

Information for applicants

Thank you for your interest in the vacancy with The Open University. This document provides details about the application process, staff benefits and selected policies.

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1. About The Open University

The Open University is the UK's biggest university and a world leader in flexible part-time education, with more than 264,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, including 18,000 studying directly with the University overseas and 40,000 students on validated programmes. We transform lives through education and the quality of our students' experience is at the heart of what we do. We are committed to delivering quality, flexible education for all and our students have rated the OU in the top three universities for satisfaction since the National Student Survey began in 2005.

Since its inception, the OU has used the technology of the day to deliver education. This enables us to not only offer formal qualifications across the world, but extends our reach to offer informal and free learning on a global scale. Many institutions across the world use our teaching materials and in the UK's latest Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) the Open University was ranked in the top third of UK higher education institutions. In February 2011, the UK Government's Online Learning Task Force said the UK set a "world standard in distance learning" by establishing The Open University in 1969.

Teaching is through the provision of specially designed, high quality materials which encompasses traditional print texts, CDs and DVDs to extensive web-based resources.

The success of The Open University is due to our outstanding staff. There are around 12,000 staff (including 7,000 Associate Lecturers). Staff and potential staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of gender, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, socio-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, family circumstances, sexual orientation or other irrelevant distinction.

We are also committed to the development of our staff to their full potential through lifelong learning. We offer a range of formal and informal training and development activities to ensure that staff are able to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities and to help meet individual and University objectives. Our objective is that all staff undertake a minimum of five days' development activity in each year.

2. How to apply

2.1 Guidelines

The following guidelines are designed to help you submit a job application in line with our requirements.

You will need to read carefully any specific instructions concerning what should be included in your application (this will be in 'Further particulars' document.) Please ensure you comply with these instructions since, if you do not, the panel will not be able to shortlist you.

2.2 Covering letter or supporting statement

Your covering letter or statement should clearly identify how you meet the criteria in the person specification if you have not already provided this information on the application form. Please ensure that you provide relevant examples as evidence to support your statements.

The selection panel will consider how well the information you provide demonstrates that you meet the criteria identified in the person specification.

2.3 Completing the application form

It is in your interest to show how your experience and personal qualities address the person specification for the role.

Please ensure you complete all the sections of the form in full, giving as much detail as possible. You are welcome to enclose your up-to-date curriculum vitae (CV), but **CVs will not be accepted on their own**. You can include your name and date on the application form.

If you are invited to an interview you will be asked to sign and date your application form to authenticate the content.

2.4 Curriculum vitae (CV)

If it is stated in the 'Further particulars' document that the department/unit is accepting the short (two-sided) version of our application form, please enclose an up-to-date CV with your application. This should include details about the following, where applicable:

Secondary and higher education (dates, educational establishment, examinations, results/grades and thesis titles if applicable).

Other technical, professional or occupational training/courses attended (dates, provider, type of training, subjects studied and qualifications attained).

Membership of Professional Institutes or Societies.

Employment history (dates, details of your present and past employers, positions held with brief details of duties, final salary and reason for leaving). Please start with your current or most recent appointment. Remember to include unpaid or voluntary work as well as paid employment.

Details of Relevant Publications (for academic posts).

Please remove any Equal Opportunities information (e.g. age, date of birth, sex, gender, marital status, ethnicity, and religion) from your CV as this is not relevant to your application.

The short application form needs to be completed and submitted with your CV and covering letter.

2.5 References

The 'Further particulars' document indicates whether you are required to provide details of two or three referees. At least one of the referees should be from your current or most recent employer. Please provide full contact details for each referee in the relevant section of the application form, stating clearly if you do not want us to contact a referee until after the interview, should you be invited to one.

If you are offered a position, please note it is University policy to obtain the most current employer reference before the written offer of employment is sent.

Internal applicants only:

When completing the 'Referees' section of the application form, please ensure you specify your Head of Unit as your 'current employer', as s/he is responsible for providing this reference or nominating an appropriate alternative referee.

3. Proof of eligibility to work in the UK

There are legal restrictions on who may undertake employment in the United Kingdom. Residents of the European Economic Area and Switzerland are permitted to work within the UK. Citizens of other countries, however, normally need to be sponsored by a UK employer and granted permission to stay in the UK by the UK Border Agency, in order to undertake employment with the sponsoring employer.

When applying to the UK Border Agency in order to sponsor someone, the University will be required to demonstrate that **there are no other suitable candidates for the post who are residents of the European Economic Area and Switzerland**. If you require sponsorship, this will be processed should your application for appointment be successful.

Every candidate invited for interview will be required to provide proof of their eligibility to work in the UK by producing verifiable documents. Details of the required documents will be sent to all candidates who are invited for interview and the relevant original documents must be brought to the interview for checking and copying. Please note we are unable to accept photocopies of documents; original document must be provided for checking by Open University staff.

To find out which visas and permissions you may require in order to work in the UK, please see <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/> or telephone 0114 207 4074. The general enquiries line is open from 09.00 to 17.00, Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

4. Equality and Diversity

4.1 Equality Scheme

The Open University Equality Scheme is our single equality scheme setting out our work to prevent unlawful discrimination and promote equality and good relations with regards to the characteristics of age; caring and dependency responsibilities; disability; gender; gender identity; marriage and civil partnership status; political opinion; pregnancy, adoption, maternity and paternity; race; religion or belief; and sexual orientation.

Our vision is to create an inclusive university community and a society where people are treated with dignity and respect, where inequalities are challenged, and where we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances so that everyone can achieve their potential. The University values the commitment and involvement from all our staff, students, partners and providers in working towards the achievement of this vision.

4.2 Disabled applicants

The Open University positively welcomes disabled applicants. If you require any adjustments to enable you to attend the interview, please ensure that you contact the Recruitment Co-ordinator to discuss your requirements.

(The Equality Act, defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.)

Please let us know if you need your copy of the 'Further particulars' document in a different format to meet your needs. Additional accessibility information for disabled applicants is available from the Recruitment Co-ordinator - please see 'Further particulars' document for contact details.

4.3 Equality staff networks

The University has a support framework for groups of staff that are interested in establishing networks and groups. This includes: paid time off for network coordinators to work on network activities, use of computing facilities, equipment and other resources, use of training and meeting rooms as required, and funding for start up costs, programmes, publicity and events.

The University has a number of current networks, including one for black and minority ethnic staff, one for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff and one for disabled staff.

4.4 Disclosure of equality information

The University monitors the participation and progress of staff in relation to a number of individual characteristics and this information is collected in the recruitment process through an equal opportunities monitoring form. This information is only used to assess the effectiveness of our equality policies and is never disclosed to individuals who do not need to know it. Although the disclosure of this information is entirely voluntary, the University encourages you to provide this information in full when you apply for employment and to keep this information up to date on your personal record using the *Staff Self Service* system available through the intranet.

4.5 Further information and benefits

Further information about equality and diversity is available on the University's Equality and Diversity website (<http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/>), and on the intranet (accessible to all staff).

Section 5 contains details of a number of additional equality-related benefits and facilities.

5. Benefits and facilities

This section provides a summary of benefits and facilities. Full details will be available if your application is successful.

5.1 Staff development

We have a strong commitment to providing training and development in and beyond your current role. This includes thorough induction into the organisation and regular reviews of your training and development needs. The objective is that all staff should undertake at least five days' development activity in each year – this may include attendance at formal courses or other learning e.g. use of self-study material. We invest substantial time and money in our staff development provisions and we normally waive fees for staff wishing to study our own courses.

5.2 Annual leave

The annual leave entitlement is 30 days for support staff and 33 days for academic, academic related or research staff, in addition to all bank and other public holidays. There are also three additional University closure days that are usually taken between Christmas and New Year. Any Unit variations will be notified to applicants in the 'Further particulars' document, during the interview and as business needs require in the future. Part-time staff receive pro rata entitlements.

5.3 Study leave

Central academic staff on contracts of two years or more are entitled to study leave on full salary for research or other approved academic purposes for two months in each leave year. For regional academic staff the entitlement is to study leave on full salary for two months within each period of two years' completed service.

5.4 Pension scheme

Staff have the option of contributing to a defined benefit pension scheme called the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).

5.5 Relocation expenses

Staff are normally expected to live within a reasonable travelling distance of their place of work. The University will make a grant towards expenses necessarily incurred for removals and disturbance, within certain rules and subject to a maximum payment. Full details will be sent with any offer of employment. The removal grant does not apply to appointments of less than two years' duration.

5.6 Maternity/Adoption leave

Staff are entitled to 52 weeks' maternity/adoption leave. Statutory maternity/adoption pay will be paid for a maximum period of the first 39 weeks, made up to full pay for the first 18 weeks, subject to minimum service conditions. Male and female staff, whether in same or opposite-sex relationships, are eligible for adoption leave. Staff have the right to return to work at any time within 52 weeks of the maternity leave start date, subject to certain conditions.

5.7 Paternity leave

Staff are entitled to a maximum of 10 days' paid paternity leave in connection with their wife's/partner's confinement in any one leave year in addition to normal leave entitlement, subject to certain conditions. This applies to parents in same or opposite-sex relationships.

5.8 Childcare vouchers

We have a salary sacrifice scheme which enables staff to take advantage of tax and national insurance exemption on up to £243 of childcare vouchers per month. The scheme is managed by Computershare. Further information will be provided on appointment.

5.9 Location specific benefits

5.9.1 Nurseries in Milton Keynes

The Mulberry Bear Day Nursery and Pre-School is a purpose-built nursery on the Walton Hall campus. It is an independent charity supported by The Open University and managed by parents. Open University staff applications are given priority but there may be a waiting list in some age groups. For further information, please telephone Milton Keynes 01908 653867, email mulberrybear-enquiries@open.ac.uk or, see their website at: <http://www.mulberrybear.org.uk>. There are a number of other private nurseries in the Milton Keynes area. Please contact the Families Information Service on 0800 035 0335 for further information.

5.9.2 Facilities at the campus in Milton Keynes

Catering facilities at the Walton Hall campus and East campus provide a high standard of meals, snacks and drinks that combine healthy eating with a quality environment, to help staff and guests maintain a work-life balance. The Walton Hall campus also has:

- a NatWest bank sub branch.
- a Shop selling general provisions
- A multi-faith prayer room for individuals or small groups to use, in their own time, for quiet prayer or reflection.

5.9.3 Local Education in Milton Keynes

Information on local schools can be obtained from the Learning and Development Directorate, Milton Keynes Borough Council on 01908 253489 or visit their website at: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools>.

5.9.4 Facilities available at other Open University locations

The University has a number of national and regional centres throughout the UK. Dedicated prayer/reflection facilities can not be provided at every location due to space limitations however the University will accommodate requests for use of rooms and facilities for prayer/reflection as far as practically possible. Other facilities will vary from location to location.

5.10 Private healthcare

Discounts are available on private medical insurance via the Universities and Colleges Personal Healthcare Scheme, with the added benefit of automatic acceptance onto the scheme if you become a member within six weeks of joining The Open University.

The University also offers the option to pay, via your salary, for a health cash plan. The policy will provide cash payments towards the cost of regular health care treatments such as dental and optical care. More information is available from the Staff Payments Office.

The University also provides a comprehensive Employee Assistance Programme offering free and confidential advice and support with life events. This can be accessed via a dedicated telephone helpline (0800 282193) or via an online portal: www.ppconline.info. Access to the portal requires passwords and usernames, available from our HR or Occupational Health Departments.

5.11 Open University Club

The Club offers a number of affiliated clubs, including sports clubs such as cricket, sailing, badminton and football and other interests such as gardening, astronomy and photography. The Club also organises social events, including theatre visits, days out and weekend breaks. In addition, a wide range of discounts are available via the Club from local and national traders.

University national and regional centres have some separate Club arrangements, details of which are provided locally.

6. Smoking policy

Please note that smoking is not permitted in University buildings, bars and catering areas. Smoking is permitted only in designated outdoor areas.

7. Medical clearance

If you are offered an appointment, this will be made subject to medical clearance from the University's Occupational Health provider. You will be sent a health assessment questionnaire with our offer letter and we ask that you complete and submit the questionnaire as soon as possible so that your start date with the University can be formally confirmed once the required clearance is received. You may also be required to attend a medical examination by a registered medical practitioner during your employment with the University, as detailed in your terms and conditions of service.

8. Recruitment process feedback

If you have any comments or concerns about any stage of the recruitment process, please write to the HR Partner, Human Resources, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, who will look into the matter.