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Summary of policy

This policy describes how The Open University delivers Information, Advice and Guidance Services to support:

- i) Enquirers and prospective students considering study with The Open University;
- ii) Students in achieving their aspirations, including their study and career goals through Open University study.

Policies superseded by this document

This is a substantially revised policy based on the Information, Advice and Guidance Policy, April 2012.

Scope

Who and which circumstances this policy covers

1. This policy applies to you if you are:
 - An enquirer or prospective student.
 - A student pursuing an undergraduate, taught postgraduate, Vocational Qualification, Apprenticeship or Open University-branded micro-credential qualification or stand-alone course.
2. The University Information Advice and Guidance Policy adheres to the requirements of Welsh Language Standards for enquirers and students in Wales.

Who and which circumstances this policy does not cover

- Postgraduate Research Students
- Those registered on [OpenLearn](#) or [FutureLearn](#) modules.

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Related Documentation

Other documentation relevant to Information, Advice and Guidance Services includes:

Open University Documentation

- [Student Privacy notice](#).
- Students in secure environments are asked to visit [Students in Secure Environments](#) or contact SiSE-General@open.ac.uk.
- [Safeguarding Policy](#).
- The Open University [Strategic Plan](#).
- Statements of Service: Information, Advice and Guidance Service, Careers and Employability Service (Student Policies collection) available via the [StudentHome Help Centre](#).

Relevant legislation and guidance

- The [UK Quality Code](#) – a key reference point for UK higher education quality.

The Open University Student Charter Principles

This policy aligns with the following [Open University Student Charter](#) Principles:

- Principle 4: We communicate with each other in ways which are clear, relevant, accurate and timely.
- Principle 7: We act ethically and transparently, providing and making use of fair and open means to deal with our concerns and grievances, learning from them.
- Principle 8: We challenge bullying and harassment and are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all members of our University community.
- Principle 11: We work to maintain and enhance the standards and reputation of our University recognising the contributions that all members make to its success.

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Introduction

1. The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Service

1.1 The purpose of the IAG Service is to support you in achieving your aspirations including your study and career goals, whether you are considering studying with The Open University, or are already a student.

Information: is a range of resource material available online that is presented in a way that encourages self-assessment and independent decision making whilst also delivering factual data. Information is also provided by practitioners who will direct enquirers and students to relevant resources. Practitioners will use a variety of questioning techniques to gain an understanding of requirements and circumstances whilst identifying any underlying needs or potential barriers to study. Practitioners will signpost enquirers and students to more specialist support where needed.

Advice: is the process of supporting enquirers and students to reach informed decisions by making suggestions relevant to their options. Practitioners will use a variety of questioning techniques to clarify further and identify specific needs and help enquirers and students to interpret more complex information.

Guidance: is the process of helping enquirers and students with more complex needs to explore issues that may present a barrier to successful study. Practitioners will encourage enquirers and students to assess appropriate options and make decisions that are in their best interests and will facilitate learning and progression. Guidance is likely to involve challenging unrealistic expectations; advocacy on behalf of enquirers and students; and referrals to more specialist support.

1.2 Prospective and current Open University students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and display a varied range of educational experience. The IAG Service supports you in making decisions about Open University study and career planning, based upon your individual needs, circumstances and interests. We place an emphasis on helping you to make informed decisions about your studies by providing online information and advice that is easy to access, clear, relevant and up to date.

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- 1.3 Our service is consistent with the agreed Open University approach to educational support and guidance, and is delivered in accordance with the principles of the nationally recognised [matrix quality standard](#) and the University's [Student Privacy Notice](#). We contribute to the University's commitment to reach more students with life-changing learning that meets their needs and enriches society.
- 1.4 The IAG Service entitlements for enquirers and students is outlined in our [Information, Advice and Guidance Statement of Service](#).

Policy

1. Aims, Objectives and our Commitments

- 1.1 We aim to provide an IAG Service which:
- respects the needs of the individual enquirer or student. As a service, our Information, Advice and Guidance is underpinned and informed by the open and distance learning model of The Open University;
 - is targeted to the specific needs of enquirers and students at different stages of their studies with The Open University.
- 1.2 We aim to provide you with an impartial IAG Service which respects your individual needs and supports informed course choice and decision making.
- 1.3 We are committed to developing the IAG Service through compliance with the external Quality Standard **matrix**, and via continuous quality improvement, including monitoring, staff training and development.
- 1.4 We will:
- i) Take into account any concerns you may identify in relation to the IAG Service.
 - ii) Record any necessary communication with you in our customer relationship database, regarding prospective/current study.
- 1.5 With regard to Data Protection:
- i) Information will be held in accordance with the [University Student Privacy Notice](#).
 - ii) When you contact The Open University, we will ask you to confirm some personal data before discussing your record.

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- 1.6 The objectives of the IAG Service are to ensure that:
- i) You are empowered to achieve your study and career goals and to develop independence in your decision-making.
 - ii) The IAG Service can support you if you have additional needs to enable you to overcome potential barriers to study.
 - iii) The IAG Service supports student success, progression and retention.
 - iv) The delivery of Information, Advice and Guidance is responsive to changes and developments within the University and in the external environment.

1.7 We will achieve these objectives by:

- i) raising awareness of the IAG Service so that you know what you can expect and how to access it;
- ii) providing you with timely and targeted information, advice and guidance at key points in your studies to support your study progress;
- iii) ensuring, as far as possible, that our online information and advice is current, personalised, accessible, accurate and takes account of individual needs;
- iv) providing opportunities for you to access information, advice and guidance through a variety of channels, including online discussion forums, email and telephone;
- v) offering a range of opportunities to give feedback regularly on our IAG Service, and encouraging, and acting, on student and staff feedback;
- vi) ensuring members of staff have opportunities for training, skills and knowledge development appropriate to their roles;
- vii) monitoring and maintaining the IAG Service regarding the key skill sets required for an effective and responsive service;
- viii) seeking to ensure the IAG Service explores and adopts innovative and digital technology as appropriate and relevant in line with University strategic plans;
- ix) identifying key internal and external points of contact, such as staff in different departments, or external agencies, to inform and support the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance.

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2. Students under the age of 18

- 2.1 The Open University has specific procedures in place to help children and young people who are considering applying to study according to the [Admission of Applicants under the age of 18](#).
- 2.2 The University recommends that all applicants under the age of 18 have an appointed Advocate at the time they commence their studies in accordance with the [Advocacy Policy](#).
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3. Implementation and review

- 3.1 The implementation of the policy takes place through the delivery of Information, Advice and Guidance, and is evaluated through quality assurance mechanisms such as monitoring and evaluation, and accreditation to **matrix**, the national Quality Standard.
- 3.2 The policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it remains appropriate and relevant to IAG Service delivery, quality assurance processes and alignment with key University and regulatory policies.

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Appendix 1

The following policies, standards and codes of practice underpin the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance.

Open University Student Policies and Regulations

These can be found on the [Student Policies and Regulations](#) page via the [Help Centre](#) on [StudentHome](#)

These include the policies on:

- [Student Privacy](#)
- [Student employability statement](#)
- [The Open University Equality Scheme](#)

These policies are supported by the [Information, Advice and Guidance Statement of Service](#) and the [Student Charter](#).

External:

- [UK Quality Code](#)
- The [matrix quality standard](#) for information, advice and guidance services
- The Career Development Institute
- [Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services](#)

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Appendix 2:

Academic Services departments providing specialist Information, Advice and Guidance:

- [Assessments and Exams](#)
- [Credit Transfer Team](#)
- [Careers and Employability Services](#)
- [Disability Support](#)
- [Student Fees](#)
- [Vocational Qualification Assessment Centre](#)
- [Ceremonies Centre](#)

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Glossary of terms

Enquirers

Individuals who are considering Open University study (and are seeking Information, Advice and Guidance to support making an informed decision).

Matrix Quality Standard

The **Matrix** Standard is a national quality standard which organisations use to assess and measure and improve their information, advice and support services.

Student Progression and Retention

The process of supporting student success through successful completion of assessment and the chosen programme of study within a specific timeframe. (Reference: Higher Education Academy Framework, as below.)

The Higher Education Academy Framework

Explaining student access, retention, attainment and progression: Access (across the student lifecycle), retention (completing a programme of study within a specific timeframe), attainment (cumulative achievements in HE and level of degree-class award) and progression in and beyond education are all components of student success. Success in each of these areas depends on the extent to which students are engaged, and their belonging is fostered within their programme and wider institution, across the whole student lifecycle. Further information can be found in the [Framework for student access, retention, attainment and progression in higher education](#).

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Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, please contact your Student Support Team via who are specially trained to advise on the implementation of policy. Alternatively, you can contact your Student Support Team through the 'Contact Us' option on the [Help Centre](#) if you are a current Open University student.

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please submit these to SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk.

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Student Support Team via <http://www.open.ac.uk/contact/> (phone +44 (0)300 303 5303), or your dedicated Student Support Team via StudentHome if you are a current Open University student.

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