STUDENT'S GUIDE TO STUDYING ON A PROGRAMME VALIDATED BY THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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The Open University

WELCOME TO THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

"I am pleased and proud that you have chosen to study on a programme validated by The Open University (OU). You are one of over 45,000 students who are currently studying on an OU-validated programme at one of our partner institutions worldwide. The aim of this guide is to introduce you to the University and to explain what studying on a programme validated by the OU means to you.

Essentially, OU validation is a stamp of quality that guarantees the value of your award. OU validated awards are equivalent in level and standard to similar awards offered throughout UK higher education. For instance, did you know that an OU validated award is exactly the same as an OU direct award and offers the same opportunities for employment and application for further studies?

As well as providing some key facts about OU validation and some practical information and guidance that you might like to refer to during the course of your studies, this guide gives you a number of links to some great learning resources developed by the OU which you can freely access online.

You are at the start of a study journey, which all of us at The Open University are very proud to be a part of and on behalf of all my University colleagues, I wish you every success in your studies.''

**Phil Berry, Director,
Open University Validation Partnerships**

ABOUT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

The OU was established by Royal Charter in 1969 and has since taught more than 2 million people.

The OU is the largest university in Europe with over 170,000 students.

The OU is the UK's only university dedicated to distance learning.

The OU is the largest provider of law graduates in the UK.

There is no typical OU student. People of all ages and backgrounds study with us:

- Over 75% of directly-registered OU students work full or part-time during their studies.
- 34% of new OU undergraduates are under 25.
- 23% of OU UK undergraduates live in the 25% most deprived areas.

59 of the FTSE 100 sponsored staff on OU courses in 2016/17
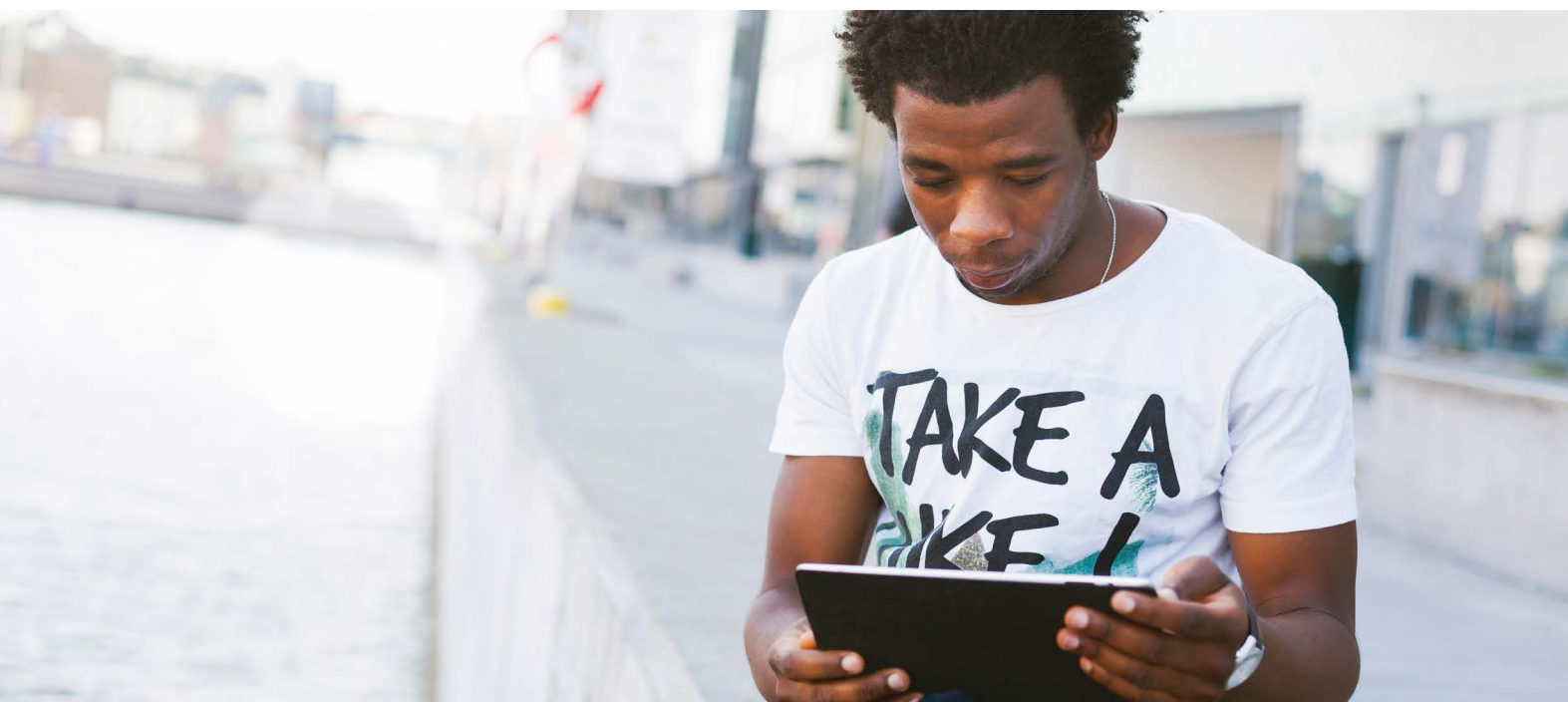
OpenLearn, a free learning resources website from the OU, has had over 50 million visits since its launch in 2006.

Our world-leading innovative research and development ranks in the top third of UK universities.

72% of OU research submitted was assessed as world leading or internationally excellent (Research Excellence Framework 2014).

31% of students had one A level or a lower qualification at entry

OUVP FACTS & FIGURES

- Over **35** partner institutions in the UK and overseas
- Over **45,000** students
- Around **300** programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level
- Wide range of subject areas
- **5,260** Awards conferred in 2016/17
- **158,084** conferments since 1992 when activity started (figure at end of 2016/17)

ABOUT OPEN UNIVERSITY VALIDATION

Through its Royal Charter, The Open University (OU) is able to validate programmes offered by institutions that do not have their own degree-awarding powers or that wish to offer OU awards. Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP) is the unit in the University that manages its validation activity.

What is a partner institution?

You are studying at an institution which, following a rigorous process, has been approved by the OU as an appropriate organisation to offer higher education programmes leading to Open University validated awards. Institutions are re-approved on a regular basis to ensure that they continue to meet the OU's criteria in terms of procedures and resources for teaching, learning and assessment, staffing and staff development, academic organisation and internal quality assurance systems.

What is an OU validated programme or award?

You are studying on a programme validated by the OU, which, if you complete it successfully, will lead to an OU validated award. Awards can be undergraduate (e.g. BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), Certificate or Diploma of Higher Education, Foundation Degree), or postgraduate (e.g. MA, MSc, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma). Your institution has designed your programme, for which it has full responsibility for teaching, assessment and further development, before submitting it to The Open University for validation.

OU validation responds to stringent quality assurance processes, such as external examiners scrutiny and the systematic application of the Quality Assurance Agency defined standards.

How does the OU guarantee programme quality and standards?

The University assures itself of the standard and quality of its validated programmes through the following mechanisms:

- **The validation and revalidation processes,** which involve panels of experts from higher education (and industry where appropriate) both within and outside the relevant subject area. In order to reach a decision about whether or not to (re-)validate a programme, the panel has detailed discussions with the staff team, employers and students, and considers the proposed curriculum and assessment regulations and other programme documentation. Any major changes to a programme are validated and programmes are revalidated regularly. During your time at your institution, you may be asked to speak to a panel as part of a revalidation event.

- **Scrutiny of the institution's own quality assurance procedures:** As part of the approval process, we check that your institution has appropriate quality assurance procedures in place such as external examiners, student, staff and employer feedback mechanisms; analysis of statistical information; and annual monitoring. Your institution is required to produce an annual report to the OU through which the University can monitor the institution's quality assurance procedures and ensure that any concerns are addressed.

- **The appointment of external examiners to every OU validated programme:** The role of the external examiners is to check and confirm that your assessment has been fair and just and that the academic standard of the award has been achieved. All external examiners produce reports which are considered by your institution and the OU. The OU monitors these reports and the institution's response to assure itself that the quality and standard of the programme are being maintained. Your programme information must include the details of the relevant external examiners, such as name and position. In addition, your institution should give you access to external examiners' reports.

What is my relationship with the OU?

Although you are studying for an OU validated award, your primary relationship is with your institution and you must follow the guidance and procedures you are given by them. This includes the Regulations for validated awards of The Open University, which the institution will provide you with, as well as the OU Handbook for Validated Awards. Any queries, complaints or requests should be directed towards the relevant person within your institution and information on who to contact should be found in your student handbook.

Where will I be registered?

You will be registered as a student at your institution, which will register you through The Open University for an OU validated award. The OU will hold summarised information including your personal contact details and progression data, whilst more detailed records are held by your institution. For more information, please see the OU Handbook for Validated Awards.

Who is responsible for induction and any advice I might need?

Your institution will arrange induction for you and will have appropriate services for advice and guidance on all matters whether academic, financial or personal.

Where can I find information on my programme, regulations and support services?

You should find this information in the materials given to you when you start your programme. If you have any further questions, you should contact your programme leader or administrator.

What should I do if I want to make a complaint?

Try to deal with any problems or complaints as soon as possible by speaking to your course leader or administrator. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, your institution has complaints procedures which you should follow. These procedures should be available in the documentation provided to you at the beginning of your programme. Your institution will also ask for your feedback at various stages throughout your programme and each programme will have a committee on which there is a student representative. You should raise any concerns through these mechanisms.

Who is responsible for assessing my performance?

Your institution is responsible for setting and marking assessments. It is also responsible for ensuring that accurate data on student progress and awards is provided to the OU.

What should I do if I dispute a decision made about my performance?

Your programme handbook should detail your institution's appeals procedures, which will include deadlines for any appeal. You should follow these procedures as soon as possible to ensure that you do not miss the opportunity to appeal.

Can I appeal or complain to the OU?

You have the right to appeal or make a complaint to the OU, but you must first go through the relevant procedures in your institution. Your institution can provide you with the detailed procedures for submitting a formal appeal or complaint to the OU through Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP), or you can find them in the Regulations for validated awards of The Open University, on our website **open.ac.uk/ouvp**.

What will happen if I need to leave my programme early?

You may be eligible for an exit award or credit for your achievements up to that point. Discuss this possibility with your institution. It may apply to the OU on your behalf for an exit award or a certificate of credit. It may be possible to use this credit to get exemption from aspects of another programme within the institution or elsewhere. You will also be entitled to a transcript showing the complete record of your learning and achievement up to the point at which you left the programme.

What happens when I successfully complete my programme?

On successful completion of your programme, your institution will ask the OU to confer the award and produce a certificate. Your certificate will include your name, the award, the name of the institution you studied at and the date the award was conferred. The OU coat of arms, crest and logo will appear on the certificate, which will be signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary.

You will also receive a Diploma Supplement, which is a formal and comprehensive record of your learning and achievement. This will come in addition to the transcripts that you will have received as you progress through the programme.

Moving on...

You may be able to use the credits or award you have gained to continue your study at the institution, at the OU, or elsewhere. The OU offers progression onto supported distance learning programmes.

You may join the **OU Alumni Association** – Membership is free and brings with it networking opportunities, discounts and offers, and much more **open.ac.uk/alumni**.

For a registration form, visit the student section of our website **open.ac.uk/ouvp**.

You may use the **OU Careers Service open.ac.uk/careers**.

FREE ONLINE RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE OU

Our approval process requires that institutions have all the necessary services you need to help you with your studies. In addition, the OU has some great free online resources that you may wish to use:

The OU Library gives you access to non-restricted online resources to support your study and research. **open.ac.uk/library/library-resources/publicly-available**

OU Library (Learning Skills) **open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/training-and-skills** and **open.ac.uk/students/help/topic/study-skills**

OU Library (Being Digital) **open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/activities**

The OU on iTunes U contains a wealth of learning materials that are free to download. The OU's extensive material on iTunes U has had 71.8 million downloads to date. **open.ac.uk/itunes**

OpenLearn is a free learning resources website with over 1,000 free courses, interactives, videos and more. The site has had over 50 million visits since its launch in 2006. **open.edu/openlearn**

The OU on YouTube has bite sized extracts from courses, plus videos of research, experiments and student life. **youtube.com/ou**

Open Research Online shares the OU's high-quality, peer-reviewed publications. It features research outputs across a broad range of OU research from science to arts. **oro.open.ac.uk**

FutureLearn allows you to choose from hundreds of free online courses. **futurelearn.com**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE OU AND OU VALIDATION

OU website **open.ac.uk**

twitter.com/OpenUniversity

facebook.com/theopenuniversity

Validation website **open.ac.uk/ouvp**

The validation website includes the list of the OU partner institutions, more information about approval and validation, the OU Handbook for Validated Awards and our appeals and complaints procedures.

CONTACT US

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