



50

**A movement of millions,
a mission of one**



The Open
University

50
YEARS

WE BELIEVE THAT WHERE YOU START IN LIFE SHOULDN'T LIMIT WHERE YOU GO.

We believe that a university shouldn't just be, well, a university.

We are The Open University. Open to all of us, all of the time
– not just some of the time.

We are disruptors, occasional troublemakers, game changers.
We are the fuel for imagination; chasing comets, making the
impossible possible.

We are restless in our drive to see progress that touches us all
– inspiring students to become ministers and nurses, barristers
and teachers, tech entrepreneurs, business gurus and more.

Our cause goes beyond being an innovative way of learning
and our future lies in continuing to build that cause.

TOGETHER, WE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO OPEN UP THE FUTURE OF LEARNING.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Fifty years ago, on 23 April 1969, The Open University received its Royal Charter from Her Majesty, The Queen.

Since then, enshrined in our DNA is our commitment to open up education for all. We believe that anyone, anywhere, with a desire to learn, should have access to the education opportunities that they deserve.

As we celebrate 50 years, we are proud to be the UK's largest and only four nation university and to have supported millions of learners from around the world to transform their lives through education.

From graduates in 157 countries, to inspiring open education across continents, through to educating millions of teachers and health workers in some of the remotest parts of the world, we are proud of bringing Harold Wilson's vision to life.



We are open, first, as to people...

We are open as to places...

We are open as to methods...

We are open, finally, to ideas...



SHARE YOUR MEMORIES

Email proud@open.ac.uk

Social [#OU50](https://twitter.com/OU50)

Join an OU50 event.
You'll find all of them listed
at www.50.open.ac.uk



ONE UNIVERSITY FOUR NATIONS

The Open University is a true four nation university, operating across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

We are proud to welcome students from all over the world and to come together to continue to transform lives and create better futures.

OU IN ENGLAND

The OU in England has over 90,000 students from every part of the country. It is home to the OU's head office in Milton Keynes and has two offices in Manchester and Nottingham. Our warehouse in Wellingborough makes over one million dispatches of learning materials in a year.

90,000 STUDENTS

OU IN SCOTLAND

The OU in Scotland has 16,500 students from every part of Scotland. These students are supported by around 500 associate lecturers living across Scotland. We also have a dedicated team of staff at our offices in Edinburgh.

The OU in Scotland has partnerships with 15 Scottish colleges allowing students to move seamlessly from college study to an OU degree. The popular Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS) helps pupils bridge the gap between school and university by studying an OU module alongside their other subjects at school, and our new Graduate Apprenticeships build on years of experience supporting employers and their staff with skills development.

16,500 STUDENTS

OU IN WALES

The OU in Wales has over 9,000 students from across all areas of Wales supported by over 200 associate lecturers and a dedicated team of staff at our Cardiff office.

The OU works in partnership with employers, trades unions, third sector organisations and FE colleges across Wales to provide access to learning opportunities and pathways into higher education.

Our free bilingual online learning platform, OpenLearn Cymru, offers Welsh and English learning resources to encourage access to higher education in both languages.

9,000 STUDENTS

3,700 STUDENTS

OU IN IRELAND

The OU in Ireland has over 3,700 students in Northern Ireland and over 1,000 in the Republic of Ireland. These students are supported by our associate lecturers and we have a dedicated team of staff based in our offices in Belfast and Dublin.

In addition, the OU in Ireland works in partnership with all five Health and Social Care Trusts across Northern Ireland to offer a pre-registration nursing degree programme and the only work-based social work degree course in Northern Ireland. It also works in partnership with a number of trade unions under a formal partnership with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to widen access to higher education for its members.

1,000 STUDENTS

OU 50 TIMELINE

1969



Following years of planning by Harold Wilson and Jennie Lee, The Open University (OU) was granted a Royal Charter on 23 April 1969.

1970



The first buildings on the Walton Hall campus were opened by Earl Mountbatten of Burma. Over 42,000 applications were made for the 25,000 available places to study for the first year.

1971



The first OU courses were launched, and the first broadcast was aired on 3 January.

1973



The OU's first graduation ceremony was broadcast live on BBC2 from Alexandra Palace.

1979



The Queen visited the OU's Walton Hall campus in Milton Keynes.

1980



Over 38,500 students had graduated with the OU by 1980, and 130 undergraduate courses were being offered.

1981



Over 6,000 OU television and radio programmes had been produced by 1981 through the OU / BBC partnership.

1983



The OU launched the Business School.

2006



OpenLearn, the University's major new content initiative was launched, making educational resources freely available.

2003



Beagle 2 is launched led by late OU academic Professor Colin Pillinger. While the overall mission was unsuccessful, it increased the public's awareness of the European Space missions and The Open University.

2000



The Library launched Open Libr@ry, providing OU students and staff with access to online journals and resources.

1998



The 25th Anniversary of the OU's first graduation ceremony and the 200,000th graduate.

1995



The OU's Knowledge Media Institute (KMI) was founded to create and study future technologies.

1992



The OU launched a service to validate the degrees of other academic institutions.

1990



The OU celebrates its 100,000th graduate and more than 20,000 tons of study materials has been sent to students.

1984



The OU won the popular ITV/BBC TV series University Challenge for the first time.

2008



The OU launched its iTunes U project, which had over 1 million downloads in only 4 months.

2009



iSpot, the OU's social media site for identifying nature was launched.

2010



The OU's iTunes U service reached 20 million downloads, and Open Research Online, the OU's research repository marked its 1 millionth visitor.

2012



The OU creates FutureLearn, now the largest social online learning platform in Europe with almost 9 million people signed up worldwide.

2014



OU space scientists contribute to historic Rosetta comet landing on 12 November after ten-year space mission.

2015



The OU finds evidence of water on Mars and OpenSTEM laboratories launched.

2018



Blue Planet II, co-produced by the OU, reached over 14m people per episode, and created unique assets for teaching and learning.

2019



The Open University celebrates its 50th anniversary as the largest university in the UK, one of the largest in Europe and an unrivalled reach across the world.

OPEN TO PEOPLE, PLACES, METHODS & IDEAS

We believe in a world where everyone can succeed in their goals, and that where you start in life shouldn't limit where you go.

Bringing together a diverse group of staff, students, learners and supporters, we are united by the opportunity that lifelong learning brings.

DID YOU KNOW?

174,000

We're the UK's largest university with over 174,000 students – nearly four times bigger than the UK's next largest university – and one of the largest in Europe.

1,700

We're the only university to provide a degree pathway to serving prisoners across all prison and secure units in the UK. Currently, over 1,700 prisoners are studying with us, receiving personalised support and materials.

3 in 4

Three in four of OU students are in work, and 78 of FTSE100 companies in 2017/18 and many public sector employers sponsor staff on OU courses.

90%

We're the only university to be funded and operate in all four nations of the UK – and we have students in over 90% of UK postal districts.

0

No previous qualifications are needed to study the majority of the OU's courses – removing barriers to higher education.

24,000+

Over 24,000 disabled students – that's more than many universities total students.

2 MILLION

2 million students taught across over 157 countries.

#1

We're the most popular choice in the UK for part-time undergraduates.

13

Our youngest graduate:
Aged 13.

93

Our oldest graduate:
Aged 93.

HELPING ABILITY FLOURISH

KARIS WILLIAMSON

Karis Williamson from Inverness began studying with the OU in Scotland aged 16, having left school in the last year of primary. Karis, who has congenital muscular dystrophy, is now studying for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) Open Honours degree; a flexible degree programme where students can choose their own subjects to build a bespoke qualification.

Karis says: "The OU has re-educated me about what education really is, who I really am and what I'm capable of. Even if I never get to graduate, I have gained so much from it that I could never regret it."



The OU couldn't have done anything further to support me. The Student Support Team is fantastic and helped me to access the equipment I need to study, and my tutors have been very supportive. I also felt that the team who supported my entry to the University was really behind me and wanted me to succeed.



To read more about Karis' story, head to www.50.open.ac.uk





AGE HAS NO BAR ZAHRA ALIDINA

Completing her degree at the age of just 18, Zahra Alidina is The Open University's youngest ever law graduate.

Zahra left school at the age of 13 to pursue law related subjects at GCSE and A-Level through home education. Completing her A-Levels at just 15, she found it difficult to get into traditional universities because of her age. After a detailed interview with The Open University, Zahra was accepted onto the law degree programme, and she graduated three years later in 2016. She is now waiting to be called to the Bar later this year and is on track to be a fully qualified barrister before she turns 22.

“

I was actually unable to attend other universities because of my age. I am incredibly grateful for being given the opportunity to study with the OU at such a young age - it helped to spearhead my career when no other university would.

”

TRANSFORMING LIVES

STEPHEN AKPABIO- KLEMENTOWSKI

Stephen Akpabio-Klementowski has transformed his life from a prisoner with a 16-year sentence for the importation of class A drugs, to an OU student, and finally to a member of OU staff in our Students in Secure Environments team. Stephen achieved a BSc with the OU, and has gone on to gain two Masters degrees from Oxford Brookes – all mostly achieved while serving his sentence. He is now undertaking a PhD in criminology.

Stephen, who left school without any qualifications, attributes his impressive turnaround to the OU and “the enlightened academics prepared to tutor a prisoner”, and that our inspiring tutors and learning experiences left him “thirsting for more”.



I thank The Open University for doing what they alone do best, widening access and participation to higher education, which in my case means facilitating the successful reintegration of prisoners back into society.



To read more about Stephen's story, head to www.50.open.ac.uk





OPENING DOORS

KARENA SERDECKA- RHODES-BELL

Karena Serdecka-Rhodes-Bell is a former student turned Associate Lecturer in psychology at the OU. She runs online and face-to-face tutorials, gives academic feedback and supports students remotely from her home near Yarm, in the northeast of England.

For Karena, the OU represented a way for her to pursue her passion for teaching while also continuing her career as a psychotherapeutic counsellor and raising a family too.



I love the ethos and the fact that teaching and learning through the OU definitely does open doors and can be a life-changing experience. With the technology we have today, I can always be on hand for my students, providing them with the support they need to get through their studies. It also means I'm able to continue to study myself and fulfil my other professional commitments as well as be there for my family.



To read more about Karena's story, head to www.50.open.ac.uk

PIONEERING LEARNING WITHOUT BARRIERS

No other university reaches more people than the OU.

We constantly develop the best methods for breaking down the barriers to learning. Whether this is our unique partnership with the BBC, course materials on mobiles, or virtual reality teaching experiences, our use of technology brings learning to people wherever they are.

Globally recognised as the experts in learning technologies, we spearhead research that underpins our courses and BBC co-productions, and drives innovation in teaching.

Our expertise and flexibility means we can meet both the needs of thousands of individuals worldwide and large employers with dispersed workforces.

With the OU, studying really can be anytime, anywhere...

DID YOU KNOW?

AWARD WINNING

Our science teaching has moved from home laboratory kits to our award-winning OpenSTEM virtual laboratories. They connect our students, wherever they are, to benchtop experiments, microscopes, telescopes, robots, rovers, and even a satellite.

60 MILLION+

Over 60 million visitors to OpenLearn – home to our free educational resources, and over 73 million downloads of OU free content from iTunes U since we joined in 2008.

9 MILLION

We founded FutureLearn, a social learning platform for massive open online courses, which now has nearly 9 million learners, over 1,500 courses and 150 partners around the world.

INNOVATION

The OU's Institute of Educational Technology specialises in how we can help people learn and informs how the OU teaches and influences practice and policy in the UK and beyond.

1ST

We were the first university to make all of its undergraduate course materials accessible by smartphone and tablet through the award-winning OU Anywhere app.

260 MILLION

Our unique BBC partnership reached 260 million people worldwide in 2017/18.

STUDY WHILST DOING THE JOB YOU LOVE

FELIX ASARE- DONKOH

Felix Asare-Donkoh joined the armed forces soon after completing his A-levels, but was keen to continue his education. Rather than leave the army, Felix joined the OU in Wales and gained his Bachelors in Engineering while stationed away from home.

Felix made the most of his studies, weather-proofing his textbooks to see him through unexpected postings and choosing to study in the evenings while his colleagues rested.

Since graduating, Felix has become an aircraft technician, and is currently working towards becoming a sergeant in the military.



Taking on a degree with the OU was the best decision I could have made. It gave me the best of both worlds, allowing me to continue doing the job I love, while studying at the same time.



To read more about Felix's story,
head to www.50.open.ac.uk





FREEDOM TO STUDY ANYWHERE

TRACY THORPE

Tracy Thorpe left school at 15 after getting a handful of O-levels, and went straight into work, establishing a career as part of professional crews on sailing yachts. Many years later in 2011, Tracy signed up for an OU degree in modern languages, sailing thousands of miles whilst studying, before graduating with first-class honours in 2017.

Studying whilst working onboard a yacht poses many unusual challenges – writing essays in stormy weather, multiple time zones and erratic WiFi connections to name just a few. Tracy even managed to complete her level 3 French oral exam in the back office of a shipyard in Nova Scotia, having begged the manager to let her use the WiFi whilst they were docked in the port. Tracy says the flexibility and portability of OU study means that you really can study anywhere.

“

I dreamed for years of studying for a degree, but I always thought that my job would make it impossible. The flexibility of the OU has enabled me to achieve that dream.

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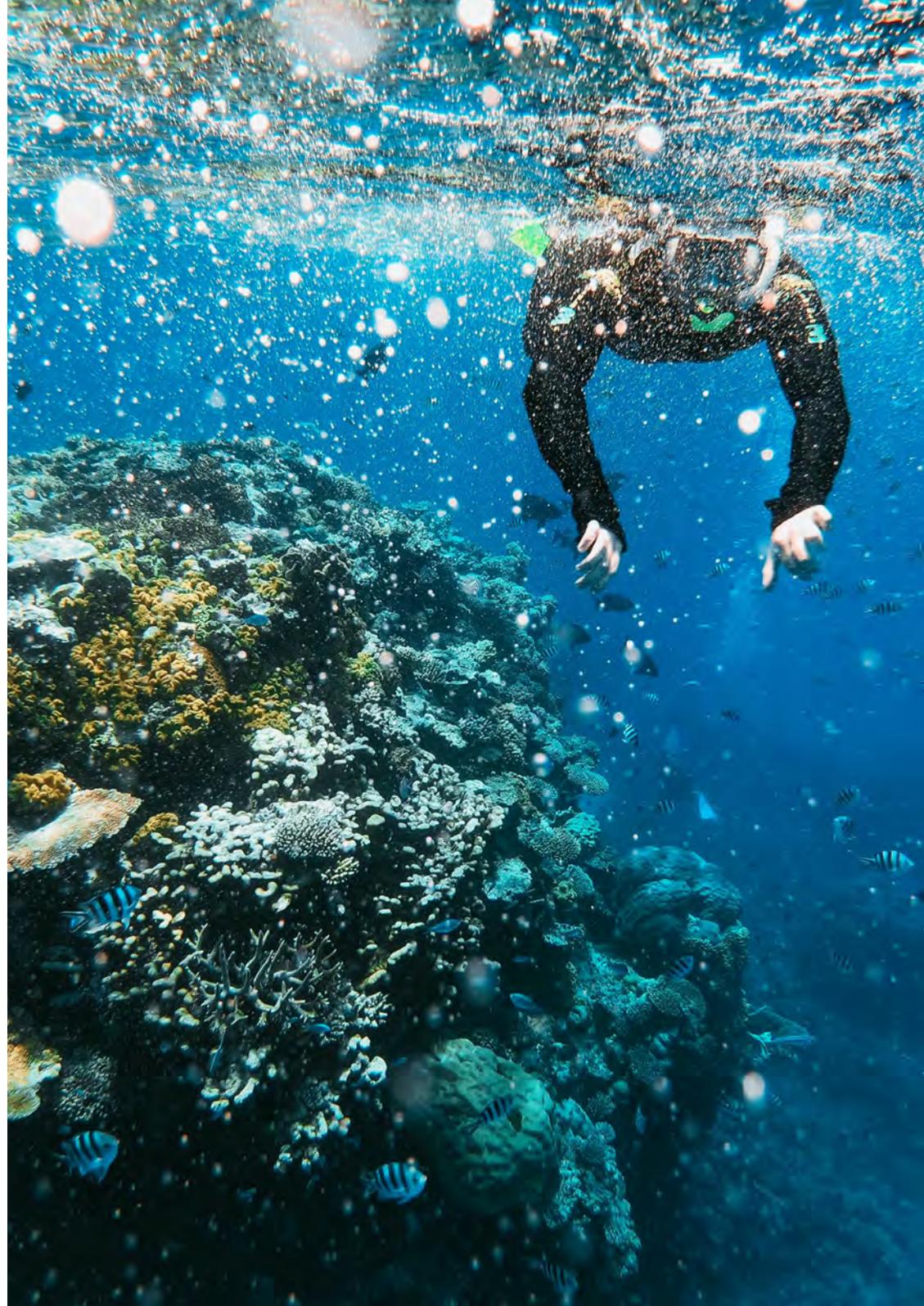
To read more about Tracy's story, head to www.50.open.ac.uk

BRINGING LEARNING TO MILLIONS BBC

From late night black and white lectures on TV to award-winning co-productions, the OU and BBC partnership has continued to grow for almost fifty years.

Over the years, our partnership with the BBC has allowed us to reach and engage with millions around the world and our academics continue to be at the core of the partnership. It is their continued expertise that helps create the most inspirational programmes, including the award-winning *Blue Planet II* and *Hospital*. More recently, we have continued to explore our natural world with *Blue Planet Live* and coming up we will take viewers behind the scenes of the Bank of England and into the world of forensics.

Whilst we look back fondly at some of the amazing programmes we have worked on together over the years, we're also looking forward to the future and to continuing to bring learning to life on TV and radio, on digital and social media and via immersive technologies.



TRANSCENDING BORDERS, CHANGING LIVES

Our teaching and research has inspired millions of people to dream, believe and succeed in creating better futures.

We reach people who would otherwise have had no opportunity to learn and change their lives. We help people make an impact in society by educating them to be the teachers, nurses, social workers, entrepreneurs, scientists and lawyers of the future. At the same time, we're helping close important skills gaps.

Our research is creating a 'smart' city, helping stroke patients to walk again and training dogs to sniff out cancer. We use our academic knowledge and expertise in technology to address real problems in society. Our work is empowering citizens to have a voice about issues important to them, such as children undertaking their own research and local citizen scientists monitoring active volcanoes.

Together we are creating a global footprint of staff, students and alumni who want to create a better world for future generations.

DID YOU KNOW?

#1

We train more health and social care staff in the UK than any other higher education provider.

2 MILLION

Our international development work has reached more than 2 million people in developing countries, helping to improve teacher education, healthcare and sanitation.

86%

86% of OU qualified students say their studies have improved their careers or helped them achieve their personal goals.

1/3

OU research ranks in the top third of UK universities and underpins our teaching.



INSPIRING ONE TO HELP MANY STEVEN RYAN

Steven Ryan is currently studying for a BSc in Adult Nursing with the OU in Ireland while working for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. The OU's unique work-based method allows Steven to work part-time as a Health Care Support Worker while studying to become a nurse.

After starting out in his career as a bricklayer, Steven suffered a potentially life-changing accident and was left unable to walk for two years. However, with the help of exceptional care from NHS staff, Steven made a full recovery. The support he received during this period inspired him to completely change the direction his career was heading in, and to start working in healthcare, with the ultimate goal to become a nurse.



I am very proud to have the opportunity to study nursing with the OU - it has supported me in developing a career which I am passionate about. As a Health Care Support Worker, my course is sponsored by my employer the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, meaning I'm able to earn a salary alongside my studies. For me, the chance to become a nurse means I can make a difference and have a positive impact on people's lives.



To read more about Steven's story, head to www.50.open.ac.uk

MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE, POSSIBLE

TESSA

The OU's first international teacher training initiative, the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme, is now Africa's biggest teacher training scheme.

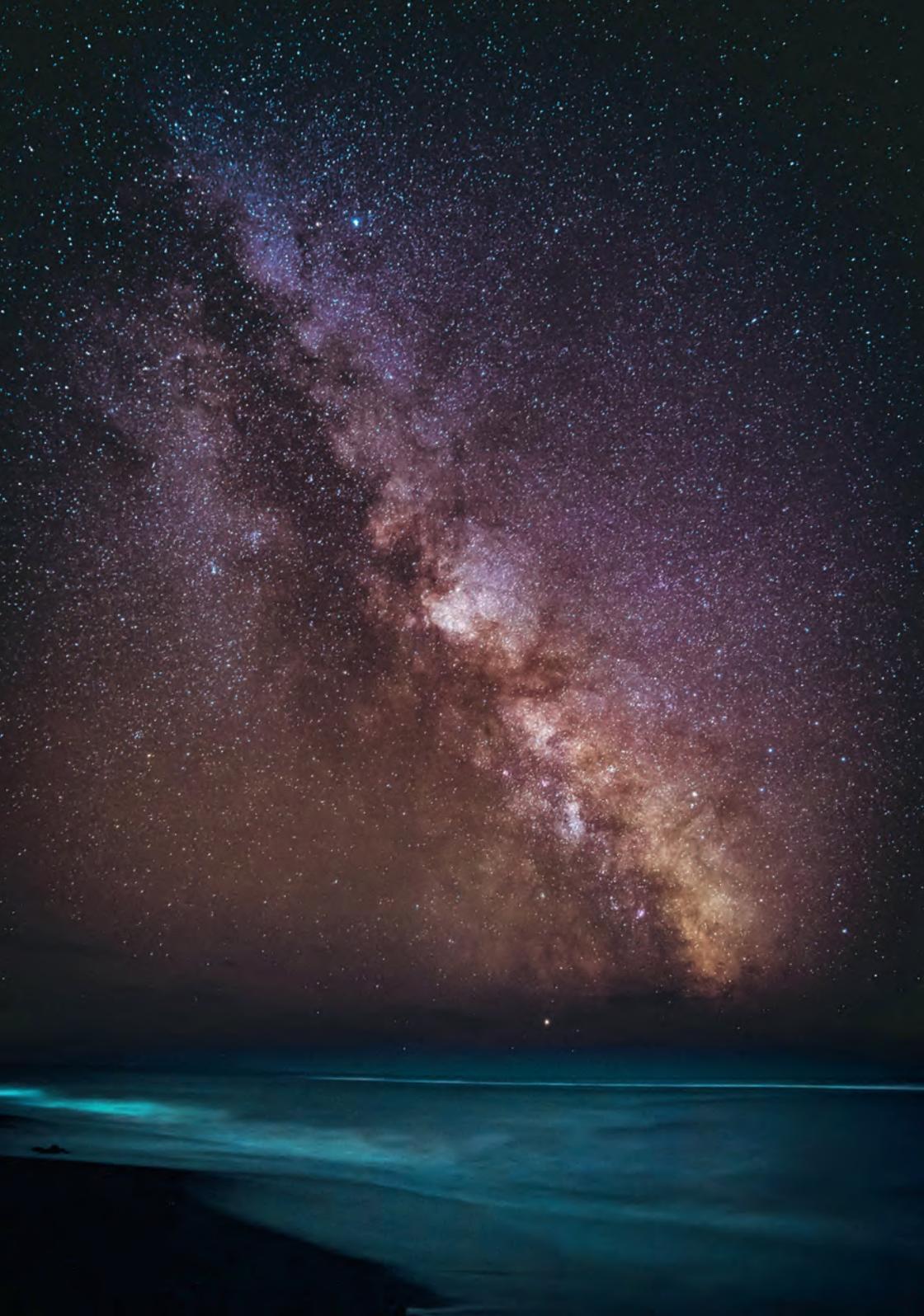
Starting in 2005, TESSA reaches millions and helps to empower teachers, increasing access to higher education and revolutionising learning in international development.

As well as winning the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2009, the pioneering TESSA programme continues to win awards, including a Digital Innovation of the Year Award for the ground-breaking massive open online course (MOOC) which introduced more than 7,000 teachers and teacher educators to the opportunities afforded by free online study.

The TESSA programme has also inspired equivalent programmes in India, 'TESS-India', the award-winning 'English in Action' programme in Bangladesh and 'Zambian Education and School-based Training' (ZEST) which is currently supporting 200 teachers and 10,000 students in Zambia.

For more information head to
www.open.ac.uk/ido





OUR PLANET & BEYOND SPACE

Long before the first moon landing, also 50 years ago in 1969, humans have wanted to explore the secrets of space, and to answer the question: 'Is there life beyond planet Earth?'

OU space scientists have been involved in breakthrough space missions, such as Beagle 2, the Rosetta comet landing, and ExoMars. We work closely with the UK Space Agency (UKSA), the European Space Agency (ESA) and other partners around the world to develop instruments that will help us understand worlds beyond our own.

The cutting-edge technology we develop to unlock the secrets of the universe is also applied to practical challenges here on Earth, from cancer testing to food security. Our research also informs our world-leading teaching in the physical sciences and continues to inspire generations to come about life beyond our own planet.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE OU!



Sir David Attenborough CBE
Broadcaster and Doctor of the University

“

Happy 50th birthday Open University! I remember your birth 50 years ago very vividly and you've turned out so well!

”



Joan Armatrading
OU graduate and Doctor of the University

“

I'd like to wish The Open University a very happy 50th birthday! Achieving my OU History degree whilst studying on tour between gigs remains one of my biggest achievements so far. I'm proud to be part of the OU family!

”



Professor Mary Kellett
Vice-Chancellor of The Open University

“

We're celebrating 50 years of opening up education to all, 50 years of helping people change their lives and 50 years of making the impossible, possible. We wouldn't have got to this landmark birthday without you. Thank you to everyone who has been part of our story, for helping to make The Open University so special.

”



Cath Brown
OU Students Association President

“

We OU students have so much to be proud of in our university. The OU has transformed so many lives, allowing students to succeed who never dreamed they could. It's a real privilege to be President of the OU Students Association in the 50th year of this wonderful institution. Here's to the next 50 years!

”



Martha-Lane Fox
Chancellor

“

As Chancellor of the OU - its ambassador and champion - I believe it is one of the most important positions I've held anywhere. 50 years on, the OU matters today more than ever before - supporting millions of students to be curious, to believe in themselves and to develop. I can't imagine a more important institution to support and love.

”



Rob White
MBA alumnus and Chairman of the OUBS Alumni Council

“

50 years after the OU was founded, we stand on the precipice of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and access to quality relevant education is critical in determining the success of individual, or organisation, and indeed a country's economy. Here's to the next 50 years, OU - you've never been more relevant.

”

OUR BELIEF AND COMMITMENT IS WHAT MAKES US WHO WE ARE.

We wouldn't be such a special university without our staff, students past and present and our supporters. Thank you for being a part of our story.

We are proud to have such a wonderful OU family across four nations and across the world.

HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY!



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50
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