

The Open University

Developing our new University strategy

Opening Up

On screen captions: 1969: A new kind of university was born...

In 1969, something remarkable happened. A Prime Minister and a Minister for the Arts shared a belief that education should belong to everyone, everywhere.

On screen captions: University of the Air

Harold Wilson imagined a **“University of the Air,”** where the power of new technology, television and radio, could bring learning into people’s homes.

Jennie Lee brought that vision to life. She was determined that this new university would stand for opportunity, equality, and quality.

Her humanist values gave The Open University its soul, a place where anyone, regardless of background, could achieve their potential through learning.

The OU changed the face of Higher Education.

On screen captions: We opened our doors

We opened our doors to people who couldn’t attend traditional universities, those held back by cost, geography, or circumstance.

On screen captions: Cost. Geography. Circumstance.

We promoted equity, giving working people, and particularly women, a fair chance to learn, work, and grow.

It was a bold experiment in national modernisation, using innovation, technology, and science to build a fairer, more competitive society.

On screen captions: Innovation. Technology. Science.

The vision was clear: Education would no longer be the privilege of the few, but the right of the many.

On screen captions: Privilege of the few. Right of the many.

The OU was there to turn that right into reality.

Fast forward to today, and it’s the same familiar challenges.

Affordability remains a major concern. How do we keep education open and accessible when costs are rising and families are under pressure?

Inequality still shapes opportunity.

On screen captions: Inequality still shapes opportunity.

In some areas, fewer than one in five people progress into higher education, while in others it's more than three in five.

Ethnicity, socio-economic background, and geography still determine who gets the chance to study and that can't be right.

The world may have changed, but our mission is more relevant than ever.

On screen captions: Equity. Opportunity. Progress.

On screen captions: Harnessing the power of technology.

The latest technology has always been at the heart of how we deliver on our mission.

In the 1970s, we used radio and television to bring learning into people's homes. Today, Artificial Intelligence is transforming what's possible. Tools like ChatGPT can already generate learning materials, simulate tutors, and adapt content to each student's needs.

In the next decade, AI could help us personalise learning at scale, to reach more students than ever, and free educators to focus on what only humans can do: teach, inspire, and connect.

On screen captions: Teach. Inspire. Connect.

But one principle remains unchanged. As Jennie Lee insisted, ***mass higher education must be built on quality***. The goal was never education on the cheap, it was education that changes lives.

On screen captions: Mass higher education must be built on quality.

So how do we advance our founding mission? How do we make it even more compelling and relevant for even more people?

On screen captions: So how do we advance our founding mission?

On screen captions: Six decades of expertise, innovation and commitment.

Our new strategy builds on nearly six decades of expertise, innovation and commitment to create learning that changes lives, research that drives impact, and a university that remains true to its purpose.

On screen captions: Learning that changes lives. Research that drives impact. We remain true to our purpose.

It's founded upon three powerful pillars.

On screen captions: Creating societal impact.

1. **Creating Social Impact.**

Bringing education to the people who need it most, in partnership with employers, colleges, and communities.

On screen captions: Bringing education to the people who need it most.

Designing flexible pathways so learners can join at any stage. Breaking down barriers, and rewriting the rules of learning. And ensuring our research makes a real difference to people and communities everywhere.

On screen captions: Breaking down barriers. Rewriting the rules. Ensuring our research makes a real difference.

On screen captions: Advancing social mobility.

2. **Advancing Social Mobility.**

We want every student to have the greatest opportunity to succeed. So we will focus not just on how many students join us, but how many achieve their ambitions, whatever they may be.

Designing curriculum that makes intelligent use of AI and closing the gaps in attainment we still see between many different parts of society.

On screen captions: Closing the gaps in attainment.

On screen captions: Empowering communities.

3. **Empowering Communities through Partnership.**

Combining global reach with local impact to ensure we're relevant and connected wherever we are needed. Creating new education models and developing partnerships to maximise impact and support, embracing the fact that we are a global university.

On screen captions: Global reach, local impact. New education models. Developing partnerships.

This framework raises profound questions, about how we design, deliver, and sustain what we do.

We'll find the answers together. Because our strategy is built and delivered by all of us.

Together, we'll define how the OU evolves, while staying true to its founding spirit.

However different the world may look in another 60 years, our commitment will remain the same. To open up learning for everyone.

Our mission stands strong.

Our values hold true.

And together they will guide us to find new ways to learn, to teach, and connect with one another, helping people to transform their lives and their communities, whoever and wherever they are.

On screen captions: Together we will advance The Open University's mission.

The Open University.

Advancing our mission for the world today, and for the generations to come.

On screen captions: The Open University. The future is open.