Setting up your first meet-up

First things first

Check if there are any meet-ups running in your area already (https://www.oustudents.com/meet-ou-students-near-you) If so, why not join up with them?

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

Attend an Adobe Connect Training session if you wish

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.com/meet-up-form - so we can promote it on social media and on the OU Students Association website (www.oustudents.com).

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 and wearing a name tag can go a long way! We will send you a table sign along with some leaflets and goodies for handing out.

After the meet-up

Please let us know how your meet-up went and how many students turned up.

Share your photos and stories from your meet-up with us: oustudents-meetups@open.ac.uk & @OUstudents on Twitter.
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.

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 socals 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 cosier 😊
- Price range – a coffee shop or Wetherspoons can be a cheap and cheerful option!
- Check that Public Liability Insurance is displayed in the venue and that you are satisfied the venue meets the criteria for accessibility.

"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 student community team know (oustudents-meetups@open.ac.uk) 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! If you have any under 18’s attending your meeting up they will need to be chaperoned.
• We will send you some goodies for handing out on the day. Included will be an 'OU students meeting here’ sign. We’ll also include some of Our Strategy booklets showing our mission, which is to support, encourage and empower OU students. It would be great if you could make yourself familiar with the key aims of the Association and to let students have a copy of the booklet and hand out other materials relating to other volunteering roles from your pack.
• You’ll find lots of information on the Association website which can help with any questions that may be asked at the meet-up. If you feel unable to answer any then please ask the student to email us at oustudents-meetups@open.ac.uk and we’ll do our best to help.

Staying Safe

• Think about letting someone know where you’re going before you head out and what time you expect to be back.
• Inform a friend or family member about the meet-up details.
• We recommend you choose a public place to meet students for the first time and don’t give out your personal address.

Keeping us posted:

• Take a group selfie or make a short video
• Join the Volunteer Slack channel from your Welcome email and chat with other hosts
• When using social media please use the hashtag #meetOUstudents
• Take some photos at your meet up and send them to oustudents-meetups@open.ac.uk so that we can publish them