



The Open
University



CANDIDATE BRIEF FOR THE POSITION

COUNCIL & COMMITTEE ROLES

The Open University

Spring 2022

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AND INSPIRING.**
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ABOUT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

The Open University (OU) is the largest university in the UK by student population and has a significant global reach through a network of alumni in over 157 countries, international partnerships and research. The OU is the only university to receive funding from, and operate in, all four nations of the UK.

The OU was established in 1969 with a unique aim to make high quality, flexible education open for all. Our mission was to provide a new style of university education that was truly open to people, places, methods and ideas, to improve lives and enrich communities in the UK and across the world. Since our foundation, more than two million people have studied with us, and our commitment to our mission is as strong as ever. That's why we continue to evolve and adapt our teaching methods and technology to support student success in a rapidly changing world.

A unique institution

The OU is unique. A world leader in open access, supported open learning and open educational resources, our distance learning approach sets us apart from other universities. Our commitment to open entry requirements means the OU has an unrivalled reach and influence on today's society. Our flexible approach supports people of all ages and backgrounds to study and achieve their potential. Through academic research, teaching innovation and partnerships, the OU constantly breaks new ground in the design, content and delivery of supported open learning.

Open, ambitious, innovative and inclusive

We believe anyone, anywhere, can study with The Open University. Over 205,000 students are currently studying with us, and these include:

- Over 30,000 students declare a disability.
- 1,400 people from 150 UK prisons and secure units

- Students sponsored by FTSE 100 companies and major public services like the police and the NHS.
- In excess of 2,700 students on apprenticeship courses partnering with over 750 employers with 46 apprenticeships across Scotland.
- FutureLearn Limited, which reaches over 10 million, our jointly owned MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) platform.

Some other highlights include:

- We rank as one of the top universities in respect of the overall satisfaction of our students as measured in the 2021 National Students Survey.
- A unique partnership with the BBC since 1971 and co-production of approximately 35 prime-time TV and radio series every year: including flagship co-productions such as Frozen Planet and Blue Planet II, which transformed attitudes about the health of our oceans, and Blue Planet Live winning the 2020 BAFTA for 'Best Live Event. During 2018/19, OU-BBC TV and radio programmes reached a large audience and were viewed or listened to 264 million times.
- The OU's free-learning platform, OpenLearn, which provides free courses and has had over 67 million course visits from learners to date.
- Being one of the top three Space Science Research Centres in the UK; pioneering an inclusive innovation approach to international development research; and having worldwide influence on innovations in learning technologies to deliver digital education at scale.
- Providing free educational resources to teachers and healthcare workers in sub-Saharan Africa and India, reaching over two million people.

- Our world-leading Business School, which is part of the top 1% of the global business schools that are triple accredited by the world's leading management education association.

We play a unique role in society, making higher education open to all and promoting social justice and social mobility. We are innovative, leading the learning revolution, placing innovation at the heart of teaching and research, continuously seeking new and better ways to inspire and enable learning, and conducting world-class research and teaching. We are responsive to the needs of individuals, employers and communities, and dedicated to supporting our students' learning success.

Location

The University has its headquarters on a purpose-built campus of approximately 110 acres in Milton Keynes. It also has national headquarters in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast and Dublin, and bases in Manchester and Nottingham.

Teaching and learning

As well as hundreds of accredited higher education courses, from access modules to doctorates, we provide free courses on our OpenLearn platform, many linked to our partnership with the BBC, and are co-owners of FutureLearn, a global marketplace for short courses and degrees. With over, 9500 employees, we are a large employer in a wide range of professional areas. About half of our employees are associate lecturers, who provide the small group tuition that is a key feature of the OU's teaching and learning model. Others include

academics, researchers, student advisors, specialist administrators, IT specialists, designers, editors and a wide range of support services from marketing and communications to finance, estates and governance.

Leadership and governance

The University received its Royal Charter on 23 April 1969. It is an exempt charity registered in England and Wales and regulated on behalf of the Charity Commission by the Office for Students. It is also registered as a charity in Scotland.

The University's governing body is the Council, which focuses on the University's overall strategy, finances, property and staff, and is supported by a number of subcommittees, such as Finance and Audit Committees. The Council has the ultimate authority within the OU, but it has to respect the views of the Senate in academic matters. The Senate is the academic authority of the University, responsible for academic strategy, policy, priorities and performance. The University's Chancellor is Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho and its Pro-Chancellor (who also chairs the Council) is Malcolm Sweeting.

The Vice-Chancellor is accountable to the Council for maintaining and promoting the efficiency and good order of the University.

MORE INFORMATION

More information on the OU's leadership and existing structure can be found at

www.open.ac.uk/about/main/governance-ou/executive-team





ONE UNIVERSITY, FOUR NATIONS

The OU delivers world-class, flexible education to people across the four nations of the UK, Ireland and worldwide.

We are the largest provider of part-time education in England, with over **122,000** students choosing to study with the OU. Highly rated for student satisfaction, in the National Student Survey 2021, the OU was ranked third overall in the UK for student satisfaction, first in Northern Ireland and Wales, and second in Scotland and England. The OU makes a major contribution to addressing widening participation in England. Nearly **30%** of our new English undergraduate students do not have traditional entry requirements, around **20%** are from low participation neighbourhoods and **1 in 5 has a disability**. Collectively over **50%** of OU students in England come from disadvantaged backgrounds. **76%** are in employment while they study.

We have over **22,000** students in Scotland and we exceed sectoral targets for the recruitment of entrants from the most socially deprived areas. Through our successful partnership with colleges, over **18%** of our new undergraduates have a college Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma.

Over **14,500** students across Wales are currently studying with The Open University. Student numbers in Wales have increased significantly over the last three years following the introduction of new financial support arrangements, presenting us with new growth opportunities in this part of the UK. **45%** of OU students in Wales come from the most disadvantaged areas and around seven out of ten students are in employment while they study.

The Open University is the only university in Northern Ireland dedicated to distance learning and has over **7000** students. We have been the top-rated university in Northern Ireland for overall student satisfaction in the National Student Survey for 16 consecutive years. We also operate across the Republic of Ireland with over **900** students choosing to study with us.

The OU continues to make a significant impact internationally and has a history of building successful, long-term partnerships. We currently have over **30 partners in 27 countries worldwide, supporting and teaching over 300,000 students using OU content and methodologies**.

The Open University has been committed to International Development for over twenty years. Our current projects empower teachers, healthcare workers and higher education experts and have reached over 2 million people around the world.



MISSION AND STRATEGY

The Open University's *mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.*

Mission

We promote educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential. Through academic research, pedagogic innovation and collaborative partnership we seek to be a world leader in the design, content and delivery of supported open learning.

Most of our undergraduate courses have no formal entry requirements. We believe that the qualifications our students have when they leave are the only ones that matter. We are committed to promoting equal opportunities for all, and close monitoring makes sure that we live up to our ideals.

Our **Annual Reports** provide a record of our work, events, projects and financial highlights year by year.



Strategy

Through the power of learning we aim to transform lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone.

Our Strategy: Learn and Live (2022-2027) is built on five goals and seven enablers, showing how we will achieve our mission over the next five years.

Our five goals:

- **greater reach**, offering unrivalled choice, quality and flexibility to more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities, with the University's core offer of qualifications and accredited learning at its centre¹.
- **success for our students**, supporting them to achieve their goals, whoever and wherever they are, with outcomes that are equitable and open up new opportunities in life and work.
- **societal impact** locally and globally through research, enterprise and skills development that shape the future.
- **equity**, greater diversity at all levels, and inclusion in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve.
- environmental and social **sustainability**.

The seven enablers to reach our goals:

- **living our values**, being inclusive, innovative and responsive in all we do.
- **supporting each other** to do our best work.
- **continuously improving** how we work and manage change.
- **employing secure and effective technologies** with the best possible user experience.
- **using data and evidence** in all our decision-making.
- **building on our uniqueness** as a university for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- **stewarding our finances** so that we can invest in our goals.

MORE INFORMATION

More information on the OU's Mission and Strategy can be found at

<https://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/strategy>



¹ Channels are the platforms through which the University reaches learners, such as its virtual learning environment, our OpenLearn website, collaborations with employers and colleges, and broadcasting with the BBC. Learning opportunities are its various course products, from degrees and modules to apprenticeships and microcredentials, as well as different ways in which these can be studied, from higher and lower study intensity to blended or entirely online experiences.

FINANCES AND KEY STATISTICS

In 2020/2021 the OU had 205,420 students (87,960 full time equivalent). Total income was £561m, of which £393m from tuition fees and education contracts, £104m from funding body grants, and £13m from research grants and contracts.

The University receives funding from the Office for Students (OfS) in England, and the funding bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but its principal financial regulator for all the nations is fulfilled by OfS. The majority of its expenditure is on its staff and the infrastructure to support distance part-time education. The University has a strong balance sheet with substantial reserves. A programme of agreed strategic change driven cost-reduction measures will support delivery of the OU's financial strategy for financial sustainability. The strength of the reserves has enabled the investment in strategic change to build for our future to be done without recourse to external funding.

Key Statistics

The Open University has spent over 50 years inspiring learning and creating higher educational opportunities with no barriers to entry. We continue to demonstrate excellence in research and teaching and achieve enormous reach through use of open access educational resources and our partnership with the BBC.

Growing our attractiveness to students

We continue to increase the numbers of students directly studying with us and these students are studying at a higher intensity as shown by the increase in full-time equivalent students.

Our students have voted us third overall in the National Student Survey Awards. We retained an overall satisfaction rate at 88% across the UK, with an increase to 92% in Scotland. We ranked first in Wales and in Northern Ireland we were again first retaining this ranking for 17 years. In England and Scotland, we were ranked second.

Our excellent research informs our cutting-edge curriculum and is recognised by numerous external funding grants.

Securing external investment for FutureLearn

In 2019, we secured the largest EDTech investment in Europe from SEEK, making us joint owners of the platform that sees over 10 million learners globally. This will enable us to grow our educational offering to students and industry across the world.

Extending our reach

We remain the largest university in the UK and one of the largest universities in Europe in terms of student numbers, the majority of whom are part-time and study at a distance.

Our work in Apprenticeships continue to grow. The DfE statistics have confirmed once again that we are the largest provider of degree apprenticeships in England based on 2019/20 statistics.

We introduced free Badged Open Courses for learners who want to develop their study skills whilst wanting recognition, with more than 208,000 enrolments by July 2019.

Enhancing our multiple media channels

Our enduring relationship with the BBC continues to provide high calibre programming demonstrated by Blue Planet Live winning the 2020 BAFTA for 'Best Live Event'.

We won Public/Private Partnership of the year at the 2020 PIEoneer awards in recognition of our successful partnership with Uber.

The paper co-authored by STEM PhD student, Madhu Madhavi, called 'Coal in the twenty-first century: a climate of change and uncertainty' was formally awarded the James Watt Medal by Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Publishing.

The Language of Lying, commissioned by our OpenLearn team and produced by Hamlett Films, won the MEDEA Award 2020.

In Ireland we received an 'Excellence in Online Learning' Award from Public Sector Magazine in Ireland.

Two Guardian University Awards, for the Uber partnership widening access and outreach, and nQuire for research impact. Both initiatives reflect the remarkable ability that our channels and platforms have to reach people who want to learn and discover new knowledge.

Use of our multiple media channels continues to grow. Total downloads from The Open University iTunes U service reached 73.4 million, video views of Open University content on YouTube reached 53 million, total Amazon kindle downloads for Open University books since 2013 reached 1.7 million and visits to the University's open educational resource website, OpenLearn, reached 80.8 million.



ABOUT THE ROLE

The Council is collectively responsible for overseeing the University's activities, determining its future direction and fostering an environment in which the University mission is achieved, and the potential of all learners is maximised. Members should assure the University's corporate responsibilities and obligations under law, regulation, and public and University policy as appropriate, with reference to national expectations and guidance on qualifications frameworks, and the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education. Members will be expected to gain knowledge of the Open University's governance framework, including the **Charter and Statutes**, standing orders and schedules of delegation, codes of governance, and the relevant law, regulation, and policies and procedures.

The Open University is an exempt charity as well as a legally independent corporate institution. Members of the Council are therefore trustees of a charitable body, and have the responsibilities and potential liabilities that go with trustee status. Members have a responsibility to understand the Charities Act and their role as a trustee. This includes accepting ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the University, acting in the University's best interests and managing the University's resources responsibly (including financial resources). The Charity Commission publishes **guidance for trustees**, which explains the responsibilities a Council member has to the University.

The Council and its committees exercise their responsibilities in a corporate manner and decisions are taken collectively by all of the members acting as a body. Members should not take decisions outside of meetings of the Council and its committees, whether individually or as representatives of a constituency or an informal group.

Upon commencing appointment, members of the Council are required to declare any financial, family or other personal interest, direct or indirect, and this is noted in the Register of Members' Interests.

Members are expected to adhere to the University's Code of Conduct, which sets out the standards and expectations around the roles, responsibilities, behaviours and attitudes that support the core governance of the University and enable it to function effectively. This requires members to demonstrate high ethical and professional standards acting in good faith, honestly and properly, exercising appropriate care and diligence in accordance with the accepted **Seven Principles of Public Life** (Nolan Principles) drawn up by the **Committee on Standards in Public Life**, which embrace selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, and the additional principles of public service and respect identified in the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland.

All persons appointed to the Council are expected to respect and uphold the University's mission, as set out in its Charter, and to be committed to its core values and objects.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Skills and experience

The University aims to have a diverse skill set amongst the membership of the OU Council and Committee's, so the specific skills and experience of potential candidates will vary according to the current membership. The OU is now looking to add seven roles, of which three will be full Council members and the other four will sit on Committees.

Council Roles

- One member of Council with broad experience of tertiary education across Higher Education and/or Further Education.
- One member of Council with expertise in IT/ data/systems and experience of leading large-scale change.
- One member of Council who brings senior experience of operating within Northern Ireland and an understanding of the operating environment and political and constitutional context.

Committee Roles

- One member of Audit Committee with relevant audit experience.
- Three new members of the Investment Committee to enhance expertise in investment management.

The Council recognises the benefits of having a diverse governing body, and sees increasing diversity and breadth of experience on the Council as an essential element in delivering the OU's mission and its strategic plan. Applications are welcome from candidates from all backgrounds.

Qualities required

Members should demonstrate the following qualities, skills and experience:

- a) enthusiasm for and commitment to the mission of the Open University, and its values, aims and objectives, particularly diversity and widening participation;
- b) passion for the higher education sector in the UK;
- c) a strategic mind-set, good analytical and communication skills and the ability to identify key issues;
- d) good communication skills at all levels;
- e) ability to act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate;
- f) ability to establish a good working relationship with the Chair, and work with them to provide appropriate support and challenge to the executive, whilst respecting the boundaries of a non-executive's remit;
- g) well-developed stakeholder engagement abilities; and
- h) not overtly party political; and

Desirable:

- i) an appreciation of the national and international issues of relevance to the operation of the OU.



Terms of appointment

These roles are pro bono although reasonable expenses will be paid.

Council Members

The initial appointment of a Council member is for four years. Members may be appointed for a second term of up to four years, subject to the needs of the University and the balance of skills, experience and diversity required on the Council.

The maximum period of office is eight years. Student members are appointed by the OU Students Association for a term of two years; and are eligible to serve a second term.

The Council normally meets at least 5 times per year, in March, May, July, September and November, but will call additional meetings if business dictates. Meetings are held in Milton Keynes and in one of each of the four UK nations and one English region annually. Formal business is combined with strategic or development events, so meetings usually take place over a whole day. The September meeting is normally the Strategy and Development Day. In addition, the Council has a joint meeting with the Senate in April.

Time is also needed to keep up with the Council and other committee papers, and with other significant University documents.

Committee Members

Most Council Committees meet 3-4 times per year.

The initial appointment of a Council committee member is for four years.

External co-opted members of the Council committees must attend at least one award ceremony each year and are strongly encouraged to attend other University functions, such as open days, lectures, etc. Details of such events will be circulated as appropriate.

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the Open University on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **VAOVM**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter, and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Friday 25 February 2022**.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process



Visit open.ac.uk

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales, and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.