



Student guide to studying on a programme validated by The Open University

From September 2026

Open University Validation Partnerships



Welcome to The Open University

You have chosen to study a programme that is **validated by The Open University (OU)**. This means you are part of a global community of nearly **60,000 current students** studying OU validated courses at partner institutions worldwide. This guide introduces you to the OU and explains what it means to study on an OU-validated programme. It outlines our relationship with the institution you are registered with, our responsibilities to you and what would happen if our relationship with your institution came to an end.

What does “OU validated” mean?

Essentially, OU validation is a mark of quality for your award.

- **Quality assurance:** Your programme has been reviewed and approved by the OU, ensuring it meets the same high standards as similar awards offered through UK higher education.
- **Recognised qualification:** Your award is equivalent in level and value to degrees offered across UK higher education. It can open doors to employment and further study – just like a degree awarded directly by the OU.

What this guide covers

- The relationship between the OU and your institution.
- The OU’s responsibilities to you as a student.
- What happens if the partnership between the OU and your institution changes.
- Useful resources and links to OU-developed learning tools that you can access for free.

You are at the beginning of your study journey, and all of us at the OU are proud to be a part of it. On behalf of our colleagues, we wish you every success in your studies.

About The Open University

The OU was established by Royal Charter in 1969 and has since taught more than 2.5 million students.

The OU is one of the largest universities in Europe with more than 200,000 students.

The OU is the largest provider of higher education for people with disabilities.

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

► 19%

of OU UK undergraduates live in the 25% most deprived areas.

► 30%

of OU students declared a disability while studying with us.

► 67%

of OU students worked full or part-time during their studies.

► 26

Is the median age of new OU undergraduate students.

2024/25 statistics updated: 07/01/2026



The OU was awarded an overall Gold rating – the highest – in the Office for Students Teaching Excellence Framework 2023, with Gold for 'student outcomes' and Silver for 'student experience'.

OU research ranks in the top third of UK universities and 82% of the OU's research impact is assessed to be 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent' by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

For the latest information about the OU, please visit our website: www.open.ac.uk.

OU validation partnerships facts and figures:

- **38** partner institutions, in the UK and overseas.
- **Nearly 60,000 current** students.
- Over **400 validated programmes** at undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- Wide range of subject areas.
- Over **30 years** of experience.
- Over **227,000 awards** conferred.



About Open University Validation Partnerships

Through its Royal Charter, the 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?

A partner institution may be a further education, higher education or alternative provider that has been formally approved to deliver programmes leading to an OU validated award. Partner institutions undergo regular reapproval reviews to ensure they continue to meet the OU's rigorous standards. This includes maintaining appropriate procedures and resources for teaching, learning and assessment, as well as demonstrating strong academic organisation, qualified staffing and staff development, and robust internal quality assurance systems.

What is an OU validated programme or award?

The programme you are studying is validated by the OU and, if you complete it successfully, will lead to an OU validated award. Awards may 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 is responsible for the development, delivery, assessment and overall quality of your programme. Where licensed content is used, the institution remains responsible for its integration, delivery and quality assurance, although

the original development of that content may be external. OUVP responds to stringent quality assurance processes, including scrutiny by external examiners and the systematic application of defined standards set by the Quality Assurance Agency.

What is a Single Registerable Module (SRM)?

Within a programme of study, there may be individual modules that can be studied for credit without registering onto the full programme. These modules are a minimum of 10 credits and on successful completion, for those not studying on the full programme, a pdf certificate is issued by the OU. This certificate outlines the module title, level, credit value, and learning outcomes. SRMs are subject to the same quality assurance processes as the full programme.

How does the OU guarantee quality and standards?

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

- **Validation and revalidation processes** involve panels of experts from higher education (and, where appropriate, industry), both within and outside the relevant subject area. To reach a

decision on whether to (re)validate a programme, the panel holds detailed discussions with staff, students and employers (where appropriate), and reviews the proposed curriculum, assessment regulations, programme documentation, resources and delivery sites. Any major changes to a programme are subject to approval and programmes are revalidated regularly. During your time at your institution, you may be asked to speak to a panel as part of a (re)validation event.

- **Scrutiny of the institution's quality assurance procedures:** As part of the approval process, we check that your institution has appropriate quality assurance procedures in place, such as the use of external examiners; feedback mechanisms involving students, staff, and employers; analysis of statistical information; and institutional and programme monitoring. Your institution is required to produce an annual report to the OU, through which the OU monitors these procedures and ensures that any concerns are addressed.
- **The appointment of external examiners to every OU validated programme:** The role of the External Examiner is to 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 them, to assure itself that the quality and standard of the programme are being

maintained. Your programme information must include details of the relevant external examiners, such as their name and position. In addition, your institution should provide you with access to the external examiner's 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 it provides. This includes the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University, which your institution will provide, as well as the OU Handbook for Validated Awards. Any queries, complaints or requests should be directed to the appropriate person within your institution. Information on who to contact can be found in your student handbook and/or in your Virtual Learning Environment.

Where will I be registered?

You will be registered as a student at your institution, which will, in turn, register you with the OU for an OU validated award. The OU will hold summary information, including your personal contact details and progression data, while more detailed records will be maintained by your institution. For further information, please refer to the OU Handbook for Validated Awards.

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

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

Where can I find information on my programme (including SRMs), regulations and support services?

You should find this information in the materials provided to you at the start of your programme or SRM. 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 resolve any problems or complaints as soon as possible by speaking to your programme leader or administrator. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, your institution has a complaints procedure that you should follow. These procedures should be available in the documentation provided at the start of your programme and on your institution's website. Your institution will also seek your feedback at various stages throughout your programme, and each programme will have a committee that includes a student representative. You should raise any concerns through these mechanisms.

Can I access the OU's whistleblowing policy?

Your institution should have its own whistleblowing policy. If you feel you need to use the OU's whistleblowing policy, you can find it here: <https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/public-interest-disclosure-whistleblowing>.

Who is responsible for assessing my performance?

Your institution is responsible for setting and marking assessments and 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 institution should provide you with its academic appeals procedures, which will include deadlines and timescales. You should follow this procedure 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 follow the relevant complaints or academic appeals procedures at your institution. Your institution can provide detailed information on how to submit a formal academic appeal or complaint to the OU through OUVF. Alternatively, you can find this information in the [Handbook for Validated Awards](#).

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. You should discuss this with your institution, which may apply to the OU on your behalf for an exit award or a certificate of credit. This credit may be used to obtain exemption from parts of another programme within your institution or elsewhere. You will also be entitled to a transcript showing the full record of your learning and achievement up to the point at which you left the programme.

What will happen if the partnership between the OU and my institution ends?

Sometimes partnerships between the OU and institutions delivering its awards come to an end. This usually occurs when the partner gains its own degree awarding powers or establishes a new partnership with another university. In these circumstances, students will normally be given the option to complete their OU award at the institution or transfer to the new awarding body.

In rare circumstances, a partnership may end because either the OU or the institution decides not to continue. In such circumstances, your institution's student protection plan will be implemented, alongside the OU student protection plan, where necessary:

<https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/student-protection-plan>.

We will work with any validated partner whose relationship with us is ending to ensure that you can complete your qualification or a suitable alternative.

In the first instance, we will work with your Institution to provide appropriate teach-out arrangements, which may include an alternative UK degree awarding body. If this is not feasible, we will explore options for you to transfer to an alternative provider, which may include the OU itself.

If this is not possible, or if you do not feel you have been offered a suitable alternative, you should refer to your institution's student protection plan for information on refunds and compensation.

What happens when I successfully complete my programme?

On successful completion of your programme, your institution will ask the OU to confer your award and issue a certificate. The certificate will include your name, the award, the name of the institution where you studied and the date the award was conferred. It will also display the OU coat of arms, crest and logo, and will be signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary.

You will also receive a Diploma Supplement, which provides a formal and comprehensive record of your learning and achievement. This is in

addition to the transcripts that you will have received as you progress through your programme.

If you are studying a single registerable module, rather than the full programme, you will, on successful completion, receive a PDF certificate issued by the OU outlining the module title, level, credit value and learning outcomes. You will also receive a transcript from your institution showing the final mark achieved for the module.

Moving on...

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

You may also join the OU Alumni Association. Membership is free and offers networking opportunities, discounts and other benefits. For more information or to apply, please visit <https://alumni.open.ac.uk/> or email ouvp-aftercare@open.ac.uk.

You can also access the OU Careers Service here: www.open.ac.uk/courses/careers/.

Free OU online resources

Our approval process requires institutions to have the necessary services in place to support your studies. In addition, the OU provides free online resources that you can access.



The OU Library provides access to online resources to support your study and research:

<https://university.open.ac.uk/library/library-resources/publicly-available>.

The library offers training and skills resources, including guidance study skills such as referencing:

<https://university.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/training-and-skills>.

OpenLearn is a free learning platform offering over 1,000 courses, including dedicated sections for study and employability skills. The site has had over 111 million visits since its launch in 2006: www.open.edu/openlearn/.

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

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: <https://oro.open.ac.uk/>.

Find out more

Visit:

<https://university.open.ac.uk/validation-partnerships/>

Email:

ouvp-info@open.ac.uk

Our website includes a list of OU partner institutions, information about approval and validation, and the Handbook for Validated Awards.

