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Alternative format

If you require this SCONUL Access policy 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.

If you are a postgraduate research student, please contact the Research Degrees Office via research-degrees-office@open.ac.uk.

Students living in Wales can speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on 029 2047 1170, should you wish to do so.

Summary of policy

The Open University is a member of the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) Access scheme. SCONUL Access enables eligible Open University students and employees to access space and resources in participating libraries in the United Kingdom (UK) and the Republic of Ireland to support their research, teaching and learning.

The aim of this policy is to define who is eligible, how they apply for SCONUL Access membership at The Open University, and to explain how we respond to infringements at host libraries.

Scope

Who this policy covers

- Undergraduate students registered on a module of 30 credits or more and living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.
- Postgraduate taught students registered on a module of 30 credits or more and living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.
- Postgraduate research students living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.

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- Open University employees on permanent or fixed term contracts living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.

Who this policy does not cover

- Students registered on modules of fewer than 30 credits.
- Students and employees living outside of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.
- Students in prison and secure units (see 2.5 and 2.6).
- Learners studying a Microcredential via either the Open University or FutureLearn platforms.
- Open College of Arts (OCA) students.
- Vocational qualification learners (see Glossary of Terms).
- Alumni.
- Former Open University employees.

Please consult the [Libraries Near You](#) page for alternative options.

The Open University Student Charter Values

The [Student Charter](#) was developed jointly by The Open University and the OU Students Association. It is a declaration of our shared values and the commitments we make to each other. This document has been developed with the Student Charter values as its foundation.

Introduction

The Open University is a member of the SCONUL Access scheme. SCONUL Access enables eligible Open University students and employees to access space and resources in participating libraries in the UK and the Republic of Ireland to support their research, teaching and learning.

When The Open University was accepted as a member of the scheme, we agreed to abide by the [Membership Criteria and Responsibilities](#). These include having responsibility for Open University students and employees making use of the scheme.

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The Open University's membership of the scheme was on the condition that our students would be eligible to apply if they are registered on modules of 30 or more credits.

For specific guidance on how this policy may relate to your personal circumstances, please contact the [Library Helpdesk](#).

Policy

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to make transparent to Open University students and employees how we are meeting the [SCONUL Access Membership Criteria and Responsibilities](#).

1.2. The objectives of this policy are:

1.2.1 To define who is eligible to apply for SCONUL Access membership at The Open University.

1.2.2. To explain how we respond to infringements at host libraries.

1.2.3. To explain how to apply for SCONUL Access membership.

2. Policy principles

2.1. SCONUL Access is a reciprocal scheme and subject to The Open University Library building being open to SCONUL Access visitors from other institutions.

2.2. The SCONUL Access scheme may be suspended by SCONUL. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.3. The Open University's membership of SCONUL Access is not guaranteed and may be withdrawn by SCONUL. For example, if we are not meeting the [SCONUL Access Membership Criteria and Responsibilities](#).

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Eligibility

2.4. The following Open University students and employees are eligible to apply for SCONUL Access:

2.4.1. Undergraduate students registered on a module of 30 credits or more and living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.

2.4.2. Postgraduate taught students registered on a module of 30 credits or more and living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.

2.4.3. Postgraduate research students registered on a research degree and living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.

2.4.4. Open University employees on permanent or fixed-term contracts living in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.

2.5. Students in prison and secure units are not eligible to apply for SCONUL Access.

2.6. Students released on licence may be eligible to apply for SCONUL Access. This is at the discretion of the Students in Secure Environments (SiSE) team.

Bands

2.7. SCONUL Access member libraries choose which bands of users to accept as visitors. Using the [SCONUL Access Membership Criteria and Responsibilities](#), we assign eligible Open University students and employees to the following bands:

2.7.1. Open University employees and postgraduate research students: Band A

2.7.2. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students: Band B

2.7.3. Those in a probationary period after an infringement (see 2.11): Band R (reference only with no borrowing)

Access Periods

2.8. If you are eligible for the scheme, we will grant you the following periods of access:

2.8.1. Open University employees: Band A access is up to three years for permanent employees or the contract end date for fixed term employees (but not more than three years at a time).

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2.8.2. Postgraduate research students: Band A access is until the end of the probationary year or thesis submission date (but not more than three years at a time).

2.8.3. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students: Band B access is until the end date of the currently registered Open University module(s) worth 30 or more credits.

2.8.4. Band R reference access is restricted to the agreed probationary period after a cancellation period has been observed.

2.9. When your access period expires you can re-apply, as long as you are still eligible.

Infringements

2.10. In line with sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2c of the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#), we may cancel your SCONUL Access membership for a minimum of one year. Examples of conduct that can lead to a cancellation period include:

2.10.1. Failure to pay fines for overdue books or fees for replacement books.

2.10.2. Breaking the host library regulations, including health and safety matters.

2.10.3. Behaving in a manner which is intended to or has the effect of creating an intimidating or hostile environment for others.

2.11. Violent behaviour or threats of violence in the host library may result in a life ban from SCONUL Access membership.

2.12. Cancellation periods are commensurate with the infringement.

2.13. Band R reference access may be granted for a probationary period after a cancellation period has been observed. The probationary period may be based on the original cancellation period.

2.14. Admission to libraries under the SCONUL Access scheme is always at the discretion of the host library. Following an infringement, the host library may not grant you re-admission.

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Procedure

3. Applying for SCONUL Access

3.1. If you are eligible, follow the steps on the [Libraries Near You](#) page to apply for or renew your SCONUL Access membership.

3.2. The length of time we may take to process your application is posted on the [Libraries Near You](#) page.

3.3. For current guidance on how to plan your visit to a host library, please visit the [SCONUL Access website](#).

3.4. When you apply for SCONUL Access as a student, the personal information that you supply will be used and processed in accordance with the [Student Privacy Notice](#) and the [Retention of Student Data and Records](#).

3.5. When you apply as an Open University employee, the personal information that you supply will be used and processed in accordance with the [OU Data Protection Policy](#).

3.6. If you have any questions about your application, please contact the [Library Helpdesk](#).

4. Methods of appeal

If you wish to appeal against any element of how this policy has been applied, please consult the [Students Complaint and Appeals Procedure](#).

Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at The Open University

Policies are inclusive of all Open University Students, Learners, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation or trades union membership status.

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Safe Space Reporting

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated. Safe Space Reporting is available through [an online tool](#) through which staff, students, learners and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime, or sexual harassment. It also provides information about what you can do if these incidents happen to you, or to someone you know, and where you can find support.

Glossary

Bands

You will be assigned to a band depending on what type of student or employee you are. SCONUL Access member libraries choose which bands of users they are willing to accept as visitors.

Credit/Credits

This means a value which is related to the workload required to successfully complete a module. One credit represents about 10 hours of study.

You will be awarded credits when you successfully complete a module, so if you pass a 60-credit module you will be awarded 60 credits. Some modules have a zero-credit value.

Host Library

This means a library that belongs to the SCONUL Access scheme that you choose to visit.

Module

This means a self-contained unit of teaching, learning and assessment which may be studied as a standalone course or in combination to form qualifications. Each module other than a short course is assigned a credit value and a level of study.

Registration

Registration is the process by which you become a student of The Open University. To register you must agree to the Conditions of Registration, signalling your intention to study one or more modules or qualifications, and make or arrange payment for your studies.

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SCONUL

The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) represents all university libraries in the UK and Ireland, as well as national libraries and many libraries with collections of national significance.

SCONUL Access

SCONUL Access is a reciprocal scheme which allows many university library users to borrow or use books and journals at other libraries which belong to the scheme. The scheme covers most of the university libraries in the UK and Ireland.

Vocational qualification learners

Vocational qualification learners are not registered for an Open University module. They work towards a Vocational Qualification which the Open University delivers content for, but is accredited by an external awarding organisation, e.g. City & Guilds. For more information, see the [Vocational Qualifications website](#).

Related Documentation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this document:

[Libraries Near You](#) – information on how Open University students and employees register for the SCONUL Access scheme

[Open University Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#)

[Open University Student Privacy Notice](#)

[Open University Retention of Student Data and Records](#)

[SCONUL Access Membership Criteria and Responsibilities](#) (PDF) linked from the [SCONUL Access: Membership and governance](#) page

[SCONUL Access: Handbook for participating institutions](#) (PDF) linked from the [SCONUL Access: Membership and governance](#) page

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Further clarification

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Students living in Wales can speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on 029 2047 1170, should you wish to do so.

Feedback

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.

Summary of significant changes since last version

There are a number of significant changes from the previous version of this policy (Version No.1.0). These are:

- a) Added 'Open College of Arts (OCA) students' to the list of who this policy does not cover.
 - b) Removed the requirement for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students to wait three months before the start date of their currently registered module before being granted access.
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Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces the previous version of SCONUL Access Policy [dated August 2022].

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