A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

OU Students magazine is changing! Find out how you can get involved...
WINTER 2018

In this edition...

4 What inspired you?  
Student comments

5 Your achievements  
Student comments

6 Magazine news  
A refresh!

7 Second innings  
Adrian Rollins story

10 Is it worth it?  
Leanne’s story

12 More than a language  
Philippa’s story

14 Uni Challenge  
Researcher questions

20 Samhain  
Spooky short story

28 An OU student...  
Beats the blues
Welcome to this edition of OU Students magazine...

What a year it's been!

When we look back at 2018 and think about how much the Association and all OU students have achieved over it year, we're filled with pride. The hard work doesn't stop here though - at #OUstudentsHQ we're looking forward to getting stuck in for 2019!

In this edition, we celebrate OU student Leanne's graduation story, learn about a life-long love of languages from polyglot Philippa, and are treated to a chilling short story by Write Club member Paula. Also inside: it's a University Challenge researchers turn to answer a few questions, we hear from inspirational OU students and we announce a project to give our beloved magazine a little refresh (and share how you can get involved!)

#OUstudentsHQ will be closed for the holidays from midday Friday, 21 December to Wednesday, 2 January. Check out page 15 for information on support services that will be open during this time.

Happy holidays OU students - here's to 2019!

FANNI ZOMBOR
Vice President Media & Campaigns

---

**Support**

15 **Holiday period**
Services for students

23 **PLEXUS**
New website!

24 **Black History Month**
10 fab films

---

**Volunteering**

16 **Four new roles**
Apply today!

17 **Hosting a meet-up**
A host's tips

---

**Community**

19 **Clubs**
34 and growing!

25 **Music society**
A musical visit

26 **M500 weekend**
Winter + Maths = fun!

26 **Mountaineering soc**
Looking for members

27 **Commercial awareness**
New society

28 **Our newsletter**
Read all about it!
Your responses...

We asked you two questions during Freshers 2018 as part of our Freshers prize draws and we loved your responses so much that we’ve included a few of them here:

What inspired you to start studying with the OU:

My inspiration is...

- ... trying to prove that hard work is the way to get on in life
- ... finally believing in myself, so I’m doing this to prove to myself that I can and will do this.
- ... to push myself to do something out of my comfort zone that will help me get into a career I love.
- ... my children, to show them no matter what life throws in your direction you’ve got to grab life by the horns and be the creator of your own destiny, believe in yourself and the rest will follow.
- ... at 54 it is now my turn to show myself that I am not too old to challenge myself and to achieve something I didn’t have the opportunity to do at 18!! It is never too late!
- ... I wanted to stop my brain from stagnating now that I have retired, couldn’t think of a better way
- ... I want to change the world. One small behaviour at a time...
- ... I’ve been stuck in the retail industry for years and I’ve decided that I’m going to do this. I’m going to become a primary teacher, and I’m going to make my grandad proud. I’m going to make a good life for myself and my future family. I’m doing this for me.
- ... seeing one of my best friends manage to fit OU study around work, a relationship and a social life
- ... because I want to be the best mummy I can be. I’m going to get myself a proper career and make myself someone she would consider a role model.
- ... hoping my degree plus my work experience will help me to one day set up my own charity to help people who have been through what I have been through and remind them that they are not alone.
- ... at 54 it is now my turn to show myself that I am not too old to challenge myself and to achieve something I didn’t have the opportunity to do at 18!! It is never too late!
- ... I wanted to stop my brain from stagnating now that I have retired, couldn’t think of a better way
- ... I want to change the world. One small behaviour at a time...
- ... I’ve been stuck in the retail industry for years and I’ve decided that I’m going to do this. I’m going to become a primary teacher, and I’m going to make my grandad proud. I’m going to make a good life for myself and my future family. I’m doing this for me.
- ... seeing one of my best friends manage to fit OU study around work, a relationship and a social life
- ... because I want to be the best mummy I can be. I’m going to get myself a proper career and make myself someone she would consider a role model.
- ... hoping my degree plus my work experience will help me to one day set up my own charity to help people who have been through what I have been through and remind them that they are not alone.
- ... at 54 it is now my turn to show myself that I am not too old to challenge myself and to achieve something I didn’t have the opportunity to do at 18!! It is never too late!
- ... I wanted to stop my brain from stagnating now that I have retired, couldn’t think of a better way
- ... I want to change the world. One small behaviour at a time...
Your biggest achievement with the OU (so far):

My biggest achievement is...

- somehow managing to keep going despite mental health, the fear of failure and life itself, and still be here and excited for what is next...
- being able to prove my doubters wrong that I can get further then the first term of a degree.
- making it to my final module of my degree while still playing sport, working full-time and having a social life. OU definitely teaches you how to prioritize.
- carrying on after a fail - it's the journey!
- studying three languages simultaneously, and passing all three modules with flying colours.
- all the confidence I’ve gained while studying!
- walking across the stage for graduation!
- being able to study while meeting awesome new people, while participating in a great community.
- overcoming anxiety enough to be able to allow myself to be part of your #WeAreOUStudents campaign. I have much more confidence and conviction with public speaking now thanks to you.
- just starting my journey which is an achievement in itself!
- managing to stay on track along with all the other things life throws at you.
- getting a pass with a distinction in my first year studying with the OU, even though at the beginning of the module I didn’t think I was ready or made of stern enough stuff for uni.
- just discovering that I CAN finish what I start.
- becoming a Central Committee Rep, meaning I represent fellow students at Board of Study level. Helping to make a difference.
- actually believing in myself!
- deciding to study at OU to be able to change my career.

Freshers will return...

Monday 21 January - Friday 1 February 2019
Here at the Students Association, we want to make sure that the magazine is something all OU students can enjoy, with fresh content, more ways for OU students to share their story and an easy to read format. We’ll be working on refreshing the magazine over the beginning of 2019. This means that there’ll be no spring 2019 edition (sorry!)

Want to receive exclusive updates on the project?
Sign up to our new magazine mailing list and we’ll send you sneak peaks and reminders of where you can share your thoughts and ideas.

Getting involved
Student feedback will be incredibly important to this process, so get involved! Sign up to our new magazine mailing list, or keep an eye out on our website or social media channels for ways to get your voice heard.

Staying connected
Though there won’t be a spring 2019 edition of the magazine, we still want to hear from you! Sign up to our monthly Association newsletter to receive news, info and opportunities. Also, find us on social media #OUstudents!
Adrian Rollins is one of the Open University’s biggest success stories. Adrian is a former professional cricketer but his life took on a whole new direction as the OU helped him to train to become a maths teacher. Adrian is now a Deputy Headteacher and we caught up with him to learn more about his cricketing career in which he took on the best players in the world, and his new career in education. We also asked Adrian for the advice he’d give OU students to help them achieve their goals.

**The early part of your life saw you become a professional cricketer – how did you become interested in the sport?**

I grew up in East London and my family – my uncles in particular – played cricket in the Essex leagues, with one of them making the Essex second team. My family is from Barbados originally so cricket was in the blood. My younger brothers and I were taken to cricket matches every weekend. Being from a West Indian, single-parent family, I looked up to the West Indies international players as male role models as they dominated world cricket in the 1980s. We visited Barbados fairly regularly and there were many Bajan heroes of mine – Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes, Joel Garner and Malcolm Marshall to name a few.

**How did you get spotted as a young player?**

If you grew up in East London you were part of the Essex county schools system. By the time I was 18, my brother had Robert signed for Essex as a wicketkeeper, but I wanted to concentrate on my A Levels. My studies came first and I wasn’t too interested in being a professional cricketer and wanted to go to university. However, I took a job for a year at a sports centre and joined a successful inner-city cricket academy called the Haringey Cricket College. My brother encouraged me to write to some counties and give cricket a go. In two trial games for Derbyshire’s second team I did well and was registered in 1992 and signed my first full contract the following year.

**What was life like as young professional cricketer?**

I moved up to Derby and shared a house with three other players. It was the first time I’d lived away from home and I was just 20 and we didn’t earn much money! I managed to break through into the first team in my first season. Then I shared a house with a senior player (Alan Warner). I think he wanted me to cook my West Indian cuisine for him! He was an experienced player who offered me wisdom and guidance.
What were the biggest challenges?

The season was really physically demanding. Each week we had a four-day match, a one-day match, a training day and day off. It was hard on the body – especially if I was wicket-keeping for a day and a half. I’m 6 foot 5, so it was hard work! Apparently I’m the tallest wicketkeeper in first class history. In the second half of the season there were challenges on the mental side too and it could be tough living in your team mates’ pockets for months, dealing with the different personalities in the team. At this point in time, county cricket was at its best. You were playing against the best in the world. Each county had a world class overseas player and most had a recent or current England international. As a young player, that was the best cricketing education you could wish for.

How did your cricketing career come to an end?

I played for Derbyshire for eight years and then signed for Northamptonshire in 2000, where I stayed for three seasons. I had some unfortunate injuries and also a run of low scores. In my last season I was playing well again, but broke my wrist fielding against Nottinghamshire and had three operations – so it was time to retire.

Had you planned what to do next with your life?

Yes. While I was still playing I did some diplomas. My mother never had a problem with me playing cricket but she wanted me to prepare for life after cricket – and I had no problem with that. In my last season I started my OU degree. I planned to do a Childhood and Youth studies degree and got a job as a School Sports Coordinator for Luton Borough Council, coordinating physical education as an unqualified teacher in various schools.

Where did you get your inspiration to teach maths?

I did the Sports Coordinator role for two years. However, I remember a young person saying that they didn’t need to work hard at school because they could be sportsman like Mr Rollins and then teach a bit of sport afterwards. That really hit me. I realised that wasn’t how life worked and I just couldn’t see myself in sport for another 30 or 40 years. My two passions were sport and maths, so changed the focus of my Open degree towards maths. When I started my graduate teaching role back in Newham teaching maths, I knew that’s what I wanted to do.

How did you find studying with the Open University?

I loved it, it was really suited to me – especially the discipline and the routines. I was used to scheduling my life around my cricket, whether it be going to the gym or picking up my kids. I needed to work to earn a living, so it was a tough schedule. Sometimes if I had a weekend when I wasn’t looking after my kids, I would go away and book a hotel, turn off my phone and study all weekend. By the time I was doing my Masters I was teaching 45 lessons a fortnight and had seven sets of books to mark, so I had to dedicate time just to study. But I loved it and stuck to my routine.

Who were your inspirations to keep going?

I had great relationships with my tutors. They were so encouraging and understanding and would give their time to help me get through the modules. My mother, Marva Rollins, was also really important. She is a phenomenal woman and is in her 25th year of being a Headteacher. She has mentored me throughout my whole teaching career. She was awarded an OBE last year and has shared her own OU story.

Did being a cricketer and studying with the OU prepare you for the leadership roles you’ve since taken on?

Yes definitely. When you are in leadership there has to be self-motivation and accountability. In my current school I’m
the only Deputy Headteacher. You have to be able to manage yourself and that’s where the OU degree really helped. I also think having played professional cricket has helped too. I was critiqued on my performances by the newspapers for over ten years so that helps with things like OFSTED where you are under the microscope. Next year, I will be completing the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and becoming a Headteacher is my next goal.

**What is your advice for new OU students starting out?**

I’d recommend Stephen R. Covey’s “7 Habits for Highly Effective People”. One of those habits is “Begin with the End in mind”. At the start it seems like 360 credits is massive, but start with the end in mind and the time will pass quickly. When you get past 180, into the 200s, the time just flies. But for the first few modules, just be persistent and patient with yourself. How would you overcome any challenges? If you have challenges – such as personal issues – then make sure you get support from your tutor and the Student Support Team. You must use them. If you haven’t studied for a while, don’t doubt yourself and give yourself time to get into it – there’s a lot of support out there. Many students have had other commitments in the past such as childcare, so think about the end goal that brought your back to studying.

**What did it feel like when you graduated?**

It was a fantastic day. I went to my Masters Graduation at the Barbican and my kids were there. It was great for them to see that with all the challenges we have gone through together. They had seen me studying and it felt great for them to see the end product of all that hard work.
Is it worth it? Yes!

One of the greatest lessons Leanne learned was to believe in herself...

I remember the beginning of my OU journey so well. I sat with my phone in hand scrolling through social media posts by other students who all seemed to know what they were doing. The posts were filled with confidence, success and terminology that I didn’t understand. I was a fraud – at least that’s what I thought.

I hadn’t studied at university level before. It was 14 years since I had left school with eight averagely graded GCSEs and I hadn’t even attempted A-levels. I didn’t believe in myself, it was my husband who did the believing. The only thing I knew for sure was that I wanted to keep my brain ticking over whilst being at home with our second son. With gentle encouragement, despite my blindfold, I put one foot in front of the other and began my baby steps.

How I walked into that first tutorial, I don’t know. My weighted legs tried hard to keep me from the room and there were butterflies dancing around inside me. I felt a burning sensation in my chest and almost didn’t walk in. I’m so glad that I did. To my surprise the tutorial was fun, my brain was active and some of the other students were just as nervous as I had been. I learned an important lesson that night. We were all in the same boat. None of us knew it all already, we were all there to learn.

That first year went by and I surprised myself by doing quite well. I passed my course and knew that I was capable of doing further study when I was ready. Soon after that course I prepared for the arrival of our third and final little boy. I was content but I knew that I’d be back to study more.

It was the summer of 2012 when I saw that some of my original student friends were graduating – they had completed their degrees. Those few years had gone in a flash and I knew that all I had to do was to keep taking steps to move forward and it could soon be my turn. I bit the bullet and signed up for my degree.

Having learned from my first foray into the student world, I began to immerse myself into the online student community. As for the stack of books, I just took them one page, one paragraph or even one word at a time. With every section that I got through, I reminded myself that I was a step closer to my goal.

I still wasn’t sure if I could get through the degree. I was performing quite well in my assignments but I knew that the workload only got harder as the degree progressed and I was finding it tough. Writing an essay was a mammoth mission that almost broke me on every single occasion. Taking exams was even worse. I worked in the evenings, at the weekends, on birthdays and bank holidays. I read books while my children were in clubs and generally used every spare moment that I had. I was trying to do it all and always felt like something was failing. I was working, volunteering and bringing up three children whilst trying to study.

I remember doubting myself one afternoon. I sat amid the chaos of family life, after a hard day at work, and felt like I couldn’t
possibly reach the end of my degree. As I scrolled through social media I saw that another student, also a working mum of three, had just been awarded a First-class Honours for completing her degree. Her tweets so often mentioned the juggling act that I was ever so familiar with but somehow, she just seemed to manage.

At first, I wondered why I couldn’t do it as successfully as she had done. I wished that I wasn’t falling apart. But then I remembered why I was doing it all. I wanted to get my turn to wear the graduation gown. I wanted to see if I could get myself a degree. I thought about how my children would feel as they watched me cross that graduation stage. I thought about how I just might inspire them in their own lives. I thought about how much I wanted to reach the end and knew that I had more grit than that. Despite how I felt that day, I wasn’t a quitter. I took a deep breath and, one page at a time, I never doubted that I could do it again.

Over the next few years I fell in love with my studies. I made some really genuine, like-minded friends, I found subjects that I adored, I wrote a study blog, wrote articles for the OU website and Surviving the OU (a student support website). I was invited to record a podcast about my experiences which led onto me presenting the OU Students radio show a number of times. I even got to present their live, recorded panel show. My studies took me to Bruges to see the art that we studied in situ and I got to study things that I’d always been drawn to. There was a rather interdisciplinary element to my degree which meant that I studied a variety of subjects. The biggest shock was that I was able to turn my hand to each and every one of them. I wasn’t a fraud, I had just been lacking in confidence.

I never stopped taking those baby steps. I just kept moving forward and giving things a try. Sometimes studying was fun and at other times it was tougher than almost anything else I’ve experienced.

Life has continued with so many ups and some incredibly hard downs. I have been at both my happiest and my saddest whilst studying for this degree. My social life fell away but I didn’t mind too much because I was gaining something that would change me forever. I remember my husband telling me that education was a gift but to watch out because once that gate had been opened, there was no turning back. He was so right. My eyes have been opened to the world and I’d never want to go back.

Instead of doubting myself, as I always did before, I now believe in myself. I can’t explain what a gift that is. I’ve already gone beyond what I thought I was capable of so, if I doubt myself again, I’ll know that nothing should ever stop me trying. I thank my husband for his belief in me and the OU for everything that they stand for. Without either of them, I wouldn’t have been able to try.

As I sit here now I have watery eyes and a heart that feels like it might burst. I’m so proud that I didn’t give up on myself.

As I sit here now I have watery eyes and a heart that feels like it might burst. I’m so proud that I didn’t give up on myself.

Leanne Goodall
“Polluted.”
I am not at my sharpest first thing in the morning, and so I thought I might have misheard my youngest son.
“Sorry…?”
“Polluted!” No explanation. No elaboration. When you start an OU degree, it feels like an individual choice, something you are doing for yourself, whether for your career, or for the simple pleasure of learning something interesting. However, the truth is that it affects those closest to you as well, in ways that you don’t always foresee.
“POLLUTED!”
Suddenly it dawns on me. I should perhaps mention that I am in the final year of a BA in Language Studies, studying mainly French and German but making up my final credits by resurrecting GCSE Italian and dabbling in Beginners’ Chinese. This is the reason that I have covered the wall behind our bed with Post-It notes of the Italian vocabulary I am trying to learn. Which is, in turn, is the reason that my nine-year-old son is now testing me to see if I have learned them yet.
“Inquinato?” I venture. No praise. No affirmation. Just on to the next one.
“Entertaining.”
And so it continues, until having diverted me completely he slips in a request to watch TV and scampers downstairs, leaving me wondering what the Italian word for manipulative is. But he now knows all the Italian words on the scraps of paper too, and I also wonder whether he will one day speak Italian. The children (and the dog) have been alternately entertained and exasperated by having to listen to the news in Italian, songs in German and the radio in French, but they seem to have picked up a few words along the way. (The dog must be almost fluent in something by now. He has to listen to it during the day too). In the process they have also grasped the idea that in spite of being English, they can learn languages, that it makes travelling abroad easier and more fun, and that perhaps, more importantly, learning doesn’t need to stop when you leave school.
When I started my degree I was focused on just learning the languages, but the best part of the last six years has been the
people I have met and the experiences I have had as a direct result. In an effort to practise my speaking I found online partners in France and Germany who were willing to talk to me on Skype – half in English and half in their own language. I signed up with the local Twinning Association and spent five days in Northern Germany where I befriended my wonderful host who has been to stay with us several times since. I have now met all my Skype partners face to face, either staying with them or hosting them here, and one of them invited my older son to spend a week with them speaking German in preparation for his GCSE – linguistically and culturally a great success. And that’s without mentioning the residential courses abroad and the friendships and experiences that they brought.

And having benefitted from so much hospitality myself, it has encouraged me to try and reciprocate a little, inviting foreign students from Japan and Thailand to come and stay with us, which has been another opportunity for the children to meet people from a completely different culture to theirs, thereby getting a picture of the wider world. We were able to arrange a French exchange for our daughter this summer, staying with a lovely family on an island on the Atlantic coast, and we enjoyed our recent road trip around France, when we essentially visited a number of my new friends who welcomed my family into their homes too.

I thought I’d enjoy doing an OU degree. I hoped it would make a bit of a difference in my life. But I had no idea that it would result in broadening my children’s experiences and ideas too, or that we would have so much fun – perhaps not from the TMA s, but as a direct result of the decision to study. The only loser, really, has been the dog. As I start playing a cheesy YouTube video designed to teach children Chinese, in a desperate effort to learn some basic Mandarin phrases, he looks at me with a pained expression.

“Really? We have to listen to this too?”

**Philippa Cleeve**

---

**New free course on OpenLearn**

‘**Multidisciplinary study: the value and benefits**’

October saw the launch of a new, five hour online badged open course (BOC) on the Open University’s free learning website, OpenLearn. The course is titled ‘Multidisciplinary study: the value and benefits’ and was written by two of the team responsible for managing the OU’s “Open” qualifications: Helen Cooke, Senior Manager, Curriculum Innovation and Rehana Awan, Student Communications and Engagement Manager. We piloted some of this content (in a slightly different format) with new BA/BSc (Hons) Open degree students earlier in the year, through a university-wide online induction programme. We have since re-worked the content to be more public facing so that it can be used as a resource for multidisciplinary students at other institutions (for example students studying joint/combined honours degrees), as well as for students at the OU.

You can earn a free digital badge for completing the course, which can be shared as a marker of achievement, for example with potential employers, to demonstrate that you understand – and can articulate – the benefits of multidisciplinary study, as we know this is something that Open degree students find challenging. You can access the course here: [http://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/multidisciplinary-study-the-value-and-benefits/content-section-0](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/multidisciplinary-study-the-value-and-benefits/content-section-0)

We’d love for you to explore the course, and would very much welcome your feedback. Please also let us know if you have already completed the course – and what you thought of it! You can email us at open-programme@open.ac.uk.

**Helen Cooke and Rehana Awan**

The Open Programme
Time to get the team together

For those of you that haven’t already heard, University Challenge is back and competition for a spot on the team is fierce, with hundreds of students answering some tough questions and taking part in a gruelling interview.

University Challenge is legendary and is the longest-running academic quiz show in the UK. It was first aired in 1962. We’ve asked researcher Tom Kinsella who writes many of the questions for the music rounds on University Challenge to answer a few questions for a change!

Q. What is your background in music?

I studied music at Jesus College, Oxford, but I’m from a very unmusical family. I was born in Oldham, which was also the birthplace of the composer William Walton. His foundation gave me financial aid to help me attend university.

Q. How do you come up with ideas for the music questions?

It’s a completely mixed bag. Most of the time an idea will come from something I’ve read in the Grove Dictionary of Music or in an article I’ve seen online. Often that will set off a spark that you think might make a good theme for a question and then it’s a matter of seeing if you can find three other good examples that are about the right level of difficulty.

Q. What do you think of the UC teams’ music knowledge in general?

I’m always astounded by what the teams know when it comes to music. On the rare occasion contestants miss something you thought was a complete gimme, it always says more about your own music biases than it is a reflection on their general knowledge.

Q. And finally, have there been any funny moments?

Too many to count. Last year’s Emmanuel College, Cambridge team famously suggested Oasis as a possible artist after hearing Led Zeppelin’s ‘Stairway to Heaven’. Jeremy was aghast, twitter was outraged, and everyone forgot the theme of the question was ‘rockism’ – the idea that rock music (and knowledge about it) is incorrectly assumed to be of more cultural importance than any other form of popular music. But they can’t know everything.

The warm up event

Prior to the selected team taking part in the televised challenge, students at the OU are being put to the test with two rounds of quizzes ranging from general knowledge to maths and science. Students with the highest scores and fastest times will be invited to a live audition for the final round. Once a team has been selected to represent the OU, we’ll be inviting all students to come and attend a warm up event in January 2019 at the Open University campus in Milton Keynes. To be the first to hear details about the event, sign up to our monthly newsletter.
Look after yourself over the Christmas period!

Big White Wall

Peer Support

Nightline
Closed 14 Dec to 7 Jan

Samaritans

WWW.OUSTUDENTS.COM/SUPPORT
Volunteer with us now!

The OU Students Association has several exciting new volunteer roles coming up this winter, including Library Study Support Volunteer, Student-led Projects Volunteer and two roles that will work with photographs and documents in our archive.

Library Study Support
Library Study Support volunteers will help students in prison with the research they need to study for their OU qualification. Using resources from the OU Library, volunteers will be able to locate references and print source material so that a prisoner can access the data and material in order to carry out their studies. This will make an enormous difference to a person who is not allowed to access the internet.

Perfect for: Students looking to further their own research skills, support other students and volunteer from their own home!

APPLY NOW

Association Historians
If you like working with primary resources and archive material, then you will love our two archive volunteer roles! We’ll be looking for student volunteers to become Association Historians, using 45 years worth of photographs, newspapers, letters and campaign material to research our history and report on major achievements since the OU Students Association was founded in 1972.

Perfect for: Students who love investigating and exploring the history of organisations and enjoy writing blogs or articles.

APPLY NOW

Archive Catalogue volunteer
We have started scanning and cataloguing hundreds of wonderful photographs taken during conferences, Open Days, social events, fundraising activities and celebrations over the last 45 years, and there’s still loads to do! We have a volunteering opportunity to carry on with the cataloguing of digitised photos that can be carried out at home, so if you’d like to become an Archive Catalogue Volunteer please do look at our volunteering opportunities page!

Perfect for: Volunteering from home and finding out more about the history of the Students Association!

APPLY NOW

Student-led Projects Leader
Have you had an idea for a student-led project which will benefit your local community? We are looking for students with big ideas to apply to lead social impact projects in their local areas. This may include running a beach clean, collecting items for a local food bank or raising awareness of a cause close to your heart. Whatever you are interested in, this could be for you! Find out more and apply to be a Student-led Project leader now!

Perfect for: OU Students who want to make a positive impact on their local community!

APPLY NOW
Hosting a meet-up

OU Student and meet-up host, Graham Coult, tells us about how he started hosting meet-ups in his local area and shares some of his top meet-up hosting tips with us.

I had been studying for the past three years previous and before my first meet up I found that studying with the OU was a lonely time and didn’t realise what a fantastic community of students we had.

So, I decided to join my local Facebook group for my area of OU students and back in early 2017 I made the decision to join the local students meet up hosted at the time by Malika Steed. This proved such a fantastic opportunity not only to network with other students in my local area but find out more about The Open University. From there I went on to become a central committee representative which gave me a real insight in to how the OU operates attending campus four times a year and to give me the chance to widen my local network of students.

The first person I met was Fanni Zombor who introduced herself and showed me the ropes of being a student volunteer. I attended my first Conference last June and it was fantastic, all expenses to and from campus have been paid for, so I’m not left out of pocket.

Due to some unforeseen circumstances, Malika had very little time to organise regular meet ups so, upon chatting to her at the Conference, and without wanting to step on her toes I asked if she would mind me organising some more regular meet up for students in East Anglia.

I’m now holding regular meet-ups for those students that wish to attend in Norwich every third Saturday and first Wednesday of the month. I’m also on the board of studies for the business faculty, meeting the academic staff that produce our materials. Once you’re on campus it makes you feel like you are utterly different part of a university and a real student.

To anyone that is thinking of organising and hosting a meet-up in their local area I would say this - just go for it. The OU Students Association will give you the tools to be able host and provide a lot of goodies for you to share with other students, as well as social media platforms to advertise on. It’s a great way to find out what is happening within the university itself, and to meet likeminded students to discuss any study related issues or just unwind and make some great friends.
Five tips to consider when hosting a meet-up:

1. Find your local area for OU Students Association students on Facebook.
2. Don’t beat around the bush, just go for it.
3. Contact the OU Students Association and they will provide you with all the help and tools to host your first meet-up.
4. Plan well in advance to give students a chance to make arrangements, make sure it is an accessible venue and has car park facilities.
5. Don’t worry if only a few students turn up. Word of mouth will mean that the number of students at your meet-up will grow. Bring a book or even better your course book to read while you wait for the first person to arrive.
There are now 34 clubs on the Associations website. Find your club today!

oustudents.com/full-list-of-clubs
I keep my eyes closed, trying to rewind the scene of a child running around a garden, bright stars of cerise cosmos dancing above a mass of ferny foliage and the branches of an old apple tree heavy with ripening fruit. I can almost touch the silky petals and hear her laughing, but the memories slip away into a hazy montage of unconnected images, then into a blur and finally fade away.

Stretching my back, stiff as usual after sleeping awkwardly with the corner of the pillow tucked between my shoulder and head, I try to remember what day it is. Of course, it must be the weekend Matt is taking Josie to visit his parents. That’s why it’s so quiet. We had said the first weekend of November would be ideal. It gave us enough time to get her back into the routine of school and homework after our half term trip to Spain. I head downstairs into the empty house.

Why is the kitchen so tidy? Normally I create piles: letters from the bank about...
interest changes, the latest catalogue from an online clothing company, a bundle of receipts held together with a clothes peg, the latest shopping list and scraps of used paper covered with anagram letters scribbled in groups and circles. I keep school stuff by the ‘fridge: newsletters, letters about the next trip, forms to fill in and send back in the book bag... Today, it looks as if we are just about to go on holiday again. Everything is tidied away, surfaces clear and clean, fruit bowl emptied and the radio unplugged.

Did Matt stay up last night? I can’t remember him coming to bed. Maybe he stayed up late to tidy up and I was already asleep. I don’t know why, it’s not the sort of thing he usually thinks about. Why this time, when we had agreed I would stay behind? Maybe he thought I deserved a rest. Getting Josie settled into her new school has been a bit stressful, but I didn’t realise he knew. I must remember to say thanks when I call him later.

The answer phone is blinking. It’s started to play the messages. Did I touch any buttons? I don’t think I did.

“Saturday 20 October at 5.13pm: Hello, Matt. Just calling to say hope you had a great holiday, call us when you can.”

Matt’s Dad. Matt must have forgotten to wipe the message.

“Saturday, 20 October at 7.12pm: Matt, are you back? Did your flight get delayed?”

“Saturday, 20 October at 8.05pm: Matt, where are you? You’re so difficult to get hold of. Don’t you ever put your mobile on?”

For goodness sake, Matt, don’t you ever delete your messages?

“Saturday, 20 October at 9.30pm: Matt, I know you must be tired but you won’t forget to call before you go to bed. Your Mum is getting bit worried she hasn’t heard from you.”

Matt normally phones his parents almost as soon as we get through the door, but I don’t remember what we did when we got back this time. He really should have wiped all these messages by now. The machine will run out of space.

“Saturday, 21 October at 10.10pm: Matt. Matt. We’ve just been watching the news. Please call us. Please. We’ve left a message on your mobile. Just call us.”

I wonder what he saw on the news. Another terrorist attack maybe? I can’t remember anything special. It was probably nothing important. I think his parents worry about things on the news much more than we do. More time on their hands to brood over things, I suppose.

“Tuesday, 31 October at 9.34am: Hello, I’m sorry to leave a message on this phone but I don’t have any other telephone numbers. If anyone picks up these messages please could you phone with the details of the service? Oh, it’s Jenny by the way. Josie and my daughter are... they knew each other at school. Me and a few of the Mums are hoping to come.”

Jenny? I’ll be seeing her when I drop Jess off at school on Monday. And what did she mean by the service? Have they changed something about the Harvest Festival at school?

No, wait... what did the answerphone say? Tuesday 31? Half past nine? I thought Harvest Festival was on the 31st. I remember, we said it was too confusing, mixing it up with Halloween and all that. And assembly is at nine o’clock. So that can’t be it, it’s too late. And why didn’t I get back to her? I don’t remember anything about a service. In fact, I don’t remember this message at all. Is the phone on the blink? We’ve not had any trouble with it before. Let me play it again.

If anyone picks up? No other telephone numbers? I’m sure she’s in my WhatsApp group. What is she on about? And what does she mean by ‘knew’? That’s a bit odd too, unless... Of course, she must think they’ve fallen out again. Girls! They fall in and out of friendships at this age over the slightest thing.

But... knew? Isn’t that the word you use when...?
Get a grip! Being on your own is getting to you already. Josie is fine. She will be singing along with one of her DVDs in the car, or playing on her tablet. Matt will be getting a headache and looking forward to one of his Dad’s killer G&Ts.

I’d better call Jenny and sort it all out. We’ll have a bit of a laugh, and fix up to have coffee in that new place in the High Street. Maybe I’ll treat myself to one of their Halloween spicy apple muffins. Oh wait, Halloween is over, isn’t it? If that message came on the 31st, then… Was that yesterday? No, I’m fairly sure it was a Wednesday this year. Josie likes to dress up and go trick or treating, but I told her she wouldn’t be able to stay out late on a school night. What did she wear this time? Did I make pumpkin soup with the left-overs? Why can’t I remember?

I should be calling Jenny. But my phone isn’t in the kitchen. My handbag is missing too. I run upstairs and look around the bedroom. Not a sign of it. Everything else is just as it should be. The duvet is smoothed out, pillows sitting up against the headboard, just as I like them. Did I do that just now? I’ve only just got up and already I’ve forgotten that I made the bed. Better have an early night tonight; I really must need some sleep.

Where is my phone? I run downstairs again and look round the lounge. It’s not in the dining room either, although heaven knows there wouldn’t be any reason to leave it there.

No sign of it. Nothing is out of place. Suddenly I notice that my coat is missing; my new one, the one I bought for Spain. Of course Matt’s and Josie’s coats aren’t there. They will have taken them for the weekend. But Matt wouldn’t have thrown mine in the boot as well, would he? That really would have been a bit dopey.

Or maybe we’ve been burgled? What else is missing? I race around the house looking for evidence. The spare bedroom is always a bit of a dumping ground. It’s where we keep suitcases and the kind of stuff you only need a few times a year, like the cushions for the patio chairs. Nothing seems to have gone, but… the suitcases? Why would anyone want our suitcases? Oh, I know; I’ve heard of burglars stuffing things into suitcases to make it easy to carry away their loot.

Jewellery, that’s what they like to swipe. Not that I’ve got much of any value. But I’d better take a look. I kneel by my dressing table. It’s always easier than bending over. I try to open the bottom drawer but it seems to be stuck. My hand just can’t get a grip to pull it open. I grimace with frustration and try again. No, it just won’t open.

OK, I’ll try the top drawer. I sit down on the chair and try the drawer. No, that one seems to be stuck as well. I must be getting old, I laugh to myself. I’d better check for grey hairs. I lean forward to peer into the mirror…

There’s no-one there.

Meet the author…

Paula loved writing as a child but stopped after leaving school for no good reason. Studying A215 with the OU reignited her ambition to write a novel by the time she is 70 – inspired by Mary Wesley’s achievements in later life. Unfortunately procrastination and other interests are currently winning. (PS – she has a very long time before reaching her self-imposed deadline!)
It’s on to the next chapter for PLEXUS as they launch their new website and hold elections for a new committee who take over in January.

The roles that were up for election were:
Chair
Campaigns Officer
Trans Officer
Womens Officer
Committee Member
Equalities and Support Officer

There were no nominations for the Secretary role therefore no election, if that role interests you get in touch with chair@ouplexus.co.uk for more information!

To view the results head to www.oustudents.com/plexus-elections
For Black History Month in October, we celebrated the achievements and wisdom of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people from across the world. In case you missed our top ten films, you can find them below!

1. HIDDEN FIGURES (2016)
2. MUDBOUND (2017)
3. I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO (2016)
4. QUEEN OF KATWE (2016)
5. MOONLIGHT (2016)
6. BLACKKKLANSMAN (2018)
7. THE HELP (2011)
8. MAYA ANGELOU AND STILL I RISE (2016)
10. 12 YEARS A SLAVE (2013)
The following article is a shortened version of the illustrated article which appeared in the Autumn edition of the OUMS Journal. Membership costs £5 per year which includes 3 journals. To join or for further details please contact the Secretary, Linda Brown, at linda.brown157@btinternet.com

A terrace of five-storey town houses (including attics and basement), were built in Brook Street in 1723. Handel was the first occupant of number 25 with an annual rent of £50 (recorded in 1742). He lived in the house until his death in 1759. A blue plaque, first installed in 1866, alerts the casual passer-by to Handel’s connection with the property, while a blue plaque at number 23 next door announces that Jimi Hendrix lived there. Hendrix’s residence was an upstairs flat costing £30 per week between June 1968 and March 1969 and is, according to the Museum’s website, the only officially recognised Hendrix residence in the world.

Today the ground floor of numbers 23 and 25 are shop premises with the first and second floors of 25 given over to Handel and the attic flat of 23, accessible from the attic landing of 25, is devoted to Hendrix. The history of the house including its various owners and architectural changes) can be seen in a short video on the Museum’s website (www.HandelHendrix.org). Visitors are given a handy guide which unfolds concertina fashion providing notes and pictures of Handel House on one side and the Hendrix flat on the other. There are also helpful guides stationed throughout the house.

The Handel part of the museum comprises four principal rooms: the bedroom, the dressing room, the music room (where Handel entertained his friends and rehearsed his plays), and the composition room (where Handel wrote his various operas and oratorios including Messiah and Xerxes).

An ante-room on the first floor contained a dressing-up box, to the delight of some members of the OUMS group who took the opportunity to slip into the garb of characters from Handel’s London.

The attic flat of 25 Brook Street is divided into three main areas: the bedroom arranged as it was during Hendrix’s occupation; a small room used as a guest room in Hendrix’s time but now as a display area for all his albums; a general display area with photographic and poster displays and memorabilia.

By 1990, 25 Brook Street had fallen into disrepair and in 2000 was leased for 35 years by the Handel House Trust with the aim of restoring both the House and the Hendrix flat. The Handel House Museum was opened to the public on 8 November 2001, but there were insufficient funds to complete the refurbishment of the flat, which was opened on occasional days between 2010 and 2013, being restored fully in 2014 with Heritage Lottery Funding. The building opened to the public as the Handel and Hendrix London museum in February 2016.

Sources: Visitors Guide and www.Handelhendrix.org
M500 Winter Mathematics Weekend

Booking is open for The M500 Society Winter Weekend which takes place this year at Florence Boot Hall, Nottingham University, from Friday, 4 January to Sunday, 6 January 2019.

This year our visiting speaker is Dr Gareth Williams who will be talking about and setting puzzles in knot theory.

More details of other speakers, how to book and discounts for groups and new attendees who solve the “Sum to squares” problem can be found on our website www.m500.org.uk

Established for nearly 30 years, the Winter Weekend is a great explosion of mathematics and mathematical ideas, old and new.

If you are interested in mathematics and want a fantastic weekend, then this is for you, it’s accessible to anyone who has studied mathematics – even if you’re just starting with the OU.

We also have a whole range of social activities - good conversation, good food, the famous M500 quiz and meeting friends old and new.

To book go to www.m500.org.uk, or to enquire further email us at winter@m500.org.uk.

Interested in hill walking or outdoor pursuits?

We’ve got just the society for you!

The Mountaineering Society are currently looking for new members and have reduced their membership fee from £20 to just £1.

Membership is open to past and present students of The Open University and also to their family and friends.

Current society members have visited many countries over the years and past events include visits to Chamonix, Javea and the Peak District.

For further details please check out the society page on the Association website or contact the Student Community Team at outreachstudents-community@open.ac.uk.
Introducing the OU Commercial Awareness Society

Are you pursuing a career in law—whether that’s in commercial, criminal, family, human rights or civil? Do you wish you knew more about current issues that affect your chosen sector? A new society is here to do the hard work for you and bring you news and updates on key issues you need to be aware of to give yourself a competitive edge in the job market.

What is commercial awareness?
Commercial awareness means understanding the way in which businesses and organisations operate and the factors that affect them which include political and socio-economic changes, legal developments and the market climate. Employers within the legal sector often ask questions on your understanding of the legal sector, the firm, and the environment in which it operates. It is therefore vital for you to understand these issues that affect your chosen sector and to be able to explain your understanding to employers and that is where we can help by equipping you with the relevant knowledge and skills.

Who are we?
The OU Commercial Awareness Society (OUCAS) was created by Violet Aboagye, a law student here at the Open University, who realised that so many of us lack this awareness or don’t know the best places to find the right information.
The society is in the process of recruiting top talented students and it is growing rapidly with some positions still available. If you are looking to gain some valuable experience and be part of something exciting, then email admin@oucommercialawarenesssociety.com stating your name, subject of study, what you can bring to the society and the date you graduate.

Why should you join?
There are so many benefits to joining OUCAS. First, we have partnered with Linklaters, Shoosmiths and Aspiring Solicitors to bring you events that will help you in gaining knowledge on how to successfully become a lawyer. You will also be notified of other opportunities and events near you, so you don’t miss out on a chance to network and progress your career.
You will be kept up to date on all the latest newsworthy developments, so you can knowledgeably answer your employer’s questions on commercial awareness and show your dedication to your career.
The society aims to be a one-stop shop for OU students to find all the latest news and debate on legal topics.

How do I become a member?
It’s really easy to sign up! Everyone is welcome! The only criterion is that you’re an OU student. All you have to do is visit our website: oucommercialawarenesssociety.com and subscribe at the bottom of the page by using your email address to sign up. You will then receive all our updates directly to your inbox. You can also find all the latest news on the website blogs page.
An OU student... beats the January blues

Twas the night after new years and all through the land, OU students were waking up and realising studying was at hand...

... there was fretting and worrying, avoidance and denial...

... anything to forget the next TMA on the pile.

... so they went to oustudents.com and contacted Peer Support...

I need some help! I think I’ve left my TMA too late to do!

Don’t worry! Let’s discuss the options available to you.

But one day they realised there was no time for delay, but panicked they may have left it too late in the day...

So regardless of their issue, every essay, reference and equation...

1. Talk to tutor
2. Chat to others on the forum

Oh good, I’m not the only one...

... the students were ready thanks to the OU Students Association.

Do you have an adventure for our OU student to go on? Is there a subject that you’d like to see them tackle? Let us know at oustudents-magazine@open.ac.uk and see if your story is next!

Don’t miss out on the latest news from your OU Students Association...

Subscribe to the oustudents.com newsletter to receive a monthly email straight to your inbox.

Get the latest news, opportunities and offers from your Association.

Sign up today at: oustudents.com/newsletter-1