Setting up your first meet-up

First things first

Check if there are any meet-ups running in your area already (http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/news-and-events/events). If so, why not join up with them?

If there are any students copied into your 'Getting started with meet-ups' email who also pledged - get in touch and find out how you can work together. They may like to set up a Facebook Group or help organise your first meet-up.

Decide on the venue and date, then book a table if necessary. You could always just turn up at a café.

Promotion (ideally 4 weeks before your event)

Create an event on Facebook with time, address and postcode (strongly recommended).  

Find your region’s Facebook group/page and post an invite on it linked to the event.

Let us know about your meet-up at oustudents.co/meet-up-form - so we can promote it on social media and on the OU Students Association website (www.open.ac.uk/ousa).

Final touches

In the run up to the event, check the forums and Facebook event regularly to answer any questions attendees may have.

Reflect on how regularly you may like to meet so that you can discuss future meet-ups with attendees during your meet-up. Monthly? Each term?

Arrive nice and early and make yourself noticeable. Students often feel nervous showing up to their first meet-up, so greeting them, putting up a sign/balloons and wearing a name tag can go a long way!

After the meet-up

Message attendees to let them know it was great to see them, and that you hope they’ll attend your next event. You could also send a message to any no-shows to say that you hope they’ll be able to make the next one.

Share your photos and stories from your meet-up with us: Student-Community@open.ac.uk & @OUstudents on Twitter.
Tips from our Meet-up Experts!

Cath, Anca and Michelle are OU Students who are involved in running ongoing regular meet-ups in their local areas.

Activities

- Obvious things are coffee shop or pub meet-ups. These are things that naturally allow people to turn up half an hour after it starts, or make their excuses and leave, if it suits.

- After your initial meet-up, look out for public open days - for example, Open House Weekend takes place in September at cities across the UK, and offers a great opportunity to visit places you can't normally visit. Piggybacking on something also increases variety, and may really help people who wouldn't feel confident to go on their own.

- Anything where the group as a whole is paid for in advance is probably not a good move - problems are inevitable with dropouts.

Choosing a venue:

Pick a venue that is friendly and somewhere that does not mind you chatting in a large group.

It’s helpful to bear in mind:

- Try to avoid running duplicate events that are too local. There’s a limit to how many socials people want to attend.
- Central locations often have better public transport links.
- Is this venue accessible to everyone attending? Somewhere with wheelchair access would be ideal.
- Is it a ‘comfortable’ environment? The sort of bar where coffee is commonly served too tend to be more cosy 😊
- Price range – A coffee shop or Wetherspoons can be a cheap and cheerful option!

“Meeting up in a coffee shop or pub can be great too because you can take your studies with you and get a bit of work done while you wait for people to arrive. I know students who’ve used the time to chat with OU Students online!”
Timing

- We've found keeping to a regular slot makes sense. It makes it easy for people to come when they want / are able to. For example: the second Saturday of the month.

- After a while, why not try additional events - and go for a different slot (e.g. the fourth Saturday of the month as opposed to the second).

- If the meetings are regular, getting a leaflet with the schedule for 6 months in advance helps a lot. People have more notice and they can plan better.

Promoting your event

Use all means possible, but make sure it is not only on social media – make the most of the student forums and let the Students Association know (oustudents.co/meet-up-form) so they can post it on their website and social media accounts.

Getting organised

- If possible have a couple of people willing to host so it is not left to one person, just in case anything unforeseen happens.

- Watch out for people thinking it's up to someone "official" to organise it. Our successful West Mids coffee mornings were started up by a student who had no official involvement in the Association at the time!

- If you can get a mix of ages/genders/subjects at the "core" of your event, it can make it a much more welcoming environment. But let's face it, this may not be entirely within your control!

Staying Safe

- Think about letting someone know where you're going before you head out and what time you expect to be back.

- We recommend you choose a public place to meet students for the first time and don't give out your personal address.