

Advocacy Policy

Representing a student's interests

The [Advocacy policy](#) describes how The Open University enables a student to be represented by someone else on their behalf, called an Advocate, for times when a student is unable or unavailable to represent themselves. It also outlines the procedure to follow to indicate when a student no longer requires an Advocate.

For example, a student may require an Advocate when they are under the age of 18 at registration (and then no longer need an Advocate after they reach the age of 18); when they have a disability or long term health condition which remains in place throughout their studies (including prior to registration); when they become impacted by a disability or health condition part-way through their studies; when they are in the Armed Forces and deployed to theatre where they will be unable to maintain contact with the University for an indeterminate period.

The policy and its related procedures apply to:

- Situations where an individual seeking to study or is in the process of studying at The Open University¹ requires representation to communicate their interests via an Advocate. There is a distinction between receiving and discussing information, advice and guidance on behalf of a student and contractual commitments which require further evidence of the student's consent/confirmation.
- Situations where an appointed Advocate is deemed by either the student, The Open University or other parties to be acting outside of the student's interests that they represent.
- Situations where an appointed Advocate conducts communications between the student and The Open University on behalf of the student and with the student's consent to enter into contractual agreements.

The appointment of an Advocate with regard to Open University study is not for the purposes of appointing a representative to act for the student in a legal capacity. An Advocate appointed by a student is not related to lasting power of attorney (England) or continuing and welfare power of attorney (Scotland).

An Advocate can be set up at any time from the point of first enquiry and at any time through a student's journey with the University.

Contact your Student Support Team or general-enquiries@open.ac.uk for more information.

¹ This includes all prospective students at all levels of study who have embarked on the process of registering, or are registered for, or have completed Open University study; including the Apprenticeship Programme, non-credit bearing study, students under 18 years old, students in secure environments (see Section 1.9 of main policy [hyperlink]) and students studying vocational qualifications.