



Craig Whittaker MP

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Open University Funding

Thank you for contacting me about The Open University.

The Open University plays an important role in the higher education sector and, like you, I welcome the contribution it makes. As you may be aware, higher education institutions are autonomous bodies. The Government and the Office for Students (OfS) monitor the financial sustainability of the higher education sector, with the OfS monitoring the financial sustainability of individual providers in receipt of public funding, including The Open University. However, a provider's business model and financial plans are a matter for the governing body of that institution.

I welcome the measures that have been introduced to help people who want to study part-time. I recognise, as you do, the important role part-time study plays in enabling individuals to gain new skills, advance their careers and support the wider economy. Part-time study and distance learning are clearly central to The Open University's business model.

Tuition fee loans were introduced for eligible part-time students in 2012/13 and I am encouraged that colleagues in the Department for Education are working towards launching a new maintenance loan for part-time students studying, in attendance, on degree level courses in 2018/19. I know the Government is currently considering extending this to eligible students studying distance learning courses part-time more generally in 2019/20.

I hope this reassures you that more is being done to support those who want to study part-time.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP