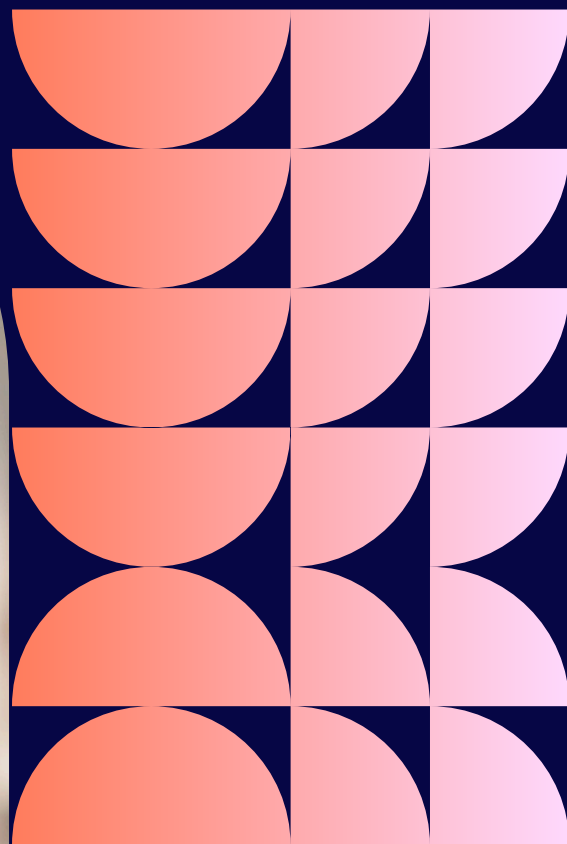


Student support booklet

A guide for college students progressing to the Open University (OU)



The Open University
Y Brifysgol Agored
Wales Cymru

Welcome



Welcome to your Open University in Wales (OU) Student Handbook to support your transition from college to OU study. It is great to have you as part of the OU family.

We recognise that you may be moving from learning designed for a traditional college or classroom base to study designed for distance and online learning by the OU. You will continue to be supported by the staff and fellow learners of the OU community along the way and this handy guide will give you lots of information you may need on your exciting journey as an OU student.

This handbook will get you started. Where it will take you, is up to you.

Do enjoy the adventure.

Ben Lewis, Director

The Open University in Wales

How does OU study work?

The Open University is the largest provider of part-time undergraduate higher education in Wales.

As an OU student, you will be studying with the UK's largest university, and the leading expert in flexible higher education. Studying one module at a time through **distance learning**, however, does not mean studying alone. You will be combining the flexibility of **self-directed learning** with access to the UK's largest student community. Throughout your studies, you will be able to:

- Rely on **support** every step of the way from the **Student Support Team** and access lots of **useful support information** on our website.

- Connect online, or in person, through **tutors and tutorials**, study days and study groups.

- Take part in online forums, available 24/7, to discuss your course with students, staff and alumni.

- Engage in live online interactive events with **Student Hub Live - SHL**.

- Enjoy and share free OU content on the BBC, YouTube, iTunes and OpenLearn.

- Automatic membership of the Open University Students Association (OUSA), the student union run by students for students. You can find out more about the benefits of being part of the OU Community **here**.



Watch on TikTok

Hear why Welsh OU student, Abbie, chose the OU over a brick uni.



Myth busting

Myth #1

The Open University is not a real university.

- ▶ The Open University is the **largest university in the UK** with over **168,000 current students**. Since we launched over 50 years ago, we have taught more than 2 million people in 157 countries.
- ▶ The Open University is globally recognised and respected as a leader in distance education, achieving an overall **Gold rating in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework**.
- ▶ Open University degrees are equivalent to degrees from brick universities, with the same rigorous academic quality standards and student attainment as seen in the rest of the higher education sector.
- ▶ At The OU, you submit your application directly to us without going via UCAS.
- ▶ Our curriculum is underpinned by world-class research with our network of over 5,000 tutors, experts within their industry sectors.
- ▶ 87% of our former **students** say OU study has helped them achieve their career or personal goals.
- ▶ The OU is the third biggest provider of graduates for the world's largest tech companies after Oxford and

Cambridge, according to analysis by LinkedIn.

Myth #2

I will never be able to afford to do a degree.

- ▶ There is a range of **funding** methods available. A college student who joins the OU after L3 (A levels or equivalent) could expect to pay around £7,872 tuition fees for 360 credits (that's a full honours degree), compared to £27,000 at a brick university.
- ▶ If you've studied for an HND or Foundation degree (both 240 credits) at college and have 120 credits left to complete you could expect to pay around £2,624 at the OU, compared to £9,000 tuition fees at a brick university.
- ▶ What's more, you'll still be able to apply for the maintenance grant from **Student Finance Wales**, just as if you were going to study at a brick university. You could get up to £4,500 a year to help with living costs whilst you study part-time with the OU*. The maintenance funding is a grant, which means you don't have to pay the money back. Find out how much you could be eligible for on our **website**.

**Eligibility rules apply for financial support.*

- ▶ There's also help available for students on a low income for **study related costs, such as internet access, stationery or travel to tutorials**. Find out more **here**.

Myth #3

The OU will just send me books to work through.

- We've pioneered distance learning for over 50 years, giving you expert tutor support, an immersive learning experience, and flexibility to learn around your life. Distance has never stopped us. It's brought us together. And we are constantly innovating in how we deliver our learning, including:
- ▶ Online study, including interactive activities, videos, and articles on our module website.
 - ▶ Personal support from your dedicated module tutor.
 - ▶ Tutorials with your tutor and fellow students either online, in-person, or a mixture of both.
 - ▶ Engaging with a global student community through online forums.
- Find out more about our **blend of learning methods**.

Our undergraduate prospectus: Take a look at our **prospectus**. As you would expect from the largest university in the UK, we have a comprehensive range of courses for you to choose from. There really is something for everyone.

Open degrees – what are they?

How can an Open degree work for you?

If you're undecided on a specific subject to study, you may wish to consider our exciting and innovative **BA/BSc (Honours) Open degree** which gives you the freedom to study a range of subjects. It's like a 'pick and mix' degree – you choose the modules you wish to study.

It's an honours degree with a difference as, free from the restriction of a subject-specific specialism, you set the direction of your learning by:

- Tailoring your qualification to suit your needs.
- Choosing modules from a wide range of subject areas.
- Studying that fits your evolving career ambitions, lifestyle or personal interests.

A BA/BSc (Honours) Open degree equips you with a wide range of expertise, skills and capabilities that are much sought after in today's highly competitive job market.

We also offer the **BSc (Honours) combined STEM degree** which allows you to build your own degree from a wide range of STEM modules and study routes.

Watch on TikTok

OU student, Abbie, explains what flexible OU study means.



Abbie answers the common question: "Are there lecturers at the OU and can you talk to them?"



Boost your confidence with an Access module

An **Access module** is a great place to start if you want a gentle introduction to Open University study – you may even be able to **study for free***.

Designed specifically for OU students, an Access module can help you to find out more about your interests and where you want your learning to take you. There are up to four Access modules to choose from, starting in February, May and October. They're usually 30 weeks long, and most students study for about nine hours a week.

**Eligibility rules apply.*

If a fast-track option is available, you can complete your Access module in just 18 weeks by increasing your study time. We recommend that you apply early to guarantee your place.

Designed to inspire you

You'll explore a range of broadly related subjects within one module. That means you'll have the time and space to discover where your natural interests lie before settling on your ultimate qualification goal.

Access modules provide the perfect introduction to distance learning and studying with The Open University. You'll get a broad overview of the subject that interests you, refresh your learning skills and build your self-confidence.



Undergraduate registration summary

For Level 3 students studying A levels, BTEC, or equivalent at college.

Ready to fulfil your ambition? **Let's get going.** Our registration process is short and straightforward. Simply follow the steps outlined below:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Register	Choose your modules	Organise your funding	Complete your registration
Go to your chosen qualification webpage, select your preferred start date and click 'Register now' .	Select the module(s) you want to study in your first year. Some may be compulsory while others may be selected from a list of options.	Tell us how you'll be funding your chosen module(s). You'll find all your options here .	Confirm your funding method. That's it, you're ready to start learning.

Completing your registration is a significant step as you'll become part of the OU community and get access to our learning tools, materials and the student support that'll help you throughout your journey.

Now you can begin achieving your goals.

For more information on the registration process, click **here**.

 **Watch on TikTok**

OU student Abbie explains why you don't need UCAS points to apply to the OU.





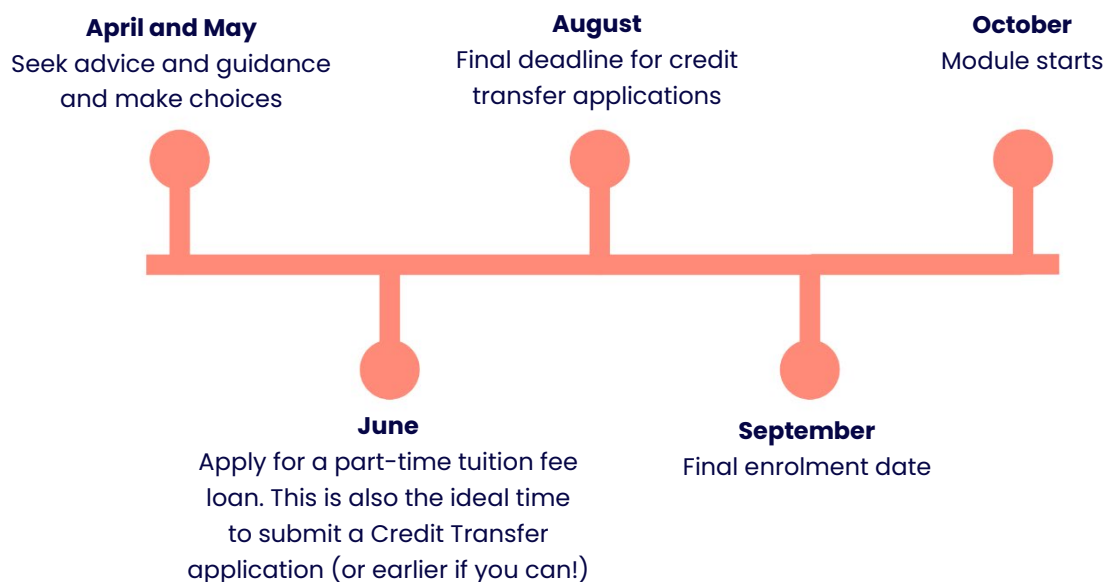
HE top-up study at the OU in Wales

If you've studied HE at college e.g. HNC, HND or Foundation degree, we offer flexible progression pathways to enable you to do your **'top-up'** to Honours degree study with the OU in all the subject areas you would expect.

How do I apply?

Upon successful completion of your HE study at college (120 or 240 credits) you may be eligible to **continue your study** towards a full BA/BSc (Honours) subject specific degree or our BA/BSc (Honours) Open Degree. You will need to study a 'top up' of 120 or 240 credits at the OU.

Application timeline summary for 'top up' study HE students



Application stages

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access advice and guidance available from The Open University. • Choose qualification. • Choose module(s) based on pathway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply to Student Finance Wales for part-time tuition fee loan – (listing chosen qualification). • Apply online for credit transfer. You should apply for credit transfer before you register, at least 4 weeks before the registration closing date. For more details of when you will need to apply by and to download an application form, visit our Credit Transfer website and our FAQ page. • Our credit transfer team will look at the transcript of your previous study and compare the content that you have studied against the content of the Open University modules that make up your qualification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register on chosen qualification and reserve interest in module(s) via online registration form or by phone. • Complete registration with a Student Finance Wales Customer Reference Number or alternative payment method.



Funding your studies

Bursaries and other support

Depending on your circumstances, you could be eligible to apply for one or more of the following:

- ▶ Study Related Costs Funding
- ▶ Carers' Scholarship
- ▶ Carers' Bursary
- ▶ Care Experienced Scholarship
- ▶ Care Experienced Bursary
- ▶ Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
- ▶ Disabled Veterans' Fund
- ▶ Scholarship for Black Students
- ▶ Sanctuary Scholarship

These bursaries and support packages are available for 2024/25 but may change.

How to pay the course fees

Open University qualifications are made up of a series of modules. Every module has an individual fee – added together, they give you the total cost.

You'll fund your modules as you study them, which means you won't have to pay for your whole qualification up front. A typical 60 credit module with The Open University in Wales costs £1,312* (for academic year 2024/25).

There are a variety of ways you can pay:

Part-time tuition fee loan

Over 80% of our new students in Wales fund their studies with a Part-Time Tuition Fee Loan (sometimes called a student loan), meaning they pay nothing up front. Eligibility isn't based on your income, and you won't repay a penny until you earn over a certain amount. Further details on how you apply via **Student Finance Wales** can be found on our **website**.

Card payments

Pay for each module with a debit or credit card in one quick, simple payment.

Open University Student Budget Account (OUSBA)

To qualify for a loan with OUSBA, you must be over 18 years old and will need to provide proof that you can afford the repayments**.

Using OUSBA, you have two options:

1) **OUSBA pays** your full fee direct to the OU on your behalf. OUSBA then spreads the fee and interest payable over up to a year, enabling you to pay your fees monthly. The interest rate is fixed for the duration of the course (representative APR 5.1%).

2) **OUSBA pays** your full fee direct to the OU on your behalf. You then repay OUSBA interest free and in full just before your module starts. 0% APR representative.

OUSBA is not The Open University; it is a separate legal organisation but is a wholly owned subsidiary of the OU.

The Open University works exclusively with OUSBA and is not able to offer you credit facilities from any other provider. Should you wish to consider a loan from any other provider you should make your own enquiries.

Help with living costs

There is also financial support available to help with your living costs whilst you're studying with the OU in Wales. You could get up to £4,500** a year as a maintenance grant dependent on your household income and how many credits you are studying. As the money you receive isn't a loan – you won't need to pay it back. However, if you aren't eligible for the full grant, you can also apply for an additional top-up loan.

Find out more about working out your entitlement.

*Fees typically increase annually.

**Eligibility rules apply for financial support.

Accessibility and support

Kyle explains the range of support we offer at the Open University in Wales in this video [here](#).

Accessibility on formal study modules

We're committed to making study accessible to all, whether you have a disability, health condition, mental health difficulty, or a specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia). When you sign up for a qualification or module, we'll ask you to let us know about any additional circumstances that may impact on your studies.

The **support** we may be able to offer will depend on the modules you choose to take, but our services include:

- Accessible study materials
- Specialist equipment
- Tailored assessment
- Residential school support
- Additional support accessing tutorials and day schools
- Financial help

Support for disabled students

Our flexible system of learning supports the largest disabled student community of any UK university. Find out more about the support we offer [here](#).

Student Voice

The Open University is dedicated to continuously strengthening the **student voice** by enabling its students to play a key role in shaping the University's direction.

There are many ways to have your say as an OU student:

- Student consultations (online)
- OU Students Association (OUSA)
- Surveys
- Become a Module/Course/School/Faculty representative
- Student Voice Week
- Student representatives on all key committees and groups in the university
- Student representatives on quality assurance processes



 **Watch on TikTok**

Listen to Abbie talk about connecting with other OU students.





OpenLearn

You may have noticed that we've used links in this guide to **OpenLearn**. This platform is home to over 1,000 free short courses including **many** which will **help you in your progression to degree study** with the OU.

You may have used **OpenLearn** in college as part of the **National Enrichment Programme (NEP)**.



We're here to help you every step of the way, so do get in touch!



Find out more

Call **029 2002 0354**

Email **wales-support@open.ac.uk**

Visit **Request a prospectus**

Twitter **@OUCymru**

LinkedIn **The Open University in Wales**

Facebook **@openuniversitywales**

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and in English and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to delay.

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.

All information in this guide is indicative and correct at the time of going to press September 2024.