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sesame

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- Graduate success
- A question of sport

Issue 227
Autumn 2005

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COMMENT

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OU NOT IOU

THIS is a historic issue of **sesame**: the first to be printed on 100 per cent recycled paper – for the technically-minded, it's 'V Green Silk, 80 gsm made from 100 per cent post-consumer waste'. Previously **sesame** was printed on paper obtained from sustainable forests, but your letters, calls, and survey responses indicated a strong preference for recycled paper, and after some negotiation with the university, we've done it. Thanks to all who contacted us with your views, and the many more who responded to our reader survey in the last issue of **sesame**. We're still digesting the results, and will let you have them in detail in our next (Winter) issue.

And there's more good news: the OU will not be charging 'top up fees' next year when the other universities do, so your OU course will be even better value for money. The university is trying to prepare itself for an influx of school leavers who have taken on board the 'OU not IOU' message in its current marketing campaign (see pages 16 to 17) in this issue.

One area in which younger students may have an impact, is curriculum. The university has finally launched a Media Studies course (see page 18); now, with the London Olympics only seven years away, it is looking hard at the academic possibilities presented by sport. A debate is taking place within the university (see page 4) and your views are being sought. Anyone for (Level One) tennis?

Yvonne Cook, Editor



Have I got news for you? The OU launches its first ever media studies course

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IN BRIEF

Bonanza for *Study Guide* author

ANDY Northedge, author of the popular *Good Study Guide*, has been awarded a National Teaching Fellowship from the Higher Education Academy. The award includes £50,000 which Andy, a Senior Lecturer in Health and Social Care at the OU, says he will use to look at OU teaching methods and see how they could be applied to teaching in general. The *Good Study Guide* has sold over 425,000 copies and been translated into Italian, Greek and Portuguese. For more details of the award see www.heacademy.ac.uk

Postcolonial book conference

RESERVE your place now on the OU international conference on The Colonial and Postcolonial Lives of the Book, 1765-2005, at Senate House, University of London, 3 to 5 November 2005. There will be speakers from India, Africa, Australasia, USA, Canada and Europe, and you can take part in plenary lectures, round tables and workshop sessions. Censorship, copyright, missionary publishing, gender and area studies are some of the topics covered, and there will be live debates on burning issues in Asian and African publishing. The past, present and future of international communication are explored, and there will be an accompanying exhibition of rare items. The event is of immediate relevance to several undergraduate and postgraduate courses. £35 concessionary rate for all OU students. Contact Joanne Nixon-Grubb on ies@sas.ac.uk.

Nominate an honorary graduate

LIKE most other UK universities, the OU awards honorary degrees to people who have made a significant and particular contribution to society. This year's honorary graduates include novelist Ian Rankin and Tim Smit of Eden Project fame. As members of the University, students and Associate Lecturers are encouraged to make nominations. The deadline for nominations for 2007 is Friday 30 September. Nomination forms are available from Jane FitzGerald in the Awards and Ceremonies Centre, call 01908 652903 or email j.fitzgerald@open.ac.uk. We also have details of the criteria against which each nomination is considered and the list of previous honorary graduates.

NEWS

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

Open to sport

AND the winner is... (long pause)... London. But even before the decision to hand the 2012 Olympics to London Open University staff were talking about the role of sport in the OU curriculum – and would welcome students' views.

"So far sport has been confined to the margins of a few courses and has never been taken really seriously as an area of study, despite its increasing relevance for our everyday lives," said OU Administrator, Dick Skellington, who is coordinating the initial academic discussions.

But why do sport, and why do it now? Sport studies have become more important vocationally. Sport science is developing fast, mainly through further education colleges, and some 'elite' sport-based universities – such as Loughborough. UCAS data shows more and more would-be students see sport as a viable and relevant area of study, said Dick.

"2012 represents an educational opportunity for the OU. In recent years the state has profited enormously from sport while investing relatively little, especially compared with other European countries. For every £1 the government invests in sport, it earns nearly £9, but very little of that has been invested back. Between 1997 and 2002 the annual growth of the sports sector was 7.7 per cent. In England £21 a head of public money is spent on sport; Germany spends £30, Australia £51 and France £110 a head.

"Sport in the UK provides full-time employment for 400,000 people"

"Sport in the UK provides full-time employment for 400,000 people, 2.2 per cent of the workforce.

Consumers' sport-related spending is running at £20 billion a year and rising, almost two per cent of the nation's GDP comes from sport, making it larger than the heavily subsidised agricultural sector.

"But in addition to the study of sport per se, sport can be used as a lens through which we can better understand the world. Sport possesses a social and political currency that drives and shapes popular culture and the power structures of society. It is important to both the health and wealth of nations. It is big business. It has the capacity to divide and bring together. It influences the development of individual and national identity. Sport allows us to understand social class and the fabric of our culture better. It raises moral and ethical dilemmas, especially in the area of human rights, and it is local and global," added Dick.

If you have views on sport in the OU curriculum, email Dick Skellington at r.s.skellington@open.ac.uk or telephone Dick on +44 (0)1908 274066.



OU a good match

RICHARD Vaughan finds OU study ideal for fitting around his unusual work schedule as Britain's number one badminton player.

The 27-year-old Welshman (pictured left) is training for his third consecutive Olympic Games, in Beijing in 2008, and working for a BA in International Studies.

"It's ideal," he said. "I travel all over the world and can be in, say, Asia for about six weeks at a time, so I can take my OU materials with me. I keep in touch with my tutor via email."

He says the decision to award the 2012 games to London may tempt him to keep playing at the top level for a little longer. "It would be great to play at an Olympics in front of a British crowd," he said. "I'll be 33 then which is quite old for a badminton player but I hope I would be able to play in the doubles."

To follow Richard's Olympic progress, log on to www.richardvaughan.net

Top-up fees 'problem'

THE Open University will not be charging 'top-up' fees next year, because its part-time students do not have access to the student loans and grants that will help full-time students bear the increased costs.

OU course fees will rise in 2006 but only by five per cent, which is in line with its usual practice. This does not compare with the top-up fees of up to £3,000 which other institutions in England and Wales will be able to charge from next year, explained Professor David Vincent, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Strategy, Planning and External Affairs).

But this 'no top-up fees' policy puts the OU at a disadvantage because it will not get the same income boost from top-up fees that other universities will get.

"Top-up fees present a fundamental problem for The Open University," said Professor Vincent. "They were introduced to bridge the funding gap in Higher Education, but the OU is unable to engage in the top-up fees economy."

"The government has provided benefits for full-time students which are denied to part-time students."

OU students in Wales, where the Welsh Assembly is looking at measures to support part-time students, may be better off than their English counterparts (see story page 7). There are no plans at present for top-up fees in Scotland.

Support promised

The government has promised a package of measures to help support part-time students, which it is due to unveil this autumn. No



Kat (left) and Joan team up to back students

details of the package had been announced by the time **sesame** went to press.

Part-time students on low incomes, though, are eligible for financial assistance. (See story in **sesame** 225, page 5, or contact the OU's Financial Assistance Advice Line on +44 (0)1908 653411.)

The Open University Students Association (OUSA) and the National Union of Students (NUS) are joining forces to fight the cause of part-time students.

NUS President Kat Fletcher met OUSA President Joan Jones at the university's Walton Hall campus in Milton Keynes in July to discuss how the two organisations can collaborate for their members' benefit.

"We are looking at ways to make joint representations to government and put part-time students higher up the agenda," said the OUSA President

Joan Jones, following the presidents' meeting.

"We need to confront the contradictions in government policy. The government claims to be in favour of lifelong learning and flexibility, but it is constantly trying to pigeonhole part-time students and treat them differently."

Discount deal

OUSA and the NUS between them represent 75 per cent of the country's part-time students. Earlier this year they struck a deal to allow OU students a special category of 'associate' membership to the NUS. This gives OU students access to student discounts on a range of goods and services, including brand-name retailers such as HMV and Pizza Hut. For more details, including how to get your student discount card, turn to story on page 36 of *OU Student* in this issue.

Up to £1,200 for engineering students

IS there anyone out there who could use up to £1,200? That's the value of the Sidney Perry studentships which are open to OU engineering students. The scheme is danger of closing due to lack of applicants, say organisers, so applications are welcome. Students who are aiming to become professional chartered engineers, including those on the BEng and MEng programmes, will be given preference. For an application form contact The Secretary, Sidney Perry Foundation, PO Box 2924, Faringdon SN7 7YJ. Further informal advice is available from Professor AG Parkinson, Department of Environmental and Mechanical Engineering, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

Maths Professor is top man

PROFESSOR Jeff Griffiths, Associate Lecturer in Region 10 (Wales), has been elected as President of the British Operational Research Society from January 2006. Professor Griffiths has been an Associate Lecturer with the university since 1971 and has taught a range of Level 1 Mathematics courses, starting with the first foundation course M100. He currently tutors MST121 and MS221 in Cardiff. For his 'day job', he is head of the School of Mathematics at Cardiff University.

Single Library password

TIRED of having to remember tens of different PINS, passwords and usernames?

From 1 November, registered OU students and Associate Lecturers will only need to use their Open University Computer Username (OUCU) and password to access the majority of OU Library online resources. This will replace the current dual password system of personal 'Athens' usernames and OUCUs. The facility will be set up automatically for all users with no separate registration required. Personal Athens usernames (e.g. opu-tdz23) will no longer work from the above date.

Further information can be found at: <http://library.open.ac.uk/resources/passwords/athensda.html>. You can also contact the Library Helpdesk (lib-help@open.ac.uk) with any queries or concerns.

PVC'S VIEW

NEWS

More news online at
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Part-time is not a second chance

18 AUGUST – or 10 August in Scotland – is not a special date for most people who are thinking of becoming OU students this year. But for almost everyone else on the edge of Higher Education, A levels/Highers Results Day is when they discover whether or not they have their passport to HE.

So why is this suddenly important for the OU? This year, for the first time, we have actively promoted the university to young people at the end of secondary education. Those who visited the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) website during the clearing period will have found an OU button on the home page with a click-through to pages specially designed for young students. There is much more awareness-raising and promotion to come.

More support

The number of young students coming to the OU has been growing. We have done nothing to cause this to happen.

Factors include variable fees and growing anxieties about starting a career after three years full-time Higher Education laden with debt. The special factor this year is the number of students seeking to avoid higher fees by starting their degree in the final year of the old regime. Applications to UCAS are up by eight per cent, and the sector is unlikely to be able to meet that increase in demand.

We are not promoting the OU as second best to full-time HE. We have a positive message to offer. Students who come to the OU after some experience of face-to-face HE often discover that they get more support for their studies at the OU. OU students develop skills that employers value: independence, organisation, determination. Young OU students can begin to build their career as they do their degree, and avoid long-term debt into the bargain. As we stress, 'if you have the motivation, we have a place for you.'

Will Swann, Director, Students

Tutors marked

STUDENTS will have the opportunity to give feedback on their tutors by completing online questionnaires towards the end of their course.

The new tutor feedback process is being piloted from February this year and is due to be extended to more courses next spring.

Electronic questionnaires will consist of a list of standard questions but individual tutors will be allowed to 'customise' their questionnaires by adding questions they would like answers to.

Students will be asked to give their views on statements such as: 'Overall I was very satisfied with my tutor'; 'The tutor marked and returned TMAs promptly'; 'The tutor ran very helpful tutorials'; to give a few examples.

The exercise will not be carried out with every tutor on every course but each of the OU's 8,000 or so tutors will receive feedback on a periodic basis. The development of the feedback process is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

"The idea is to help associate lecturers understand how students are experiencing

their tuition and the support they provide, and help them to identify what is working well and areas where there could be improvement", said Katherine Prince, who is the project manager in charge of developing the Associate Lecturer feedback process.

"It is also an opportunity for students to tell ALs and the university about their experience.

"Although tutors will get individual feedback it will be anonymous; they will not know which students said what." The feedback will not be given until the course has ended.

"Although tutors will get individual feedback it will be anonymous"

The OU already has an ongoing programme of training and development for its tutors and this will help feed into it, Katherine said.

But the results of questionnaires will also be aggregated to help the university identify trends or consistent problems that students across the board may be experiencing.

Katherine stressed that the new feedback system is not intended to replace the existing complaints procedure. "If students have a specific thing they are unhappy about they should still talk to their regional centre," she said.

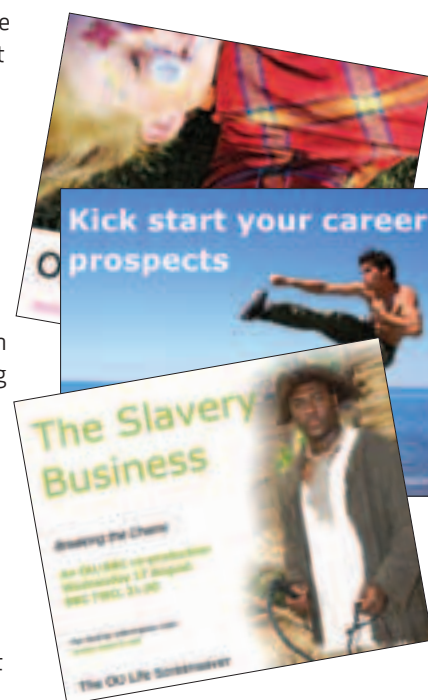
Screensaver shortlisted

THE OU Life Screensaver has been shortlisted by the Campaign Digital Awards under the category of Best Relationship Marketing Programme. The awards, devised to reflect the creative leap forward that the digital industry has taken in recent years, are judged by an independent panel of industry experts.

"Using innovative screensaver software to communicate is typical of the way in which the university strives to enhance the experience of its students through technology," said Screensaver Project Manager Claudia Sargent. "The Screensaver can be downloaded to a PC anywhere in the world, ensuring students can keep up to date with all the latest national news about the university, events, new services, courses and TV programmes. Since the Screensaver was launched 18 months ago over 20,000 students and staff have downloaded it."

Award winners will be announced at a ceremony in London on Wednesday 5 October.

For more information about the OU Life Screensaver, and instructions on how to download it, visit www.open.ac.uk/oulifescscreensaver



Two opens join forces

THE online global magazine *openDemocracy* is joining with Open University academics to host a major symposium which will take place at the OU and also feature on *openDemocracy*'s website.

Speakers including race equality and gender expert Reena Bhavnani will give their views and take part in debates on cultural diversity and tolerance in contemporary Britain. The event, due to take place in November, is the result of a collaboration between *openDemocracy* and the Centre for Research on Sociocultural Change (CRESC), a joint OU/University of Manchester venture funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

CRESC director Tony Bennett, who is the OU's Professor of Sociology, recently conducted an interview with *openDemocracy*'s editor-in-chief Anthony Barnett for *Society Matters*, the journal for OU social science students. Professor Bennett told **sesame**: "*openDemocracy* has very similar values to the OU. It is based upon principles of open access to information and debate. It is a website that should be of interest to every OU student."

For more details about the November symposium visit the CRESC website www.cresc.ac.uk. To find out more about *openDemocracy* visit www.opendemocracy.net

WALES BREAKS FREE FROM ENGLISH FUNDING REGIME

THE OU in Wales is now funded for teaching and learning through the Welsh Funding Council rather than the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The change to Welsh funding comes at a particularly exciting time, says the OU's Welsh Director Heather Graham. It has

already been agreed that full-time students who are Welsh-domiciled and studying in Wales will receive a Welsh Assembly grant of £1,800.

Universities in Wales will therefore be able to charge up to £3,000 without the added burden on Welsh students of a

deferred top-up fee. A decision on part-time students is yet to come.

A review group has been set up to make recommendations on the funding and fees for part-time students in Wales.

The group is chaired by Heather Graham, and is due to report by April next year.

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PEOPLE

Joy and tears as Carys collects dad's degree



GRADUATION is an emotional time for many students but Carys Swinger's ceremony was especially poignant – as she also collected a degree earned by her late father.

Carys (pictured left), a chemistry technician, went to Ely to pick up her own BSc but a recent change in the rules about the number of points required for a degree meant dad Peter now also qualified for the BA he had planned to finish before he died suddenly in 2001.

"It was very emotional, especially for my mum," said the 28-year-old. "Daddy joined the OU in its first year in 1970 and in 1976 was just one course away from the 360 points he needed to complete the degree. But then I came along, and a screaming baby isn't a great help when you're trying to study, so he decided to give it up for a while."

Rules changed

It was another 23 years before Peter contemplated completing his studies, prompted by his wife seeing an OU advert on television – and his daughter beginning her own Open University degree.

"I wasn't sure whether or not to do it but I said to Daddy 'if you do your final course I'll do a degree' and he agreed," said Carys, of Stowmarket, Suffolk. "I did S103 in 1999 and got completely hooked and we agreed he would do his final course in the same year I did my last one, and then we could graduate together. That was due to be 2004 – but in September 2001 he became ill with what we thought was flu, but turned out to be septicaemia and he died 10 days later."

"When I walked up to get my degree they said 'BSc, Carys Swinger, and BA, the late Peter Swinger'"

"It was a huge shock," said Carys, who studied mainly biology and earth sciences. "I carried on studying and completed my degree, but when I got my results at the end of last year I realised Mum was in floods of tears because Daddy hadn't got his."

But it turned out he had. Last year the OU changed the rules, decreeing that from the end of 2004 a student who has earned 300 points qualifies for a degree* – and that led Carys to ask if her father's achievement could also be recognised.

"So when I walked up to collect my award, they said 'BSc, Carys Swinger, and BA, the late Peter Swinger' and I don't know how it happened but whereas there had been handshakes for all the other students, I found myself hugging everybody. It was a fantastic day and it was lovely that Daddy and I were able, after all, to graduate at the same time."

* Students who have achieved 300 points can claim a degree without honours. At least 180 points must be achieved at level 2 and at least 60 at level 3. An honours degree still requires 360 points, including at least 240 at level 2 or above and 120 at level 3.

Sight for square eyes

SUDOKU addicts rejoice. OU Mathematics Professor Robin Wilson has rushed to the aid of all those hooked on filling in those fiendish little squares, with a new book called simply *How to solve sudoku*. Robin – who's a Gresham Professor of Geometry and has just been made Professor of Pure Mathematics by the OU – became a fan himself when the numbers puzzle first hit Britain last November. His book was produced in just three weeks ("a bit different from doing OU course units," said Robin) at the request of publishers keen to take advantage of the craze.

"Everyone says sudoku is 'not mathematical but logical,'" Robin told **sesame**, "but in fact you are doing maths – it is not arithmetic, it is combinatorial mathematics. Although I think a lot of people would be horrified if they knew that."

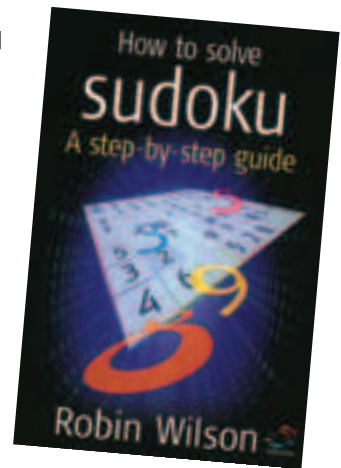
No need for the maths-phobic reader to worry about this book. "It's a step-by-step guide on how to approach sudoku puzzles, what the techniques are, and by the time you have finished it you should be able to do most reasonable ones," said Robin. The pocket-sized paperback ("we think of the typical reader as sitting on a deckchair on a beach"), retailing at just £4.99, is likely to reach a wider audience than Robin is used to. "It is on sale at Heathrow airport, something which doesn't happen to my graph theory books."

"Everyone says sudoku is 'not mathematical but logical' but in fact you are doing maths"

Robin is the son of the OU's 'founding father', Harold Wilson, so he's delighted with the idea that his book may play a part in the difficult task of popularising mathematics. And sudoku is more than just fun and relaxation, he added. "It is a very good way of training the mind in problem solving and organising. In fact, I would like to do a 10-point course on it for the OU."

How to solve sudoku, published by Infamous Ideas, Oxford, £4.99, ISBN 1-904902-62-6.

Mathematically inclined readers may be interested to know that combinatorial maths and the kind of thinking it involves feature in *MT365 Graphs, networks and design*.



Advertisement

Memory Like a Sieve?

A WORLD-FAMOUS memory expert, who has trained students, industrialists, trades unionists, businessmen, professional men, salesmen and housewives to improve their memories, said:

"Many people are embarrassed by a poor memory, and find difficulty in concentrating; while others realise that they lose business, academic and social opportunities not only because they cannot remember accurately everything they see, hear or read, but also because they cannot think or express their thoughts clearly, logically and concisely."

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greater personal effectiveness. According to this remarkable man, anyone — regardless of his present skill — could, in just 20 minutes a day, improve his or her memory and concentration to a remarkable degree. For example, you need never forget another appointment — ever! You could learn names, faces, facts, figures and foreign languages faster than you ever thought possible. In fact, you could be more poised and self-confident in everything you say and do.

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LETTERS

Degree or not?

IN case any of your older readers were heartened to read that it is possible to obtain grants for course fees and expenses, hear this.

When I started at the OU three years ago I applied for credits on the basis of an existing honours degree only to be told that, since said degree dated from 1967, I was not entitled to any. Academically, as far as the OU is concerned, my degree doesn't exist.

This year, I was obliged to seek financial support, only to be told that my 1967 degree does exist after all! It is so significant, in fact, that it disqualifies me from any monetary assistance whatever, despite the fact that I fulfil the financial criteria.

I find it totally inequitable that the OU can claim that the same degree awarded to the same student is both time-expired (in order to deny credits) and eternally valid (in order to deny financial assistance).

Moreover, since only a person old enough to have a pre-1978 degree (or pre-1995 in the case of OUSET) is so disadvantaged, this is a not-so-subtle example of age discrimination.

Avis Pearson

Blandford, Dorset

VICKI SMITH, CREDIT TRANSFER & ANNA BARBER, FEES, REPLY

WE understand your disappointment that your previous degree is not regarded as eligible for transferred credit towards a second degree. The university cannot however, undertake to award credit for all qualifications taken at any date. The university has to apply criteria to guarantee both the standards and the currency of the study.

The implementation of a cut-off date of 1971 is a means of ensuring that the currency of the study is at least equal to the earliest OU course and provides for equity of treatment between students with OU credit and non-OU credit.

We would like to reassure you that the use of this cut-off date does not imply any age discrimination against

students – it is the age of the study that is being judged and not the age of the student. A large number of older students have undertaken study since 1971 and do receive awards of credit.

The financial support for course fees administered by the OU is provided by the government with certain criteria attached. One of these criteria is that students cannot have financial support for course fees if they already hold an undergraduate degree from a UK institution.

The government's rationale is that the funds are not unlimited and should be targeted so as to give as many people as possible the opportunity to attain a first degree. In case you are not already aware, students with degrees completed more than 10 years ago are eligible for consideration for support from OUSET for fees and study costs so we have arranged for the application forms to be sent to you. If you find that you get into financial difficulties during your course you can apply for help with study expenses to the Student Assistance Fund which is held by your regional centre and the Access to Learning Fund (telephone +44 (0) 1908 653411 or email general-enquiries@open.ac.uk)

We do hope that you are able to continue your studies and we wish you continued success.

The wrong trousers

'STONE walls do not a prison make' provided a most interesting read in *sesame* (issue 226) and thanks are due to author John Kirkaldy. My own memories of work in prisons with the OU have provided me with some delightful incidents.

Many years ago when, as part of a group being briefed on our first stint, we sat in the obligatory circle. As the oldest and least attractive member of the gathering I was taken aback when the person in charge advised "and don't wear anything provocative" and appeared to stare directly at my cords (Taiwanese, 1977, £7.99, broken in). Needing the work I

dispensed with them, but not immediately.

Sidney Brown

Yorkshire

Give us DVDs

I WRITE to support Laura Sheppard ('End of the tape', *sesame* 226). I am recording all my OU TV programmes on DVDs which is a sensible thing to do in view of the fact that I am taking two modules this year, meaning that altogether there are 13 programmes to record (i.e. six and a half hours to view).

On the other hand, I need to transfer my OU videos onto DVDs in order to keep all the A/V materials in one place.

Surely, the OU would appreciate the advantages of using DVDs in terms of quality, storage and easy referencing, etc. Perhaps the OU could further consider having the students downloading A/V material from their website?

Wai-Si El-Hassan

Guildford

Road to nowhere

I HAVE just started out on the long road (S103) and am enjoying it immensely. I find though that I cannot obtain a named degree without attendance at certain 10-point extra practical residential courses.

I cannot be alone in being unable to attend these courses. I have spoken to very helpful people at regional office and Milton Keynes, but the message is simply residential courses or no named degree. The blame seems to lie with outside bodies who lay down the criteria for obtaining membership of their groups.

I have a suggestion: The Open University awards named degrees without these residential courses, but offers them to those who wish to take them to gain entry into the professional associations.

Others like myself would then be able to say to these bodies "recognise us or do without our subscriptions". I suspect the professional associations would quickly back down.

Ken Furnell

North Yorkshire

Why axe U205?

I AM shocked that the course U205, *Health and disease*, is being discontinued. I studied this in the first year of my Health Studies degree and three years later would still recommend it as one of the most challenging and enjoyable courses I have studied.

It is quite hard in the Health Studies degree to find courses which are not repetitive and totally in the social care area. U205 covers both sociology and

STAR LETTER

Positive choice

I WAS interested to read that more and more under-25s are choosing the OU.

I found university a struggle as I could not contain the intensity of the social life and studying. Being away from home was also a struggle.

It was my father who notified me about the OU. I felt that being a young person, a move to OU education and

home study would be a negative choice. I decided to take up T171 *You, your computer and the net*. The result is that I have very much enjoyed the course and am near completion. I am now looking for my next course and hope more people like me discover the benefits of The Open University and what it has to offer.

David Jellis

Milton Keynes

LETTERS

biology in detail and makes for some stimulating and thought provoking study and essay writing.

I cannot understand why the university would discontinue it especially as approximately 400 people sat the exam last year.

Renee Myerson
Arkley, Herts

DR CHERYL NEWPORT, SENIOR CURRICULUM MANAGER, FACULTY OF SCIENCE, REPLIES

WE are very pleased that this student found U205 to be such an enjoyable course – and she certainly isn't alone in that respect – however we have an obligation to keep the curriculum fresh and up to date. Thus we are faced with a difficult balancing act of maintaining courses and producing new ones and old courses inevitably have to make way for new offerings.

The Course Team Chair of U205 is currently working on a new and exciting course SDK125 *Health matters: case studies in health studies* (working title), for first presentation in 2007.

This will be an evidence-based course designed around a series of interdisciplinary case studies of important health topics in which the interactions between the scientific, the psychological and the social dimensions enable students to see the 'bigger picture' that emerges when these perspectives are brought together. This is being designed as an important entry course in the development of a university-wide health-focused curriculum.

Thus we hope students will find this just as attractive as U205 – if not more so!

Revelation

I HAVE read with interest the article by Dr Pam Jarvis (**sesame** 226, Debate, p17) advocating the promotion of summer schools and I find it meets with my own disappointment that my course does not include a compulsory summer school.

I am doing L310 *Nouvelles mises au point*, but unlike the earlier L211 there is no

compulsory school. In addition to the L211 school, I attended the voluntary school LX122, both at Caen University.

Why am I doing these courses? After the death of my wife I hoped to complete something I hoped for all my life without fulfilment, the university experience.

My experience at Caen University has been a delightful revelation to me. In spite of my advanced years, I was received by the staff and other students without discrimination, and I am especially grateful to Graham Bishop who took a friendly interest in me.

I second Dr Jarvis's comments on the value of summer schools: the convivial evenings, the conversations with other students, observing how they are tackling the course, the sense of contact with the country, particularly valuable on a language course, and in my case the distraction from painful events.

Jack Wilson
Devon

Oops!

IN DD100, *An introduction to the social sciences: understanding social change*, book 4, page 134 it speaks of 'Her Majesty's Customs and Exercise'!

Let this be a lesson to all, spell checkers are not proof readers!

Jon Greetham
Bridport, Dorset

Foiled by font

I RECENTLY came across a problem which is relevant to students as more and more courses introduce electronic TMAs. Being pressed for time as usual, to complete my next TMA I took a copy to work so at lunch time I could write up the final question. When I opened the Word file a number of the calculations seemed funny, on closer inspection all the division

signs (line with dots top-bottom) had changed to plus signs. This was due to the font used on my home computer (a maths cad font) not being installed on the computer at work.

So is there a standard for the fonts to be used by the OU in its electronic TMAs?

Graham Park
Abergavenny

Thumbs up for DD121

I AM writing with reference to the letter from Dr Woodward in **sesame** 226. I must say that I have received excellent co-operation and tuition from my course tutor on DD121, DD122 and also DSE212. There are various sources of help available to a student, even if, like myself, they find themselves unable to attend day schools and tutorials.

I have found my tutors to be excellent and always available to give help and advice.

I have also found the email service on the student homepage to be very quick with most queries.

Kimberley Kellett
Bolton, Lancashire

Biased policy?

IN response to Mark Endean's article in **sesame** 226 (Debate, p17) I would be interested to see the evidence collected that students were deterred from courses with embedded summer schools.

I remember being given a questionnaire to get students to complete at summer school.

In the end I refused to do it, the students became so annoyed

at the perceived bias of the form. The first question was on the lines of "Have you ever been put off a course by it having a summer school?" Y/N.

The students demanded to know where the alternative question was.

They wanted to state that they deliberately chose courses by the fact that they did have summer schools. This option did not appear.

They felt they were not actually being asked their opinions – just asked to give supporting evidence for a policy someone wanted to bring in.

I would also like to know how many of the increasing numbers granted excusal had ever attended a summer school; as Pam Jarvis (**sesame** 226, Debate, p17) said, I would have done almost anything to avoid my first – until I knew better.

As far as choice is concerned when I was a student I certainly would never have had the opportunity to attend if I had not been able to tell a very grudging spouse that it was a requirement of the course. This is far more common than most people may think and never seems to be considered.

I would love to think that students' needs were the motivating factor rather than finance.

Instead of saying look, only a few people want to do it so let's get rid of them.

I cannot see why, when the market is flooded with distance learning providers, that the OU is determined to throw away one of its main advantages over its competitors.

Diana Maxwell

Associate Lecturer, S282 and Y155

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PEOPLE



Sculptor uses his head and his art

DAVID Webster has been sculpting works of art for 40 years but says in the last five years his work has really “come alive” – and it’s all down to his OU degree.

The 58-year-old Liverpoolian (pictured left) says studying such diverse subjects as the history of art and human evolution has had a life-changing effect on the way he perceives art.

“It’s really made me think and question everything, and made me believe all art should do that,” he said. “My work challenges people to think about why there are so many problems in the world, challenges them to think about religion, race, humanity. But it was the OU that changed my own thinking.”

David’s interest in art began when he was a youngster growing up in 1960s Liverpool. “So many kids from this city did the same thing – went to art school, started a band, left art school early, married young – and I was no exception. I did all of those things – although unlike certain people, I didn’t make the band my career!”

Cavern Club

David, whose commissions include a carving of John Lennon which stands outside Liverpool’s Cavern Club and a statue of the Fab Four for the foyer of the city’s proposed Beatles hotel, began his OU studies “to learn why art is as it is, and how it changes and evolves over time”. Now, about to graduate, he wants to produce work that challenges people to think about the world. “A lot of art, particularly modern art, is showmanship – if there is a message in there it’s very difficult to decipher,” he said. “Some of the so-called cutting edge works seem to have become more and more elitist – it’s a bit like the emperor’s new clothes. There’s no substance, no challenge, no attempt to engage people in debate about the themes. You see people wandering round the Tate Modern like lost sheep, just because someone told them to. It’s a case of ‘we’ve been in this room, we’ve been in that room, now let’s go home’. I want my work to get people thinking – and be accessible enough for them easily to understand and consider the points I’m making.”

And he says that debate can start from a very early age. “Kids of four and five can talk about what they see in a painting or a sculpture,” he said. “If art is presented in the right way, it can get even the youngest children to think.”

Now David is planning to get people talking on a grand scale. “I’m trying to put together an event that will be something unusual and spectacular – that’s what you have to do in this day and age to get many people’s interest. It’s going to be something that gets people to question religion, evolution, race – how humanity has evolved. It may not even be in a gallery. I’m still putting together ideas at the moment.

“My work will explore society, culture, ethnocentric issues, gender, human ecology and much more. It sounds like an advert for an OU course!”

Protests went with a Swing

STUDENTS who completed the now discontinued DA301 *Family and community history* so enjoyed it, that they formed The Family and Community Historical Research Society.

And their research into the Captain Swing Riots of the early 1830s has resulted in a book, a CD-rom and new material about one of Britain's most turbulent periods of public protest information.

The book, *Swing Unmasked*, tells of a series of protests and attacks mainly by labourers who had returned from fighting in the Napoleonic Wars to discover their jobs on the land were gradually being taken over by new technology, such as threshing machines. Responsibility for the attacks was often claimed under the name Captain Swing, which may or may not have been a reference to leaders of teams of corn harvesters, who would order their men to 'swing' their scythes to cut the crop.

"The attacks ranged from very mild threatening letters to physical assaults, maiming of livestock and in many cases arson," said society committee member Jacqueline Cooper.

"There were members of the Captain Swing movement in almost every county," said Jacqueline. "The main period of unrest lasted only a few months, but apparently related incidents continued to take place occasionally for the next few years."

"Much of the project was coordinated by email, which was a huge factor in its success"

Previous research work, by Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé in 1969, identified 1,475 incidents of protest between 1830 and 1832. The society uncovered more than twice as many.

"We looked up the records of at least one newspaper in every single county, and each incident we found led to more research," said Jacqueline. "Much of the project was coordinated by email, which was a huge factor in its success. I don't think that this sort of project could have been done on this scale as effectively even five years ago – the popularity of email has made our work so much easier."

The CD-rom will enable interested readers of *Swing Unmasked* to look up specific instances in specific parts of the country.

"Our current major project is about allotments in the 19th century, but we are also starting to research transport in Britain between the First and Second World Wars," said Jacqueline.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the *Swing Unmasked* book or CD, or about joining the society, can visit www.fachrs.com or write to: The Chairman, Family and Community Historical Research Society, Unit 4, 5 West Hill, Aspley Guise, Milton Keynes, MK17 8DW.



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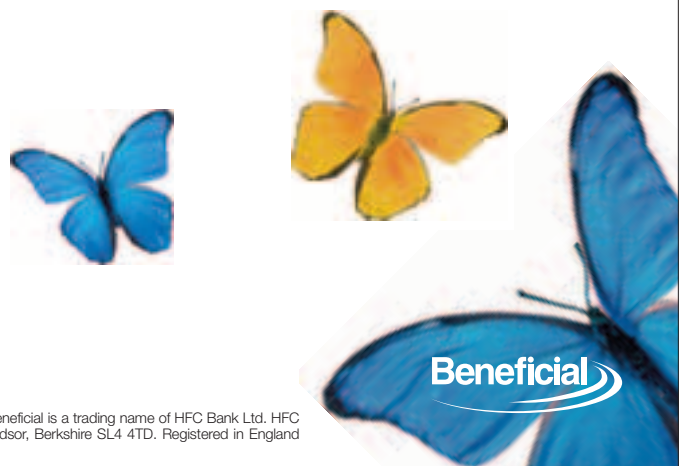
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The Open University



Green and violent land

MOST people believe the world used to be a safer place. Those of us of a certain age who remember playing as children in the street are now fearful, we keep our own kids close by, because our society is more violent than ever.

But is it, really? After all, violence is as old as society itself. So why do we think of it as more prevalent now?

This perception is explored in fascinating detail in a new book by OU Professor of History Clive Emsley. *Hard Men: Violence In England Since 1750* explores whether instances of violence are more common now and whether English attitudes to violence have changed.

Hard Men cites a plethora of examples of violent behaviour in England through the last 250 years, each one of (albeit inevitably ghoulish) interest in its own right and raising thought-provoking issues about why we now perceive violence as we do.

Among dozens of cases is the story of Mary-Ann Cotton, whose suspected murder victims numbered more than 20 when she was hanged in 1873, but a lack of immediate national media meant she was known only in her native north-east – today she'd be a household name. There's the murder in 1861 of two-year-old James Burgess by two eight-year-olds, who received a month in jail after their actions were summed up by the judge as "babyish mischief" – some way from the public and media reaction to the similar murder of toddler Jamie

Bulger 130 years later. And there's the case of Lieutenant Douglas Malcolm, who shot dead a French love rival in 1917 but was cleared of murder because he claimed to be defending his wife's honour – which was considered to be the only proper course for an Englishman, especially against a foreigner.

Hard Men is a well-written, informative work that is the result of obviously intensive research, much of it from the OU's own Police Records Archive. In examining attitudes to violence it also explores what it meant, and still means, to be English, with an English sense of justice. In doing so, it reveals that the English fancy about being a nation of gentle folk with a sense of fair play who condemn violence is a smokescreen. Baying crowds paying for the best seats at public executions; mobs of parents attacking men they believe to be paedophiles while inciting three-year-old children to shout slogans about hanging and killing; campaigners rueing the perceived rise in violence while urging the return of state violence in the form of capital punishment all show us that the English are as violent as the rest of the world. And they always have been.

Peter Taylor-Whiffen

Hard Men: Violence In England Since 1750 by Clive Emsley is published by Hambledon & London, priced £19.99.



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people

BSc
for
Lisa

SHE found fame playing a nurse in TV drama *Casualty*. But now that Lisa Coleman has an OU psychology degree, she may quit acting to do the job for real.

The 35-year-old, who starred as feisty Jude Kocarnik in the BBC series, collected her BSc at the Royal Festival Hall in June. And as she celebrated after the ceremony with her parents, she told **sesame** her new qualification could lead to a new career.

"I already work as a volunteer occupational therapist in a psychiatric unit," she said. "The work really fascinates me and I am beginning to think of giving up acting and training to be a psychiatric nurse. This degree is a great start to doing that. If I succeed, I'll be able to see if I was acting the role accurately!"

Lisa, who is also known to younger TV viewers as scruffy writer Cam Lawson in the BBC children's series *The Story Of Tracey Beaker*, began studying with the OU more than 10 years ago. "I never really liked the idea of going away to university, so I never did," she said. "I loved acting and I wanted to do that instead."

"But from when I left school I always wanted to do a degree in psychology, which has always interested me. I always liked the idea of the OU and I would always watch the TV programmes, but I struggled to find the time, especially when I got the role in *Casualty*. My student record shows I started the same course about three years running during the 1990s because I kept signing up and then wasn't able to do the work!"

In fact being unable to concentrate on her studies was one reason Lisa left the hospital drama in 1997. "I needed more time and we worked so hard on that show that I never had the opportunity. When I got that time, I got into my studies."

Lisa was delighted to attend her graduation ceremony – but it's not the end of her OU journey she said. "I'm going to see how I find the experience of working in the



Lisa Coleman: contemplating a career change

National Health Service, and if that goes OK I would like to do an MA. But I've already found I haven't been able to stop studying. I finished my degree in December but six months later I'm already halfway through an OU creative writing course!"

"I always liked the idea of the OU and I would always watch the TV programmes"

Lisa readily acknowledges OU study is hard – "the most difficult thing is the constant self-motivation" – but some aspects of her degree courses came as a pleasant surprise. "When I first signed up, I absolutely dreaded having to go to summer school," she said. "If I'm honest, I thought they'd be full of weirdoes! But I met so many fantastic people and I thoroughly enjoyed going. Summer schools are brilliant!"

As an actor working sometimes irregular hours, Lisa also appreciated the flexibility of OU study. "Some days you are working flat out continuously, and at other times you can

have a whole run of days off in a row – I looked forward to those times, because I knew it would be easier to study without distraction."

But the acting may soon come to an end. "I don't tend to go for the spectacular high profile roles, but parts that challenge and interest me," said Lisa. "There aren't so many roles out there for women over 40 so there are likely to be fewer opportunities."

She seems more excited about the prospect of her new career – and carrying on her studies. Certainly the graduation ceremony has given her the taste for more days like this. "What a fantastic day," she said, looking round at the hundreds of people dressed, like her, in OU gowns. "A lot of the time when you're studying, you're on your own. But seeing all these other graduates today, I really felt like I was part of something. And to see people from all walks of life, of all ages, getting their degrees was wonderful. The OU's an excellent place, so – egalitarian. It doesn't matter where you come from, the OU gives you an opportunity."

FOCUS

Study without bars

It can't compete on campus bars. But as more and more under-25s are choosing to study with the OU, the university has begun to look at whether it needs to offer more, or different, study support to these younger learners

WITHIN the next five years' it is predicted that nearly one in three students applying to study with The Open University will be under the age of 25. Thousands of school leavers are predicted to eschew the traditional brick university route in favour of flexible, debt-free distance learning.

This summer, for the first time, there has been a link from the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) website, where school-leavers search for a university place, through to the OU.

The financial attraction is a strong one – not only will the school-leavers joining the OU not incur a student debt, but if they earn less than £15,000 a year (“and most under 25s do,” said Steve Clayton, Manager of the younger students strategy) those in England

can claim annual financial assistance of up to £885 a year from government. As all 60-point courses except those in the OU Business School and Law programmes cost less than this, some could end up getting their university education for nothing with the OU.

“The truth is that in very, very general terms, younger students tend to do less well than older ones”

To try to make sure it is ready for the youngsters when they arrive, the university is developing a ‘younger students strategy’ which was endorsed by its academic governing body, Senate, earlier this year.

“Most young students want to do a degree, as distinct from a series of courses,” said Steve. “We need to be able to show them

clear pathways to that degree – telling them ‘this year you can do this course, next year you can study that’. They need to be able to see where they are heading.

“The truth is that in very, very general terms, younger students tend to do less well than older ones,” added Steve. “They still do better with the OU than they do with other distance learning institutions, but it is something we are looking to address. We can keep an eye on them and offer them particular support.

“We already do this with many students through ‘modelling’ – modelling work in the OU shows that, statistically, students from a particular background will do less well on some courses than other courses; if we know this, we can target them with help when they need it. It’s a generalisation, but it

Do younger students have different study styles? The OU is investigating



does help us to identify potentially vulnerable students, whom regional OU staff can then help by keeping a close eye on how they're doing and proactively calling them at key points to make sure they're OK. This methodology will also benefit younger students."

Young students can get support in other ways, too – the OU is planning 'Induction' events ("as they would expect of a university," said Steve), and is also highlighting a number of rooms on its FirstClass conferencing system that specifically encourage younger learners.

Tutor's view

OU tutor Alan Cadogan said from his experience there was no 'discernible difference in ability, attitude or achievement between young and other students.'

But, he added: "A national survey indicates that younger students appear to have a higher drop-out rate and a lower success rate than older students. Perhaps it could be expected that some younger students would be less motivated than their older colleagues, and they might have more difficulty in dividing time between study, social life and becoming established in the world of employment.

"Yet they have the advantage of more recent contact with a school learning system and a greater facility with computers and the web than the more traditional students."

One thing the OU will not do is to target young learners at the expense of older students, said Steve. "We'd be very foolish to ignore our more mature learners. We will continue to give them as much support as we always have; they are very much part of the OU's future."

Do young students need special provisions? If so, what should these be? Email or write to **sesame** with your views.

AGE STATISTICS

- The average age of OU students is currently 34.
- Twenty per cent of new registrations in 2003/4 were from people under 25. This is up from only 12.5 per cent in 1996/7.
- More than 11 per cent of all OU students studying on undergraduate courses in 2003/04 were under 25.
- Of those aged 24 or under, more than one-third are aged 21 or under.

The OU and I

*What does a prospective young student look for when choosing a university? **Ricky Mason**, aged 15, assesses the OU's youth appeal*

ONE of the most attractive things about the OU, from a teenager's point of view, is the amount of free time available; enabling you to complete assignments and research data, while still having time to go out with your friends, have a job and be involved in clubs and societies. Also, by studying from home you can stay closer to friends and family.

However, there are a few things, as a future university student, which put me off. The Open University doesn't offer a wide spread and varied amount of courses; one of the largest and most popular subjects which is unavailable at the moment is 'media courses'. This is one of my main interests and as the OU don't offer this course, the OU is of no use or interest to me.

Night life and university life are also main aspects that attract many students to university and as the OU is home-based you will not be able to experience the fun and laughter of going out on the town after a stressful week of hard work.

The OU now needs to apply some market research towards us younger students. What do we want? Fun, no debt, bigger choice in courses, university life, great tuition and high quality learning. I still believe the OU is not advertised and pushed enough at sixth form and year 11 as your first choice uni. It is always used as a last option, and that's not what the OU is about.

Ricky Mason is currently studying for his GCSEs at Ousedale School, Milton Keynes.

The OU is launching its first-ever media studies course. See Courses page 18.



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Have I got news for you

A MEDIA Studies degree is a popular choice among young students going to conventional universities, but despite its pioneering research background in popular culture, the OU hasn't offered 'media studies' courses to its students. Until now.

Thanks to DA204 *Understanding media*, a new 60-point course launching in February next year, OU students will not only be able to explore this topic but will have the option of taking named degrees in Social Sciences or Humanities with Media Studies. They can do this by including two other OU courses, AA310 *Film and television history*, and D318 *Culture, media and identities*, in their degree profile.

Although in the past it's been decried as trendy, Media Studies ranks third in the country in terms of employability, says Dr David Hesmondhalgh, the A204 Course Chair.

It doesn't aim to provide vocational training but, said David 'if you look at the media now, more and more people who are coming into it are coming out of Media Studies courses – people like Michael Jackson and Jane Root, former BBC Controllers'.

“The course is expected to draw students from Education, Technology, Business and Law”

Would-be BBC Controllers aside, the course is aimed at people who want to gain a better understanding of one of the most pervasive and influential forces of our age. People who watch TV and want to know more about what lies behind what they see; people who are interested in issues of media control; those curious about the media as a global force; the media has many facets and the course is expected to draw students

from the Education, Technology, Business and Law areas, as well as Arts and Social Sciences.

And of course it will appeal to anyone who enjoys watching TV or films, listening to the radio or reading the newspapers.

“The students have a week in the middle of the course where they watch a lot of films and TV programmes, radio plays and adverts,” said David. Interactive DVDs, DVD-rom and audio CDs make up a ‘rich audiovisual mix’ for students. The five course textbooks cover the phenomenon of celebrity; media audiences; media production; analysing media texts; and technologies markets and regulation.

The course doesn't shy away from political issues, such as that of who controls the media. David said: “The media today is absolutely at the centre of our lives as citizens in a modern society.”



Study for peace

FROM Rwanda to Northern Ireland, bloody conflicts between neighbours are one of the great evils of our age. Over the last 50 years, more than 200 civil wars have been fought bringing death to millions, and untold misery to many more.

But we can transform these desperate situations, and ways to do this are examined in a new Open University course, TU875 *War, intervention and development* starting in November.

The significance of the course content is underlined by the fact that the UK government is part-funding the course through its Conflict Prevention Fund. And among its first students are expected to be military peacekeepers, as well as aid workers, corporate employees and others venturing into a conflict situation.

Breaks new ground

These potential students will be hoping to improve on a situation where half of all peace settlements brokered fall apart within a decade. "Peace is not just the absence of war. A stable peace requires that people be committed to the future of their country, and that requires equity, justice, and development," explained Dr Helen Yanacopulos, the Development Studies Lecturer who is in charge of the course.

"The course looks at ways to analyse wars. It looks at the many players, the power relations, the history and the context. In doing this we explore how we can transform conflicts and potentially address inequalities and power relations contributing to the escalation of conflicts to war."

The course breaks new ground in linking conflict and development, which itself can help to cause or to alleviate conflict, she added.



The Tree of Life created by artists from Mozambique

Picture: Christian Aid/David Rose

It includes case studies of real-life conflicts including those in Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Northern Ireland, and there are interviews with key players such as former International Development Secretary Clare Short.

The 30-point course is suitable not just for those directly involved in conflict intervention, but for anyone interested in understanding these critical issues. It can be studied as part of the MSc in Development Management or as a stand-alone course. There will be an online tuition option making it accessible to students anywhere in the world.

INTRODUCTION TO LAW

IN A fresh approach to an ancient subject, The Open University has designed a new introductory Law course. W100 *Rules, rights and justice*, is suitable as a foundation course for those wanting to pass on to the LL.B. (Hons) degree, but will also be engaging for anyone curious about the law. No qualifications are required.

Taught through an up-to-date set of books, manuals, DVDs, internet exercises, and face-to-face tutorials, the course introduces students to the study of law and to legal reasoning. Using real, colourful case studies, the course looks at how social and legal rules are made and applied. It moves on to examine the different types of legal status, unlawful conduct, states of

mind, and the rules of evidence. The course covers civil and criminal sanction, as well as ideas of rights and justice.

The course is designed to teach legal technique – such as how to interpret cases, and statutes – and to appreciate law in its social, historical, economic and anthropological contexts.

As well as legal skills, the course develops general study skills. It teaches, among other things, how to identify and critically evaluate material relevant to a problem, how to take notes effectively, how to access and use different information sources, and how to write in different styles.

Every television and radio news

broadcast, every newspaper, and every news website contains stories about law and legal issues. Unlike science, and maths (of which we all need basic knowledge to make sense of the world), law is not systematically taught in schools. Basic skills in law are, though, absolutely necessary for good citizenship. Now is the chance for many people to make up on lost ground.

To find out more about studying or teaching on the course, go to www.open.ac.uk and key the course code, or telephone 08700 100311.

Professor Gary Slapper,
Director of the Centre for Law
at The Open University

Raise your game

*The Open University Business School has helped almost 16,000 people, in all areas of management, to MBA success, says the School's Programmes and Curriculum Director, **Professor Mark Fenton-O'Creevy***

ANNUALLY, more than 4,000 organisations sponsor managers on our courses. Sixty per cent of our students are supported, financially or otherwise, by their company or organisation. Most of our students find that their experience at work becomes a feature of their studies, and – to complete the circle – their study becomes relevant to their work.

There are entry points to the School's suite of professional and management development programmes for managers and professionals at all levels. The Professional Certificate in Management provides a firm initial grounding in key management issues and provides students with a range of tools and techniques to apply to their roles. For others, an ideal starting point could be the undergraduate BA (Hons) Business Studies programme.

The Professional Diploma in Management builds on the work of the Certificate and looks in greater depth at management issues. It seeks to meet the challenge of an increasingly complex management environment. An extensive range of professional development

programmes for the corporate sector is also offered. The Diploma is also a Stage One course for the School's MBA, Masters in Public Administration or MSc.

Suite of Masters

The MBA (Master of Business Administration) itself – the third step on the ladder of programmes – is aimed at practising senior managers. Its emphasis is on strategic analysis, interdisciplinary skills and independent judgement. The suite of Masters courses extends beyond the MBA for which the School is well known. The first students have started studying for a series of new Masters degrees, including: MBA (Life Sciences), which is designed for managers in life sciences and health organisations; MSc in International Finance and Management; MSc in Human Resource Management and Master in Public Administration.

For more information visit www.oubs.open.ac.uk or call 08700 100311. Alternatively, visit www.open.ac.uk/sesame

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An hour a day to get ahead

*Studying an MBA has helped **John Farrell** step back from the day-to-day routine and invest time in himself*

AWARD-WINNING MBA student John Farrell (above) says his degree not only helped him in business – it also improved him as a person.

The medical director said the influence of the course was so great that it changed his outlook on life – and a year after he completed his studies, it still is.

“It made me think in a different way and it sparked an enthusiasm for learning,” he said.

“So much of the time we go to work, we do our day-to-day jobs, but we don’t progress ourselves, and forget that it is important to do so. Through the MBA I got into the idea of spending an hour each day simply improving myself and it’s a habit I’ve kept. It’s made me read magazines or books I would never previously have looked at.”

It is this dedication that earned John, of Stillorgan, Co Dublin, top marks in last year’s exams and won him the OU Business School’s MBA Student Of The Year Award.

“The MBA teaches some excellent skills and makes you look at issues from a different angle,” said John, who works for Pfizer Ireland. “I learned so much about strategy, finance, how to structure my work and the course on change management was first class,” he said. “And it was fantastic to be able to apply everything immediately to the way I did my job. In medical training you can do all the book work – for example about how to elicit signs of various ailments – but it’s theory,

and you can’t really understand how it works until you start talking to patients. But with the MBA I could go in to work the next day and apply everything I’d learned immediately.”

John started the MBA “because I recognised a need to develop my skills and knowledge in management” and began with the Certificate in Professional Management and the Diploma in Professional Management before completing the MBA programme. He said another advantage was being able to study when he liked. “Some institutions offer you the chance to do business courses but you have to go to college one or two days a week,” he said. “There’s no way I could afford the time to do that. But the MBA allowed me to study when, where and how I wanted or was required to by work demands. I have a busy job that can involve working long hours and lots of travel, so the OUBS style of teaching matched my needs perfectly.”

John’s prize includes enrolment on the Chartered Management Institute’s Chartered Manager programme, which will allow him to demonstrate the practical impact that his skills, knowledge and understanding bring to his workplace. And he hasn’t ruled out further study with the OU.

“I could be tempted back by the Maths courses,” he said. “Maths was my first love and I always wanted the chance to learn more about it. When the children are a bit older I think you’ll definitely see me back.”

SUPPORT

Being smarter

USING the OU's online materials can give your studies a boost. Here's some website you may find useful:

Study smart

A taster of what's provided from the Study Support page of StudentHome:

- Hints, tips and activities for improving your study skills www.open.ac.uk/learning/study-strategies/index.cfm
- Doing assignments – better and faster www.open.ac.uk/learning/study-strategies/pages/doing_assignments.cfm

- Using your PC more effectively for study www.open.ac.uk/pc4study/index.htm
- Doing a project this year? Need to improve your information skills? Try the Library SAFARI tutorial to speed up your search for information <http://ltssolweb1.open.ac.uk/safari/signpostframe.htm>

Career smart

The Careers Advisory Service offers a variety of resources and activities. You can explore how your study might help you make a career change or explore new ideas and

opportunities

Talk to others about career options, dreams. Check out Careers Links: www.open.ac.uk/careers/links/index.htm

Life smart

Get your friends and family on board. This site gives friends and family ideas on how they can support you in your studies www.open.ac.uk/family/

Fitting study into a busy life... Time management www.open.ac.uk/time/index.htm has hints and tips which may be able to save you hours.

Marking TMAs is no picnic

EVERY OU marker learns on day one about the OU sandwich. When you fill out the PT3 form, you must start with something positive and end with something positive. The filling in between should be critical but in a positive sense. All Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs), however bizarre, must be taken seriously. This can be easier said than done. Experienced marker **John Kirkaldy** shows how it can be achieved.

Dear Eric,

In all my years with the OU, I must admit that your TMA is the most remarkable I have ever corrected. In fact, so much so that I have faxed copies to the course team and to all my fellow Associate Lecturers. The essay title: "Did Hitler have anything to do with World War Two?" was set as something of an easy introduction to the course and you certainly came up with some interesting conclusions.

Your opening sentence, "Well, no, not really" certainly goes against the general trend of thought on the matter. There is some controversy concerning Hitler and World War Two, but no historians so far have marginalised him completely. Your alternative notion that World War Two was all down to Vera Lynn's agent has not received any academic support.

You produce two bits of evidence to back up your conclusions. Neither of which I have seen used so far by any reputable historian. You write "in 1939 Portsmouth won the FA Cup for the only time in their history". Now it is true that this has produced one of the sure-fire winners of any pub quiz – "What team has kept the FA cup for longest?" – but the connection with the outbreak of World War Two remains very doubtful. Even the most devout supporter of Wolverhampton Wanderers (who lost to Portsmouth) or Southampton (Portsmouth's biggest rivals) have claimed that this against-the-odds victory had anything to do with World War Two. Certainly, Portsmouth came nowhere in 1914. This seems to belong to the Coincidence School of History.

Your second bit of evidence is even more obscure. According to you, your Great Uncle Jim announced in the Five Bells, Nether Wallop

in June 1931, two years before Hitler came to power, that "this means war". Your conclusion is that this momentous pronouncement predated Hitler's rise to power. However, research (Andover Advertiser) shows that he was referring not to the European situation but to allegations of cheating in the local Cribbage League (the Butcher's Arms). Your Great Uncle Jim's role as travelling reserve to the Five Bells Cribbage Team hardly makes him one of the movers and shakers of European diplomacy at that time. As far as we know, Hitler never met your Great Uncle Jim.

"All TMAs, however bizarre, must be taken seriously. This can be easier said than done"

You produce an additional bit of evidence. This is quite outrageous. You attach a five pound note with the comment, "mine's a Distinction, have a drink on me". This is an insult to the integrity of the OU's part-time staff. It is true that so bad is the payment that we receive for correcting that many of us are forced to go, in torn cap and gown, among the poorer parts of our towns and cities, crying: "Spare a few coins for a red pen, guv'nor". But five pounds! We only start talking at twenty and that's for a pass only. (We take all known credit cards and recommend stapling all such requests to the TMA, as paper-clips have been known to come unstuck.)

I am a little anxious about the next TMA – "Were the USA and Russia involved in the Cold War?" – and tremble a little as to what you might come up with. Please put all thoughts about Budweiser and Electrolux out of your head.

Do give me a call if you want to discuss anything. Alternatively, the phone number for the Samaritans is in the phone book. Or I believe that some of the courses in Psychology and Social Sciences are really interesting.

John Kirkaldy is an Arts tutor in the South-West region (Bristol).

First plan your study

Keith Herrington has gained not one, but three degrees with The Open University. Here he passes on the five top study tactics that worked for him

IN 1993, I was standing in the National Gallery admiring *The Ambassadors*, a painting by Holbein, and was wondering why he had chosen to paint the picture of a skull obliquely in the foreground. Then, as if by magic, I suddenly heard a female voice explaining exactly why the skull was in the picture, and turned around to see an Open University tutor talking to a captivated group of students. From then on, I dreamt of becoming an OU graduate.

Over the years, I have reflected on that day many times, never thinking for one minute that I would one day achieve three OU degrees: a Bachelor of Arts (Hons); a Masters degree in Education; and a Masters degree in Social Science. Combining my studies with my role as a full-time police officer has not been easy, but never less than totally captivating.

Now, as I put my OU books away, possibly for the last time, I have compiled a list of the top five shortcuts I used to successfully complete my degrees, which might prove useful to fellow students.

Many will wholeheartedly disagree with some of the tactics I recommend, but hopefully they might stimulate students in to developing their own learning strategies. Everyone learns differently, the trick is to devise an effective system. Here are my tips:

1 Always read the Study Guide first

As soon as the course materials arrive, skim-read the Study Guide to get a feel for the course. There will be all sorts of other things as well, but the Study Guide is the heart and soul of the course, and deserves early attention.

2 Next read the specimen exam paper

I was always amazed how many students were completely unaware about the format of the exam, sometimes when it was only weeks away. Even before the first tutorial, I always knew exactly what the framework of the exam was, and planned my studies accordingly.

3 Then read all the Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA) questions

The next important thing, and yes I am suggesting this BEFORE picking up the Study Guide for the first serious study, is to look through all the assignment questions. Getting a good mark on the first TMA gives the student a great confidence boost, and it is a big advantage knowing what the TMA is asking, before turning to the Study Guide. Again, I have known students who will read religiously through the opening block, and then look at the TMA assignment guide for the first time. In my view, this is totally the wrong strategy, the student should be aiming to read with a mission, and this is only achieved by knowing what the TMA is about as one reads the course materials.



Keith: "Students should aim to read with a mission"

4 Know the main points of the introduction in the course guide or workbooks back to front

This is a particularly important point to remember, especially for the exam, as invariably the main arguments of each writer are concisely summarised. While I always ensured I read the recommended discourses, I also found that the course guide introduction was the single most important element. Using this strategy, and knowing the introduction almost like a mantra, enabled me to get 81 per cent on my very last exam.

5 Do NOT try to learn every single word on the course

If there was one single piece of advice I would give to an OU student, this would be it. I have lost count of the number of students I have seen fall by the wayside because they insist on doing this. I have also known students who read reams around a subject and wonder why they cannot précis all the information down to answer the questions in the exam. Reading with a purpose, and developing an effective learning system, is likely to be far more successful, especially if one is in full-time employment.

If nothing else, I hope that some of the ideas I have suggested above will provide food for thought for some students, particularly if they have not yet devised their own learning strategies. As everyone reading this will know, studying with the OU is a wonderful experience, but especially so if you can see it through to a successful conclusion.

Keith Herrington originally began studying with the OU to gain qualifications he could use after retiring from Gloucestershire police force. He retires this year at age 48, after 30 years' service, and is going on to do a PCGE (teaching certificate) with the aim of becoming a history teacher.

The Graduates

More than 14,000 people graduated from The Open University in 2005. Between April and September, 26 OU graduation ceremonies took place at 18 different locations. From Brighton and Cardiff to Glasgow; from Dublin and Belfast to the Palace de Congrès in Versailles, they were celebrating the end of a long journey



Quitting was not an option

YOU never know where your study will take you – as Judith Stein discovered after she embarked on an OU Openings course, *Living Arts*, in 2000.

The 28-year-old Londoner, who left school with no qualifications, picked up her BA Honours in Humanities at the Milton Keynes degree ceremony in June.

“When I started, I didn’t think I would go on to do a degree,” said Judith (pictured left), who is believed to be the first *Openings student to make the journey all the way to degree level.

And it was hardly an easy ride; while studying AA306 and E300 in the same year, Judith had to cope with her mother having a serious operation, and herself giving birth to a premature baby just as her two final TMAs were due. “I took a lot of advantage of extensions,” she said.

Judith achieved her degree in four years. “I am very very stubborn,” she said. “Once I have started I do not quit.”

Judith, who is orthodox Jewish, has also been writing articles for Jewish publications and hopes to develop this line of work. “I was cheated out of an education at school,” she said. “The OU has given me more confidence and an education I never had.”

**Openings are a series of short introductory courses designed to prepare the inexperienced student for undergraduate study, or give a taste of an unfamiliar subject area. Launched in 2000, they are worth 10 credit points; the latest, launched this September, is Understanding management (Y159).*

NURSE IN CHARGE OF HIS FUTURE

PICTURED on the front page is Tonde Maringa with daughter Rutendo.

Tonde, who is currently a charge nurse at St Andrews hospital in Northampton, picked up a BSc Hons in Health and Social Care at the Milton Keynes degree ceremony in July, watched by proud wife Julliet and daughter Rutendo, aged 15 months. He says the OU was an obvious choice for someone like himself working long hours with changing shifts. “I was able to fit my studies around work and family commitments,” he said. Tonde is now looking forward to beginning a Masters degree in forensic mental health studies with the University of Birmingham.



FOCUS

Wasting women

The OU has recently launched a free course for women who want to return to a career in science. But more initiatives are needed if they are to reach the top jobs. **Peter Taylor-Whiffen** examines the phenomenon of the leaky pipeline...



SCIENCE used to be thought of as a subject for boys, but times change. Girls now consistently outperform boys in science subjects at GCSE level. As many girls as boys take science subjects at A-level. And over the last decade, most students who walk out of British universities with a chemistry or biology degree have been female.

So is it fair to assume more and more top science posts in business and academia are being filled by women? Fair, but wrong. The reality is that although women make up the majority of science graduates looking for jobs, by the time they would be eligible for the top posts, most of them have disappeared.

But why? Physicists might speculate on the existence of a black hole. Chemists may consider the properties of a glass ceiling. But the phrase used increasingly regularly to explain this scientific phenomenon sounds more like one for the engineers – a leaky pipeline.

Career breaks

"Women tend to take more career breaks than men – often, say, to become mothers – but science moves on so quickly that even a short time out of the loop can set you back," says OU volcano expert Dr Janet Sumner (pictured left), who found it hard to return to her career after living in Germany for five years. "I'd done a PhD, then a fellowship in Japan, then another in the UK. But because I then took a career break to be with my new husband, I found it hard to get research funding to get back into the job I loved. I couldn't believe it – it felt like after that PhD and two fellowships, I was on the scrapheap at 35."

The problem, she said, is that anyone who has not recently received funding for a research project will always find it harder to make a successful application. "If you've spent some time without funding, this gap is viewed with suspicion," she added. "You're not seen as viable, so you don't get funding. And the longer it goes on, the less viable you become. The people giving out the funds

become even more suspicious – without realising it's at least partly because they wouldn't give you any money! You want to say: 'I'm every bit as bright and committed as I was five years ago!'"

Janet's career was revived by the Daphne Jackson Trust, which provides research funding to help scientists struggling to re-establish themselves after taking a break. "From then on it was easy – once you've got funding you become viable again. You need it to prove you're good at what you do."

One OU student whose gender has not been a barrier to success is Faye Banks. She grew up in local authority care and left school at 16 with no qualifications, but at 25 was named Britain's Woman Engineer Of The Year, when she was halfway through her OU Master of Engineering.

"It doesn't matter what sex you are as long as you can do the job," said Faye, who became interested in engineering while working on a production line in a factory and talked to engineers who came in to fix machinery. "I've worked for three engineering companies now and found no other female engineers, but I'm respected because I proved I know what I'm doing."

But Faye, whose studies were sponsored by her bosses at Unilever, thinks the reason there are so few women engineers (about one in 20 of all engineers is female – and higher up the ladder there are considerably fewer) is because schoolgirls are not taught to see it as an attractive career path.

"It doesn't attract them because they think it's about cars, and getting dirty – but it's not, it's about knowledge, and research, and when girls know that, they become much more interested," she said.

They have no lack of role models. Marie Curie won two Nobel prizes for her discovery of radium. If Rosalind Crick had not done the groundwork, Watson and Crick may

not have discovered DNA. Gertrude Elion developed the leukaemia-fighting drug 6-mercaptopurine. It was the American Barbara McClintock who discovered genes are transposable. And next time you turn on your windscreen wipers, murmur a little thanks to their inventor, Mary Anderson.

Women make up 54 per cent of the OU's science student population. In addition, The Open University tends to appoint more females than most other institutions to senior science posts. When Jocelyn Bell Burnell became the OU's Professor of Physics in 1991, she was one of only two women with the title in the UK, and more than 10 years later, there are still only 11.

"It doesn't matter what sex you are as long as you can do the job"

Some science or science-related subjects appear to be more attractive to women than others. Across the whole of the UK nearly one in three professors of medicine are women but females account for only six per cent of maths and computing professors.

But closer inspection of the figures reveals that whatever the science subject, that leaky pipeline remains. One in three female professors of medicine sounds impressive, but at lecturer level women outnumber men. More than half of biological science lecturers are women, but they make up only 18 per cent of professors. The drop is only slightly less acute in physics (30 per cent of lecturers, but 14 per cent of professors), engineering (20 per cent reduces to five per cent) and computing (one in four lecturers is female, but only one in 17 professors).

So what's the solution? Sheer weight of numbers and more employer support for mothers may result in more women in senior positions, but it will take a while. There is, argued Britain's most senior female scientist

and Royal Society Vice President Dame Julia Higgins in a *Guardian* interview, no short cut. "To go very much faster would smack of positive discrimination," she said recently. "No woman wants to downgrade the idea that they are there for any reason other than talent."

Dame Julia, who is also Professor of Polymer Science at London's Imperial College, claims all universities are struggling with the idea of women in science roles.

"Among the middle managers, at professor level, there are, quite clearly, a whole raft of people who carry out the most appalling employment procedures," she told *The Guardian*. "I don't mean sexual harassment,

but being unfair and demanding too much. If you do the same to women and men, women are more likely to walk out. Men are perhaps a bit better at fighting back.

"There's not a culture of 'oh my God we don't want women around', but there's an awful lot of ignorance about what you should do to support them."

Dr Janet Sumner believes increasing support for men and women who take career breaks means such gaps will become the norm and not affect their rise up the ladder.

"As this market becomes ever more competitive, funding agencies will find more and more applicants with such gaps in their CVs, and hopefully it will become common enough for people not to view the gap as suspicious," she said. "Eventually those giving out the grants will include people with gaps in their careers so they will understand the applicants' situation – but that won't happen for at least another 10 or 15 years."

In the meantime, women scientists may take encouragement from the words of Canadian politician Charlotte Whitton: "Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Fortunately, this isn't difficult."

FREE COURSE FOR WOMEN RETURNERS TO SCIENCE

SCIENCE, engineering and technology: a course for women returners (T160) is designed for female students who have studied or worked in science, engineering or technology (SET) and would like to find a job that reflects their skills. The free places, funded by the Department of Trade and Industry and the European Social Fund, are available until February 2007.

"There are approximately 50,000 women with science degrees who do not work in the sector," said Course Chair Clem Herman. "Knowledge in the sector moves very fast, so the course will include advice on up-skilling. But it will also look at where each

student wants to go with their career, and help them to network with potential employers, prepare CVs, and deal with some of the entrenched attitudes about women in science that unfortunately continue to exist in some companies."

The 10-point course is just one initiative offered by the Bradford-based UK Resource Centre for Women in Science Engineering and Technology (www.setwomenresource.org.uk) in which The Open University is a leading partner. For further details visit www.open.ac.uk/courses and search for T160, or ring 0870 333 4340.

FIFTH COLUMN

Power crazy



TO keep myself at the leading edge of educational technology, I recently signed up for an online course. One day,

as I sweated over my printer and waited patiently for it to grind through page after page of download material, I asked myself "What am I doing this for?" Then it struck me that throughout the land there must be hundreds of students doing this very same thing. In a flash of inspiration the idea came to me to have one person do the downloads, and then, using fast copying machines, produce enough copies to mail one to each student via our much-beloved Royal Mail. Since student numbers are accurately known, this process should also release thousands of unpaid work-hours into the economy. More conveniently still, the pages could all be stitched together to make something which I am provisionally calling a "book".

I have to confess that this idea is not original. Research revealed that its genesis dates back to a fifteenth century German technician called Gutenberg. Nevertheless reinvention has its place, and in modesty I feel that even if no cash reward is forthcoming, I should at least receive some token of my brilliance such as an OU tie-clip or a professorship.

I observe that the OU is committed to "powering" people. In my dictionary the verb "to power" means "to supply with storable energy, as in a spring". Maybe all these downloads are just my personalised manifestation of the OU's powering processes – they certainly succeed in getting me wound up.

Norman Thomson divides his time between caring for his printer and studying TT281.

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

BOOKS

Fab Four on film

The Beatles' movie, A Hard Day's Night, was so influential it affected the course of history. By **Peter Taylor-Whiffen**

IT helped turn the Beatles into pop legends. It's listed in the British Film Institute's top 100 movies of all time. Without it, MTV might not even exist. So it's incredible to think that the film *A Hard Day's Night* was rushed out in just six weeks to cash in on what even the Fab Four thought would be only fleeting fame.

The film's influence on the wider world is explored in a fascinating first book by Steve Glynn, an OU tutor on AA310 *Film and television history*. Steve's book explores the impact of the film by examining the social context in which it was released, and the effect it had on not only popular culture, but the wider world.

"In those days if you'd had a couple of hit singles, the next logical step was to cash in by making a movie," said Steve. "Tommy Steele did it, Elvis did it, Cliff did it – and The Beatles did it. *A Hard Day's Night* was an exploitation movie."

Anarchic

"It was extraordinary," he added. "As soon as this film was released it was clear to critics, many of whom had turned up expecting a throwaway piece of cinema, that this had redefined the genre."

The movie depicts, to coin a phrase, "a day in the life" of the Beatles, who play slightly larger-than-life versions of themselves as they prepare for a concert. But as well as helping to identify them as four separate personalities for their growing fan-base, the film is sharper, wittier and more anarchic than arguably any other pop film made before or since, argued Steve.

"Richard Lester, who directed it, was responsible for that," said Steve who, as well as lecturing in film at the OU, is a secondary school languages teacher in Oakham, Leicestershire. "Lester had worked with the Goons on their *Running, Jumping & Standing Still Film* and incorporated many similar ideas into *A Hard Day's Night*. There are some wonderful visual jokes and one of the highlights is a three-minute piece of the Beatles running, jumping and falling over on a playing field to the accompaniment of *Can't Buy Me Love*. That could be described as the first proper pop video."

"But the movie also has an edge to it. The writer Alun Owen followed the Beatles around for a few weeks listening to them and came up with a sharp witty script that reflects their own humour. And then there's Paul's grandfather (played by Wilfrid Brambell) who, as well as taking a very cynical view of the Beatles' world, can be heard singing snatches of old Sinn Féin songs."

MTV

No wonder, says Steve, "it more or less killed off the traditional pop movie". "It had a huge impact," he said. "In 1960 Cliff Richard's *Summer Holiday* had been the second highest grossing film in Britain. He tried a similar formula with *Wonderful Life*, but that came out only a week before *A Hard Day's Night* and the Beatles' film blew it away – and virtually sealed the fate of that type of movie."

A Hard Day's Night, says Steve, not only redefined cash-in pop films but had a much wider influence. "You can trace a path through from this movie," he said. "The Beatles prompted the Americans to form The Monkees, one of whose members Mike Nesbitt started MTV. The station even presented Richard Lester with a scroll acknowledging the debt the music industry owed to him and *A Hard Day's Night*."

"But its influence was even wider than that. When America was at its lowest ebb in late 1963 after Kennedy's assassination, it really needed something to cheer it up. A couple of months later, along came Beatlemania and then *A Hard Day's Night*, which is now widely held to have played a key role in America's recovery. This wasn't just a film, it was a cultural phenomenon."

A Hard Day's Night by Stephen Glynn is published by I.B.Tauris priced £9.95.

"A Hard Day's Night was an exploitation movie"

people

Ray's in the hot seat, thanks to his MBA

FIREFIGHTER Ray Craven is putting into practice the knowledge he gained from his OU MBA without even realising it.

The 45-year-old Dubliner, who is the Acting Station Officer at the city's airport, says that while he does deliberately use some of the techniques he learned in his studies, the OU changed his thinking so much that he often doesn't realise he's used one of his management skills until after the event.

"A lot of it has become subconscious," said Ray (pictured below), who graduated at the OU ceremony in the Irish capital in April. "I have applied what I've learned in accountancy, and in situations that are about getting people involved. But a lot of the time the knowledge I gained in the MBA is simply reflected in the way I do my everyday work. I don't tend to see it as much in specific tasks as in a new overall way of working."

OU study has paid off for Ray, who as the only fire officer in the department to hold an MBA was promoted from a firefighter to supervisor and then his current job as acting station officer. But he says he's benefited as much from the flexibility of learning with the OU.

"I've found the best way to fill my time waiting for the next shout is to turn to my OU books"

"I do some very irregular shifts and there have been many times when I've found the best way to fill my time waiting for the next shout is to turn to my OU books," said Ray. "Since becoming a supervisor I haven't had as much opportunity to study at work, but it's still great to be able to fit my study around my job."

Ray, who left school after his O-levels in 1974 and has been in the service for more than 20 years, first got into open learning when his bosses encouraged him to take a London-based management course in the mid-1990s. "There was a big development drive and I signed up, and it went from there," he said. "I just got interested in learning more and more, and got into the OU."

"It's brilliant to be able to study wherever you are – the OU is absolutely ideal for shift workers such as myself," he said. "And I've tended recently to take November start dates so I'm studying in the winter but have time to spend with the family in the summer."

And his OU career does not end here. "I'm looking at the new Masters in Human Resources," he said. "I'm not ready to stop learning yet."



CASE STUDY

Kevin Rogers – Senior Chartered Forensic Psychologist

What was your career path leading up to becoming a forensic psychologist?

I did a variety of jobs from driving buses to managing a shop and working on the docks in Liverpool as an Assistant Quay Controller. Having been made redundant, I took an access course and a degree in applied psychology.

What training did you do?

The Prison Service sponsored me through the Masters course in Applied Criminological Psychology. I studied part-time while working as a psychologist in prison.

What does your current job involve?

I am a Senior Psychologist, which means that I have full chartered status and lead a team of nine people in a prison which holds approximately 1,500 inmates, making it the largest in western Europe. My work covers three main areas: with offenders; with senior managers in the prison; and research. Work with offenders involves one-to-one sessions to address, in the main, offence issues of stress, low self-esteem and depression plus group work on topics such as enhanced thinking and dealing with drug issues. I have a consultancy role within the Senior Management Team helping to build a particular type of regime and train staff to work appropriately. Research has recently included anti-bullying, stress among prison officers and environmental factors for prison employees. I am also on call as a negotiation adviser for prisons in the region, on dealing with disruptions by prisoners such as hostage-taking or rooftop demonstrations.

What skills do you use the most?

The main one is listening. I need to be able to adapt to deal with people at any level from the Governor through to the staff and the inmates. I also need to be able to accurately understand the needs of the prison Governor when being consulted on strategy.

Best and worst parts of your job?

Best – going home knowing that you have made a difference to someone's life.

Worst – lack of resources.

What advice would you give to someone wanting to get into forensic psychology?

Get experience; you need to know that being in a prison environment or working with offenders doesn't intimidate you. If you want to volunteer you can try the Probation Service, Psychology Departments in prisons, the Police, NACRO (the crime reduction charity) or Victim Support.

Work in mind

Only 15 to 20 per cent of Psychology graduates go on to work in areas of professional psychology. If you're thinking of, or already studying, psychology with a view to progressing your career, here are some things you should know, and details of where to find out more

THERE are many options open to you regardless of whether you wish to apply your psychological knowledge directly or indirectly in a future career. To find out more, ask the Careers Advisory Service at your regional centre for a copy of the Signpost sheet on psychology or visit www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Signposts

Professional areas of psychology

There are nine professional areas of psychology as recognised by the British Psychological Society (www.bps.org.uk). You will need to ensure that you take the recommended courses to gain Graduate Basis for Registration by the BPS if you want to qualify in one of the following areas: clinical, counselling, educational, forensic, sport and exercise, health, occupational, teaching and research, and neuropsychology.

All of these involve further study at Masters or Doctorate level in order to qualify. There can be changes to the training requirements for these specialisms, so make sure you find the most up-to-date information. For example, the training requirements for those wishing to become an educational psychologist are changing. Refer to the BPS in the resources section below for more information on this.

Gaining work experience

It is vital to gain some relevant work experience for entry into any area of professional psychology. This will usually mean spending time in the working environment or with the client group you want to work with. Volunteering is often the way to begin, giving you an initial flavour of the environment to help you judge whether it is right for you. Posts for assistant psychologist and research assistantships are also useful; as well

as gaining experience you will be making contacts with people already employed who may at some point in the future be recruiting.

Psychology FirstClass conference – all topics covered...

The Careers Advisory Service made an electronic conference available throughout June for you to ask a careers adviser some questions about using a psychology degree – and many of you took us up on this offer. The conference will remain read-only until the end of 2005 and is located on FirstClass in the main OU community area within the Career Advisory Conference. Questions were asked about a wide spectrum of topics, from further qualifications, routes into the specialisms and options for career change to getting into teaching, careers in counselling and much more.

Resources

- Careers Advisory Service website – look in the A-Z for *Getting into Psychology* where you will find links to related information – www.open.ac.uk/careers
- OU Psychology Programme website – www.open.ac.uk/programmes/psychology/
- British Psychological Society – holds links to websites for the professional areas – www.bps.org.uk
- Psychological Society of Ireland – www.psihq.org/
- Psyclick.org.uk – www.psyclick.org.uk – non-official site for those interested in clinical psychology
- United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy – www.psychotherapy.org.uk
- Prospects HE careers website – www.prospects.ac.uk
- *Becoming A Teacher* – OU publication



– www3.open.ac.uk/courses/recognition/becoming_a_teacher.pdf

● Do-IT – national volunteering database – www.do-it.org.uk

As with all career planning, remember that there may be variations between countries so always check with your regional centre or the relevant professional body.

Use your region

WHERE will my degree take me? What are my options? How easy will it be for me to gain work? Faced with queries like these, careers staff in the OU regions are looking at ways to support students' in their career development.

In Birmingham (Region 04) they hit upon the idea of a Careers Day, which brought together employers from a range of areas to answer one-to-one queries from students. Employers attending included representatives from the National Health Service, College of Law, Teacher Training Agency, Birmingham City Council, National Trust, Volunteer Bureau, Social work, Psychology, Graduate Prospects and Graduate Advantage. There was also a variety of talks, a cv clinic and videos on topics such as job hunting, applications and interviews.

"Regional events like this can be a useful networking opportunity with the chance to meet local employers," said OU Careers Advisor Ellen Cocking. "Students can also visit the Job Hunting conference within the Career Advisory conference in the OU Community area of FirstClass. This was run in June but will remain read-only until the end of this year." Regional centres will contact students to let them know of forthcoming events, or see www3.open.ac.uk/contacts/events.aspx for all events in your area. For more information about the OU Careers Advisory Service see www.open.ac.uk/careers or contact your regional centre.

CASE STUDY

Katie Harrop – Clinical Psychologist

Why did you choose clinical psychology?

I enrolled on a Law degree but found that it didn't fulfil any of my interests and so I dropped out; Psychology was suggested to me by chance by a friend. As I studied I found the topics related to some of my own personal experiences and this encouraged my interest in clinical psychology.

What experience did you gain?

I worked in an old people's care home and volunteered for a local rape crisis line during university. After my degree I worked as an assistant psychologist in a local hospital for two years, having found out about the opportunity via one of my tutors. I would always recommend talking to clinicians about your interests even as an undergraduate.

What was your route to qualifying and what has been your career path?

I managed to get a place on the three-year training course. The course was a mixture of lectures and placements and many of the people on the course were mature students.

I qualified two years ago and am working three days a week in a paediatric department in a district hospital, plus two days a week as a tutor on a Clinical Psychology course. At the hospital I have a case load of 20–25 clients – it's mostly one-to-one work with children/adolescents and their families. The difficulties that they are facing vary; some are finding it hard to come to terms with a diagnosis while others are struggling with the demands of an illness such as diabetes, and some have complex difficulties with no obvious medical explanation.

I am also involved with training other health professionals. I also run groups for diabetic teenagers.

What skills do you use the most?

Listening and validating – part of the process is to enable the client to talk about their problems and empower them to develop strategies for managing it themselves. Another skill is to act as an advocate for my clients within the health care system and external agencies such as social services.

Best and worst parts of your job?

Best – seeing someone develop and no longer need you.

Worst – the constraints of resources and having to say no.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering clinical psychology?

Firstly, make sure you gain enough experience in a clinical setting to be absolutely sure that it is what you want to do.

Secondly, be aware of the demands of training, there is considerable support but it is both academically and emotionally demanding.

Often students ask whether having their own experience of mental health difficulties will disadvantage them; but it can be useful to have a personal understanding and certainly shouldn't prohibit you from applying.

READERS' HOLIDAY OFFER

DISCOVER CORFU

Seven nights in 2005 from just £299

YOU will stay away from the usual tourist trail in privately-owned apartments in the delightful village of Arillas on the north-west coast, reached through peaceful hillside villages and olive groves. A gentle curve of sand offers a safe bathing beach and the surrounding area is a walkers' paradise, with some of the most beautiful scenery in Corfu. Price includes a half-day escorted walk and a full-day boat excursion to one of the offshore islands. **Holiday offer C155/OU**

LUXURY BREAK IN CORNWALL

Three-, four- and seven-night breaks in deluxe four-star coastal apartments from just £42 per person + fourth and seventh night free offer and Eden Project ticket

BEACHCOMBERS apartments, open all year round, are situated only 200 yards from the mile-long sandy beach of Watergate Bay, a surfers' paradise near Newquay. These one and two-bedroom apartments sleep up to six people and many have sea views. **Holiday offer C185/OU**. Also Christmas and New

Year five-night breaks from £159 per adult, from £39 per child including Christmas lunch or New Year's Eve gala dinner. **Holiday offer C186/OU**

GUERNSEY FLY/DRIVE PLUS HERM

Save up to 15 per cent on a romantic break on Guernsey for two, three, four or seven nights from just £165 per person, including flight, a self-drive hire car, a day trip to Herm + fourth and seventh night free offer

YOUR B&B accommodation will be in the two-star Abbey Court Hotel in St Peter Port, ideally placed to explore the fabulous beaches and castles and sample the superb cuisine. Minimum two adults per booking.

Holiday offer C184/OU

JERSEY FLY/DRIVE OR SEA/DRIVE

Save up to 33 per cent on a two-, three- or four-night break in sunny Jersey travelling by air from regional airports or by sea from Weymouth or Poole from just £135, including travel, a self-drive hire car or free car passage + third or fourth night free offer

YOUR B&B accommodation will be in the



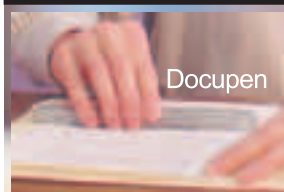
Gorey Castle, Jersey

two-sun De Normandie Hotel in Havre des Pas on the outskirts of St Helier. Amenities include a leisure complex with indoor pool, spa bath, sauna, steam room and gym. Minimum two adults per booking. **Holiday offer C187/OU**

For further details contact Travelsmith on +44 (0) 1621 784666 quoting the holiday offer number.

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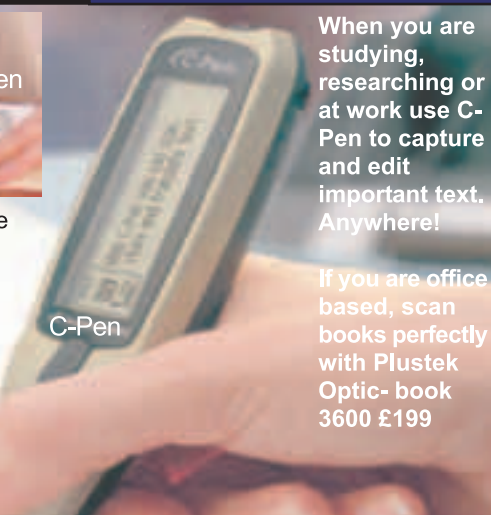
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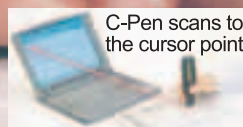
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interview

Lucie Flint



Lucie (pictured front, third from left) enjoying summer school

I do like to be beside the seaside

Name: Lucie Flint.

Family: Divorced with a son, Andrew aged nine.

Where do you live? Henlow, Herts.

What are you studying at the moment?

I'm working towards a Life Sciences degree. I completed S103 in June. Now I'm doing a short 10-point course called *Fats of life* to fill in until my next long course (*Human biology*) starts in November.

What made you study with the OU? I don't have a degree and wanted to prove to myself I was capable of achieving it. And I wanted to learn something new.

What's the best thing about OU study?

The courses are very well put together – the distance learning materials are excellent. The best thing for me so far has been summer school. I had so much fun, and my group (big up for SXR103 Red Rectangles!) were fantastic.

And the worst? Not being able to spend more time on activities. I always seem to rush through them to get through the assignments.

Complete the following sentence: The OU would be better if... there were more residential courses – perhaps shorter

three-day courses at Easter, or in the winter. It would be good to have more opportunity to share ideas, work in teams etc.

Favourite food: Anything! I'm a complete foodie. But moulles marinières with fresh crusty bread would be in my top 10.

What newspapers/magazines do you read? *The Times* and *BBC Good Food*.

What are your hobbies? Anything food related – cooking, entertaining, eating out. I also get out on my bike and explore the countryside sometimes.

Favourite film: *When Harry met Sally*. It's cheesy but it makes me laugh.

Favourite TV/radio: *Blackadder II*.

What makes you switch off the TV? Reality TV, soaps, daytime rubbish.

Where did you take your last holiday? Cornwall – I love the west country.

How would you spend your ideal evening? Sitting on a beach watching the sun set over the sea, preferably with a bottle of red wine and my (as yet undiscovered!) soul mate.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given? Go for it (when I started my own business 18 months ago).

What do you miss most from your childhood? My grandparents and my lack of overdraft.

How do you picture retirement? Probably still trying to finish my degree! I'll be living in north Devon, near the sea. And I'm a born organiser so I'll probably be on every local committee going!

Name one way you think you've changed in the last 10 years: I'm more relaxed and comfortable in my own skin.

How would you spend £1 million? I'd buy a piece of land and build my dream house.

What's your greatest achievement? Producing what has become the finest, most wonderful boy in the world.

What's your greatest regret? Developing a fear of flying.

Describe yourself in three words: Quirky, confident, peacemaker.

If you would like to be featured in the interview please email your contact details and a brief description of the courses you are studying with the OU to sesame@open.ac.uk

competition

sesame crossword competition

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

FANCY a break from study or revision? You could win yourself £75 by filling in **sesame's** autumn crossword.

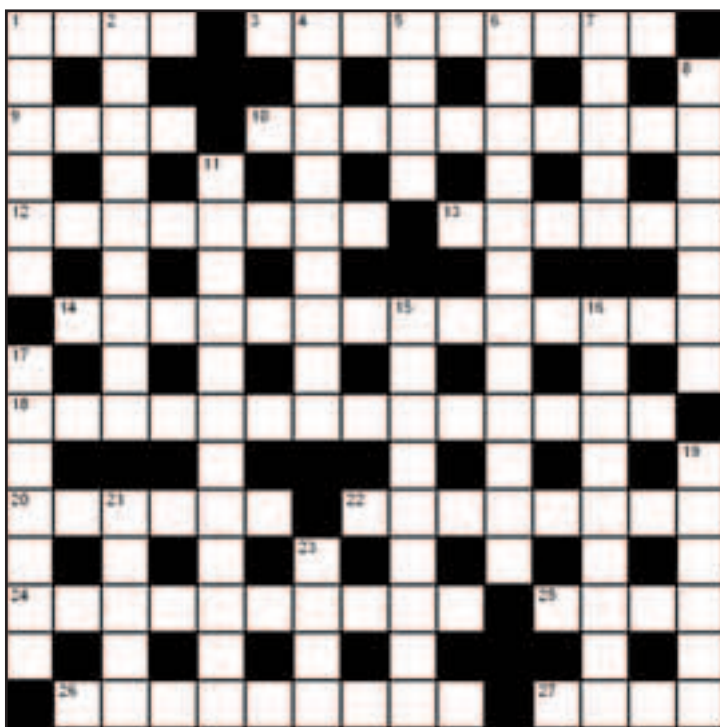
Senders of the first three correct

solutions drawn out of the hat on 21 October will receive a copy of the *Chambers Dictionary*.

In addition, the first one drawn will receive £75 cash courtesy of **sesame**.

Winners will be notified by telephone or email.

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



SESAME AUTUMN CROSSWORD ENTRY FORM

Send your entry with the completed coupon to:
Cullen Crosswords, 19 Cyncoed Place, Cardiff, CF23 6SG
Closing date 21 October 2005. Only one entry per person.

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

Clues – Across

1. Large family with many in goal (4)
3. Head dropping, concierge's possibly in spot (9)
9. Month for Topol and assembled actors to make a comeback (4)
10. Assuming it is installed in vessel as well as in replica (5-5)
12. Openings in Oxford, possibly? (3-5)
13. Napoleon, the first one with no time to ask for help (6)
14. Basic requirement of a business establishment (4,10)
18. Dream homes for dons? (7,2,5)
20. Left heart-broken, in a state of agitation (6)
22. Figure not as great as it's cracked up to be? (8)
24. Platform, unknown length, wants simple floral arrangement (5,5)
25. Covering that's hard, dry and warm (4)
26. Book in which there's little that's new? (9)
27. An English rebel hanged in a basket (4)

Clues – Down

1. Boys' tippie (Johnson) would be port if it could (Bentley) (6)
2. Case I made for reform in seats of learning (9)
4. Responsive to excitement, certain to take in one game after getting up (9)
5. Kind of grass – hard underneath – one musn't lie on it (4)
6. Race to put your car in protected area (8,4)
7. European on a roll (5)
8. The upper row reportedly made of translucent material (7)
11. It preserves notes penned by starchy alter ego (12)
15. No partners are fair to women (3-6)
16. Fishy extract all ready for drinking? (9)
17. Block giving Doc clue to disorder (7)
19. Start off search, then regret being disloyal (6)
21. Old tongue featured in pre-war Britain or in the West Indies (5)
23. Fat man in exemplary turn-about (4)

Summer crossword winners

The first entry out of the hat was from Stuart Goulding. A cheque for £75 and a copy of the *Chambers Dictionary* are on their way to Stuart who comes from Fiskerton in Lincoln. The two runners-up who also receive a copy of the *Chambers Dictionary* are: Mark Saxon

from Stockport and Michael Jones from Bangor.

Answers - Across:

1. Panathenaea 9. Orris 10. Allemande
11. Grenadine 12. Trier 13. Aioli 15. Allotrope
17. Precipice 18. Blend 19. Rheum 21. Nile-green

24. The mikado 25. Acari 26. Silverstone

Answers - Down:

1. Prong 2. Norse 3. Toscanini 4. Examination hall
5. All hell let loose 6. Armet 7. Antigone
8. Befriend 13. Aspirate 14. Open-eyed
16. Toboggans 20. Maids 22. Erato 23. Naive

OU STUDENT

Edited by



The official publication of the Open University Students Association

Joan Jones

Twenty gap years

I HAVE been in a bit of a whirl since the last edition of *OU Student*, combining a mixture of hard work with pleasurable duties. The hard work has been mostly the setting of the pace for the Open University Students Association's (OUSA) work for the coming year, ensuring that the social, support and representational functions of the Association are working properly, or moving towards changes where improvements are needed within our own organisational structures and processes. I have also been working hard to progress the resolutions from OUSA's Conference held in April and I believe that significant success will follow from early negotiations that I, and other key members of my Executive team, have had with the University. I will report on these in future editions of *OU Student*.

Pleasurable duties have included attending graduation ceremonies, Open Day and residential schools. It gave me great pleasure to attend Manchester graduation and to be present when a past OUSA President, Dr Iris Keating, was honoured by the OU for her services to the University. Interestingly, Iris was the President when I first became involved with the Association in 1984, and it was she who led the campaign against the Margaret Thatcher government's plan to introduce drastic funding cuts which, if they had been successful, would have seen the closure of the OU by the early 1990's. Iris recalls "We really thought we were fighting for our lives." The OU had always been seen, rightly, as the baby of Harold Wilson, and there was a real fear, at that time, that it would not survive.

Iris, accompanied by Labour MP Jack Ashley, Lib Dem MP Clement Freud and Conservative MP for Milton Keynes, Bill Benyon, delivered a petition carrying over 160,000 signatures on a massive stretcher to 10 Downing Street, and the fact that the OU is still here is testament to Iris's success. Ironically, 20 gap years later I, as the present President, am facing a similar dilemma where the government's policy regarding higher education funding is presenting a serious threat to the future viability of the OU. I am continuing to work with the University to develop a flexible strategy to follow as the effects upon the OU of the government's policy becomes clearer. I am also meeting with Kat Fletcher of the National Union of Students in order to work together for the good of part-time students in general, whilst showing to the government and funding council that part-time students deserve recognition.

The OU Open Day was also a great occasion for OU students to have a chance to visit their very own campus and I was given an opportunity to be able to deliver a presentation explaining the work of OUSA. If you were not able to attend, my presentation is

available from my page on the OUSA website at www.ousa.org.uk

This year I have also taken the opportunity to visit residential Schools that I have not visited before. As I write this I have spent the weekend at St Mary's in London, but am now overlooking the beautiful setting of the University of Sussex campus and will be moving on to Bath for next week. This is my opportunity to try to understand how residential schools have changed during the 20

years since I

attended my first as a student but one thing that is clear, the students attending are enjoying the social interaction and the

chance to concentrate fully on their studies if only for a short time and all of them would

recommend the experience to their peers. This also gives me the chance to thank my residential schools representatives who volunteer to give up a week or more of their summer in order to work hard providing peer support to their fellow students. I am sure they are appreciated by the students who attend, especially those

turn to page 36

*"Part-time students
deserve recognition"*



Joan (left) with Dr Iris Keating at Manchester

Picture: Ede and Ravenscroft

Twenty gap years

from page 35

doing so for the first time.

At Open Day, graduation ceremonies and residential schools, we have been able to sell our very first rag mag, in aid of the charity we run, the Open University Students Educational Trust, OUSET, and it has been fun watching students browsing through their copies and not being able to stifle their giggles. So if you want a copy please send a self-addressed and stamped A5 envelope and a minimum donation of £1.50 to our contact address. Special thanks to Trev and his team for producing it.

And while I am thanking my 'activists,' then I must remember John, who amused me recently by his statement that he was "not a mature student, he had just had 20 gap years!" However many gap years you have had, if you are just embarking on your studies or nearing the end of them, do consider seeking out OUSA whether for social, support or representational aspects, as our combined experience can help to enhance your studies. I wish you all success with the completion of your programme of study.

JOAN JONES
PRESIDENT, OUSA

IN BRIEF

Join Physics Society

HAVE you ever wondered how electricity is pumped into the National Grid or even what the National Grid is? Have you wondered how satellites are sent into orbit, how you can remote-control a robotic arm on the surface of Mars, or how quantum computers or nuclear generators work?

Then join us at Fusion, the Open University Physics Society, for articles, talks and tours that will lead you to a greater understanding of the technology of today's world. For more information on events, newsletters and membership details contact us at www.oufusion.org.uk or membership@oufusion.org.uk

Conference returns home!

FOLLOWING the success of OUSA Conference 2004, OUSA Conference 2006 will be back on the OU Campus at Milton Keynes. It takes places over the weekend of 7- 9 April .

All OUSA members have a right to be represented at the annual Conference and a right to determine what is debated. Your Association is organised as a network of branches and by attending your local branch meeting, you can help to decide just what the current issues and concerns are for students and what matters OUSA should be debating at Conference 2006.

Interested in finding out more: contact your local OUSA branch or email or call the OUSA Office for further details.

Rag mags selling like 'hot cakes'

THE first ever OUSA rag mag (*OUTSET*) is going down very well at residential schools this summer and is threatening to be a sell-out.

Being sold in aid of the Open University Students Educational Trust fund, (OUSET), it's jam pack full of silly stories, nutty newspaper cuttings, light-hearted lists, and amusing anecdotes. It's been compiled by and for OU students and will keep you amused for hours.

And for those not going to residential school this year, you can buy your very own copy of *OUTSET*, care of the OUSA Office. We are asking for a minimum donation of £1.50 for OUSET, and 50p to cover postage and packing. Just send your request to us and there'll be a copy of this momentous mag shortly winging its way to you.



The specially designed Associate Card

Launch of NUS/OUSA Associate Card

THE Open University Students Association has negotiated an Associate Membership with the National Union of Students available to all OU students on application which will include the rights to discounts and special offers on a range of goods and services.

Application forms for the OUSA/NUS Associate Cards are now available and are downloadable from the OUSA Website or the NUS Website.

If you would like to request an application form by telephone, ring the hotline number 0870 242 2458, quoting OU Student.

Go to www.nusonline.co.uk/associate for further information.

All current students can apply for the card which will cost £10 per year and will be issued from September.

STOP PRESS

In addition to the great discounts that the NUS have negotiated for students, such as 10 per cent off at HMV, Apple Stores, TopShop/TopMan and discounts on AA driving lessons, at STA travel and with Endsleigh insurance, the NUS are negotiating special deals especially for OU students, which include Moss Bros and Hewlett Packard. More deals are expected in the near future, so keep an eye on the NUS website.

WRITE HERE... WRITE NOW...

Got a gripe to air, a comment to be considered, a suggestion to share? Well this is the place where you can have your say. Address all your correspondence to: Write here... Write now..., *OU Student*, Open University Students Association, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6BE. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Editor's note: We often mention raising funds for our Charity, OUSET, in *OU Student*, so I thought that it would good to let students share in some of the feedback the Trustees get from students that we have been able to support financially in their studies. The letter below is from one such student.

Kay Munn's special day

HELLO, As you can see Gordon (my husband) has photocopied some photos that were taken at my Graduation Ceremony on 11 June. It was up in Gateshead at the new Sage centre, which was amazing. There were times when I thought I would be unable to complete my degree, and I never gave the Conferment ceremony any thought. However, when I did pass I decided to go for it.

I know with God's help I can do anything according to his will, and his help comes in many ways. Social services provided a mobile electric hoist, a local hotel accommodated us by removing excess furniture from their large family room, Jayne was happy to be bossed about and do all of the packing (having enjoyed the retail therapy necessary to find the right outfit, of course!) and Gordon, a star as always, drove us up to the venue. I decided to take advantage of the occasion and organised a family meal (15 of us) and got a photographer to come and capture us on film. It was fantastic, and to make things even more special, my godmother came over from South Africa and Gordon's parents came up from Dorset.

I am just so fortunate, I can't believe it, and these blessings continue as I am able to lie here (yes unfortunately I have had to pay a physical price for having so much fun!) and enjoy the sounds of the summer in the countryside.

Furthermore this week I am having a new remote control system fitted that will operate more gadgets, gizmos, switches, doors and even windows. I will be able to do all sorts of things at the press of a button, as I have said before there is nothing wrong with me, I am just lazy!

To the OUSET Trustees – Just to show you what your help and support enabled me to achieve. I cannot thank you enough.

Kay Munn



EDUCATION MATTERS

From summer schools to exams to work

LIKE most students, I've now also received my examination allocation and the nerves are beginning to set in. This is the time of year when we begin to anticipate our results, reflect on our overall course performance and make decisions about courses for next year. For some, this represents the end of a few long years of OU study which will hopefully culminate in the receipt of a very special piece of paper at the OU Graduation Ceremony. For others, this will represent the beginning or middle of a journey into the unknown – a process of personal and professional development that is unique to OU study. Although errata in exams has reduced over the years, I am still attempting to keep a close eye on the situation and would be pleased to hear about your experience of this should it occur.

Check the calculator

I was recently able to visit the Bath Residential School to see how an intensive course of study such as a residential week fits into the student experience of OU study. I felt the same buzz as I do when I visit a graduation ceremony – the atmosphere of lots of OU students very passionate about their own curriculum development and pursuing a subject area close to their hearts. Apart from the students there being a truly wonderful bunch of people, it was great to see students from all parts of the UK and beyond debating course-related issues over a pint. Unfortunately, some students, disheartened by falling behind or life getting in the way, will have withdrawn before getting to this life-changing stage of OU study. Inevitably, life does sometimes get in the way. So, for those of you who do have doubts as to whether your course can be salvaged, do check the OU Assessment Calculator through your Student Home Page and get in touch with your tutor for advice.

This brings me to the subject of qualifications, and importantly 'employability'. I want to hear from students about their perceptions of what enhances the employability of an OU Course and/or qualification. What makes it valuable in the work place, what do you feel the OU could do to increase this, and what are the benefits in terms of skills gained?

I've tried to highlight three areas in my article this time around – Exams (errata/experience), Courses (Residential Schools, checking your own progress) and Qualifications (Employability). I'm always very interested to hear what students have to say about their experience of OU study, so please do get in touch and express your opinion on these areas and anything else you want to speak about. Every correspondence will receive a personal reply, and you can contact me via the OUSA Office. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

**REBECCA
ROSENTHAL**
VICE-PRESIDENT,
EDUCATION, OUSA



Open Day 2005

What a day! On one of the hottest days of the year students and their families joined together with local people at Walton Hall, curious to see what delights the OU had to offer. They were not to be disappointed

The President, Joan Jones, opened OUSA's activities for the day with a presentation entitled *The Best Things in Life are Free*. The OUSA marquee, on the Mulberry Lawn, bustled with people all day, eager to find out more about what OUSA does.

Highlights of the day included the launch of the NUS/OUSA Associate Card and the first ever OUSA Rag Mag. Other OUSA activities included the OUSA Challenge, FirstClass

demonstrations, a book sale, a bottle stall and a raffle. Many of OUSA's affiliated societies also had displays in the marquee.

OUSA wishes to thank all those who helped on the day and those who made donations of books, bottles and raffle prizes. A grand total of £ 1406.05 was raised for the Open University Student Educational Trust (Ouset) from a range of activities.



"The Best Things in Life are Free" or so says OUSA President Joan Jones in her presentation in the Old Lecture Theatre



The OUSA marquee is always a hive of activity with students and visitors finding out more about what OUSA does



Open Day gives visitors an ideal opportunity to buy items from the range of goods that OUSA (Services) Ltd (OSL) has to offer



One of the organised events was the OUSA Challenge based on the BBC programme of similar name. The student team, led by Vice-President (Finance) Julie Rains, was narrowly defeated by the academics team, led by Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Staff) Professor Brigid Heywood



Open Day gives OUSA a chance to promote its registered charity, Ouset (Open University Students Educational Trust), and do fundraising activities for it. Here we see the President ready to draw the Ouset Raffle in the OUSA marquee



The many educational exhibits allow visitors young and old to find out more about the University's areas of study

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 17 October.

Local Events

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

Bristol Branch First Wednesday of every month, 8.30pm, Horts Tavern, 49-50 Broad Street, Bristol and Third Tuesday of every month, 8.30pm, The Llandoger Trow, Kings Street Bristol. Details: Kate: 0117 955 1992.

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

Chippenham Branch Second Monday of every month, 7.30pm. Pheasant Public House, Chippenham. Details Pauline Lock: paulinelen@pau-lin.freemove.co.uk

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

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

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

Gloucester Branch First Thursday of every month, 8.00pm, The Fountain Inn, Westgate Street, Gloucester. Details Paula: 01452 750416.

Haverfordwest Branch First Thursday of every month, 7.30pm, Haverfordwest Cricket Club, Dale Rd, Haverfordwest, Pembro. Details Mair via FirstClass: gmk64@student.open.ac.uk

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

OUSA in London Thursday 22 September, from 6.30pm. OUSA at Pizza Express, 133 Baker Street, W1U 6SF. Relax over pizza, pasta, salad or if you wish you can just have tea, coffee or ice cream. To let us know if you are coming or for details email: br-sec-c@ousalondon.co.uk

London South West Saturday 24 September, 12.45pm. South West London EGM followed by theatre visit. The AGM will be held in Room G, Wimbledon Community Association, St Georges Rd, London SW19. Arrive 12.45 to start at 1pm promptly. Afterwards we

will be going to the Wimbledon Studio Theatre to see *Lucky Stiff*. Cost: £8.50. We will most likely continue the tradition of 3-Event days by finishing with a meal. To let us know if you are interested or for details email: br-sec-sw@ousalondon.org.uk

London North West Sunday 30 October, 1pm, Merger EGM. OU in London Regional offices, 1-11 Hawley Crescent, London. NW1 8NP. To let us know if you are coming or for details email: br-sec-nw@ousalondon.org.uk

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

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

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

Tayside Branch Branch Meeting & Social Event, City Mills Hotel, Perth, Thursday 27 October, 8pm. Social Event, Three Bridges of Perth Walk, meet at South Inch car park at 1.30pm on Sunday 28 August. Details: Tayside @ousa-scotland.org



Open Day gives OUSA's affiliated societies an ideal opportunity to promote the services that they offer. Here we see exhibitors from the OU Poets Society and OU Shakespeare Society



In addition to the educational exhibits, the University organised many displays from local Milton Keynes groups to entertain visitors on the day. Here we have the Ceroc display team from Bletchley

Books, books and even more books



THE Book Stall at Open Day proved to be as popular as ever. We had collected a great many books before the day, so we knew that it would be a good sale. However, many visitors brought books with them and donated them on the day too, thus making it an excellent event.

We were fortunate to sell a great many of the books (making a tidy sum for OUSET) but we had a lot left at the end of the day and no place to store them for another event. Luckily, we were able to donate our excess stock to two other charities. Book Aid took all course materials and educational books under 10 years old and new fiction books, and School Aid took everything else. Book Aid is a charity that gives books to universities and colleges in Africa and School Aid does the same for schools in Africa. So you see, every donation was useful and has benefited education not only in the Open University but also throughout Africa too.

Once again, many thanks for all your support.

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

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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.

☐

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☐

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☐

ENABLED STUDENTS GROUP

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☐

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