



# LEARNING IN UNISON

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## OPEN THE DOOR TO A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY WITH THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

If someone suggests to you that you might like to consider becoming a student of the Open University (OU), what does this conjure up in your mind?

- Men with beards in checked shirts and corduroy trousers on the telly, talking about sociology or pure science at 3.00 o'clock in the morning?
- This is all about studying for a degree – I don't know how to study.
- This is all about studying for a degree – I don't want to do that.
- I don't have time to go to lectures or tutorials, never mind all that studying.
- I've heard it's really expensive – I can't afford that on my low pay.

### Dispelling the myth:

- We can't guarantee that OU tutors will always make a fashion statement...but...we can guarantee that the way the OU delivers information to its students these days is student centred and will not involve sitting in front of a TV in the early hours.
- The OU has study skills built into its 'Openings' and Level 1 courses. The OU is way ahead of many universities when it comes to student support. The 'Openings' courses are designed to give you the confidence to make the most of yourself and your potential. You can do it – if you want to.
- You don't have to study for a degree – the OU can offer you learning at almost every stage of the learning route from Openings (as a taster for returning to learn) to a Masters Degree and beyond. The choice is yours.
- The OU has perfected the art of distance learning – you don't have to attend lectures if you don't want to. In fact with Openings your

tutor will keep in touch with you by phone. You don't have to travel anywhere, so fitting in your studies around your other commitments should be easier.

- There are a number of ways that costs for learning can be reduced or be totally free – for example by using the OU fee waiver system or by using Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) to fund part or all of your course fees.

### How can your Branch become involved?

UNISON is keen to promote learning for its members at all stages of the learning route. We are working with the OU to encourage members to look at the options available. We are keen to discuss with branches:

- What courses are available and how these would benefit members.
- Target particular groups of members and get a course up and running.
- If this group is low paid – OU fee waiver may completely pay for this course, or we could use ILAs to fully cover cost of Openings, or part cover cost of other courses.
- The branch can also negotiate with employer to pay for the course.
- Study time – although a course will primarily be done in the member's own time, we would like the branch to consider negotiating with the employer for time off to study (we may need to open this up to non-members; but this then gives us a powerful recruitment tool).

We are keen to talk to you about this and can arrange for a Lifelong Learning Fieldworker and a representative from the OU to visit your branch to expand on any issues above and to discuss how we can begin to offer a unique learning opportunity to our members.

**If you want further info on how your branch can be involved with the Open University, please contact Lucanne, Mandy or Phil.**