

## STUDENT CONSULTATION MEETINGS 2021 RESPONSE

Student Consultation is a central part of the ongoing relationship between the University and its student body. As a part of this, a series of 12 online consultation meetings were conducted in Spring 2021. In total 273 students participated, and The Open University and Open University Students Association are very grateful to all students who got involved.

A summary of student feedback on the two major discussion topics, [University Strategy](#) and [Tuition](#), is available on the Student Consultation VLE website. The summaries have been considered by a wide range of staff members involved in improving the student experience in these two areas and beyond and is being used to inform further action.

Below is a short update on some of what's happening as a result of your feedback.

### UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

#### SUMMARY

This is a response to the consultation on 'University Strategy – shaping the future OU' which took place in March 2021 as part of the Student Consultation Meetings and with the Student Consultation Panel.

We received thought provoking feedback from across the OU community and wanted to let you know that your contributions, along with all the responses from around the University, have been carefully reviewed and used to inform the development of the strategy and how we describe our goals.

The headline feedback we received included that:

- Overall, the proposed strategic goals reflected the student perception of the University's ethos
- As a student community, you were looking for a strategy that is inspiring and aspirational and that truly reflects all that is unique about the OU
- Our strategy should reflect our role as an advocate for part-time learning and commitment to social justice, as well as emphasising our research activities.

The University's Strategy Office reviewed all the contributions received and incorporated feedback as they worked with stakeholders across the University to refine the Strategy and move it through the formal governance approval processes, with both the [University Council](#) and [Senate](#) having opportunities to consider the feedback you provided to ensure it was addressed.

Throughout the process we have worked to ensure that our strategy sets a strong agenda for the next five years; that it reflects and advances the distinctiveness of the OU, and is capable of guiding major decisions every year, and maintaining our focus.

In November 2021 the University Council approved the Strategy for 2022-27. In early 2022 there will be a launch of the strategy to the OU community, and the work to implement it, making the words within the strategy, the lived reality of the OU will begin, so that we can continue in our mission serving you, our students, now and long into the future.

In the New Year we will be sharing a digital format of the strategy which will be publicly available on our website, with alternative formats available on request. Ahead of that we are happy to share a copy of the approved text with students who participated in the engagement on request. Please email [strategy-office@open.ac.uk](mailto:strategy-office@open.ac.uk)

#### RESPONSE

This section responds to the summary of student feedback relating to the [University Strategy](#).

We sought feedback on five strategic goals and five enabling areas of activity that we do as a University to support our work with learners and our research. A copy of the original wording is available [on the forum](#).

As detailed in the summary, through the refinement and development of the strategy the wording of the goals and enablers has evolved, as has the detail of the activity and action which underpins them in the final strategy text.

The full strategy narrative document will be available as part of the launch activity in early 2022, ahead of that the framework which underpins it is outlined below:

**Learn and Live**

The Open University's Strategy for 2022-2027

**Our enduring mission**

Open to people, places, methods and ideas

**Our vision**

Life-changing learning that enriches society

**The values we live**

Inclusive, innovative, responsive

Through the power of learning we aim to transform lives and communities, opening a world of possibilities for everyone. This strategy sets out what we will do over the next five years to progress our mission.

**Our five goals**

- **greater reach**, offering unrivalled choice, quality, and flexibility to more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities, with the University's core offer of qualifications and accredited learning at its centre.
- **success for our students**, supporting them to achieve their goals, whoever and wherever they are, with outcomes that are equitable and open up new opportunities in life and work.
- **societal impact** locally and globally through research, enterprise and skills development that shape the future.
- **equity**, greater diversity at all levels, and inclusion in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve.
- environmental and social **sustainability**.

**The seven enablers to reach our goals**

- **living our values**, being inclusive, innovative and responsive in all we do.
- **supporting each other** to do our best work.
- **continuously improving** how we work and manage change.
- employing **secure and effective technologies** with the best possible user experience.
- **using data and evidence** in all our decision-making.
- **building on our uniqueness** as a university for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- **stewarding our finances** so that we can invest in our goals.

An overview of some of the key feedback and how we have responded in finalising the strategy is as follows:

You said	OU response
Reference to 'online learning' had negative connotations and 'distance learning' was preferred.	The Strategy refers to the University as a provider of world leading supported distance learning.
The reference to students from the Nations and beyond the UK should be more broadly reflected	Our uniqueness as a four nations university is reflected throughout the strategy with a new commitment to use our presence, experience, and expertise for the benefit of all four nations. In the longer term we expect to develop and increase our international role.
Students expressed a desire to see 'equity' reflected in the strategy, rather than equality.	The wording of the goal has been changed to equity with specific references to an equitable student experience being of paramount importance.

There was some feedback that when describing 'reach', the emphasis could be broader to achieve the goals and tell more people about the University.	<p>Within the Strategy the goal 'greater reach' intends to ensure that we will reach more people from all parts of society through a range of channels and learning opportunities. We will build on our comprehensive provision of degrees, diplomas, certificates and accredited modules.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the way people want to learn is changing and the strategy identifies the need to plan for changing trends and factors like students wanting to study at a more intensive rate or studying shorter courses to meet a short-term need or interest.</p>
Under the heading of managing finances, some students told us that they would like more to be done to help lobby regarding financial help for students	The Strategy gives a strong commitment that the OU will continue to advocate for policy and funding systems which support lifelong learning for all. It's in the reach section rather than the finance section.
Tuition delivery and study materials available in ways accessible to the student	This is addressed in the Strategy with reference to designing our courses to be truly inclusive and accessible.

## TUITION

The analysis of the feedback received during the tuition sessions of the Student Consultations in March 2021 has been invaluable in supporting work across the University. Thank you again to every student who took part.

Since March, your experiences of tuition, and your views on how it should develop in the future, have been used in the following activities:

**Development of a tuition programme:** the analysis of the consultation events provided insight and context to a short-term project, which took place between May and July 2021, to reassess the University's policy on how tuition is offered across different groups of students within a module – for example, how students are offered the opportunity to attend tutorial events other than those delivered by their own tutor. In October 2021, the recommendations from this project were approved by the University's Senate. As part of these recommendations, a programme of activity related to improving tuition is being created, informed by your feedback, which will be looking at issues such as tutorial delivery, student expectations and consistency of approach. In particular, your feedback from the Student Consultation Meetings will be used to prioritise Tuition Programme's activities. We hope to share further updates on the work of the programme in 2022.

**Updates to the Help Centre:** Whilst highlighting the importance of face-to-face tuition within the consultation, students also talked about the value of online tutorials. This feedback has been used to further develop and update the supportive [information available to students on the Help Centre](#) regarding booking and accessing online tutorials.

**Online tutorial recordings:** Students told us about the importance of online tutorial recordings. The University's recording policy has now been in place for 18 months and a light touch evaluation is currently taking place. The student input about the value and uses of these recordings will support the evaluation to ensure we provide the resources and recordings you need.

**Online tutorial accessibility:** Ensuring tutorials are accessible was a strong message from the Student Consultation Meetings. For example, it was noted how useful it can be to receive resources in advance. We have been working collaboratively across the OU including with student representatives and using your feedback to develop an online tutorial accessibility resource hub for tutors. The aim of this hub is to support tutors in better supporting students with accessibility needs in online tutorials. The hub is in the final stages of development and is expected to launch in the new year.

Whilst many of the activities in 2021 have centred around the online tuition experience the University is committed to a return to face-to-face tuition where possible / appropriate in 2022. The insight provided at the Student Consultations will support the University in developing both face-to-face and online tuition and related events over the coming years to ensure it is an experience that is useful and supports students in their study journey.

**Date: December 2021**