



**The Open  
University**

# **IAG Conference 28 June 2011**

**Flexible Learning:**

**The role of part time study and distance learning**

**Celia Cohen**

# Current Role of the OU

- 270,000 student courses a year most students studying less than full time
- Students relatively evenly divided across all socio–economic groups
- One quarter of students now under the age of 25
- 570 modules ranging from *Openings* to postgraduate
- Open entry under 30% already graduates
- Certificates, diplomas, foundation and full degrees and post graduate qualifications
- Largest MBA cohort in the country

# The Value and Place of OU Study

*We reach the students that other providers **may not be able to reach especially at scale***

Home based students

Open entry for most modules

Flexible but very structured study (timetables)

Flexible/blended modes some F2F e.g. of B122

Interrupted study

Credit transfer in and out

Part time while working

# Value and Place of OU Study ctd

- Value for money and scale: cost and numbers on main basic modules
- The quality that can be achieved with that scale
- Individual attention one tutor to 16 – 20 students per module – ‘my’ tutor
- IAG and career guidance – again at scale
- Module tasters on line
- Availability of *Open Learn*
- Retention and progression, queries and issues
- The Open Degree

# A measure of achievement

In the first decade of the 21st century, The OU awarded to students who started with less than 2 A levels or equivalent:

20,128 undergraduate degrees

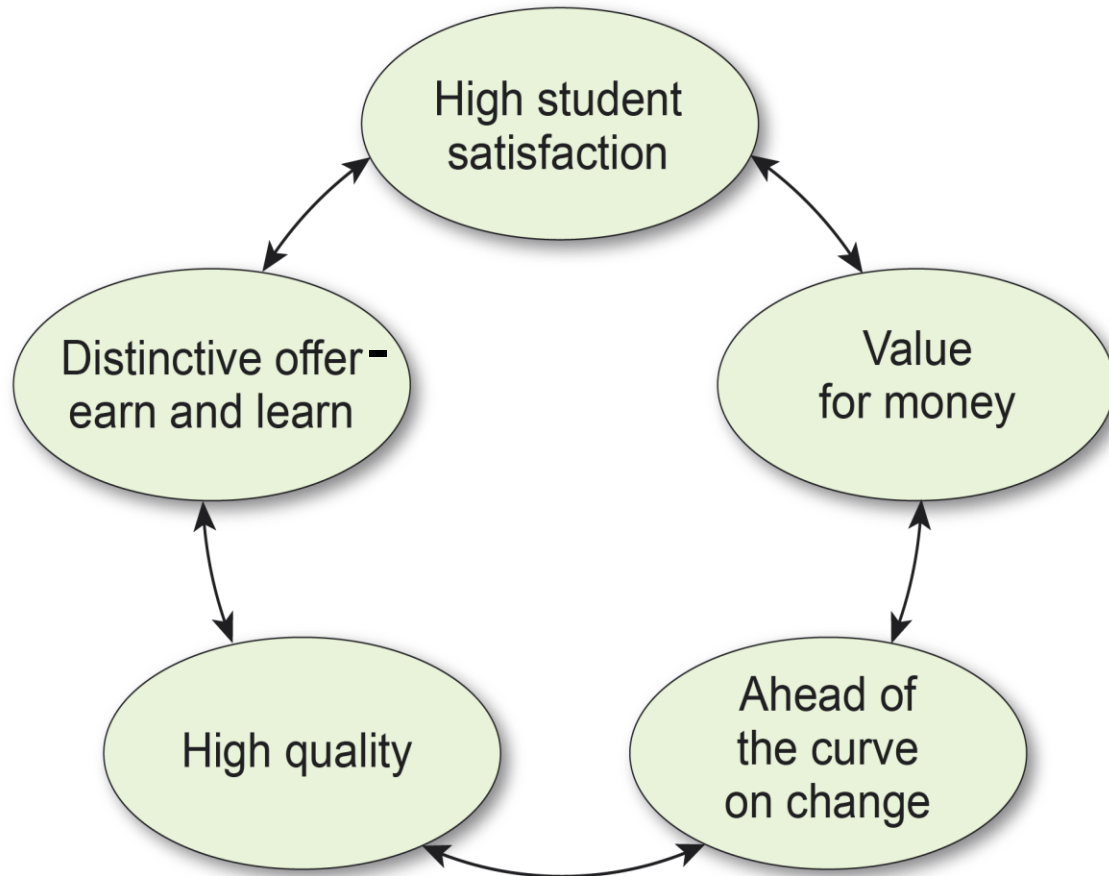
31,084 undergraduate sub-degree qualifications

... and credit worth 30 or more undergraduate points to 113,988 students

Can we do better in the second decade?

## Competitive environment: The OU's position

- The OU is well placed to deal with the new environment across the 4 nations



## Competitive Environment: For-profit providers are increasing competition

On becoming the new CEO of private education provider BPP in October 2009, Carl Lygo said:

“... online we’re competing with The Open University.”

guardian.co.uk

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### Private university to be first in Britain for over 30 years

Move to confer BPP with university college title signals  
government's desire to expand private sector in higher education

THE  
Times Higher Education

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### Private provider answers universities minister's call

17 August 2010

By [Simon Baker](#)

Kaplan, the for-profit higher education provider, is to offer tuition for external University of London degrees in a direct echo of a model for widening participation suggested by universities and science minister David Willetts.

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# SECURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION FUNDING & STUDENT FINANCE.  
12 October 2010

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[www.independent.gov.uk/bransome-report](http://www.independent.gov.uk/bransome-report)

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HM TREASURY

## SPENDING REVIEW 2010

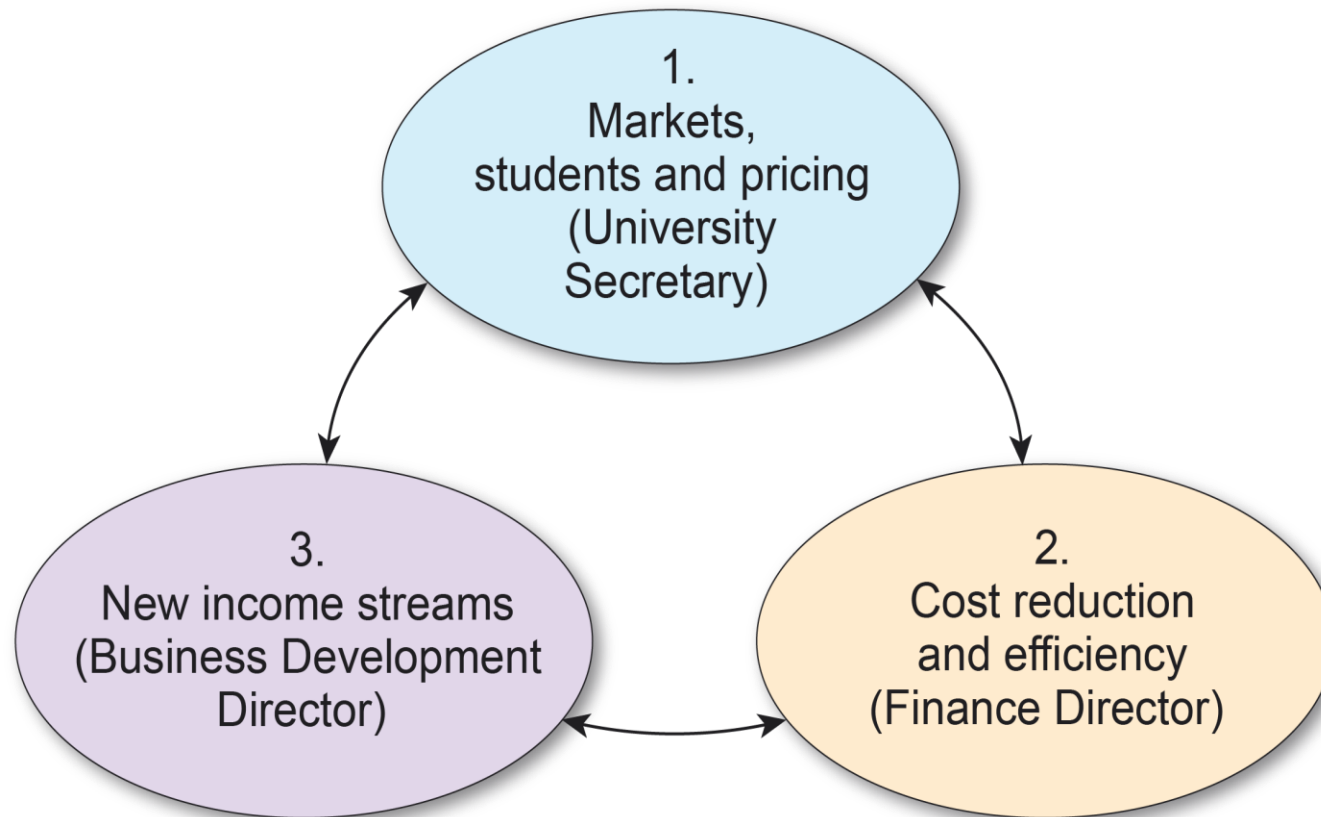
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Cm 7942

October 2010

# OU Futures 2011 on – responding to the post Browne era

Three work streams set up in response to the challenges of the new market environment:



# The Financial Climate from 2012-13 and its impact on the OU

- Fees will be announced at the end of July
- We will be competitive
- Loans will be available to more of our students but one third at present receive financial support in grant form
- IAG will include more financial information
- We want to maintain our WP ratios and access will figure more largely in our open entry position (OU charter)
- More structured progression and migrating our current student cohorts who may have 3/5 or even 10year goals

# Vocational Routes and the OU

- Employability policy and practice
- Foundation degrees currently offered
- Work based learning currently – armed forces links
- Professional programmes:- Social work , nursing, PGCE, Law, Youth Justice, Paramedics and health sciences, IT development with the professional institute, microsoft diplomas

**A HEFCE initiative run  
by the OU and partner  
Universities**

**back on course**

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# What is **back on course**?

- **back on course** is a 3 year HEFCE funded project operated by The Open University, working with UCAS
  - The project tackles the issue of early leavers and undergraduate retention across HEIs in England
  - For the first year,(July 09-10) the **back on course** team worked with UK undergraduate students that had withdrawn from 13 North West HEIs as a pilot
  - The pilot's success means that HEFCE have funded BoC to rollout across England from 2011-July 2012
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# back on course IAG service

- We provide free, impartial, information, advice and guidance to achieve a 'positive outcome'
  - Explore reasons for leaving and future opportunities
  - Confidential discussions tailored to student's own circumstances, from experienced advisers
  - Clients may have multiple guidance interviews
  - Outcomes may be HE, FE, different modes of study, professional training, work or just opportunity to talk through what happened
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# How does **back on course** work?

- Partner HEIs provide details of early leaver student data to UCAS
  - UCAS manage a mailing on behalf of the HEI introducing **back on course** and giving early-leavers the opportunity to opt out
  - Students who are already in the process of reapplying or who opt-out are not contacted by **back on course**.
  - Some students find us directly via the website, friends or be referred by other agencies
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# Why the service is beneficial to students?



- We are giving students the information to make positive decisions about their futures
  - A chance to frame withdrawal not as failure but as an opportunity to reflect and make positive decisions
  - Just because the first choice they made didn't work doesn't mean HE isn't right for them
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