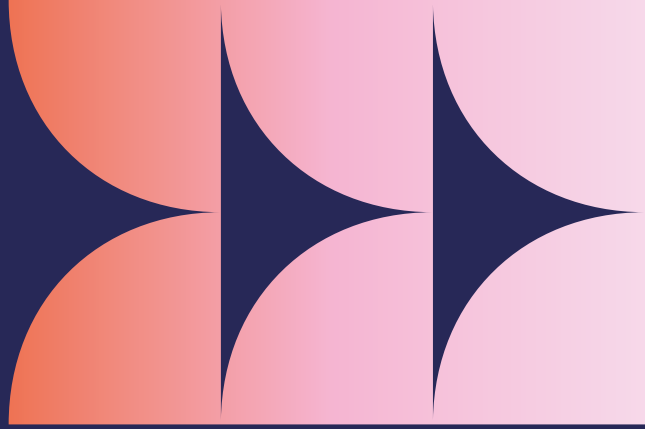




Student's Guide to Studying on a Programme Validated by The Open University

From September 2025



Welcome to The Open University

You have chosen to study a programme that is validated by The Open University (OU). This means you are now part of a global community of over 66,000 students studying OU validated courses at partner institutions around the world. The aim of this guide is to introduce you to the University and to explain what studying on a programme validated by the OU means to you. It sets out what our relationship with the institution you are registered with is, our relationship and responsibilities to you, and what will happen if our relationship with your institution comes to an end.

Essentially, OU validation is a mark of quality for your award.

What does “OU validated” mean?

Quality Assurance: Your programme has been reviewed and approved by The Open University, ensuring it meets the same high standards as similar awards offered through UK higher education.

Recognised Qualification: Your award is equivalent in level and value to degrees offered across UK higher education. It can open doors to jobs and further study – just like a degree directly from the OU.

What this guide covers

- The relationship between the OU and your institution.
- What the OU’s responsibilities are to you as a student.
- What happens if the partnership between the OU and your institution changes.
- Useful resources and links to OU developed learning tools you can access for free.

You are at the start of a study journey, which all of us at the OU are very proud to be a part of and, on behalf of all our University colleagues, we wish you every success in your studies.

The Open University Validation Partnerships team

About The Open University

The OU was established by Royal Charter in 1969 and has since taught more than 2.3 million people.

The OU is one of the largest universities in Europe with almost 200,000 students.

The OU is the largest provider of higher education for people with disabilities.

There is no typical OU student. People of all ages and backgrounds study with us:

- 69% of directly registered OU students work full or part-time during their studies.
- 26% of OU UK undergraduates live in the 25% most deprived areas.
- 35% of new OU undergraduates are under 25.
- 76% of OU undergraduates had no previous HE qualifications on entry.

► **34%**
of OU students had one A level or a lower qualification at entry.

► **38,991**
students declaring a disability studied with us in 2023/24.

► **72%**
FTSE 100 companies have sponsored staff on an OU programme.

► **285 million**
views in 2022/23 of OU/BBC co-produced programmes.

OpenLearn, a free learning resources website from the OU, has had over 117 million visits since its launch in 2006.

82% of OU research submitted was assessed as “world leading” or “internationally excellent” by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

For the latest figures, please visit **OU Strategy and Policies.**



about.open.ac.uk/strategy-and-policies/facts-and-figures

OU Validated Partnerships facts and figures

- **Nearly 40** partner institutions, in the UK and overseas
- **Over 66,000** students
- Around **390** validated programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level
- Wide range of subject areas
- **7,232** Awards conferred in 2023/24
- **Over 213,000** conferments since 1992 when validation activity started

For the latest figures, please visit **university.open.ac.uk/validation-partnerships/**.



About Open University Validation

Through its Royal Charter, The Open University (OU) is able to validate programmes offered by institutions that do not have their own degree-awarding powers or that wish to offer OU awards. Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP) is the unit in the University that manages its validation activity.

What is a partner institution?

A partner institution may be a Further Education, Higher Education, or alternative provider that has been formally approved to deliver programmes leading to an OU validated award. Partner institutions undergo regular re-approval reviews to ensure they continue to meet the OU's rigorous standards. This includes maintaining appropriate procedures and resources for teaching, learning, and assessment, as well as demonstrating strong academic organisation, qualified staffing and staff development, and robust internal quality assurance systems.

What is an OU validated programme or award?

The programme you are studying is validated by the OU, and, if you complete it successfully, will lead to an OU validated award. Awards can be undergraduate (e.g., BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), Certificate or Diploma of Higher Education, Foundation Degree), or postgraduate (e.g., MA, MSc, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma). Your institution is responsible for the development, delivery, assessment, and overall quality of your programme. In cases where licensed content is used, the institution remains responsible for its integration, delivery, and quality assurance, although the original development of that content may be external. OU validation responds to stringent quality assurance processes, such as External Examiners scrutiny and the systematic application of the Quality Assurance Agency defined standards.

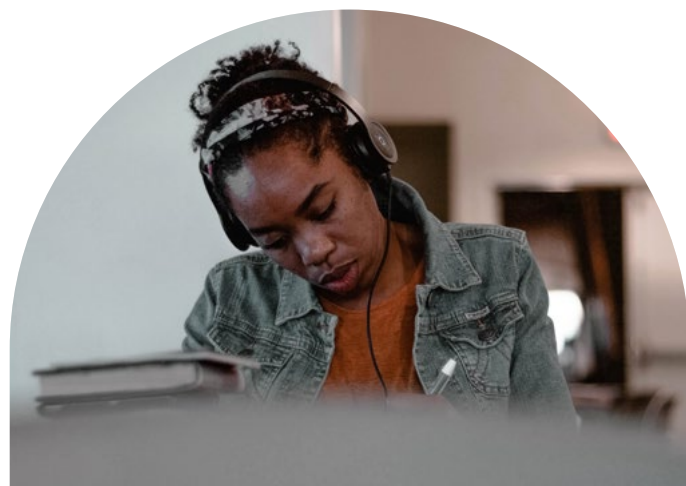
What is a Single Registerable Module (SRM)?

Within a programme of study there may be individual modules that can be studied for credit without registering onto the full programme. These modules are a minimum of 10 credits and on successful completion, for those not studying on the programme, a pdf certificate is issued by the OU outlining the module title, level, credit size and learning outcomes. SRMs are subject to the same quality assurance processes as the full programme.

How does the OU guarantee quality and standards?

The University assures itself of the standard and quality of its validated programmes through the following mechanisms:

- **The validation and revalidation processes**, which involve panels of experts from higher education (and industry where appropriate) both within and outside the relevant subject area. In order to reach a decision about whether to (re)validate a programme, the panel has detailed discussions with the staff team, students, and employers (where appropriate), and considers the proposed curriculum and assessment regulations and other programme documentation, as well as resources and delivery sites. Any major changes to a programme are subject to approval and programmes are revalidated regularly. During your time at your institution, you may be asked to speak to a panel as part of a (re)validation event.
- **Scrutiny of the institution's own quality assurance procedures**: As part of the approval process, we check that your institution has appropriate quality assurance procedures in place such as External Examiners, student, staff, and employer feedback mechanisms; analysis of statistical information; and institutional and programme monitoring. Your institution is required to produce an annual report to the OU through which the University can monitor the institution's quality assurance procedures and ensure that any concerns are addressed.
- **The appointment of External Examiners to every OU validated programme**: The role of the External Examiners is to check and confirm that your assessment has been fair and just, and that the academic standard of the award has been achieved. All External Examiners produce reports which are considered by your institution and the OU. The OU monitors these reports and the institution's response to assure itself that the quality and standard of the programme are being maintained. Your programme information must include the details of the relevant External Examiners, such as name and position. In addition, your institution should provide you with access to External Examiners' reports.



What is my relationship with the OU?

Although you are studying for an OU validated award, your relationship is with your institution, and you must follow the guidance and procedures you are given by them. This includes the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University, which the institution will provide you with, as well as the OU Handbook for Validated Awards. Any queries, complaints, or requests should be directed towards the relevant person within your institution; information on who to contact should be found in your student handbook and/or on the VLE.

Where will I be registered?

You will be registered as a student at your institution, which will register you through The Open University for an OU validated award. The OU will hold summarised information including your personal contact details and progression data, whilst more detailed records are held by your institution. For more information, please see the OU Handbook for Validated Awards.

Who is responsible for induction and any advice I might need?

Your institution will arrange an induction for you and will have appropriate services for advice and guidance on all matters whether academic, financial, or personal.

Where can I find information on my programme (including single registerable modules), regulations, and support services?

You should find this information in the materials given to you when you start your programme or single registerable module. If you have any further questions, you should contact your programme leader or administrator.

What should I do if I want to make a complaint?

Try to deal with any problems or complaints as soon as possible by speaking to your programme leader or administrator. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, your institution has a complaints procedure which you should follow. These procedures should be available in the documentation provided to you at the beginning of your programme and on your institution's website. Your institution will also ask for your feedback at various stages throughout your programme and each programme will have a committee on which there is a student representative. You should raise any concerns through these mechanisms.

Can I access the OU's Whistleblowing Policy?

Your institution should have its own whistleblowing policy. If you feel you need to use the OU's whistleblowing policy you can find it here: help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/public-interest-disclosure-whistleblowing.

Who is responsible for assessing my performance?

Your institution is responsible for setting and marking assessments. They are also responsible for ensuring that accurate data on student progress and awards is provided to the OU.

What should I do if I dispute a decision made about my performance?

Your institution should provide you with your institution's academic appeals procedures, which will include deadlines and timescales. You should follow this procedure as soon as possible to ensure that you do not miss the opportunity to appeal.

Can I appeal or complain to the OU?

You have the right to appeal or make a complaint to the OU, but you must first go through the relevant complaints or academic appeals procedures in your institution. Your institution can provide you with the detailed procedures for submitting a formal academic appeal or complaint to the OU through OUVF, or you can find them in the Handbook for Validated Awards on our website: university.open.ac.uk/validation-partnerships/about-ou-validation/ou-handbook-validated-awards

What will happen if I need to leave my programme early?

You may be eligible for an exit award or credit for your achievements up to that point. Discuss this possibility with your institution, who may apply to the OU on your behalf for an exit award or a certificate of credit. It may be possible to use this credit to get exemption from aspects of another programme within the institution or elsewhere. You will also be entitled to a transcript showing the complete record of your learning and achievement up to the point at which you left the programme.

What will happen if the partnership between the OU and my institution ends?

Sometimes partnerships between the OU and institutions delivering our awards do end. This usually occurs when the partner gains their own degree awarding powers or sets up a new partnership with another university. In these circumstances students will normally be given the option to complete their OU award at the institution or change to the new awarding authority.

In rare circumstances, a partnership may come to an end because the OU, or the institution, decides it no longer wishes to continue with the partnership. In these circumstances, the student protection plan of your institution will come into effect alongside the OU student protection plan (help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/student-protection-plan) if necessary. We will work with any validated partner whose relationship with us is being brought to an end with the aim of ensuring that you are able to complete your qualification or a suitable alternative.

In the first instance, we will work with your Institution to provide suitable teach out arrangements with them which may include an alternative UK degree awarding body. If this is not feasible, we will work with them on options to transfer to an alternative provider which may include the OU itself. If this is not a possibility or you do not feel you have been offered a suitable alternative, you should refer to your institution's student protection plan regarding options for refunds and compensation.

What happens when I successfully complete my programme?

On successful completion of your programme, your institution will ask the OU to confer the award and produce a certificate. Your certificate will include your name, the award, the name of the institution you studied at and the date the award was conferred. The OU coat of arms, crest and logo will appear on the certificate, which will be signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary.

You will also receive a Diploma Supplement, which is a formal and comprehensive record of your learning and achievement. This will come in addition to the transcripts that you will have received as you progress through the programme.

If you have been studying a single registerable module, as opposed to the full programme, upon successful completion you will be issued with a pdf certificate by the OU, outlining the module title, level, credit size and learning outcomes. You will also receive a transcript from your institution, setting out the final mark you received for the module.

Moving on...

You may be able to use the credits or award you have gained to continue your study at the institution, at the OU, or elsewhere. The OU offers progression onto supported distance learning programmes.

You may join the **OU Alumni Association** – membership is free and brings with it networking opportunities, discounts and offers, and much more (alumni.open.ac.uk/). To apply for membership, please email ouvp-aftercare@open.ac.uk.

You may use the **OU Careers Service**. open.ac.uk/courses/careers

Free online resources provided by the OU

Our approval process requires that institutions have all the necessary services you need to help you with your studies. In addition, the OU has some great free online resources that you can use:

The OU Library gives you access to non-restricted online resources to support your study and research university.open.ac.uk/library/library-resources/publicly-available

OU Library (Training Skills) university.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/training-and-skills

OpenLearn is a free learning resources website with over 1,000 free courses, interactives, videos and more. The site has had over 111 million visits since its launch in 2006. open.edu/openlearn/

The OU on YouTube has bite sized extracts from courses, plus videos of research, experiments, and student life. youtube.com/ou

Open Research Online shares the OU's high-quality, peer-reviewed publications. It features research outputs across a broad range of OU research from science to arts. oro.open.ac.uk

Find out more

Visit university.open.ac.uk/validation-partnerships/

Email ouvp-info@open.ac.uk

The Open University Validation Partnerships website includes the list of the OU partner institutions, more information about approval and validation, the OU Handbook for Validated Awards, and our appeals and complaints procedures.





Contact us Open University Validation Partnerships

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Website: university.open.ac.uk/validation-partnerships/

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