

# **Online pedagogy and the student experience: teaching applied linguistics and beyond**

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# Introduction

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## Aims of this book

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When lockdown restrictions were imposed in countries across the world following the Covid-19 outbreak in early 2020, and most universities were compelled to deliver their teaching online (Marinoni et al. 2020), the Open University (OU) found itself – as the UK's first and largest open distance learning institution – in the enviable position of having a well-established online framework in place. The OU model is to produce materials delivered in book and website form, and to combine these with small group provision, enabling students to work with a tutor in a group of approximately 20 students, including the option to attend group sessions online or in person. While most materials are provided in written format (print or on screen), audio-visual materials (interviews, talks and short films) are becoming increasingly important.

However, while certainly in a better position than 'bricks-and-mortar' universities, the OU was not immune to the negative impact of the social restrictions imposed as a reaction to the spread of Covid-19. This was in part because, although the OU's teaching model was only minimally disrupted by the pandemic (though face-to-face events of course ceased), the restrictions had an impact on the lives and study/work patterns of its staff and students. A survey by Aristeidou and Cross (2021) of 550 OU undergraduate students across disciplines found – perhaps unsurprisingly – that many reported participating *less* frequently in online tutorials and forums as a result of Covid, which the researchers attribute to increased caring and employment responsibilities as well as other life difficulties. Interestingly, OU students who interacted less frequently with peers and educators experienced a greater negative impact on their learning. The experience of the OU during the pandemic restrictions highlights the complexity of designing and delivering online education.

The restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic from early 2020 prompted a sector-wide revolution as lecturers moved rapidly to deliver their modules online. This shift was followed by a proliferation of online resources for teachers, including a range of online courses providing 'quick tips' and techniques for online teaching. In the long term, the pandemic has accelerated a change already underway in higher education (HE) and one which is particularly felt in applied linguistics as changes in ways of communicating affect both the means and object of study. This edited collection steps back from the initial rush to help lecturers consider the implications of shifting teaching online and reflect on the theories and principles that underlie online teaching and learning. All chapters are illustrated with practical examples from applied linguistics courses ranging from first-year undergraduate to master's level, and readers are invited to apply

and adapt these ideas to their own educational contexts. Written by university teachers based in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics at the OU, who have considerable experience in online teaching and learning, the book covers a range of topics including blended learning, online social presence, dialogic learning, critical digital literacies, and the role of English language studies as a vehicle for supporting students' development as language users in the digital age. While the book aims to be a source of ideas and practical advice for all HE lecturers, it does not assume access to particular technologies or platforms but focuses instead on opening up a space for the discussion and application of general principles of online teaching and learning. The book enables HE teachers in applied linguistics (and related fields) to develop their online learning strategies and reflect on their developing practice in order to fully embrace the affordances of online education.

The next section of this introductory chapter provides a broad overview of distance and online learning; we then set out more specifically how the OU model works; finally, we give a brief outline of the chapters, which are organized into three sections focusing on curriculum design, learner engagement and the use of multimedia.

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## Online pedagogy and the student experience

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### Distance learning and the Open University

Established in 1969, the OU is first and foremost a distance learning institution, which has over time embraced online tools to promote both *interactivity* (with the learning materials) and *interaction* (between students and with teachers), shifting from the original conception as a 'University of the Air' to its current incarnation as a 'University of the Cloud' (<https://www.open.ac.uk/library/digital-archive/exhibition/53>). It may at first seem surprising to some, as Aristeidou and Cross (2021) note, that student *interaction* has any role to play in the learning experience and well-being of distance learning students, defined in part by their physical separation from the teacher and each other (Keegan 1996). After all, part of the OU endeavour lies in providing learning for students who may *never* have synchronous interaction with peers or teachers. This makes it possible for students who are unable to attend a face-to-face course – such as offender learners, people who are homebound through a disability or even someone living in a lighthouse – to learn with the OU. But this lack of reliance on traditional forms of teacher-student interaction has prompted the OU, since its inception in 1969, to build interactivity and inclusivity into its curriculum design, materials production and assessment. Teaching and learning at a distance discourages the illusion of a shared background and highlights the need for materials designers to contextualize the materials for students, to clearly articulate assessment requirements and to engage the student through audio-visual study activities and pedagogic text. In short, the distance requires educators to reach out further to the student through the course

materials and heightens the need for a student-centred approach. At the same time, it has also pushed the OU to stay at the forefront of developments in educational technology which enable ever greater interaction amongst students and between students and their tutors who mediate the materials in tutorials and otherwise support learning through advice, encouragement and assessment feedback. Due to the availability of online technologies and spaces, distance education today affords a great deal of interaction and sociability for those who seek it – with interactivity, characterized by ‘learner control and two-way communication’, arguably now the defining characteristic of distance education (Adams 2016: 338). Technological advances are further driving the move from a content-transmission view of teaching to a more student-centred approach (Brenton 2015). The issue becomes how best to harness these opportunities for interaction, how to guide students in the conventions of online interaction and how to encourage them to engage, both with the subject content and with other students and their tutor. OU academics therefore have considerable experience and expertise to share with colleagues in other higher education (HE) institutions as they work through the process of incorporating online modes into an existing range of teaching methods.

In the rest of this section, we explore some of the principles and theories relevant to online pedagogy, before exploring the unique contribution that applied linguistics can make to online pedagogy itself and scholarship around it.

### **Online pedagogy and the student experience**

As the discussion so far suggests, the growing use of digital technologies at all levels of education – as elsewhere in society – was already underway before the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions forced HE lecturers to ‘move online’, to adopt popular parlance. Online education had emerged out of a long tradition of distance learning dating back to the late nineteenth century (Danver 2016). Distance learning providers have always exploited available and emerging technologies to deliver content to students – the postal service in the 1890s, radio in the 1920s, television in the 1960s and, from the 1980s, the internet and computing (see for example Scollon and Scollon’s 2004 post-hoc account of pioneering an early online programme at the University of Alaska in the 1980s). In 1988, the OU introduced its first courses requiring students to have access to a desktop computer (Open University 2018). The OU is well known within the UK for its use of television as a teaching tool in the late twentieth century, when it broadcast educational programmes late at night through its partnership with the BBC. By the turn of the century, the OU had begun to exploit the new potential of online delivery in the form of online conferencing systems (to deliver group tutorials) and module websites (hosting study planners and some learning materials as well as asynchronous student forums) (Open University 2018). It was from around this time that distance learning became synonymous with online study. Distance education courses were being offered online by everyone from traditional universities to for-profit providers such as Udacity. Meanwhile, universities began incorporating

online tools and platforms – including virtual learning environments (VLEs) – into their face-to-face teaching models. These hybrid contexts – where in-person teaching is ‘blended’ with instructional technologies and online spaces – can vary widely in terms of the technologies used and their role (Nicolson et al. 2011: 5). With the exception of the Covid outbreak period, the OU’s model has always been hybrid, combining online materials with the option of live online or face-to-face seminars and, in some cases, residential schools. Rather than distinguishing different blended contexts solely in terms of the available *media* (the technology or tools), they can best be understood in terms of their learning potential with reference to a number of criteria: the *space* (physical, virtual, or technologically-enhanced), *time* (synchronous or asynchronous), *activity* (the type of learning activity) and the teachers’ and students’ *roles* (including consideration of learner agency) (Shi and Stickler 2019; see also Littlejohn and Pegler 2007), all of which impact on the types of learning that are possible and the relevant pedagogies.

Within this contemporary HE context of increasingly fluid, complex and integrated blended delivery models, we use the term ‘online pedagogy’ broadly to cover any teaching that makes use of any online tools to any degree. Although the OU has a particular hybrid teaching model, the principles and values behind our pedagogy are relevant to a range of ‘blended’ approaches. In terms of inclusive practice at the OU, a key understanding is that in general what is good for any one group of students is good practice to provide as a choice for *all* students, meaning that the need to be inclusive has pushed the OU to adopt ways of teaching which are of general relevance beyond specific ‘inclusion’ groups and beyond the institution.

In incorporating online elements into HE teaching, Brenton (2015) advises a ‘learning design’ approach which starts from a pedagogic aim – what the teacher and learners want to achieve and how this might be done, irrespective of the technology – and then considers how this can best be achieved through the use of available technologies, both tried and tested and more innovative. Such an approach – familiar to most lecturers – avoids the danger of technological determinism; that is, of learning being driven not by the pedagogy but by the technology’s constraints or its imagined opportunities. Underlying this approach is the concept of technological *affordance* (Lee 2007) – the now widely-held notion that a technology does not determine one’s behaviour but provides possibilities or opportunities for action. Often the ways in which affordances are taken up are influenced by people’s prior experiences of older technologies and the practices that have grown up around them (Jones and Hafner 2021). As Gregory et al. (2022: 3) point out, new educational tools are often deliberately designed to resemble those they replace so as to reduce the demands placed on students. This recycling or remediating of pedagogic practices is evident, for example, in the way in which the Review functionalities of Word are used by teachers to correct students’ word-processed work as though it were handwritten on paper, crossing words out and adding ticks and comments; and the way in which the video-conferencing platform Zoom is often used to recreate a more traditional classroom setting with a central teacher

presence. As familiarity with a new technology grows, teachers and students can learn to appreciate the potential of the new affordances and exploit them in new ways.

As well as the additional opportunities for interactivity and interaction, online and hybrid learning environments have the potential to afford greater flexibility for the learner in terms of the control they can exert over their learning experience, more flexibility in terms of pedagogic approach, and a potential shift in the power relationships between teacher and students (Ward 2016: 854). For example, access to pre-recorded lectures and other audio-visual materials online enables students to study at their own pace, pausing the recording or, conversely, speeding it up, as well as consulting other sources as they engage with the material. It also frees up in-person contact time for small seminar work, rather than large teacher-dominated lectures, in which the content delivered online can be discussed or harnessed in some way, in sessions potentially led by students. The affordances of many online or hybrid learning contexts thus arguably lend themselves to more student-centred approaches, which in turn has implications for assessment and feedback (Stickler 2022: 30).

At the same time, online pedagogies are not simply pedagogies delivered digitally, but must be sensitive to the affordances of the online context and to the needs and situation of particular groups of learners. Gillett-Swan (2017) warns against a 'one-size-fits-all' approach which assumes that a technological intervention will inevitably enhance the learning experience of all learners, despite differences in learning style and digital competence. She describes the 'isolated learner' who comes to a class without existing offline connections with other students and who falls 'underneath the radar' in the virtual online environment. Given ongoing issues around broadband connection speeds and access to hardware (see Hann, Chapter 11), not all students are able to participate actively in online spaces, and not all students feel empowered to do so (Ward 2016: 857). Some may still prefer traditional study modes and engage online reluctantly. While studying online enables more student support to be offered in the form of screen readers, large print and search facilities, thus supporting students with disabilities, it may also deter those who work in front of a computer in their employment and who may consequently suffer from eye strain. It is also important to recognize that any cohort is likely to have a range of computer literacy levels and affinities, and that this includes the level of students' familiarity with online work and terminology and how well students are both willing and able to complete online learning activities. The OU's varied student demographic, especially in relation to student age, means that, perhaps more than mainstream HE institutions, it has had to adopt a thoughtful approach to the implementation of technological innovation and to be wary of assumptions that students are 'digital natives' (see discussions in Goodfellow and Lea 2013). As several of the chapters in this volume show, teachers have a role to play in creating inclusive 'safe' spaces to which all students feel able to contribute and in building a sense of community. These potential pitfalls point to the need for ongoing critical reflection on online pedagogic practices.



## **Applied linguistics and beyond**

Why our focus in this volume on online pedagogy for the teaching of applied linguistics? Despite a wide and growing literature around online pedagogy (Danver 2016), including a substantial body of work focused on the teaching of languages online (Bárcena et al. 2014; Hampel and Stickler 2015; Nicolson et al. 2011; Stickler 2022), relatively little has been published from an applied linguistics perspective. Exceptions include an evaluation of an online introductory linguistics course by Babcock et al. (2015), and a book-length treatment by a team of applied linguists at the University of Nottingham, UK (Gregory et al. 2022). Babcock et al. (2015) looked at the factors necessary for running an effective blended linguistics course and found they were similar to those needed for online programmes across disciplines – including the importance of interaction and interactivity – with a particular need for multimedia resources in teaching about phonetics and accent. Gregory and colleagues (2022) far more substantial discussion of the role of what they term ‘digital pedagogy’ in applied linguistics, which draws on their recent experience in designing and delivering an online postgraduate programme, usefully complements our own volume. The publication of our two volumes on this topic in the space of two years points to a zeitgeist – a moment, still in the immediate aftermath of the Covid pandemic, marked by the growing importance of online technologies in the teaching of the discipline and the need for the sharing of resources, experience and expertise.

So, the first motivation for this book is to target HE educators in a discipline whose specific concerns and needs have until recently been rather neglected in discussions around online pedagogy. As outlined below, the chapters in the book discuss issues of particular relevance to applied linguistics, such as the integration of academic writing and disciplinary content within a module (Tuck, Chapter 3), the decolonization of its curriculum (Giaxoglou and Tagg, Chapter 4), the sociolinguistics portfolio (Tagg and Giaxoglou, Chapter 6) and teaching about grammar (Leedham, Chapter 9), as well as the implementation by applied linguists of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) services across the university curriculum (Fayram and Adinolfi, Chapter 8). The chapters also draw on case studies from applied linguistics in exploring general principles and processes, such as learners’ adjustment to online learning (Leedham, Chapter 1), the development of online modules (Tuck and Shrestha, Chapter 2), community and identity in forums (Whittingham, Chapter 5), the role of guest lecturers (Austen and Griffin, Chapter 7), and the use of online videos (Seargeant, Hamlett and Lambert, Chapter 10) and screencasts (Hann, Chapter 11), with case studies pinpointing the relevance of these key issues to teachers in applied linguistics.

The second motivation for a book on online pedagogy in applied linguistics lies in our understanding that applied linguistics as a body of thought has itself a lot to contribute to our understanding of online pedagogy. Gregory et al. (2022) point out that the sheer topical, methodological and epistemological diversity of linguistics makes it an ideal case study which raises a broad range of issues and challenges that are relevant across HE, but we argue that its contribution goes much further than that. We refer here to the great advantage of being able to apply our professional critical understanding of language-in-use,

especially of communication in digital environments, to both develop effective online pedagogies with interactivity and interaction at their core and to train our students to dissect and evaluate the same blended communicative processes in which they engage. The vast array of online pedagogic resources, tools and technologies at our disposal – the VLE (virtual learning environment), video conferencing, online forums, social media – are themselves teaching material and sources for discussion for an applied linguistics curriculum which aims to teach students such concepts as *context*, *audience*, *addressivity*, *register*, *affordance* and *mode*. As Tuck argues in relation to academic writing (Tuck, Chapter 3), studying applied linguistics provides an opportunity for course designers, teachers and students to reflect on their own academic literacy practices – such as participating in online seminars – in their social context and in relation to the very concepts they are teaching and learning.

## How the Open University model works

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In this section, we set out in broad terms the OU teaching and learning model. This is intended to contextualize chapters in the volume for those not familiar with the OU. Where applicable, chapter authors will refer the reader to information in this section for clarification. A short glossary is given below.

Since its inception, the OU has pursued a form of ‘supported open learning’, captured in its corporate mission statement ‘open to people, places, methods and ideas’. The first of these four commitments encapsulates, amongst other things, the university admissions policy, which is that anyone can study at undergraduate level, regardless of their level of prior qualifications,<sup>1</sup> and beyond that the university’s commitment to actively valuing and serving a diverse student population and maximizing accessibility. A key feature of the OU’s core activity is, therefore, that students can, and still mostly do, study part time, around caring or working responsibilities, or pacing their study to accommodate health requirements or disability. The average age of an OU student has nevertheless fallen in recent years, with an increasing number of students in their 20s joining the university, many of whom are studying full-time. (In 2020–21, 19.24 per cent of undergraduate students were studying at full-time intensity, compared to 12.66 per cent in 2016–17.) The second commitment, ‘open to places’, points in part to the university’s distance learning model, which in recent years has been increasingly, though not exclusively, an *online* model in which study materials and events are available via a VLE. This aspect of the OU’s work is well known. However, what is often less well understood is that the ‘supported’ element of the model, which involves small groups of students in contact with an allocated subject tutor, in many cases still retains a face-to-face component involving group tutorials in locations across the UK.<sup>2</sup>

A number of features flow from this overall supported open and distance learning model which may differentiate the OU from more traditional ‘bricks-and-mortar’ institutions. One is scale. As the UK’s biggest university, the OU is

comparatively large overall (with around 175,000 students enrolled in 2019–20) and this translates into large numbers on individual modules. A ‘small’ module (often master’s level) might typically have 80 students or fewer per annum; large population modules can involve upwards of 500 students in any one year and into the thousands. The applied linguistics modules discussed in this volume range from approximately 200–500 students a year at level 3 to the largest level 1 module, presented twice a year, which has approximately 1800–2000 students per year in total. Retention is an ongoing issue on OU modules as students are frequently studying part-time while also working and caring for a family. In keeping with the need for flexibility (and in line with the sector as a whole), the OU adopts a modular degree system. Students register on defined qualification pathways or can choose to register for an ‘open’ qualification which enables choice across subjects in all available disciplines (20 per cent of all students). While there is a degree in English Language, the majority of students studying applied linguistics modules are pursuing joint honours degrees, either with a modern foreign language, or with literature and/or humanities; one module (see Chapter 2) is part of the BA in Business and Management.

Applied linguistics modules at the OU at both undergraduate and postgraduate level are – excepting a few shorter level 1 modules – large blocks of study comprising 60 credits, each of which typically run for nine months following the standard UK academic year from October to June. Modules consist of a combination of print and online learning materials produced by a central academic team collaborating with administrative and digital editor colleagues, together with assessment and tuition strategies which shape module presentation (‘delivery’) to students, including allocation of each student to a tutor group of approximately 20 students,<sup>3</sup> online and face-to-face group tutorials, asynchronous forums and wider school and university support. Tuition strategies therefore consist of two elements – the centrally-produced materials on one hand, and locally-produced materials, events, support and guidance on the other. A key challenge is managing the balance between these two elements.

Modules are typically produced by an academic team in collaboration with learning designers, web editors, rights teams, audio-visual media producers, librarians and administrators over approximately two or three years. Module production is therefore a major undertaking, more akin to a complex publishing process of books, book series and accompanying websites than to curriculum design in the traditional sense. Modules are designed to provide a ‘complete’ package of learning and to ‘last’ for 8–10 years before replacement or substantial updating (although there are annual amends and a mid-life review). At undergraduate level, applied linguistics modules have both print books (including pedagogic text and academic readings) as well as online material (Master’s modules are delivered wholly online). A website provides the starting point for each module, with an online study planner from which students can access materials for each unit of study. Online materials include film and audio and interactives such as ‘free response’ boxes, bespoke interactive graphics and ‘drag and drop’ activities. A key challenge is designing learning which supports students’ transition back and forth between print-based and online study. Academic teams

then oversee each new presentation of the module, updating and writing new assessments each time. VLE analytics provide central module teams with data on students' engagement with online materials, analogous to information which might be captured through attendance registers at face-to-face or synchronous online events. (As with 'headcounts' or swipe data in traditional course delivery, however, counting webpage visits does not easily throw light on the *quality* of students' engagement.)

Alongside the study materials, students can optionally attend live tutorial sessions (at the time of writing, the platform in use is Adobe Connect). All students also have access to an asynchronous tutor group forum for written interaction (each serving a group of approximately 20 students with one tutor) and also to cohort-wide forums. Neither tutorial attendance nor forum participation is compulsory; in other words, the module can be studied without any interaction at all with other students or even with the tutor except asynchronously through tutors' feedback on students' written assignments. On occasion, assignments include a small mark allocation for forum participation, but in most modules, students can still gain a good mark without this. The aim is to encourage forum participation but not make this mandatory. Alongside tutor-led opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous interaction, students can organize peer study sessions in Adobe Connect and also often set up external group chats via Facebook groups and WhatsApp. Associate Lecturers (tutors) also provide one-to-one subject-specific student support. Their work is managed through 'Clusters' by academics known as Staff Tutors. Clusters have a broadly regional character but are no longer strictly tied to geographical locations. The central academic teams who design and produce module materials, assessments and tuition strategies – and who do not run synchronous tutorials – have two main channels of direct communication with students: one via tutors (mainly via forums), and the other directly via module-wide forums run for students. In the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, experienced students are also employed as critical readers during materials development and as student 'buddies' to support students during presentations.

In general, applied linguistics modules contain three to five short assignments (usually marked by tutors, hence the initialism TMA – tutor-marked assignment – is in widespread use) and one longer end-of-module assignment. Although students' work is assessed by their tutor,<sup>4</sup> for most modules the final assignment is marked by other assessors. Assessment feedback is a cornerstone of students' learning, as it may be the only contact they have with a tutor. Therefore, it is viewed as important that the same tutor provides feedback on student work throughout the module. Consequently, assignments are submitted non-anonymously via a bespoke central system, through which marks and feedback are also returned. Tutors are thus in a position to note and comment on changes from one assignment to the next, enabling them to identify and acknowledge students' response to feedback and to provide a continuous dialogue throughout the module. Quality assurance and standards are maintained through group co-ordination exercises led by central academics and through individual peer (and academic team) monitoring.

Students have access to a range of sources of support beyond their module. The most important source of support is the student's tutor. Tutors do not only assess work and provide feedback, although that is a key activity. They also support a small group of students throughout the duration of a module, engaging them in forum activities, providing advice and encouragement as well as reminders and prompts, liaising between the university and the students, chasing students when there is a breakdown in communication, and referring them for extra study sessions where necessary. Other forms of support are available via the main OU website student portal 'StudentHome'. Still others are organized at qualification level (for example, access to forums supporting module choice and careers) but most services are accessed through a Student Support Team (SST) aligned with a broad disciplinary area. Applied linguistics students are supported through the Languages and Applied Linguistics Support Team. The SST acts as a hub which directs students to a wide range of services as necessary, including disability assessment and support, careers and study skills advice, financial and study break queries, special circumstances arrangements and so on. Students can self-refer, or tutors can refer their students, to this support hub at any time.

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## Overview of the book

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This book is divided into three sections: Rethinking the Online Curriculum, Engaging the Learner and Focus on Multimedia; external perspectives are provided through a foreword written by an OU colleague in modern foreign languages (Ursula Stickler), and an afterword authored by an external applied linguist (Niall Curry, Coventry University). Section 1, **Rethinking the online curriculum**, considers the online curriculum from different perspectives, bringing in student voice, the challenges of online design, shifts in teaching academic writing, and considerations around decolonization. In Chapter 1, Leedham draws on email interviews with 20 student contributors to pull out themes ranging from carving out time and space for study to how and which devices students use to access online materials. Chapter 2 is conducted as a conversation between the two authors (Tuck and Shrestha) who compare the design, challenges and embedding of language and literacy development in two very different level 1 modules. In Chapter 3, Tuck focuses on the shift in the last two decades towards a more integrated approach in supporting students' academic writing and examines this within the 'open access' model of the OU, reflecting critically on her experience chairing a level 1 module in production and presentation. The final chapter of the section (Chapter 4, Giaxoglou and Tagg) addresses the promises and challenges set by the decolonization agenda with regard to the English language curriculum, discussing what this looks like in practice on a level 2 module. The authors also introduce the Inclusive Curriculum Tool, comprising a series of prompts, which now guides the design and delivery of OU modules.

In Section 2, **Engaging the Learner**, authors consider how the use of online forums, citizen sociolinguistics, guest lecturers and academic support respectively can each contribute to motivating and sustaining distance learners. Chapter 5 starts with a focus on community and identity in a module forum, examining the impact of this on students. Whittingham considers the impact of forum engagement on both students' identity formation and on establishing effective communities of practice. Students' current and prior experience of language-in-use is the focus of Chapter 6, which combines the principles of citizen sociolinguistics and linguistic landscape pedagogy within a sociolinguistic portfolio approach (Tagg and Giaxoglou). Chapter 7 shifts from undergraduate to master's level, examining a programme of guest lecturers and how this can motivate and engage students (Austen and Griffin). In Chapter 8, Fayram and Adinolfi report on the operationalisation and evaluation of an English for Academic Purposes support programme, examining the take-up and referral process and providing suggestions for other HE institutions.

The final section, **Focus on Multimedia**, explores how bespoke and pre-existing audio and video material can enhance the online learning experience. In Chapter 9, Leedham points to the motivational benefits of including real-world examples within language analysis material. Seargeant, Hamlett and Lambert (Chapter 10) illustrate how video can be integrated into other teaching approaches, exploring both practical and pedagogical affordances of this. In the final chapter, Hann (Chapter 11) provides both a theoretical overview and practical guide to the use of screen casting as an online pedagogical tool, exemplifying this through textual analysis.

## Endnotes

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- 1 Some exceptions apply, e.g. in the case of qualifications leading to professional accreditation. Students with little prior study experience, who have not pursued formal education for a long time, or with minimal prior qualifications are advised to begin at Access level, but this is not compulsory.
- 2 Face-to-face tuition at the OU, as in other universities, was disrupted by the Covid pandemic. Although it has since been reinstated, it is likely that the pandemic will result in lasting change to tuition strategies on many modules and qualifications.
- 3 Group size varies according to level of study and across faculties.
- 4 Across the university, use is also made of computer-marked assignments, as well as formative quizzes, etc.