject areas. Full guidance on how to use these web tools will be provided. As it is an integrated environment, once you have used a specific web tool on one course, the next time you come across this tool on another course, it will normally work in the same way. In addition there also may be opportunities for you to continue using some of the tools for your personal learning.

And as most of the tools will be available from your web browser you'll normally no longer have to load any special software on your computer. For the future, although we have a way to go, we are looking ahead at ways we can provide you with learning in the format you prefer – perhaps you'd like to choose to receive podcasts of the course materials rather than work books or receive messages by text message rather than email. There are lots of exciting possibilities that creating a virtual learning environment will make possible in the years to come.

Look out for more news in future editions of **sesame**.



CASE STUDY

ONE of the OU's postgraduate courses, M883 *Software requirements for business systems*, has been an early adopter of the VLE. M883 involves teaching systematic gathering, recording, and communication of requirements of software systems. Software engineers often work remotely and wikis are increasingly being used by software engineers to work together collaboratively. In M883, students use wikis to engage in small group collaboration to emulate requirements engineering practice. The feedback from

students has been positive. One student said: "The collaborative activity allowed me to see how the others addressed this question and evolve my own contribution and understanding based on these." Using a wiki on M883 hasn't all been plain sailing. Working in a group activity online when you have never met the other members can be a challenge if you are not used to it. So a group blog is being added to allow students to get to know each other by posting pictures and introductions.

Feedback on eTMAs

Amanda Ryan, manager of assessment handling at the OU, writes about the feedback the team has received about eTMAs – and suggests ways in which you can have a go at using the system yourself

SINCE the beginning of January, over 95,000 TMAs have been submitted through the eTMA system – this may sound impressive, but it's only around 35 per cent of all of the TMAs received.

The OU has been encouraging students to use the eTMA system (where it's available for their course) by sending a flyer about eTMAs with returned marked hard copies TMA. On the reverse of the flyer is a questionnaire which asks for feedback about the eTMA system, and the team would like to thank all of those who have taken the time to complete and return this. All responses have been read and the team is taking action to address as many of the issues raised as possible.

User friendly

Some students have said how complicated the eTMA guide is – this document will be completely revised to make it more 'user friendly' and hope that this will be available from the beginning of 2008. Other students have said that their tutor has asked for hard copy because of problems that they are having with the eTMA system, so regions are being contacted to ensure that the tutors get the help they need to use the system.

And some students just don't want to use the eTMA system because they like the experience of printing their TMA, putting it into an envelope and taking it to the post office! It is recognised that not all students will opt to use the eTMA when there is a choice, but the University does want to make sure that where students want to use the system, they are able to.

Straightforward

Many students still distrust computers, especially with something as important as a TMA – if you're not confident that the system won't lose your work then why not try submitting a dummy TMA? All you need to do is put a few lines of text into a document and submit it through the eTMA system as TMA00 – dummy. Let your tutor know that you're doing this and ask them to put some comments on it and return it through the eTMA system. Then you can

practice collecting the TMA, opening it, and also make sure you can read your tutor's comments – this sometimes needs you to adjust the settings in your word processing package (the eTMA booklet has guidance on this). Hopefully this will show you how straightforward the system is to use – as one respondent said: 'I feel the system is very good – easy to use, quick, and you have confidence your TMA has been delivered'.

The system has recently been changed so that within around 30 minutes of submitting your eTMA, the system sends an email to your preferred email address (if you've given the University one) or to your FirstClass email account, to confirm that the system has received your eTMA. And once your marked eTMA is ready to collect, an email will be sent to the same email address to let you know.

"If you're not confident that the system won't lose your work then why not try submitting a dummy TMA?"

Feedback from students regarding the eTMA system have been taken into account





Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the focus of our investigative feature in this issue. How much of a problem is it in the UK, which companies seem to encourage it and what's the OU doing about it?

IMITATION may be the sincerest form of flattery, but deliberately copy something as a student and you could get thrown off your course. Plagiarism is a constant menace throughout higher education and while the vast majority of students of this cut-and-paste generation are heeding the warnings, a small minority of students in universities throughout the UK are continuing deliberately to copy work and pass it off as their own.

All universities have recently clamped down on the practice and over the past five years most, including the OU, have updated and clarified their rules regarding plagiarism.

But the problem for all education institutions is that internet technology makes it all too easy to do. Last year, **sesame** (issue 231) highlighted the rise in marked OU TMAs appearing for sale on internet auction site eBay. The University takes a dim view of this – both from the point of view of the potential it gives for cheating and the fact that, it claims, assignments marked by OU tutors automatically carry an OU copyright. Those caught selling TMAs on eBay can face disciplinary action from the University but many sellers claim they're doing nothing wrong.

sesame got in touch with a selection of these sellers to get their views. "I am selling the TMAs so other users can see exactly what the OU requires regarding content, layout and referencing," said one seller.

ARE YOU PLAGIARISING?

The OU's own plagiarism information for students advises you are in danger of committing an offence by:

- Using a choice phrase or sentence that you have come across.
- Copying word for word directly from a text.
- Paraphrasing the words from a text very closely.
- Using text downloaded from the internet.
- Borrowing statistics or assembled facts from another person or source.
- Copying or downloading figures, photographs, pictures or diagrams without acknowledging sources.
- Copying from the notes or essays of a fellow student.
- Copying from your own notes on a text, tutorial, video or lecture that contains direct quotes.

"Many people have been disappointed in their own 'marked' work and require information in order to amend their own procedures. The idea to sell this work came about after I bought someone else's TMA because of this exact scenario. I was very disappointed with my first marked TMA and needed direction in how to complete the others to OU's satisfaction.

"There is always concern that people may cheat, but I would like to think that anyone worth their salt will provide their own work and that the OU have measures in place that limit the scope for students attempting to submit duplicate work. I trust that most OU students are honest."

Essay mills

Another was more blunt: "Working on the premise of plagiarism as used by most people, every textbook is an invite to plagiarise and cheat – therefore every educational institution is promoting plagiarism. Of course this is a silly argument and therefore does not stand up when used to stop people sharing their skills and knowledge.

"I do not condone cheating. However, I also do not condone restrictions placed on people by powerful institutions. They should concentrate on catching the cheats themselves – we little people who sell are just like the institutions who sell their courses."

Honest potential buyers might think that it's surely technically legal for them to copy at least part of these TMAs in their own answer – as long as they have acknowledged where it comes from. But they'd probably think wrong. Fiona Duggan, head of advice and guidance at the government's JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) Plagiarism Advisory Service says: "Researching and referencing isn't just about using an idea from someone else, it's having the skill to research valuable information from a reputable source."

One answer to help combat plagiarism is, says Fiona, for tutors to set assignments without one clear right or wrong answer and more about the student being able to set out a cogent argument. "One of the 'best practice' elements on our websites includes such an assignment," she says. "Coincidentally it was one set by The Open University."

Yet even this will not stop one form of cheating. If a cheat is too lazy even to look on the internet, it's possible – and increasingly easy – to pay someone else to do ALL the work.

There's a growing band of copywriting businesses known as

'essay mills' which, for an appropriate fee, will research and write anything from a 1,000-word essay (£80-£100) to a full PhD thesis (a steal at £20,000). All these companies stress uncompromisingly that this is a service to provide students with research or revision material and that these pieces of work should under no circumstances be submitted as the students' own. That said, the general practice of buying and selling model essays does beg the question of who exactly would be willing to pay 20 grand for a PhD thesis to use it purely "for inspiration".

The fact is that essay mills and those who use them – no matter how genuinely honest their intentions – will always attract suspicion. It was presumably for this reason that only last month Google announced it would ban all advertisements for essay-writing services, adding it was "committed to maintaining high standards for the advertising we accept". The ban could effectively torpedo the industry at a stroke – to the unbridled anger of companies who maintain they are providing a genuine service for honest students, but to the inevitable delight of university vice-chancellors.

Those who do cheat are being thwarted – or at least their lives are made more difficult – by ever-increasing improvements in software. More than 80 per cent of UK universities (including the OU) and several others across the world have adopted Turnitin, a web-based computer software program operated on the JISC website which checks submitted documents against a database of billions of pages of current and archived material including student papers and journals. It then returns an 'Originality Report' citing how much of the work it finds to be likely to be the student's own.

But while this and similar software (the OU also uses a program called CopyCatch) is working successfully, the greatest chance of defeating the deliberate plagiarists is the shift in attitude to the problem over the past five years, says Fiona.

"When JISC was set up in 2002 all the emphasis in discussions was on catching people and dealing with student activity," she says. "Now it's moved on to a more holistic approach with a responsibility on tutors – in the way they design assignments – and ultimately institutions to take more responsibility for it."

A recent review recommended a more consistent OU approach to dealing with plagiarism. A team headed by Peter Taylor is drawing up a pilot study which could inform a new policy which, he said, would educate students as to what was acceptable. "There are some people who would deliberately cheat," he told the OU's associate lecturers' magazine *Snowball* in March. "But there are lots who end up accused of plagiarism just because of poor academic practice. We need to provide sufficient training and education to ensure they don't get into that position."

Tiny minority

Jenny Bull, head of examinations and assessment at the OU, added: "The OU has recently collaborated with a group of other UK universities to produce an online tutorial to help students to recognise and avoid plagiarism. This will be made available shortly to all OU students".

It's widely believed that most students who plagiarise do so unwittingly – because they simply don't understand the rules. A recent major report by the JISC, which explores innovative use of information technology in education and research, concluded that 'the bulk of plagiarism can be attributed to students who do not understand academic requirements'.

And then there are the biggest weapons that all universities have in the war on plagiarism – peer pressure, and the pride and satisfaction students take in their work being just that: their work. All universities, and JISC, believe deliberate plagiarists to be in a tiny minority for that very reason – almost all students are keen to learn and understand their subject by doing their own work.

WANT TO HELP WITH FUTURE INVESTIGATIVE FEATURES?

Fancy becoming a roving reporter for investigative articles in **sesame**? Or do you have any ideas for future articles? If so, get in touch with the **sesame** team by emailing sesame@open.ac.uk (with the subject line 'Investigative Features') or writing to 'Investigative Features', **sesame**, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA outlining why you would make a good investigative reporter (no phone calls please).



INTERESTING OR AMAZING?

THE challenge to 'share something interesting' first presented itself when my younger brother became the arrogant recipient and wearer of a *Blue Peter* badge. In the manner of big sisters, I was determined to outshine him. *Blue Peter* badges, I was told, were awarded for interesting letters. I had already tried competitions, and creative suggestions for using toilet roll tubes and sticky-backed plastic. No luck. Sadly the interesting letter was no more successful!

The attempt faded into insignificance and childhood proceeded with no more than the usual ups and downs of sibling rivalry. Forty years on I uncovered the said *Blue Peter* Badge amongst my parents' hoardings. The air of triumph and smug smile on my brother's face flashed instantly to mind, hotly pursued by the sense of indignation that he had achieved where I, though older and wiser, had failed.

Psychologists distinguish types of memory as short and long term, but whatever the label, it amazes me that a small white and blue piece of plastic holds the power to recall sensory experiences long buried in the detritus of years.

Judy Short is a 50-something IT tutor and about-to-be-grandmother. A176 *Start writing plays* has reawakened her interest in writing of all kinds.

Do you have a gripe or would you like to share something interesting? Send us an article of no more than 200 words to The Editor, **sesame**, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA or email sesame@open.ac.uk Include contact details and a daytime telephone number. We pay £50 for each contribution used.

Course results 2006

Below is **sesame's** guide to the results of most of the 30- and 60- point courses that ended in October 2006 – they do not include results of other completion periods earlier in the year and some very low population courses. Don't be put off by a low pass rate, as results vary from year to year and an aggregate figure gives little guidance to any individual's chance of success.

Key to abbreviations

- Fin Reg** Number of finally registered students on course
- Freg E/ECA (%)** Percentage of finally registered students examined/submitting end of course assessment (E/ECA)
- Freg pass (%)** Percentage of finally registered students who passed
- E/ECA pass (%)** Percentage of those examined/submitting end of course assessment who passed

† A103, DD121, DD122, MU120, MST121 and M150 have continuous assessment only on the course. The figures in the pass columns reflect those who passed on continuous assessment.

Some results still pending at time of press, resulting in minor discrepancies.

Course Code	Fin reg	Freg E/ECA (%)	Freg pass (%)	E/ECA pass (%)	GRADE			
					1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
A103	2414	89.5	65.7	73.4				73.4
AZX103	548	91.8	71.2	77.5				77.5
A207	662	66.2	60.0	90.6	8.4	25.1	37.0	20.1
A210	895	67.0	63.5	94.7	15.0	28.5	34.7	16.5
A211	492	57.5	54.9	95.4	8.1	39.2	35.7	12.4
A214	496	71.0	65.5	92.3	19.9	31.2	27.3	13.9
A215	2554	79.7	76.4	95.9	16.6	37.8	30.2	11.3
A216	745	64.2	60.9	95.0	13.0	34.5	31.8	15.7
A217	589	63.2	60.4	95.7	11.8	45.7	27.2	11.0
A218	341	71.8	67.4	93.9	9.0	32.2	33.1	19.6
A219	981	72.3	68.9	95.3	14.8	34.8	34.4	11.1
A220	730	52.5	47.8	91.1	13.1	29.8	27.9	20.4
A221	602	63.5	60.1	94.8	6.0	40.6	33.2	14.9
A296	381	54.1	50.1	92.7	48.5	21.4	13.6	9.2
A297	622	49.0	41.8	85.2	29.8	22.6	20.0	12.5
A300	509	82.7	74.7	90.3	16.9	28.0	28.5	16.9
AZX300	81	71.6	63.0	87.9	13.8	31.0	25.9	17.2
A354	487	65.5	64.3	98.1	10.0	34.8	39.2	13.8
A396	159	67.9	61.0	89.8	23.1	35.2	14.8	16.7
A424	212	80.2	79.2	98.8	20.6	27.1	34.1	17.1
A425	110	64.5	60.9	94.4	15.5	28.2	28.2	22.5
A430	81	70.4	70.4	100.0	19.3	38.6	35.1	7.0
A433	126	66.7	61.9	92.9	14.3	34.5	25.0	19.0
A811	59	79.7	79.7	100.0	19.1			80.9
A813	78	92.3	87.2	94.4	12.5			81.9
A817	134	85.1	82.8	97.4	31.6			65.8
A823	55	89.1	87.3	98.0	18.4			79.6
A824	65	76.9	70.8	92.0	4.0			88.0
A827	70	85.7	74.3	86.7	28.3			58.3
A837	12	91.7	75.0	81.8	18.2			63.6
A840	126	64.3	61.1	95.1	9.9			85.2
A841	95	73.7	62.1	84.3	11.4			72.9
A847	88	83.0	73.9	89.0	17.8			71.2
A850	144	61.8	52.1	84.3	11.2			73.0
A851	68	86.8	85.3	98.3	16.9			81.4
A857	32	75.0	68.8	91.7	20.8			70.8
A860	69	72.5	58.0	80.0	14.0			66.0
A861	45	82.2	71.1	86.5	18.9			67.6
A867	42	78.6	71.4	90.9	39.4			51.5
A870	76	60.5	59.2	97.8	13.0			84.8
A871	44	75.0	61.4	81.8	6.1			75.8
A877	39	82.1	79.5	96.9	28.1			68.8
AA300	248	75.8	70.2	92.6	5.9	28.7	35.6	22.3
AAZX300	75	62.7	57.3	91.5	2.1	23.4	48.9	17.0
AA302	310	73.9	68.1	92.1	15.7	22.3	34.9	19.2
AA303	305	78.4	72.8	92.9	14.2	32.2	24.3	22.2
AA305	321	77.6	69.8	90.0	12.4	32.5	32.1	12.9
AA306	301	85.7	83.1	96.9	14.7	33.7	33.3	15.1

Course Code	Fin reg	Freg E/ECA (%)	Freg pass (%)	E/ECA pass (%)	GRADE			
					1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
AA307	408	76.7	71.6	93.3	6.1	28.4	37.1	21.7
AA308	295	55.6	50.5	90.9	7.9	47.0	30.5	5.5
AA309	446	77.6	72.2	93.1	12.4	30.6	39.3	10.7
AA310	369	73.2	72.1	98.5	21.9	31.5	35.6	9.6
AA312	513	80.7	75.8	94.0	12.1	38.2	26.1	17.6
AA314	201	70.1	65.7	93.6	4.3	31.9	34.0	23.4
AA316	897	77.3	63.5	82.3	12.3	30.4	24.7	14.9
AA318	238	81.9	78.6	95.9	17.4	46.2	22.1	10.3
AA810	195	70.8	65.1	92.0	15.2			76.8
AA820	139	52.5	48.9	93.2	16.4			76.7
AD317	340	80.9	78.8	97.5	7.3	38.5	37.5	14.2
AS208	248	67.3	64.1	95.2	18.6	31.7	32.3	12.6
AT308	222	79.3	68.5	86.4	11.4	32.4	31.8	10.8
AXR271	94	74.5	71.3	95.7	17.1	42.9	28.6	7.1
AXR312	168	75.6	73.2	96.9	11.8	44.9	29.1	11.0
B200	1000	51.8	44.0	84.9	6.2	15.3	34.9	28.6
B202	615	60.7	54.3	89.5	5.6	26.5	23.3	34.0
B300	386	70.2	52.1	74.2	5.2	27.3	24.0	17.7
B615	510	75.7	65.3	86.3				86.3
BYN615	90	76.7	70.0	91.3				91.3
BZL615	16	62.5	56.2	90.0				90.0
BZX615	81	63.0	43.2	68.6				68.6
BZXN615	26	76.9	76.9	100.0				100.0
B680	556	61.0	33.8	55.5	7.1	25.1		23.3
B700	549	74.5	67.8	91.0	4.6	29.8		56.5
B713	452	79.6	65.0	81.7	2.2	25.3		54.2
B820	559	80.3	68.9	85.7	1.3	10.0		74.4
B821	462	78.6	65.4	83.2	6.6	13.5		63.1
B822	421	90.7	87.6	96.6	3.1	14.9		78.5
B825	366	86.9	78.1	89.9	1.9	12.9		75.2
B830	187	89.8	85.0	94.6	3.0	12.5		79.2
BM240	23	69.6	30.4	43.8	6.2	6.2	12.5	18.8
D218	678	59.4	52.5	88.3	7.2	29.3	32.0	19.9
D315	825	68.8	61.2	88.9	5.1	20.8	33.6	29.4
D317	1977	71.3	67.1	94.2	14.8	32.9	30.6	16.0
D318	267	78.3	73.8	94.3	9.6	39.7	34.9	10.0
D319	257	72.0	66.9	93.0	13.5	39.5	31.4	8.6
D820	438	60.5	51.8	85.7	8.3			77.4
D830	97	76.3	74.2	97.3	8.1			89.2
D832	63	79.4	76.2	96.0	26.0			70.0
D844	257	79.4	73.2	92.2	2.9			89.2
D850	77	68.8	59.7	86.8	22.6			64.2
D852	49	87.8	77.6	88.4	14.0			74.4
D860	120	73.3	72.5	98.9	8.0			90.9
D864	115	76.5	75.7	98.9	1.1			97.7
DA204	476	61.3	58.6	95.5	6.2	30.8	43.5	15.1
DD100	3401	89.7	59.5	66.4				66.4
DD121	2067	92.0	60.0	65.2				65.2

Course Code	Fin reg	Freg E/ECA (%)	Freg pass (%)	E/ECA pass (%)	GRADE			
					1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
DD200	249	66.3	62.7	94.5	15.2	40.6	31.5	7.3
DDZX200	73	72.6	65.8	90.6	24.5	50.9	11.3	3.8
DD201	532	67.3	62.4	92.7	8.4	30.7	34.1	19.6
DD202	611	57.9	51.1	88.1	5.9	29.4	29.4	23.4
DD203	428	66.4	59.3	89.4	5.6	33.8	33.5	16.5
DD205	368	75.5	74.5	98.6	13.7	37.4	35.3	12.2
DD303	1337	79.4	75.7	95.3	6.9	47.6	31.9	8.9
DD304	552	82.4	80.8	98.0	10.3	48.8	33.8	4.8
DD305	538	76.0	65.6	86.3	8.6	24.0	39.4	14.4
DSE212	4049	58.7	51.6	87.9	13.6	24.1	34.2	15.9
DT840	345	69.9	64.3	92.1	6.6			85.5
DU301	555	80.0	77.3	96.6	9.9	34.5	41.0	11.3
DU310	470	79.8	77.9	97.6	8.3	37.1	41.1	11.2
DXR220	170	79.4	67.1	84.4	5.2	28.9	37.0	13.3
DXR222	1066	89.3	81.8	91.6	6.6	36.3	35.6	13.0
E111	361	77.6	69.5	89.6				89.6
E115	416	70.7	69.2	98.0				98.0
E123	1452	74.4	60.4	81.1				81.1
E124	1196	77.2	68.9	89.3				89.3
E230	241	73.0	70.1	96.0	10.8	35.2	35.8	14.2
E243	524	67.9	66.2	97.5	10.7	39.3	35.1	12.4
E301	630	77.8	73.0	93.9	11.8	33.3	34.7	14.1
E303	376	61.7	59.3	96.1	15.9	35.3	30.2	14.7
E801	323	74.9	62.8	83.9				83.9
E804	288	69.8	54.9	78.6				78.6
E831	143	76.9	66.4	86.4				86.4
E835	208	76.9	70.7	91.9				91.9
E836	208	78.4	75.0	95.7				95.7
EZX836	105	77.1	72.4	93.8				93.8
E841	200	70.0	58.5	83.6				83.6
E844	195	82.1	74.9	91.2				91.2
E845	166	70.5	59.6	84.6				84.6
E848	105	84.8	76.2	89.9				89.9
E849	394	84.3	79.9	94.9				94.9
E858	20	30.0	25.0	83.3				83.3
E859	153	89.5	83.0	92.7				92.7
ED209	2729	62.8	54.8	87.3	13.2	24.3	32.1	17.6
ED840	446	78.7	65.9	83.8				83.8
EK310	629	75.0	64.4	85.8	3.2	29.9	35.6	17.2
H804	43	93.0	83.7	90.0	7.5			82.5
H805	21	81.0	81.0	100.0	17.6			82.4
H806	28	78.6	75.0	95.5	9.1			86.4
H807	46	76.1	71.7	94.3	8.6			85.7
H850	57	80.7	59.6	73.9				73.9
K100	2348	61.2	57.2	93.5	15.4			78.1
KYN100	240	96.2	94.2	97.8	22.5			75.3
KYP100	43	74.4	74.4	100.0	28.1			71.9
KZX100	365	53.4	49.3	92.3	13.8			78.5
KYN107	212	89.2						

Course Code	Fin reg	Freg E/ECA (%)	Freg pass (%)	E/ECA pass (%)	GRADE			
					1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
S278	383	71.3	63.7	89.4	13.6	23.8	31.5	20.5
S282	503	57.9	47.9	82.8	24.7	29.2	16.5	12.4
S283	454	65.6	61.9	94.3	11.7	30.9	29.5	22.1
S320	662	67.1	55.1	82.2	5.9	23.2	36.3	16.9
S328	354	75.1	67.2	89.5	8.6	32.0	33.1	15.8
S330	664	65.2	52.6	80.6	8.3	25.4	27.0	19.9
S339	449	77.3	68.4	88.5	19.0	23.3	30.5	15.6
S342	192	63.5	52.1	82.0	29.5	25.4	13.1	13.9
S343	237	64.6	57.8	89.5	22.2	32.7	25.5	9.2
S377	379	59.1	46.4	78.6	7.1	21.9	22.8	26.8
S381	322	61.2	51.9	84.8	17.3	26.4	22.3	18.8
S802	70	81.4	67.1	82.5	21.1	17.5	43.9	
S804	55	87.3	74.5	85.4	12.5	22.9		50.0
S807	84	77.4	77.4	100.0	38.5	43.1		18.5
S809	60	71.7	63.3	88.4	9.3	41.9		37.2
S810	29	89.7	79.3	88.5	26.9	34.6		26.9
SD226	1735	65.5	61.4	93.8	15.5	24.8	34.4	19.1
SD329	558	68.1	62.0	91.1	20.8	27.1	26.3	16.8
SD805	206	75.7	68.4	90.4	6.4	30.1		53.8
SEH806	96	86.5	85.4	98.8	9.6	24.1		65.1
SK120	369	62.3	61.0	97.8				97.8
SMK184	208	43.3	40.4	93.3				93.3
SMT359	380	57.1	46.6	81.6	20.7	16.1	20.3	24.4
SMXR359	134	84.3	77.6	92.0	36.3	35.4	14.2	6.2
SXG390	133	75.9	73.7	97.0	24.8	33.7	30.7	7.9
SXM390	58	82.8	81.0	97.9	33.3	31.2	27.1	6.2
SXN390	93	86.0	78.5	91.2	12.5	26.2	30.0	22.5
SXP390	52	78.8	75.0	95.1	29.3	24.4	29.3	12.2
SXR103	975	91.4	85.6	93.7				93.7
SXR205	164	86.6	77.4	89.4	7.7	37.3	32.4	12.0
SXR207	237	90.7	79.3	87.4	6.0	41.9	26.5	13.0
SXR216	167	89.2	82.6	92.6	16.1	32.9	31.5	12.1

Course Code	Fin reg	Freg E/ECA (%)	Freg pass (%)	E/ECA pass (%)	GRADE			
					1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)
SXR260	300	91.0	84.3	92.7	31.1	35.9	13.6	12.1
SXR270	256	89.5	84.8	94.8	34.5	36.7	17.0	6.6
SXR339	200	96.5	90.0	93.3	9.3	32.6	31.1	20.2
SXR342	55	90.9	80.0	88.0	32.0	36.0	20.0	0.0
SXR343	65	81.5	76.9	94.3	37.7	47.2	7.5	1.9
SXR374	96	85.4	80.2	93.9	7.3	20.7	42.7	23.2
SXR375	90	91.1	84.4	92.7	7.3	28.0	36.6	20.7
SXR376	94	91.5	87.2	95.3	5.8	29.1	40.7	19.8
T172	592	63.3	61.5	97.1	19.5			77.6
T173	367	59.9	55.3	92.3	20.5			71.8
T175	1383	64.4	61.7	95.8				95.8
T205	395	61.5	56.5	91.8	10.7	27.6	34.2	19.3
T206	429	73.9	71.3	96.5	15.1	30.6	37.5	13.2
T207	327	67.3	59.3	88.2	11.8	36.4	18.6	21.4
T209	850	71.5	64.7	90.5	11.2	30.1	28.5	20.7
T210	275	64.7	59.6	92.1	3.9	23.0	42.7	22.5
T211	439	68.3	65.4	95.7	20.0	33.3	28.0	14.3
T224	750	61.9	53.6	86.6	11.2	28.4	26.3	20.7
T305	641	74.6	65.5	87.9	12.8	27.6	27.2	20.3
T306	337	62.0	60.8	98.1	6.7	46.9	23.4	21.1
T307	764	83.0	81.8	98.6	25.1	35.2	28.9	9.5
T308	198	73.7	69.7	94.5	12.3	43.2	23.3	15.8
T356	182	76.4	66.5	87.1	12.2	31.7	20.9	22.3
T396	563	54.4	49.9	91.8	15.7	30.4	26.1	19.6
T402	108	87.0	80.6	92.6	13.8	29.8	38.3	10.6
T450	125	88.0	80.0	90.9	17.3	32.7	24.5	16.4
T802	69	69.6	65.2	93.8	10.4	27.1		56.2
T839	29	79.3	75.9	95.7	30.4	47.8		17.4
T840	165	79.4	71.5	90.1	2.3	40.5		47.3
T842	35	80.0	51.4	64.3	0.0	7.1		57.1
T846	100	73.0	56.0	76.7	5.5	28.8		42.5
T850	38	71.1	52.6	74.1	7.4	25.9		40.7
T851	31	67.7	64.5	95.2	4.8	61.9		28.6
T852	31	87.1	87.1	100.0	25.9	33.3		40.7
T853	37	75.7	56.8	75.0	0.0	10.7		64.3
T862	43	83.7	69.8	83.3	2.8	25.0		55.6
T863	47	76.6	68.1	88.9	16.7	38.9		33.3
T882	24	70.8	70.8	100.0	17.6	29.4		52.9
T883	154	85.1	79.9	93.9	2.3	11.5		80.2
TA225	370	50.3	42.2	83.9	15.1	28.0	24.2	16.7
TM421	127	70.1	63.8	91.0	5.6	46.1	24.7	14.6
TM422	189	63.5	59.3	93.3	2.5	34.2	30.8	25.8
TM423	148	76.4	75.7	99.1	8.8	41.6	38.9	9.7
TM426	58	82.8	77.6	93.8	6.2	45.8	31.2	10.4
TM427	96	60.4	52.1	86.2	5.2	37.9	22.4	20.7
TU870	137	73.0	68.6	94.0	9.0	57.0		28.0
TU871	136	74.3	72.8	98.0	11.9	47.5		38.6
TUXX871	29	75.9	65.5	86.4	4.5	18.2		63.6
TU872	70	82.9	74.3	89.7	3.4	34.5		51.7
TU874	43	81.4	72.1	88.6	17.1	45.7		25.7
TUXX874	18	88.9	83.3	93.8	6.2	43.8		43.8
TU875	52	84.6	84.6	100.0	13.6	56.8		29.5
TXR174	155	90.3	87.7	97.1				97.1
TXR220	132	91.7	90.9	99.2	37.2	49.6	10.7	1.7
TXR248	143	92.3	90.2	97.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	97.7
U205	499	61.1	50.7	83.0	10.5	24.6	25.9	22.0
U210	919	62.0	54.8	88.4	8.9	22.8	42.1	14.6
U212	1015	73.2	66.6	91.0	2.4	24.2	44.7	19.7
U213	612	69.1	62.4	90.3	16.8	27.9	28.1	17.5
U216	853	68.2	65.4	95.9	6.5	27.8	36.1	25.4
U316	462	75.3	72.7	96.6	12.1	52.9	25.6	6.3
W100	2115	55.7	51.7	92.8				92.8
W200	657	62.1	49.3	79.4	16.7	20.6	26.7	15.4
W201	628	77.2	64.5	83.5	12.6	25.8	28.5	16.7
W221	20	80.0	10.0	12.5				12.5
W222	151	72.8	64.2	88.2	20.9	20.0	23.6	23.6
W300	610	80.7	56.9	70.5	6.3	19.7	22.6	22.0
W301	503	80.3	69.2	86.1	25.7	33.4	21.3	5.7
Y153	311	57.2	55.0	96.1				
Y154	400	54.2	46.5	85.7				
Y156	862	55.9	49.2	88.0				
Y157	577	56.2	54.4	96.9				
Y158	532	53.4	47.6	89.1				
Y159	642	52.2	43.8	83.9				
Y160	622	60.5	51.4	85.1				
Y162	423	67.1	61.7	91.9				



Getting behind in your studies

One of the things that students worry about most is falling behind. The OU's Student Services Manager (Advice & Support), **Steve McDowell**, answers some questions about this

I have fallen behind on my course and won't be able to finish my TMA by the cut-off date. What should I do?

Speak to your tutor as soon as possible and before the cut-off date for the TMA. Tutors know all about the courses that they teach and may be able to suggest ways of catching up. You might also be able to negotiate a short extension. However, you need to make sure that this won't put you behind for the rest of the course.

I will be on holiday when a TMA is due. What can I do about this?

Speak to your tutor immediately. Can you put in some extra work before your holiday and submit it before you go – or so that it is nearly finished when you return?

Is it a good idea to submit a TMA even though it is incomplete, so that I don't fall behind?

This might help, but you should make some checks first. If the parts you have completed carry most of the marks, you might achieve a good enough score without the parts you haven't done. Some TMAs are weighted heavily and the score you achieve for them will have a major impact on the final grade for the course. Some TMAs have a threshold: you must reach a minimum score in order to pass the course. Look at the bottom of the study calendar for the course to check these details.

Is it a good idea to skip a TMA so that I can catch up?

You should be very careful before deciding to do this. Some courses allow 'substitution' of up to one TMA. This means that the lowest score is automatically replaced by a weighted average of the other assessments. The study calendar will tell you which (if any) assessment can be substituted. Remember that assessments are vital parts of your learning, so missing

one will also mean missing some of your interaction with the course content and missing feedback. If you miss a TMA which has a threshold, you will fail the course! Check carefully and consider speaking to your tutor and/or a regional adviser.

How can I be more effective at taking in the material during a study session?

Try to study in several shorter sessions, rather than one long one. People can only concentrate hard for relatively short periods. An hour of continuous study is a long time! If you can study for a short time, then do a mundane task for a break, your mind will continue to think about your studies: you may even have some revelations about your course while washing up! Also think about the time of day when you are studying. Is it a time when you are most active mentally?

I keep forgetting the dates for doing important things for the course. How can I remember?

This information is on the study calendar

Find times to study that suit you best



which is sent out with the first mailing for each course. It is also on your StudentHome web page. Pin a copy of this calendar on the wall next to where you study and make a habit of checking it regularly. Copy any vital dates onto all other calendars or diaries you use at home or at work. Use any electronic means you have (such as electronic diaries or Microsoft Outlook) to set alarms to remind you of these dates.

I'm taking two courses and I keep confusing important dates for them. How can I avoid this?

Timetable frequent 'review' sessions for each course – at least once a week. Use these sessions just to check progress on each course. Practise changing course 'hats' so that you make sure you give dedicated attention to each course at regular intervals.

Where can I find out more about managing my time?

Look at the web page at www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy This includes a section on effective study.

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Meet the parents

Tens of thousands of OU students are parents who have to juggle looking after their children with studying. How do they cope?

SCHOOL'S out for summer and millions of children are rejoicing in six long weeks of holidays, trips out and looking to their parents for lots of other ways to entertain them. Which is okay – unless Mum or Dad has got a vital TMA deadline approaching.

So how can you juggle the often immediate needs of a family with the effort, concentration and time required to succeed at an Open University course? **sesame** spoke to a few parents about how they managed ...

Having a baby

"My children were six and four when I started my first OU course," says Lin White, who achieved her BSc (Hons) in Computing last year. "I knew it would be a challenge to do that and give them sufficient time so I started with a 30-point course to see how my time management worked out.

"Most of the time it was okay, as I did much of the study in the evening after they'd gone to bed. So I decided to do a 60-point course for my second year – but then discovered I was pregnant!"

Not only that, but Lin actually had the baby six weeks before her

final exam. "That disrupted studying a bit!" she says. "But I was still able to do it while the baby was asleep and the other two were at school.

"But when the exam came, I was pleased that you don't have to stay to the end if you've finished (unless there are 15 minutes or less to go). I rushed through the questions and left early to go home and feed my baby!"

School holidays are a particular challenge, especially when the family goes away. "During the summer I've studied in the local library while the elder two were at holiday club and the youngest was asleep in his pushchair," says Lin, of Herne in Kent. "I've studied at children's indoor playgrounds while the kids played and, yes, I have studied on holiday."

But the place Lin found most strange to study was at her son's school – where she herself used to be a pupil. "One of my boys had after-school activities at my old secondary school, so I sat and worked in the entrance hall while waiting for him.

But Lin is happy to keep combining her family and study time – she's currently following up her degree with an OU English literature course, and believes it is important that the children –

now 15, 13 and eight – see her working hard academically. "I also think I'm setting a good example to my children, as they see learning doesn't stop when you leave school."

Lin's tips for parents

Have other children around – either brothers and sisters or their friends. They'll happily entertain each other while you can snatch a few minutes of reading!

When a child is ill

Geoffrey Ward, who achieved his physics degree while looking after his three children, says organisation helps to keep a home and an OU course running side by side – until one of the kids is ill.

"My eldest son has haemophilia so a bleed can keep him off school. The key was trying not just to keep up with studies, but to stay ahead of the timetable. If one of the children was ill, I'd know I wouldn't be able to get any studying done that day."

Geoffrey, 46, took the household reins while his wife Eileen worked as a primary school teacher. He gave up a job in the graphic design industry to train to become a teacher himself and the first step was his OU degree.

"I graduated in 2001, got my honours in 2002 and then did my PGCE," he says. "It was all about getting into a routine of studying and running the home. When I first began, our youngest, Clara, was a baby. As she grew older and more independent, and became more mobile, it also made getting time to myself a little bit more difficult!

"But you plan," says Geoffrey, who lives in Beckenham, Kent. "And it was very handy that the residential schools coincided with the school summer holidays when my wife was off work. I'm proud to say I was able to cope with it, with the support of my family, and I didn't need a single TMA extension!"

And those years of application mean Geoffrey, whose children are now 15, 13 and 10, is now seeing the rewards. "I now teach general science key stage three to children in years seven, eight and nine," he says. "I've been doing it for about 18 months. I really enjoy it and all the study has certainly been worthwhile.

"The great thing is that I was able to undertake this whole career change and find a job I really wanted to do – all while being able to watch my kids grow up. It's been excellent."

Geoffrey's tips for parents

Make the most of the time you know you'll definitely be able to study because then the work's done and your plans aren't thrown by the unpredictable nature of family life. Although this is easier said than done, try to stay a step ahead with your studies.

Coping with four children

Kathleen Johnson warns fellow parents not to be afraid to use the flexibility of OU learning to their advantage. "I had three children when I started my degree, and gave birth to a fourth halfway through," she says. "So I had four boys under eight, and I was doing a degree, and I was working as a childminder as well!"

"Sometimes it did get a bit too much and I got a couple of extensions on my assignments, and was even able to take a year out in the middle. It's something I'd never have been able to do at a brick university, so I'm very grateful for the OU's way of teaching."

Kathleen recalls the earlier years of her study being easier "simply because the children were younger and had earlier bedtimes!"

"As they got older they stayed up later and I had to fit it all in when they went to bed. Unfortunately I was on to levels two and three then, so not only was I finding it more difficult to fit in, but the subject matter was getting harder!"

"There were some times when I would be working long into the night on a TMA if a deadline was approaching – and then have to be up bright and early when the kids woke up, which was usually from around 6am. Then I'd be getting them ready and doing the school run – and they didn't all start school at the same time!"

Kathleen, 46, who is originally from New Jersey, was keen to study with the OU because she began a degree in the States but never completed it. "I came to Britain on a year's student exchange, met my husband and never went home!"

That same husband has, she says, been happy to take on childcare duties when she's needed him to. And the result is a BSc in Natural Sciences and four children now fast entering their teens.

And have her efforts inspired her children to follow in her footsteps? "I'm not sure about that," she says. "It took them a long time to understand the concept of homework ...!"

Kathleen's tips for parents

If you find you're struggling to do everything, don't be afraid to ask for help from the OU. Taking on a degree while raising kids is hard work – but every bit of it is worth it!

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No stopping her!

Back in the winter of 2005, **sesame** spoke to the OU's very own tutor-turned-presenter, Hermione Cockburn, about being the new face of TV series *Rough Science*. Well, it seems there's no stopping the S216 *Environmental science* tutor after a recent stint presenting the third series of the award-winning OU/BBC series, *Coast*. We recently caught up with her

So Hermione, I bet you're delighted to be working on *Coast*?
I loved presenting *Coast* as it's a programme I've wanted to work on for some time. I'm presenting three stories in this year's series and one of the stories is about secret WWII listening stations on the Norfolk coast. It was fascinating to meet an elderly woman, Joy Hale, who'd actually worked there and hear her stories firsthand. My grandmother had been a WREN like Joy, but had worked as a cipher officer – the next link in the chain of intelligence gathering. It was a poignant story to present and I'm pleased that almost forgotten pieces of history like this can be heard by a wider audience and preserved by *Coast*.

***Coast* explores some truly stunning landscapes. Which landscapes have you explored in your academic life?**

I'm very lucky because I've undertaken fieldwork in some amazing landscapes from the Antarctic to Africa and Australia. Namibia in southern Africa is my favourite place – it has stunning desert landscapes that are very alien, and more open than most. My favourite pieces of coast in the UK are the beaches of the Hebridean Islands. Having said that, living in Edinburgh means I'm pretty spoilt with some beautiful spots along the East Lothian coast including Coldingham Bay where my husband proposed.

How did you get into TV presenting?

I've always had an ambition to work in science communication – whether that be in lecturing or through the media. After studying science to PhD level and working at the Our Dynamic Earth attraction in Edinburgh with another OU academic, Dr Stuart Monroe, I won the BBC Talent Science on Screen competition in 2002. It was great fun and I met quite a few people as a result of that – for example, the director of *Rough Science*. Since then, my contacts have led me to getting presenting jobs. My big break came with *What the Ancients Did for Us*, then *Rough Science*. I also work behind the scenes quite a lot as an expert contributor for TV and radio programmes, so this has helped a lot.

What advice would you give to any aspiring TV presenters?

My interest wasn't in being a TV presenter, but in communicating science, so my advice for anyone wanting to get into factual presenting is to have an obvious desire to communicate a specialist subject that you're passionate about. You also need a natural curiosity and the perseverance to spend lots of time developing ideas.

How do you feel female scientists are represented on TV?

It can be frustrating seeing the differences in how female scientists are portrayed on TV compared with male scientists. For a start, the female scientists are younger and, dare I say it, more attractive than their male presenting counterparts! And in the

science world itself, I've found there are fewer women, particularly as you climb the career ladder. But I don't want to sound negative because there's so much opportunity out there. Excellent initiatives such as the OU course – *T160 Science, engineering and technology: a course for women returners* – and the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science are there to help. Science may suffer from a certain stigma, but don't let that hold you back because it's not necessarily always true.

What are you working on at the moment?

I'm currently working on *The Secret Life of Reservoirs*, a three-part series which I'm presenting on BBC Radio 4 which will be broadcast in July. The research I've done for it has thrown up some really interesting stuff. Another recent project I've worked on is the regional programmes for BBC ONE Scotland for *The Nature of Britain* (another OU co-funded TV series) which will be out in the autumn some time. All quite inspiring, and nice and local! I'm also getting involved in some *Coast* outreach events for later in the year.



**Rob Sibthorpe**

ROB is a psychology tutor in Region 06. He has been a tutor for over ten years, currently on DSE212 *Exploring psychology* and DD100 *An Introduction to the social sciences: understanding social change*.

"The key to being a good tutor is being receptive to the different needs that different students have, being as flexible as possible.

The many challenges facing a tutor include getting the comments right on PT3 Forms (used to submit TMA scores and comments). Surprisingly, the essays that are most difficult to mark are the best ones. For example, if I give a score of 95, I need to explain what the student could have done to get the extra five points.

I think it's important to say that most students don't realise that if they are struggling on their course, there's help out there for them. For example, one student of mine asked for an extension due to personal problems and was worried about getting thrown off the course! They didn't know just how much the OU is willing to help with difficulties.

A good tutor needs to be hot on turnaround times, giving feedback on assignments as early as possible. The most important thing we can do for students is not just help them to learn, but also how to think. My advice to students is to maintain regular contact with us.

The best bit about being a tutor is the great thrill you get when students respond to your feedback, and you start seeing it come through in their style and approach."

Playing a pivotal role

Associate lecturers play a crucial role in your time studying with the OU. **sesame** explores how the student/tutor relationship works

THERE'S a reason why The Open University likes to use the phrase 'supported open learning' about its style of teaching. Not only do students have the freedom to learn in their own time but there is also a plethora of people out there to support you during your studies. And the OU associate lecturer (also known as an AL or tutor) plays a pivotal role in this support.

ALs offer support to students via teaching and assessment (by post or online); individual contact by phone, post or email; or group tutorials and day schools (face to face or online).

Communication

It's essential that you be proactive about maintaining contact with your tutor, ensuring that you let them know about your needs and requirements.

If you're a new student, by now, you should have had a letter from your regional centre giving details of your tutor, and your tutor will write to you and/or email you via your OU mailbox or, more recently, your home email address. You will also find tutor details on your StudentHome page.

Communication in the first phase of study is essential. A proportion of students will be new to higher education or may not have studied for some time. Some may suffer a crisis of confidence in their ability to successfully complete course activities and assignments and may decide to withdraw from their course. It is therefore important that you receive support from your AL in the lead up to the submission of the first assignment to help you to continue your studies.

Email and the internet are continually opening up new possibilities, changing the way students and tutors communicate with each other so this should make it even easier for you (see page 8 of this issue about new online advances).

But remember – ALs work part-time and often fit their OU work in with other work and family commitments, so keep this in mind when trying to get in touch with them. Equally, it's important that they make it clear at the start of the course how and when they can be contacted.

It's also essential that you tell your tutor information about any special needs you have or if you plan to take an extended period away from home during the course. Or information as simple as why are you studying – personal or career development? Plus whether you're interested in making contact with other students.

Problems?

It doesn't often happen but sometimes a student may experience problems with an AL. For example, maybe you feel your tutor isn't communicating enough with you? Or that they aren't taking into account a special need that you have?

If you do find you are having problems, your best option would be to contact the Learner Support Team at your regional centre (you can do this online at <http://msds.open.ac.uk/students/contact.aspx> or find all regional numbers in your welcome pack) who will do all they can to help.

Giving feedback

Feedback is so important in student/tutor relationships. Not only does it give you the chance to express your thoughts on your tutor experiences but it also ensures tutors –

and the OU – develop and evolve in response to that feedback.

A system has been introduced – called DALs (Developing Associate Lecturers Through Student Feedback) – which gives students the opportunity to give feedback on their tutors (overall impressions, assignment marking, tuition, support and expertise). ALs are included once every four years. When your AL is part of this, you will be sent an email questionnaire about your experience towards the end of the course. ALs then use this feedback to assist their own professional development.

Some of the students who took part in DALs in 2006 answered a further questionnaire on the survey itself. 96 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the questionnaire was straightforward to complete; 93 per cent said that the questions were relevant to their experience of studying; 97 per cent said that the questions were easy to understand.

The future

The OU is currently undergoing a review of the support it offers to students, so lots of changes are expected in the future, including some that will impact on a number of staff categories including ALs.

ALs are also involved in pilot projects to improve support. The Personalised Integrated Learning Support (PILS) centre is one of 70 Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) established by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. It aims to enhance student support in the context of subjects of study, currently chemistry and psychology. One pilot activity involves four ALs working as programme study advisers on courses DSE212 *Exploring psychology* and S205 *The molecular world*. The programme study advisers make three telephone contacts with a group of students 'pre-course', 'mid-course' and 'between-course' to discuss the course result, implications for choice of course and preparation for the next course. The study advisers felt that their subject expertise was crucial, and that students picked up on this.

For more information log onto www.open.ac.uk/learning/induction/undergraduate/index-home.php



CASE STUDIES

**Sue McArthur**

SUE lives on Orkney in Scotland and tutors art courses covering all levels at the OU, including Openings courses and A103 *An Introduction to the humanities*. She has been a tutor since 1987.

"There are many challenges faced by tutors living in remote areas such as Orkney. But the OU in Scotland offers a facility which allows me to get round this. With A103, I opt to do telephone conferences with two to three tutorials. It provides great opportunities for discussion and there's much better attendance! There's nothing like sitting at home with a cup of tea, discussing a subject you're passionate about.

I think accessibility and personal contact are tremendously important. Quite frequently, students withdraw without speaking to their tutor. Maybe they struggle with the academic side or are having problems at home. So it's important that they're supported right from the beginning and encouraged to complete their present course – having 60 points under their belt really gives

them that impetus.

I'd recommend students shouldn't be shy about getting in touch. Obviously, some tutors don't want to be contacted at certain times, so make sure you keep this in mind, but use email, pick up the phone – we're here for you. It's also important to let us know in advance if you're going to send in a TMA late. We understand the challenges faced by mature students! And remember to act on the written tutor feedback you get from tutors – grades are a useful indicator of progress, but should be looked at in the context of the overall feedback.

Overall, it's a very satisfying job. I'm always astonished at how I can discuss one poem many times and yet a new insight will crop up every time – simply because of fresh input from my students."

Puttnam in the frame



Award-winning film producer David Puttnam, since 1997 Lord Puttnam of Queensgate, CBE, has just been installed as Chancellor of The Open University. He tells **sesame** about his life and how it has prepared him for his new role

I GOT my own degree over a period of five years – on the Piccadilly line,” says Lord Puttnam (pictured left during his installation). In the days before the OU existed, he studied for a University of London City and Guilds qualification at night school, with the College for Distributive Arts. “I created my own syllabus: copyright law – which was fantastically helpful – design, economics, business administration.” Much of his study was completed while commuting by tube between his work at a West London advertising agency and his home in North London.

He had left grammar school at the age of 16 with four O levels and mostly unhappy memories. “They were probably glad to see the back of me,” he says, “and I was equally glad to see the back of them.”

He began the hard slog to his City and Guilds qualification partly because “I realised there were things I needed to know”, but also because he was concerned about being overtaken by his better-educated peers: those just above him in years, emerging from their compulsory National Service; and those just below him, coming out of university. “I thought I had better prepare for the inevitable onslaught of competition. In fact it never came. By the time serious competition did emerge, I was old and experienced enough to cope with it.”

It seems as if Lord Puttnam has always been looking for the next challenge.

Award-winning films

“I was very happy in advertising and sufficiently successful that, by the time I was 26 – with the appalling arrogance of the young – I thought ‘I know how to do this. What else can I go off and be successful at?’ I’d always loved cinema, so I thought ‘sod it, I’ll put some capital together and see if I can do equally well in film’.”

LORD PUTTNAM: HIGHLIGHTS

He is: President, UNICEF UK; Chair of Trustees, National Teaching Awards; Vice-President, Council for the Protection of Rural England; Deputy Chairman, Channel 4; Chairman, Futurelab (an organisation which develops educational software in youth-friendly formats, such as videogames); Chairman, Enigma Productions; Trustee, Institute for Public Policy Reform; Trustee and Fellow, World Economic Forum; Trustee, Sunderland AFC Foundation.

Best-known films include: *That’ll be the Day*; *Bugsy Malone*; *Midnight Express*; *Chariots of Fire*; *Local Hero*; *The Killing Fields*; *Defence of the Realm*; *The Mission*; and *Memphis Belle*.

Personal favourites are: “As a piece of work, without doubt *The Killing Fields* was the toughest and most demanding film I ever produced. As a moment in my life that I would like to revisit – because I think that creatively it was the best time of my life – it would have to be *Local Hero*.”

He raised the necessary capital to launch his film career by briefly, and successfully, running a photographic agency – a reasonable enough choice given that his father was a photographer.

The rest, as they say, is history ... he went on to produce award-winning films like *Chariots of Fire*, *Local Hero*, *The Killing Fields* and *Midnight Express*, and became chairman and chief executive officer of Columbia Pictures, making him the only non-American ever to run a Hollywood studio.

But since he retired from film production in 1998 to devote himself to ‘public policy’, his most important cause has been education. It is, he says, the common thread running through the whole of a very diverse CV.

Environmental work

“This common thread is the development of a better educated, more civil society. Take the environmental work I’m involved in [he has recently been appointed chair of the Joint Parliamentary Committee scrutinising the Climate Bill] – a precondition is an educated electorate, because with an undereducated population, you are never going to achieve the kind of behavioural changes that it seems to me are required. In all the careers I have had, in every job I’ve ever done, all the roads lead back to education.

“I think the OU has a massive contribution to make to that, which is why I was thrilled to take this position.

“What I find exciting is that, unlike conventional universities where, almost like a sausage factory, young people from mostly middle-class families go in at 18 or 19, with The Open University every degree carries with it a whole story.

“Every graduate has a tale to tell of what they went through, how they had to organise or even compromise, their work, their family life, their children. The big challenge for me is how I can become a successful advocate for the role and purpose of The Open University.”

Medical condition

Will he be taking an OU course? “Yes I really hope so, but not for the next two or three years”. But his wife, Patsy, whom he met at school, and married more than 45 years ago, is now poised to take the plunge.

“When I took the job she said: ‘you do that, and I’ll do an OU degree’.”

Although he is, and always has been, a hard worker (“some people would probably say, too hard”), Lord Puttnam suffers from the medical condition ME, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome. “Actually, I have two recurring illnesses. One is ME, which has blighted me a bit since I got it in 1988. I have to listen quite carefully to my body and calibrate what I do. I mention it because it is encouraging to other people to know that you can soldier on – you don’t have to become a victim.

“The other dire condition is that I’m a lifelong Spurs supporter; something which has tortured me through almost 60 years of ups and downs.

“But I wouldn’t have it otherwise!”

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Good sports!



The OU takes on a whole new ball game next year as it launches its first ever courses based on sport

TWO new sports-related courses are launching next year. An Openings course, Y164 *Exploring sport online*, starts in March 2008, followed two months later by level 1 E112 *Introduction to sport, fitness and management*. It is hoped the latter will eventually become the entry level to a full sports foundation degree. "It's an area in which the OU has not offered courses before," said E112 course manager Amy Brown. "We have set up a brand new course team which is currently writing the finer details and we hope it will be very successful."

Health benefits

Y164, which lasts four months, will like other Openings courses develop learning skills by providing a very broad overview of the subject, in this case by introducing 'key ideas and ways of thinking' involved in studying sport. Students will use materials including the web and DVDs to explore different areas of sport from individual and team perspectives.

E112 takes a more detailed look at the subject. Aimed at learners with a general or professional interest in sport, recreation and fitness, it examines getting and keeping fit with sections on training principles and the health benefits of physical activity and a chapter on nutrition titled 'Eating to win'.

"Aimed at learners with a general or professional interest in sport, recreation and fitness"

"There are two strands to the study," said E112 course chair and sports studies lecturer Caroline Heaney. "The first underpins the science of keeping fit – what happens to the body and why certain effects occur. The second covers management issues within the organisation of sport/fitness provision in the UK."

With this in mind, the course also provides a sound basic understanding of broader topics such as legal and safety aspects, and customer care – all useful to those looking to build a career in fitness instruction, coaching or sports facility management.

Job in sport

"It's not a course all about going out and playing competitive sport," said Caroline. "It's about the effects of keeping fit, which covers everything from eating the right things and just going for a walk. It is equally relevant to those with a general interest in how sport affects their body and to those with or looking for a job in sport."

The 10-point Openings course, which is presented a second time in June 2008, is not yet open for pre-registration but full details will be available in the coming weeks. Pre-registration has begun for the eight-month, 60-point E112 course, which costs £565.

For information on both courses visit www.open.ac.uk/courses and search for the relevant course code number.

IN BRIEF

Shaping public policy

THE first residential school for B856 *Shaping public policy: contexts and processes* took place in March. This course is the first compulsory course in the new Master in Public Administration programme. Greg Clark, MP for Tunbridge Wells and shadow minister for Charities, Voluntary Bodies and Social, was an after-dinner guest speaker during the event.

Course starts: November 2007
Registration closes: 30 August 2007

Joined-up thinking

T214 *Understanding systems: making sense of complexity* is a new 60-point course which introduces learners to systems thinking – the art of seeing connections – by focusing on four broad systems areas: designated (the internet); natural (the environment); human (organisations); and personal (crime and the community). The course replaces and improves T205.

Course starts: February 2008
Registration closes: 14 December 2007

New science qualifications

STUDENTS working for an OU MSc in Science will soon be able to earn named degrees in science and society, and medical imaging. The new qualifications add to a degree which includes courses that already give students the choice of two learning pathways – science studies and frontiers in medical science – or studying a combination of both. More details will be available on the new named degrees within the next few months.

Keep up to date

GET information on all new OU courses sent straight to your computer screen by downloading the **OU Life Screensaver**.

For more information and to download the software visit www.open.ac.uk/oulifescrnsaver

Entrepreneurial streak

HAS watching OU graduate Natalie Wood on the BBC's *The Apprentice* inspired you to explore your own entrepreneurial side?

The 30-point course B322 *Investigating entrepreneurial opportunities* could be just the answer. Taken as a stand-alone course (even though it is level 3), it counts towards a degree in Business Studies and explores the important first steps taken in developing new business ideas, implementing innovations and launching new ventures.

Another course of interest is B625 *Winning resources and support* which replaces B624. Although they share the same title, there are a number of differences. Worth 30 points, B625 reflects the internationalisation of fundraising by drawing on good practice from a number of different countries.

It also counts towards the BA (Hons) Business Studies and is the distance learning route to the Institute of



Watching OU graduate Natalie Wood on *The Apprentice* with Alan Sugar may have inspired you

Fundraising's Certificate in Fundraising management (CiFM) – the benchmark qualification for fundraisers in the UK.
Registration closes: 30 September 2007
Course starts: November 2007

Legal eagles?

BUSINESSES' increased obligation to be socially responsible was one of the key elements of the recent Companies Act – and is a main theme of the OU's newest law course.

W223 *Company law and practice* takes the 2006 Act – reportedly the longest single piece of legislation to be passed in the UK – as a basis from which to consider the increasing significance of business organisations in contemporary society.

The Act contains a record 1,500 clauses, including clarification of the exact role of directors and legislation allowing

shareholders to sue company directors if they are not acting in shareholders' best interests.

The course picks up on this and other major new aspects to consider the powers and duties of those involved in companies and the consequences of a business failing to meet relevant legal standards of conduct.

Students will address fundamental issues of business law, including the idea of a company as a distinct 'person'.

Designed to appeal to those in, or with dealings in, business, the

course also considers controversial issues including the consequences of wrongdoing by companies and their responsibilities to society at large.

The four-month, 30-point study, which covers English law, can be taken as a stand-alone unit (although previous study of the law, such as the OU's W100 *Rules, rights and justice: an introduction to law* is strongly recommended) or as part of a programme towards a law degree.

Course starts: November 2007
Registration closes: 5 October 2007



What an adventure!

Win a seven-day luxury Swiss ballooning adventure for two plus a free place on a brand new sports course from the OU

THE ADVENTURE

Imagine soaring through the clear blue sky in the basket of a huge hot air balloon, admiring the magnificent, snow-capped peaks of the Swiss Alps around you and the tiny chalet villages far below. Then savouring the occasion over a glass of champagne back in the luxury of your exclusive five-star hotel...

Well, we've teamed up with Virgin Balloon Flights to offer one reader the chance to win this incredible experience for themselves and a guest. During

your week-long adventure, you'll discover the oldest and most romantic form of aviation with up to four balloon flights over the breathtaking alpine scenery of western Switzerland. You'll also get the chance to experience the world-famous Chateau d'Oex International Balloon Festival as a spectator.

What's more, when your head comes down out of the clouds, you'll enjoy a day on the slopes, opportunities to shop and sightsee, and seven nights' half-board accommodation at the legendary Gstaad Palace which is set on a hill overlooking the beautiful town of Gstaad, a ski resort found amongst the Swiss Alps.

The prize, which takes place from 13 to 20 January 2008 also includes a welcome drinks reception, a visit to a local Swiss cheese producer, cable car trip and dinner at a mountain top restaurant, return flights from England, transfers between Geneva airport and Gstaad, travel insurance, plus a host of Virgin Balloon Flights merchandise.

THE COURSE

Two new sports-related courses are launching next year and we are offering you a free place on Y164 *Exploring sport online*, an Openings course that provides a strong foundation of skills involved in studying sport. For more information, turn to page 27.

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For a limited time, readers can get Virgin Balloon Flights Adventure Packs (RRP £285 per person) at 50% off for just £142.50. They include: A three to four hour experience, with around an hour in the air; champagne toast; certificate signed by Sir Richard Branson and your pilot; choice of 100+ launch sites in England, Scotland and Wales (full list online); transport back to your original launch site; plus a Virgin Flight Shoulder Bag, compact binoculars, pen, cap, DVD and key ring. But be quick – this offer ends on 1 September 2007!

Call **0870 444 2768** or visit www.virginballoonflights.co.uk/offer.asp quoting 'Open University' to book.

THE REQUIREMENTS

Please fill in the form below and send it to: Ballooning Competition, **sesame**, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA. The deadline for entries is 20 July 2007. The first form drawn will win the prize.



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IN BRIEF

Video views

DO you want to know what students think about their OU study? You can find video clips and transcripts from current and former students on the Careers Advisory Service website. Three students talk about why they chose to study at the OU; the value of OU study; the skills they developed; and how you can move forward into the right career. Go to the sitemap at www.open.ac.uk/careers to see where the clips are located. You will need your OU computer username and password to access the clips.

Online forums

THE Careers Advisory Service is hosting a number of online forums using the FirstClass conference software this year. Topics include: teaching, volunteering, science, psychology, and law. All forums are moderated by a careers adviser. When they have ended, the content will be available in a read-only format for six months. Future forums will include job hunting (involving input from employers) and social science.

Email your career advisor?

DO you have a career related query and want to email a careers adviser? If you are a current student and want a simple and easy way to contact your regional careers adviser by email, go to: <http://www.open.ac.uk/careers/pages/common/contact.php>

Overseas graduates benefit

INTERNATIONAL students who graduate with a bachelors degree or earn a postgraduate qualification in any subject in the UK can apply to work in the UK for a year.

The higher education minister, Bill Rammell, said that the International Graduates Scheme – which used to be open only to science and engineering graduates in England – “will allow UK employers to benefit from skilled people who have gained UK qualifications and have experience of living in the UK.”

For more information go to www.ukvisaservices.co.uk/immigration/uk/igs_international_graduate_scheme/

Company profile



Ruth Stokes, Director Recruitment and Resourcing, KPMG LLP

Ruth, you were once an OU student. What did you study?

I studied for the Diploma in Management. I chose this course as it had relevance to the role I was currently in but I also felt it would give me some competitive edge as my career progressed. Having left school at 16 with no A levels yet alone a degree, I was aware there was only so far I could get without adding some professional qualification to my CV.

How did you get into the position you're in today?

My background started in retail where I spent 20 years at Marks & Spencer in a variety of roles, but in the last four years with the firm, I moved into recruitment and this gave me the interest and drive to pursue recruitment as a career. I joined KPMG in 2001 as its graduate recruitment manager where I'm responsible for intake into our London offices. After a few promotions, I started my new role as director, recruitment and resourcing in April 2007.

Tell us how your graduate programme works

At KPMG we recruit approximately 1,000 graduates a year across 22 offices in the UK and we have around 25 different entry routes. The vast majority of candidates join us on a three-year professional training programme, leading towards Chartered Accountancy status. All our programmes are very well designed and delivered by expert training bodies. The firm has a dedicated training department in-house that will work with the trainees throughout their training, offering additional support and help as and when required. Upon joining, all graduates attend a formal induction programme which introduces them to the firm, gives further details about the training and support, and of course allows them all to meet their peers. On top of the professional training, the company also offers personal skills training and other technical training such as presentation skills – this is ongoing throughout your career with KPMG, and is testament to the investment and long-term commitment KPMG has in developing and retaining its talent.

What skills do you look for at KPMG and why do you ask for them?

We have developed a list of competencies that we seek in all our recruits. These are very closely aligned to our company values and were developed after discussions with the business on what they looked for and valued from their staff. Along with academic ability we look for personal skills such as ability to work as part of a team, well developed communication skills and the skills to be able to look at and solve problems from differing perspectives. There is no 'right person' for KPMG. The great thing about the company is that we recognise it is the differing experiences and skills of individuals that will ultimately bring richness to the firm and therefore to our clients – that's what the business is all about!

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careers

The future of work

More than 60 per cent of you reading this will have opted to study because you want a new, different or better career. But in this fast-forward world, what will that new working world look like?

TWENTY five years ago, management thinker Charles Handy helped the OU's infant Business School launch its first course, *The Effective Manager*.

Handy has been taking the pulse of our workplaces ever since, helping us understand how work works – and how we will need to adapt if we are to survive and succeed.

It is just 12 years since his book *The Empty Raincoat* sounded a warning that to flourish in the workplace we require some meaning beyond being simple units of labour – ‘human resources’ (a term he loathes).

In that period terms like work-life balance, flexible working and corporate citizenship have become part of the language of management. And yet Handy believes our increasing sense of our own autonomy – plus the changing nature of the skills business needs – makes it more urgent than ever for organisations to close the gap between corporate and personal aspirations.

He recalls a recent visit to India where almost every conversation revealed bright young things gobbling up experience, accumulating savings, and plotting to use both to launch their own enterprises into the market.

“Our young people are growing up in an affluent society. They probably don't feel the tremendous pressures we did to stay in a job. They probably don't like or accept hierarchies as much as we did,” he says. “Who's going to run our organisations if the best people peel off in their 40s?”

“Organisations are not machines. They are living communities of individuals”

One part of accommodating this new demand for work to fit better around the rest of our lives is physical. There is no reason, says Handy, why a workforce should be forced to troop into an office block at 9am every day. Nor why those who develop the skills this new era requires should have to commit them to a single employer.

“The OU is a wonderful example of connecting people without having them in the same place at the same time. Organisations are increasingly going to be connecting hubs. We are not making things so much and yet we are very primitive in the way we think about organisations,” he argues.

But an even bigger challenge is our emotional relationship with work. Interestingly, Handy's recent book *The New Philanthropists* charts another phenomenon of today's working world: the growing numbers who, having made their fortune in business, seek to use



Picture: Elizabeth Handy

their skills – and money – in a more (for them) meaningful way.

We may not have their millions but this growing expectation that we have a choice about how we use all our resources can be seen everywhere – from how we structure our working lives to what we bring home from the supermarket.

Those enterprises that succeed will be the ones that work with their staff to identify a sense of shared purpose. Those that miss out will be those whose meaning begins and ends with the bottom line.

Says Handy: “When I was at Shell I never thought I was there to make money for the shareholders. I thought I was there to deliver products to the customer.

“The purpose of a business is not to make a profit, full stop. It is to make a profit to enable it to do something more or better. Organisations are not machines. They are living communities of individuals.

“The essential task of leadership is to combine the aspirations and needs of the individual with the purposes of the larger community to which they belong.”

The New Philanthropists and Handy's autobiography, *Myself and other more important matters*, are published by William Heinemann, 2006.

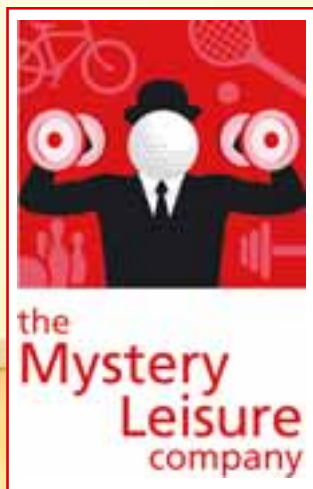
Do you agree with Handy? What are your experiences of how workplaces are adapting to new approaches to working life? Email sesame@open.ac.uk with your views.

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Get digging

The OU has just launched an **archaeology** course, so what better way to amuse your children during the summer holidays than to get them digging?



JUST down the road from the OU's headquarters in Milton Keynes is Gulliver's **Eco-Park** (pictured left), a unique visitor attraction which is set over four main areas: Evolution, Land, Water and Energy. Here children are given the chance to become 'junior archaeologists', helping out on the dig sites. They can also take part in a mini-dig, receiving a certificate at the end for their successful work. Cost: £7.25 for adults and children (£6.25 for OAPs). Call +44 (0)1925 444888 or log onto www.gulliversfun.co.uk for more information.

A new visitor attraction in York - **DIG!** - gives visitors the chance to become 'archaeological detectives' by excavating objects from the

streets of York and then deciding what they are, what they are made from, and why they got there. At DIG!, which is owned by York Archaeological Trust (YAT), visitors get the opportunity to meet real archaeologists and talk to them about their work. Cost: £5 (students with proof and children up to 15) or free for under-5s. Special discounted family tickets are also available. Call +44 (0)1904 543403 or log onto www.digyork.co.uk for more information.

Archaeolink Prehistory Park is situated in the shadow of the Bennachie mountain range in the Aberdeenshire countryside. With hands-on activities, workshops and guided tours, visitors get access to reconstructed examples of sites from different eras including a reconstructed example of a recumbent stone circle, a class one henge and the reconstructed post-hole foundation of a neolithic timber hall. Cost: £5.50 for adults, £3.55 for children (3-16) and children under 3 go free. Special discounted family tickets are also available. Call +44 (0)1464 851500 or log onto www.archaeolink.co.uk for more information.

In Llandudno in North Wales, you can visit the **Great Orme Bronze Age Copper Mines** with your family. The copper mines were discovered below the ground in 1987 during a scheme to landscape an area of the Great Orme. They date back 4,000 years to the Bronze Age and over the past 17 years, mining archaeologists have been discovering more tunnels and large areas of the surface landscape. Visitors can walk through the tunnels and stop by the visitor centre. Costs: Adults are £6, children are £4 (with under-5s going free). Special discounted family tickets are also available. Call +44 (0)1492 870447 or log onto www.greatormemines.info for more information.

Win!
We have 5 family tickets to DIG! to give away. For a chance of winning one of them, email sesame@open.ac.uk with the subject 'Dig'.

City Spotlight - Chester

THE delightful town of Chester isn't just a pretty face - it's also a real treat for any archaeological enthusiasts and their families.

At the moment, archaeological excavations are taking place at the town's 2,000-year-old Roman Amphitheatre - the largest stone-built arena of its kind in Britain. All the discoveries are then being displayed in the Chester Visitor Centre. Earlier this year, archaeologists unearthed evidence which suggests that gladiators appeared in the amphitheatre, including stone blocks with iron fastening which may have been used to chain up victims.

Its Grosvenor Museum also makes for an interesting visit with over 2,000 years' worth of local treasures including Roman tombstones.

Get more information from the Chester Tourism website at www.chestertourism.com or call +44 (0)1244 402111.

Overseas spotlight - Egypt

WELL, it has to be Egypt, doesn't it? A trip to this magical country makes for a great family holiday thanks to its friendly people and fascinating history.

Cairo is the instant draw with its astounding Pyramids of Giza and the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, where you can find the treasure of Tutankhamun and the Mummy Room.

The Valley of the Kings is also awe-inspiring, containing the tombs of over 60 pharaohs including the famous boy king Tutankhamun, and the picturesque ruins of Luxor and Karnak are fascinating, especially when visited at night when the atmosphere is quite eerie.

You can also enjoy all the activities of a typical relaxing holiday with a tranquil Nile cruise from Luxor to Aswan and snorkelling (and diving for the more adventurous!) in the Red Sea.

For more information on Egyptian tourism, log onto www.egypt.travel

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OU Student

Edited by

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The official publication of the Open University Students Association

stop press... **stop press...** stop press...

OUSA regrets to announce that John Orchard, President of The Open University Students Association, has resigned from office for personal reasons. In announcing the news the Association thanked John Orchard for his contribution in this role and for his earlier service as the Executive Committee Member for OUSA in the South and a year as Vice President, Constitutions. He made a significant contribution in a relatively short space of time. Deputy President Lisa Carson has now assumed the office of President. Further information will be provided in due course about any subsequent re-allocation of responsibilities and OUSA will shortly be opening nominations for the now vacant position of Deputy President.

Letter from the editor...

In at the deep end

WHEN I was re-elected as Deputy President at Conference in April I certainly didn't anticipate that two months later I would be writing an editorial in *OU Student* as your President. As Deputy, there is always the possibility of having to step into the President's shoes at a moments notice but it is a shock when it actually happens. My immediate priorities will be to try to ensure that there is as little disruption as possible to our programme for the year. As always, Conference has given us a lot of work to do this year and I will be working with the rest of the Officer Team and Executive Committee to deliver as much as we can of what was asked of us.

I had anticipated a busy year and I am sure that I won't be disappointed. I look forward to serving as your President and hope to meet as many of you as possible at various events that I attend throughout the year.

LISA CARSON

**OUSA
PRESIDENT**



M500 Winter Weekend

WHY do we follow OU courses? For professional qualifications, career opportunities, new horizons? These common reasons I think, most of us will identify with but I'm willing to bet that there are as many motivation profiles as there are students. Each of us has our own distinct set of reasons for taking up with the OU.

Then, as we begin our studies we find additional motivations. We meet new people and we make new friends; we find a group with similar interests and we join in with professionals and experts; we develop socially and our lives gain in purpose and meaning.

Our motivation has evolved and matured into a new direction. The OU has had an unstoppable effect on us, none of us is unaffected. We belong.

Sometimes, we take a year off. Each of us has our own reasons, but there is one feeling we all share – a big hole where the OU should be! We get a similar emptiness during the close season between OU years. And when the time comes for our final course to end...

This is where the M500 Winter Weekend can help you. It gathers for the first weekend in January at the Florence Boot Hall in Nottingham. Here, you can find all those unmissable experiences that come from belonging: seeing old friends, making new friends, sharing your interest in mathematics, enjoying the company of experts. And all of this without the pressure of upcoming examinations.

The Weekend's essence is informality – there is a Friday evening quiz and a Saturday night sing-in. The bar is always abuzz and you can sit anywhere and immediately you are part of a group. You cannot be alone here!

Knots, music, fractals, magic have all been recent topics of the weekend; I can now tie a knot in a length of string without letting go of the ends, and I can recognise a dubious pack of playing cards! Mathematics touches everything, and nothing is untouched by an M500 Winter Weekend.

Ledger White

IN BRIEF

Have you ever considered becoming a Residential School Representative?

Could you

- Act as a public relations officer and inform students of OUSA's activities and objectives?

Do you enjoy communicating

- Could you provide local information?

Are you

- Good at organising social events?

Do you think you can

- Act as a salesperson and market OUSA goods?

Comprehensive

- Training and ongoing support and guidance provided.

Want more information?

- Contact the Open University Students' Association

ousa@student.open.ac.uk, 01908 652026,
www.ousa.org.uk

New post of Vice-President, Communications Created

FOR some years the issue of communication has been highlighted as one that was crucial to OUSA. This year OUSA Conference believed that it was so important that it created a new Vice-President (VP) position. This new post will be filled through the casual vacancy procedure once a job description has been finalised by the Executive Committee at its May meeting.

Other students elected to the Executive Committee

MARK Robinson (London Region), Carole Radcliffe (South Region), Roz Evans (South West Region), Felicity Lloyd (West Midlands Region), Joy Devine (East Midlands Region), Steve Blake (East of England Region), Wendy White (Yorkshire Region), Alan Kinsey (North West Region), Suzi Holyoake (Wales Region), Carole Brooks (Scotland Region), Paul Wilson (Northern Ireland Region), Jenny Turner (South East Region), Marianne Cantieri (Southern Europe sub-region) and John Murphy (Republic of Ireland sub-region).

Introducing the new Officer team

PRESIDENT:

Former Deputy President, Lisa Carson, has become President of OUSA. She has been studying with the OU since 2002 and been a member of the Executive Committee since 2004. She says: "My year as Deputy President has been a challenging one. I have avoided quick fix solutions and we are currently in a position to work with the University on the development of our online facilities as part of the Virtual Learning Environment."

VICE-PRESIDENT, CONSTITUTIONS:

Malcolm White has been active in the association since taking early retirement. His job gave him a strong insight on the interpretation and implementation of rules and regulations. He says: "The current constitutional team have been working extensively on making the Constitution more user-friendly. I will continue this work."

VICE-PRESIDENT, EDUCATION:

Carey Shaw has been an OU student for five years and has been the student representative on the Science Faculty Committee. He says: "The Association must ensure that all students are aware of what is happening within the University, what OUSA understands is the viewpoint of the students and how OUSA successfully delivers that view to the University – communication is a two way process."

VICE-PRESIDENT, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES:

Louise Woosey has been re-elected for her fourth term as VP, Equal Opportunities, having previously been the Executive Committee Member for Northern Ireland. She says: "Throughout my life I have experienced inequality at first hand. I believe that it is possible to break down the many barriers that many of our students and potential students face."

VICE-PRESIDENT, FINANCE:

Like Louise, Julie Rains has been re-elected as VP Finance for the fourth time, having held a variety of other posts in OUSA. She says: "During the last year I began a consultation of branch financial returns and will introduce those changes that emerged. My other main priority still remains that of simplifying paperwork at residential schools."

VICE-PRESIDENT, REPRESENTATION:

Keith Ward has been elected for his second full term as VP, Representation, having come into this role in November 2005. He says: "My priorities in the last year have been, and will continue to be, branch regeneration, giving all the regional Executive Committee Members priorities and regeneration plans to follow. I would also like to continue the work of supporting representation at residential schools ensuring that OUSA is the word to spread around."

VICE-PRESIDENT, STUDENT SUPPORT:

Chris Bell has been elected as Vice-President, a position she has held since Conference 2005. She has held numerous posts in OUSA since 1996. She says: "Building relationships with individuals within the University and using every opportunity to push forward our policy is one of the best ways to ensure change occurs as quickly as possible."

A big Thumbs Up for Warwick

IT'S daunting using a venue for OUSA Conference for the first time – is the Conference Hall suitable; can the delegates walk between the accommodation and the theatre; is the accommodation apt; can we accommodate the displays?

Thankfully, we needn't have worried, Warwick University proved to be a wonderful venue for our Conference, which was held over the weekend of 13 – 15 April. Not everything was perfect as there is always room for improvement. Feedback from attendees is essential so that we continue to improve and it helps inform the Executive Committee when they decide on what venue to choose for future Conferences.

As always, there were heated debates in the Conference Hall with 135 motions deliberated over the weekend. We were lucky to have the Vice Chancellor, Professor Brenda Gourley, with us on Saturday morning to listen to the debates, visit the display areas and to address Conference. The new Dean of the Faculty of Health & Social Care, Professor Shirley Reveley and Alan Cadogen of the Associate Lecturers Committee also attended and addressed Conference.

This is a special year for OUSA as it is the 30th anniversary of 'all in' membership and the 25th anniversary of our charity, OUSET. To celebrate, a gala dinner was held on Saturday evening. Professor John Zarnecki spoke about his research, the Huygens Project and space exploration on Jupiter. He donated a photograph taken by the probe, which he had signed. This was raffled for OUSET at the dinner and subsequently auctioned, raising even more money for our charity. Former Presidents of OUSA were also invited to attend and we were delighted to gather nine Presidents together. A special display of the history of OUSA, highlighting many of the prominent events in our past, was also gathered together for this Conference.

Here are some of the comments from delegates about this year's Conference:

"I expected the debates to be boring. Instead, they were short

and lively with some passionate speeches, and were chaired with a sense of humour."

Kate Graham (South West Regional Forum Observer)

I LOVED Conference! It was my first time, and OUSA provided childcare for my baby to enable me to attend, which was brilliant. The business of conference was fascinating, with many robust debates and moving speeches. I really felt that I was a part of OUSA, able to affect decisions, even when I was clearly outvoted! It provided a good insight into the workings of OUSA and it was great to have the opportunity to meet members of the Executive Committee and fellow students too. I'd love to have the opportunity to go again next year."

Rita Williams (London North Branch Delegate)

"I FOUND my first attendance at OUSA Conference to be a very worthwhile and informative experience and encourage any students who have the opportunity in future years to attend. It is true, being an active member of OUSA, you can make a difference and influence the running of both the association and The Open University. Roll on Milton Keynes 2008."

Andrew Exton (Doncaster Branch Delegate)

"I ATTENDED my second OUSA conference. I found this one far more enjoyable and interesting than last year's, probably because I knew my way around and was less ill at ease!

Nevertheless presenting motions, which I did, is still a fairly daunting experience.

I hope that as a result of what was said not only on the conference floor, but also to other attendees, the concerns and interests of OU students, like myself resident outside the UK, will be more widely known and understood.

Fredericka (Ricky) Beets

(Northern Europe Regional Forum Delegate)

Pictured from left to right are: Mary Dalton, Graham Cooper, Joan Jones, Alicja Zalewska, Alison Levey, Ann Gall, Helen Banyard, Ais Ryan and Rebecca Rosenthal



Dates for your diary

If you would like to see your event advertised here, please contact the OUSA Office. Deadline for the next issue of *OU Student* is 30 July.

Central Events

Executive Committee Meeting 22 – 24 June, Wyboston Lakes Business & Training Centre, Wyboston, Bedfordshire

Local Events

Altrincham & Sale Branch *Second Tuesday of every month.* Details Edna: edna@fdsnorthern.com

Bath Branch *Second Wednesday of every month.* Details Nina: ndh46@student.open.ac.uk

Bournemouth & Poole Branch *First Thursday of every month.* Details Neil Walking: neil.walking@ntlworld.com

Brighton, Hove & Lewes Branch *First Monday of every month.* Details Colin: cp438@student.open.ac.uk

Bristol Branch *First Wednesday of every month.* Details Kate: 0117 955 1992. Web: www.ousabristol.org.uk

Cambridge Branch *First Wednesday of each month.* Details Peter: plc38@student.open.ac.uk

Cheltenham Branch *Second Wednesday of every month.* Details Chris: ceb8@student.open.ac.uk

Chippenham Branch *Second Thursday of every month.* Details Pauline Lock: paulinelen@pau-lin.freemove.co.uk
Web: <http://imprimis.madasafish.com/OUSACHippingham>

Doncaster Branch *First Wednesday of every month.* Details Andrew: aje269@student.open.ac.uk

Dorset Branch *Relaxed day and evening meetings.* Details Natasha: natasha_sims@beeb.net

Exeter Branch *Third Wednesday of every month.* Details Alison: 07971 954392, or ae2463@student.open.ac.uk or FirstClass branch conference.

Flyde Branch *First Wednesday of every month.* Details Andrew: 01253 891121.

Gloucester Branch *First Thursday of every month.* Details Andrew: 01453 757445.

Gwent Branch Details Celia: cpw73@student.open.ac.uk or 01633 483423.

Haverfordwest Branch *First Thursday of every month.* Details Mair Kromrei: gmk64@open.ac.uk or mair.kromrei1@btinternet.com or 07880 767266

Huddersfield Branch *Third Wednesday of every month.* Details Helen: hb2598@student.open.ac.uk

Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds Branch Details: www.ousasuffolk.org.uk

Kendal Branch *First Monday of every month.* Details Brian Wright: 01539 621567.

Lancaster Branch *Third Wednesday of every month.*

Details Sybil: smr456@student.open.ac.uk

Liverpool Branch *Last Wednesday of every month.* Details Kath: kathmckevitt@byinternet.com or 07968 576491.

London Region Details: www.ousalondon.org.uk

Manchester Branch *Second Tuesday of every month.* Details Alan: 0161 292 7209 or al.kinsey@tiscali.co.uk

Newbury Branch *Second Monday of every month.* Details Rebecca: rc3354@student.open.ac.uk
Web: www.ousa-newbury.rsmithers.net

Newcastle Branch *Last Tuesday of every month.* Details Edythe: 0191 2421142.

Northallerton Branch *Thursday 28 June.* Details Stu: sns9@student.open.ac.uk

Northampton Branch *Second Wednesday of every month.* Details Cristina: 07796 471908 or acc254@student.open.ac.uk

Northwest Region – Virtual Branch *The branch exists purely on FirstClass for people to participate in OUSA who are unable to attend meetings.* Details Cheryl: cjc89@student.open.ac.uk

Oldham Branch *Second Saturday of every month.* Details: Michael: 07786 924758.

Oxford, Abingdon & Witney Branch *Fourth Thursday of every month.* Details Tracey: ta85@student.open.ac.uk
Web: www.ousa-oxford.org.uk

Plymouth Branch *Third Tuesday of every month.* Details Pat: ousaplymouth@yahoo.co.uk

Portsmouth Branch *First Wednesday of every month.* Details Val: vam44@student.open.ac.uk

Rochdale Branch *Last Thursday of every month.* Details Gill: gill@kilshaw94@freemove.co.uk

Sheffield Branch *Last Tuesday of every month.* Details Lucy: lc2935@student.open.ac.uk

Southend Branch *First Thursday of every month.* Details Albert: albert.beaven@blueyonder.co.uk

St Helens Branch *First Wednesday of every month.* Details John: 0151 493 1266.

Stockport Branch *Second Thursday every month.* Details Jane: jane@isparp.co.uk Web: <http://aips.mine.nu/ousa>

Weald Branch *Third Wednesday of every month.* Details Norman: wealdousa@yahoo.co.uk or 07967 245939
Web: <http://www.wealdousa.org.uk/>

West Cumbria Branch *Last Thursday of every month.* Details Tony: parkerstbees@aol.com

Wirral Branch *Monday 4 July.* Details Laura: ljb526@student.open.ac.uk

York Branch *Third Wednesday of every month.* Details Elizabeth: ebc34@student.open.ac.uk

Picture perfect

RESIDENTIAL School 2007 Photo Competition – Prizes to be Won! We Want Your Photographs!

Do you enjoy taking photographs? Want to take photos and win prizes for your pictures? Think you can take good photographs of your 2007 Resi School experiences? Want to see your photography featured on the Students' Association website and other OUSA media? If the answer to these questions is yes, then we have the competition for you. OUSA is running a 2007 summer Residential School photo competition, whereby students can take photos of their Resi School experiences and submit them to OUSA to win prizes and see their photographs featured in OUSA media.

We're looking for a variety of good quality photos that help to convey both the social and academic essence of the Residential School experience. The competition will run through the duration of the OU Residential School period, throughout which time students can submit their entries for consideration. The deadline for submissions will be 27 August. So if you are creatively inspired and think you know how to take a good picture, we welcome your entries with enthusiasm. Prizes range from book vouchers to cuddly products from our web shop.

For more details and guidelines for the competition you can access the OUSA website at www.ousa.org.uk and look up details on the Residential Schools page.



EDUCATION MATTERS

Get down to business

NOW that Conference 2007 is over, it's time to get down to business. Conference set its objectives (as motions to conference) two weeks ago (as I write this on 1 May) and at the first meeting of officers two days ago, we distributed the workload for action. As Vice-President, Education, my own in-tray contains tasks ranging from issues around support by tutors, forums, day schools, problems of discontinuing several courses (without replacement) and even rationalisation of residential schools, and the timely delivery of course materials – to the adoption by the university of consistent definitions about plagiarism, referencing and word counts, and explanations to students about these, taking in greater flexibility of course start dates on the way. Some of these tasks are not new – but constant dripping wears away a stone – constant reiteration of the student viewpoint helps to keep the University 'on track', and, occasionally, jog its corporate thinking towards something that it might not have 'thought of' before, or, more often, to reinforce views that had previously been expressed by members of central staff of the university,

hitherto to little avail.

Ahead in the next few weeks is the next stage of the Student Support Review, dialogues about the University's strategy to widen the ambit of the University to include groups that have not previously been major users of the Open University, to increase the penetration of electronic course delivery and to bridge the 'digital divide', and, importantly, to relate awards and qualifications to the needs of potential employers (hopefully making an OU award of even greater value on the job market and possibly stimulating even more employers to contribute to the cost of OU studies by their employees) – "Every little helps" did I hear you say?

Competitive

Alongside this is the work already under way by OUSA to improve the perception by the individual student of the part played by the Association in ensuring that what needs to be maintained is safeguarded and changing what needs to be changed, in an environment that is increasingly competitive and subject to external scrutiny.

It feels like a challenging agenda to me

but (I believe) an exciting and useful one. By the time that you read this, I hope that we will already be putting in some action to make good promises. As members of the EC we will all be doing our best to deliver and to keep you informed of what we are doing, through these columns, via the website and (for the most up to date information) via the FirstClass forum system.

CAREY SHAW
VICE-PRESIDENT, EDUCATION,
OUSA



Become a member of our team

OUR much valued team of Central Representatives progress OUSA Policy and provide student experience on many of the central Open University Advisory Groups and Committees. At the moment, we desperately need more applications from new representatives to ensure that we have enough representatives for the new committee year, commencing in September. The OUSA Appointments sub-committee considers applications throughout the year. You do not need any

OUSA experience, can be from any faculty and can be studying at either undergraduate or postgraduate level.

As well as support from the OUSA Office before and after the meeting, there is support from Vice-President, Education and the other Central Representatives via the FirstClass Conference. On top of this, there will be a training event for all Central Representatives held in early September. This should give you all the support and guidance you need for the year, including advice on conduct at

meetings, expenses and report writing. You also receive support via VP Education and the other reps between meetings. If you would like an application form, then please contact the OUSA Office and one will be sent to you.

Becoming a student Central Representative is a fantastic opportunity to get to know more about the OU and OUSA, as well as making a difference on behalf of over 200,000 students! It's also a good opportunity for personal development, and confidence and self-esteem.

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

IF YOU WANT INFORMATION ABOUT OUSA PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM

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Join hundreds of other OU students in gaining specially negotiated and other student discounts with your NUS - OUSA Associate card. The card costs £10, and many students have reported they have recovered the cost of their card within the first few months of ownership through the discounts gained! The NUS-OUSA Associate card will provide you with a valid national student ID which will give you access to the widest range of student discounts across the UK. So if you want to save money on everything from films to music, from clothes to art gallery tickets, from sports to haircuts then make sure you get your card now. This card is also valid identification for OU exams. For further information contact the Associate Card hotline 0870 423 5001 or see the websites: www.nusonline.co.uk/associate or www.ousa.org.uk

Link, Disabled Student Link or Student Academic Link (circle area of interest).

REPRESENTATIVES AT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

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

DISABLED STUDENTS GROUP

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

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

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

OUSET DONATION

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

REPRESENTATIVES ON CENTRAL COMMITTEES

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

SUPPORT LINKS

Tick the box for further details about becoming a Student Support

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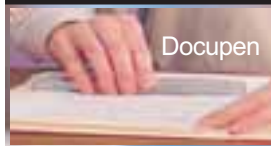
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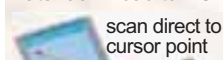
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