

Media release:

Record iTunes downloads for The Open University

The Open University (OU), the United Kingdom's largest university and the world leader in distance education, has always kept pace with the changing world of technology, which is why the university is such a resounding success on iTunes U. In June this year, the OU reached a milestone as the first university to hit 20 million downloaded tracks on iTunes U, a dedicated area within the iTunes Store (www.itunes.com)

Based on a 12-week average, approximately over a quarter of a million downloads were made per week, indicating how the OU's popularity has grown since content was first made available on iTunes U two years ago. The content includes a source of higher education podcasts and videos freely available on the web, with about 87% of these downloads from outside the UK.

Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor of the OU, said, "I am delighted that the popularity of The Open University on iTunes U continues to go from strength to strength. Our success lies in providing original, custom-built content for iTunes U, linked to current and popular OU courses. Students are able to incorporate tracks into their studies, while informal learners anywhere in the world can tap into these excellent materials for free."

"The way people want to learn is changing - many now actively seek out content when it suits them and new channels are helping people fit learning into their lifestyles."

Most people downloading the OU's tracks do so to continue their own education, with 96% of respondents to an OU audience survey admitting that they use the materials for learning. From the OU's launch on iTunes U in June 2008, to May 2010, the number of students who accessed the OU's student website via their mobile devices rose from 1370 students to over 11 000 unique student visitors.

Over 4.5 million downloads from The Open University on iTunes U in the past year relate to tracks in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects – accounting for 28% of the total downloads in that time. Anyone can download OU tracks from iTunes U for free, with the most popular collections from The Open University on iTunes U being languages and arts, while the most downloaded to date is Beginner's French.

Locally, the innovative Bachelor in Business Studies from The Open University, which provides immediate opportunities for students to apply and test new ideas and knowledge in their work environment, is delivered by eDegree throughout sub-Saharan Africa via a blend of both distance and online learning. The vocationally-relevant degree programme is offered through the flexibility of supported 'open learning' – open because you learn in your own time and place and 'supported' because the student is never alone throughout the learning experience.

Ends.
