

Supporting part time and distance PGR students

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The Open
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Background to the OU and PGRs

Part time/Distance

What does Part Time mean?

Why study PT?

Reasons motivations and benefits of Part time study

Issues

What impacts and affects PT study

How does the OU support PT?

An introduction to the Graduate School Network

Where next?

A view of the future for PT study

Questions to consider

The Open University –Research

- 98% of all submitted OU research was deemed “internationally recognised” or better REF 2014
- Priority areas include Space Science, International Development and Inclusion, Innovation, Citizenship and Governance and Technology Enhanced learning
- Research informs BBC programmes such as Blue Planet, Star Gazing Live and Built in Britain
- More than 1,1000 academic staff with 3,500 support staff
- 180000 students



The Open University

1000 PGR students – mix of PhD and EdD

PRES Overall satisfaction 84%

50% part time

30% in Affiliated research centres at a distance

Involved with CTDs and DTPs funded by NERC, EPSRC ,
STFC, AHRC and ESRC

Industrial and commercially sponsored studentships

Supporting PT students in industry



Affiliated Research Centres

Open University has
24 Affiliated Research Centres
around the World.
These are the following:

USA 2	Italy 8
The Gambia 1	Thailand 1
England 9	Viet Nam 1
France 1	Kenya 1



Affiliated Research Centres

- The Open University's ARC programme began in October 2007.
- Enables leading research institutes, who do not have their own degree awarding powers, or wish to be independent & we provide doctoral training with our support
- Partnerships with 22 institutions: in the UK, rest of Europe, South East Asia, Africa and the USA
- Each partner registers research degree students for OU PhD but supervised by partner
- Approved research institutions host students to study locally

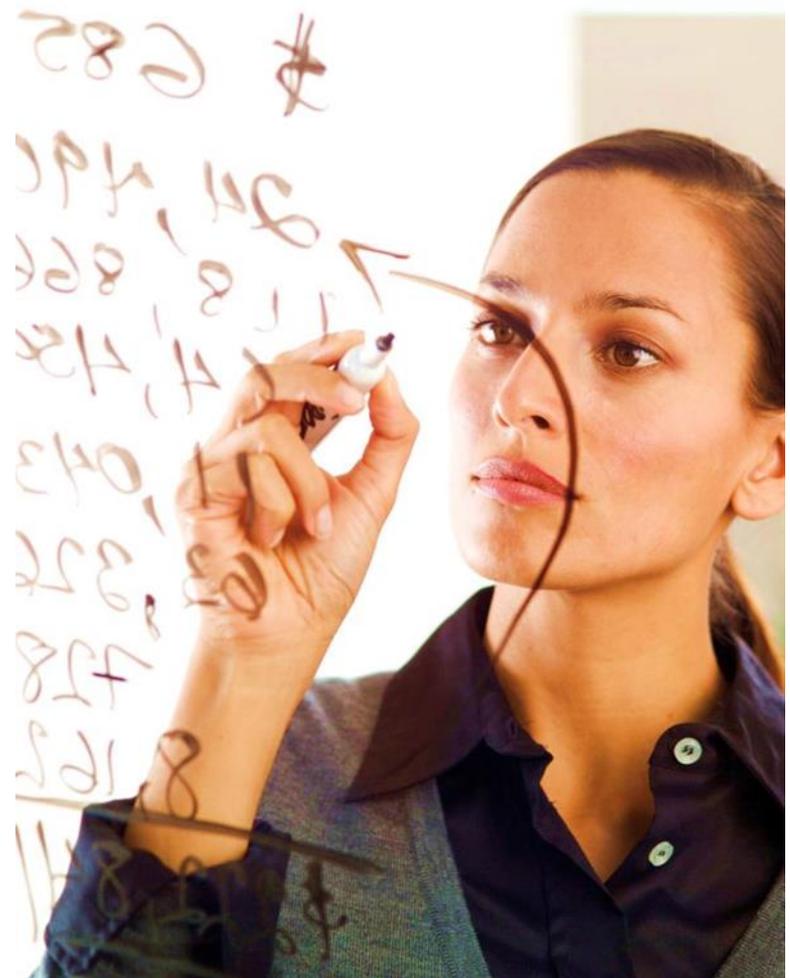


Can we define Part time or Distance study?

Part time studying at less than full time - at least 50% (18 hours per week)

What is at a distance – not on the main campus. Usually part time but can be full time.

Simple definition mask the complexity of Part time and distance study



Why study part time or at a distance

More flexible, combined with work

Access to facilities and opportunities not on the main campus

Combine with current role as career development



The completion of this thesis sees the culmination of almost fifteen years of study with the Open University. In 1973, as a C-registered undergraduate with no credit exemptions, my main aim was to raise my academic awareness so that I could the more readily assist the efforts of my two sons through their school careers. That done - and an honours degree having been attained more or less as a by-product - it seemed rather a waste not to carry the process further.



James Burton, PhD, 1988

Issues and Risks

Isolation – are they part of the university community

- does their university think of them when planning strategy

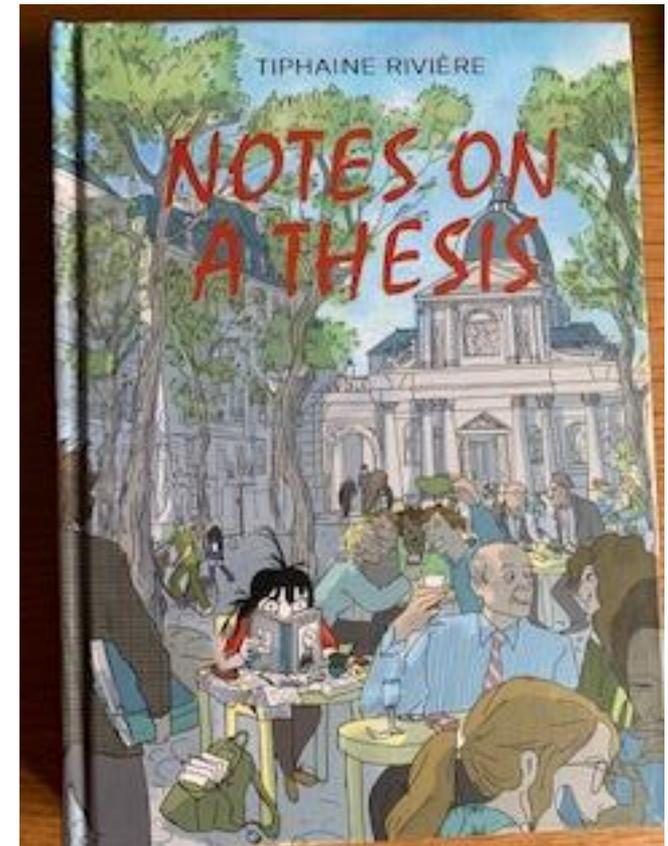
“Out of sight out of mind” contact can often only be at formal contact points

Research environment can be highly variable

Part Time often means Part Time allocation of support and resources. In fact Part Time often need more support

Not truly Part Time – study mode may be part time but often combined with full time roles e.g. work, caring/family roles

Competing drivers when sponsored by employer



How does the OU support Part Time Students?

Day and weekend schools

Graduate School Network

Community on social media.

Inclusion in events e.g. combined induction, student conferences

Online training underpinned learning design and support not just posting recordings

Synchronous live sessions with extra support to ensure those at a distance can engage and participate





[Graduate School Network](#)

Final thoughts and Questions

Aim for a parity of experience where the only variable is “study intensity”

Make the mode fluid so it is easy to switch between modes

Use online tools to define structured programmes to support ALL students

Recruitment – consider why a University would recruit part time students

Questions:

What is part time/distance learning?

What are the issues that impact on Part time students success?

How can we better integrate and support Part time and Distance students?

How can we use technology effectively?

Where next –is the online PhD the answer?

THANK YOU



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