



Open Universiteit

The OUNL educational model: activating academic distance education



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Determined by the Executive Board on July 20, 2021¹

¹ This memorandum is written by Academic Affairs with input from employees of the Expertise Centre for Education and from the executive board and management team of OUNL (meetings in December 2020 and February 2021). This version incorporates both substantive suggestions and textual revisions, as mentioned in replies from the Education Committees, the Student Council, the Works Council and the Academic Education Committee.



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1 Introduction

The purpose of this memorandum is to set the framework for the application of the Open Universiteit (OUNL) educational model in 2021 and subsequent years. The memorandum does not go into the educational model's history. The written elaboration in 2013 of the (then new) educational model did. Many of the changes that were argued at the time have been implemented by now. Evaluations among students, signals from lecturers and programme leaders, work conferences held in the context of yOUpractice and projects that have been or are being carried out regarding quality standards, show that not all proposals have come to fruition everywhere. Also, new areas of improvement have emerged.

In September 2020, the Executive Board and the deans/directors established seven basic principles for revising the educational model, which were slightly altered when the final adoption was made in July 2021. These established principles are:

- 1 Strengths of the current educational model: structure and efficiency (besides flexibility)
- 2 The OUNL infrastructure: online education, self-study of learning materials, regional study centers
- 3 Stronger ties with our students
- 4 Utilizing the educational expertise that is present throughout the organisation
- 5 Standardisation, off-the-shelf where possible, data informed (and affordable)
- 6 New target groups with new needs (part-time, full-time, work-related)
- 7 Visibility and student-friendliness

These principles will be discussed in two chapters. 1, 3, 6 and 7 in chapter 2 Study and student. Chapter 3 Supporting lecturers and students discusses principles 2, 4 and 5.

The current revision of the educational model applies to all disciplines in which the OUNL offers education: psychology, law, humanities, educational sciences, sciences, information science, computer science, management sciences and health sciences. Beyond dispute (and therefore not a matter for discussion hereafter) is the academic quality of all courses offered by OUNL. Also undisputed is the responsibility of the deans to ensure high-quality education in all bachelor's and master's degree programmes that fall under their faculties.

The educational model, as described in outline below, provides the tools to prevent improvisation and standstill. This is of course not the case everywhere, but it is in some places within OUNL. Here, the Expertise Centre for Education (ECO in Dutch) plays an important role as coordinator of and responsible body for the innovation and further development of the OUNL educational model (and the related outlook on assessment and examination), OUNL's 'educational signature' and the educational technology facilities. ECO also ensures lecturer professionalisation within OUNL and is responsible for the evaluation study into education. ECO will therefore provide the education designers, lecturers and support staff with more specified guidelines². Monitoring the use of these guidelines is part of the evaluation tasks assigned to ECO. This monitoring will not result in a greater burden on the lecturer(teams). On the contrary, the combination of specified guidelines (sometimes with certain bandwidths) and standardisation (less customisation, fewer exceptions) will ideally save faculties time and reduces the workload for lecturers. The guidelines relate to the didactics of education, not educational logistics.

In this memorandum on the educational model, (innovations in the field of) examination and assessment are not discussed in detail. There will be a separate memorandum regarding the policy on examination and assessment.

² Derived from Reorganisatieplan Open Universiteit/U2019/03932..

2 Study and student

2.1 Structure and efficiency

Students benefit from a clear structure where they know in advance what is expected of them and based on which they can draw up a good study plan. This is perhaps even more true for the somewhat older OUNL student than for the average campus student: their study often competes with a busy family, professional and social life. Structure also means working with deadlines. Otherwise, tomorrow often never comes. The efficiency improvements in recent years clearly show that offering more structure works. Providing structure applies to both course programming in the form of an annual programme with fixed quartiles, and within the course where assignments, deadlines and set exam opportunities are used.

Within this structure, students who temporarily deviate from the schedule due to personal circumstances should still have sufficient flexibility. Providing structure is possible thanks to devoted guidance by lecturers who motivate students during contact moments (often virtual, sometimes physically); who respond adequately to questions (for example in online discussions during the course) and who are committed to the academic content of the course. In the past, no agreements were made within OUNL about the scope and form of this guidance. The aim is to do this from now on. The basic principle is that OUNL intensifies student guidance on the condition that it is based on a didactic consideration. The exact implementation may differ per discipline and there are bandwidths in the number and form of contact activities and the duration of guidance by lecturers of these activities. These bandwidths must be clarified for every study programme. Ideally, every study programme should determine in the short term and per course, if student guidance has to be intensified or not; this in accordance with the 'apply or explain principle'.

The curriculum

The annual programme is divided into four quartiles within which the guidance periods of courses with a fixed intake moment are scheduled. Guidance takes place over the course of ten weeks, with a first exam opportunity in week 10-11. Students who want to start a course earlier, will have access to the course content a quartile in advance of the start of the guidance period, so they can study individually³. After the guidance period, the course will still be accessible for self-study and the possibility of re-examination. For courses with a variable intake moment, it is always possible to start at any time.

The principle that a course has a study load of 5 EC has implications. Hereafter, a distinction is made between bachelor's (180 EC) and master's programmes (60 or 120 EC⁴), since ECO's evaluations among students show that there is a systematic difference in study pace between the two levels.

³ Exceptions (as laid down in the Education and Examination Regulations) are possible if there are specific admission requirements for a course, for example the successful completion of a course in a previous quartile.

⁴ The Computer Science master programme has 120 EC.

With a study load of 5 EC, where a student does not study courses in parallel (parallel studying demonstrably leads to less study success), the nominal study load is reduced from 30 EC to 20 EC per year. For the bachelor's phase, this is a realistic pace for the vast majority of students, as study results in recent years show. At this rate, the duration of a bachelor's degree goes from six to nine years. From now on, in external communication about following a bachelor's degree, it will be emphasized that 'studying at your own pace' is the norm and the term 'nominal study rate' will no longer be used. Effective from 2020-2021, all programmes enable students to achieve study rates of up to 60 EC per year without the need for individual customisation⁵. The curricula (including examinations) of the bachelor's degree programmes are therefore designed in such a way that it is possible to follow two or three 5 EC courses in parallel during four consecutive quartiles. This requires study programmes to include some example schedules of, for instance, 15, 30 and 60 EC in their study guide. Also, care must be taken to avoid scheduling simultaneous meetings for courses that are regularly followed in parallel.

For master's programmes, a higher study rate than 20 EC is preferable for 'mainstream' students. ECO's student surveys show that students are able to maintain a study load of 30 EC for a short period of time. Without parallel programmed courses, a study load of 5 EC per course will not result in the required study pace. That is why an initial study load of 7.5 EC is applied to the master's programmes, i.e., a study rate of 30 EC per year for non-parallel studying⁶. For these courses, parallel study of two courses is enabled as well, so that a study pace of up to 60 EC is achievable without the need for any individual tailor-made trajectories.

In order to help a student draw up a suitable, ambitious and realistic study path, Educational Services provides general information and a student counselor will get in touch immediately after registering for a study programme⁷. In consultation, a personal study plan is drawn up and documented. This will serve as the basis for a student's personal planning and the proactive guidance by the student counselor. The agreement for study planning is: if you as a student stick to this schedule and are able to handle the level, we as OUNL will do our best to ensure that you realize your goals. The personal study plan is evaluated every year and adjusted if necessary. This will have a positive effect on the student's motivation, the student's bond with the study programme and the quality of study advice. Where possible, lecturers and student counselors proactively respond to delays on the part of the student or imminent dropout. It will be determined to what extent the number of student counselors in the faculties will be increased to ensure that this change in student guidance is successful.

⁵ Some programmes, such as psychology, have indicated that timely identification of students who want to study 45-60 EC per year is a precondition for achieving that goal. Another condition, regularly mentioned in responses to previous versions of this memorandum, is that the introduction of a regular study rate of 60 EC will lead to a curriculum revision and also requires a substantial expansion of the number of teachers to serve both part-time and full-time students. The didactic issue of properly serving students who study at, for example, a 20 EC tempo or a 60 EC tempo during the same course, has to be carefully looked into, should the second category increase in size.

⁶ For study programmes that currently have the master programmed in 5 EC modules, a transition period will be determined within which the conversion to 7.5 EC modules has to be realized. This could be done, for example, by synchronizing this change with changes that are implemented as a result of an external assessment.

⁷ Although the situation is not the same for every study programme, the initiative for this conversation currently often lies with the student. The explicit aim is for the student counselor to take the initiative, unless of course a student indicates there is no need for it. An alternative for programmes with a large number of students is to have this initial conversation after the start-up of the course, due to the 'peak' load on the student counselors during this period.



The course

Within a course, what is expected of the student and when is clear as well. There is constructive alignment by linking the learning objectives, educational activities and assessment. The course information clearly shows what the study load is per course component; which learning objectives and assessments apply; who the lecturers are; what the mix of self-study, online synchronous and asynchronous and face-to-face education looks like; how communication takes place within the course; how guidance is organised; and whether there is any (and if so, what) joint activity in study groups (cohorts) and cooperation on assignments in work groups. The course structure, with study activities and associated resources, is clearly arranged and offers the possibility to monitor the progress (tempo) of the student. This helps the student to keep an overall picture and the lecturer/tutor to proactively monitor student progress. For this purpose, the use of online tools, based on learning analytics, will become increasingly important.

Formative assessment⁸ helps both student and lecturer to keep track whether learning objectives are met (substantive progress). The assignments that are used have deadlines (hard or 'soft') that move towards the exam. Elaborations are collected in an individual e-portfolio. The subject matter is offered in an activating manner, meaning, among other things, that when new material is presented, the student's prior knowledge is activated beforehand, and studying is always followed by processing. Where possible, (processing) assignments are linked to the student's (work) context and aim to transfer to that work context. Each course is based on the principle of activating academic distance education⁹ and includes several contact activities. This principle applies to both regular and variable courses. Contact activities are based on didactic considerations, which can obviously vary per course. They take place via the virtual classroom and/or physically in a study center. The contact moments for each course are included in the course planning while the course information shows which meetings are virtual or physical, optional or mandatory.

The lecturer (or tutor in case of a study group) is clearly present in the course: as a content expert and guide. During the guided period there is weekly contact with the students. This can be, for example, a weekly summary by the lecturer in the form of a personal video message, or with a blog or a scheduled Q&A session in the virtual classroom. By communicating like this, the lecturer creates an open climate in which students are encouraged to communicate with each other. Students can always ask questions and will receive an answer quickly. The course description states what the lecturer's response time is. This description will be in line with the new accessibility protocol for lecturers, currently being drawn up via the University Education Committee (UCO in Dutch).

The lecturer, the face of the course, also provides face-to-face teaching: online via the virtual classroom or physically in a study center, or a combination of both: synchronous hybrid. Contact education is used if it offers a clear added value, for example if the learning objectives call for direct cooperation. The structural incorporation of substantive lectures with explanation in the curriculum is essential. If these are pre-recorded videos, a Q&A session must be added. Activating forms of education are also possible with larger groups of students, like organizing a masterclass around a specific theme, or 'serious games' in which students can practice skills.

⁸ Assessment in OUNL education will be discussed in detail in a separate memorandum.

⁹ Online elements are increasingly being added to face-to-face education. This trend, exacerbated in higher education by the COVID-19 pandemic, is likely to 'bend back' but will remain once we have returned to 'normal' campus education. The situation at OUNL is fundamentally different: OUNL education contains combinations of three components: self-study, virtual contact and physical contact. The mix of these components depends on learning objectives and will vary between courses. 'Apply or explain' forms the basis for this mix.

Variable courses are mainly used when learning objectives can be broadly met through self-study and not in collaboration with other students. If the learning objectives do require collaboration with other students, courses with a fixed start time and fixed deadlines are used. In variable courses, students must also be able to establish a personal study plan and then be proactively guided by a lecturer. In variable courses, the lecturer is clearly visible and available at set (and well communicated) times for questions and feedback.

In courses with a variable intake moment, the contact activities can take place individually or in (small) groups. This depends on the course content and the number of students who are in a specific phase of the course. For courses that are very large in size (with many hundreds of students), exceptions to this principle will of course be possible and a suitable solution will have to be found.

2.2 Stronger ties with our students

At OUNL, most of the time students study at a distance, but not distant. When completing a course, not only do you gain new knowledge and skills, they also join an academic community in which students make contacts and expand their professional network. Students remain involved as alumnus/alumna, even after completing their studies, or in between study paths. Establishing ties begins during orientation. People wondering: 'Is studying at OUNL something for me?'; can find accessible and complete information about the education on offer online. Recruitment campaigns provide a realistic and attractive image of an academic study, along with clear information on study load at www.ou.nl. With a guest account, an interested visitor can do a number of online self-tests to get a first impression of the capabilities required for an academic study and find out whether OUNL education suits them. Interested visitors also get access to part of the study material in order to get a clear image¹⁰. They can also look at part of the online study community and can draw up a preliminary study plan. This ought to give a student counselor a fairly good idea if someone is admissible (for master programmes). After registering, a student counselor is on hand to discuss personal wishes and possibilities in more detail, in order to ultimately arrive at a defined study plan. So, providing good information in advance will be the credo.

Upon registration, the student joins the online community of the study programme. Here they will find information that is directly related to the study, recent developments within the education domain and announcements about other students, alumni and employees to contact if necessary. This online community is also the place where cross-course activities are regularly organized. Cross-course activities include guest lectures, thematic meetings, symposia, Studium Generale activities and excursions.

The lecturer is the expert and ambassador of the course. It is clear who the lecturer is, students are familiar with him/her, and he/she is approachable. The lecturer provides timely and substantive relevant feedback on the work of students. In courses with large numbers of students, tutors are used as the first point of contact. The lecturers and tutors introduce themselves during open days, through introductory videos, through video messages and blogs within the course, and during the daily guidance.

Mutual contact and cooperation between students are encouraged. On the one hand, many of our students are working professionals and are able to contribute a lot of knowledge to the course themselves. On the other hand, many students find working together stimulating. Questions do not only have to be asked to the lecturer or tutor, fellow students can be a source of information as well; this is facilitated during the course.

¹⁰ Eenvoudig Proefstudies (easy proof studying), for example within starter courses



OUNL students are often very knowledgeable and can act as experts and co-creators of education; this, of course, within the frameworks set by quality assurance. At the same time, sufficient account should be taken of a category of students who specifically choose OUNL because of the individual character of the study programme. Per study programme and even per course, because depending on the student population, this balance between much and little collaboration can vary.

We also ensure that even outside of ‘scheduled’ (synchronous) activities, our students are (enabled to be) in online contact with each other and the lecturer. At educational level, as discussed above, the student counselor guides the student, and the study track completed up to that point is compared with the original study plan at least once a year.

In the past, study centers were mainly a place for taking exams. They will keep this function in the future but will become less important as more home exam options are offered. The study center as a place for face-to-face contact between lecturer and student and between students themselves is becoming more important, but in order to not make travel ‘mandatory’, students can also participate remotely, in synchronous hybrid meetings. Investments have recently been made in Heerlen and in the study centers to properly facilitate such ‘mixed meetings’. Mixed meetings make it easier for a lot of students (especially those who live further away from a study center) to attend contact activities. Also, study centers will serve more like a ‘regional hub’ and walk-in center for education and research. In the course of 2021, the vision on OUNL study centers will be revised where necessary. From that point on, it should be easier to establish which roles of the study center remain unchanged (for example, going to a study center to look at the course material to make an informed decision) and which become more, or less relevant.

2.3 New target groups with new needs

New (technological) developments and globalisation mean that nowadays you have to actively update your knowledge in every profession. With an increasingly flexible labor market, a lifelong career within one domain is no longer the norm. This means that for working professionals, individual courses (5 EC in bachelor, 7.5 EC in master), short focus programmes (10-22.5 EC), but also micro modules (1-2 EC) are becoming more important. The mini modules are not suitable as part of bama courses¹¹ but focus programmes can be. Focus programmes have a common thread, are preferably based on a socially relevant issue and, besides testing during a course, have an additional assessment, a paper for example. Within focus programmes, a maximum of three courses can be combined and the aim is to give these programmes a recognizable OUNL face.

We also see that OUNL is becoming increasingly interesting for initial students (students who start relatively soon after high school). These students want to complete an entire (usually bachelor’s) study as efficiently as possible at a rapid pace. It appears that a part of this group got behind schedule or dropped out during a previous study at a campus university. This target group deserves special attention during the intake and study guidance.

Finally, the importance of second-chance education is increasing again with the societal desire to give students with a migrant background (for example second/third generation migrants) better and more effective access to higher education. As a relatively small institution, we cannot do everything, and have to make choices. In order to cover the widest possible range of target groups and disciplines, collaboration with other universities is an obvious step.

¹¹ Micro modules (Micro credentials) can build upon educational material that is developed for bachelor’s degree programmes.

2.4 Visibility

As OUNL, we are seen as the university for activating academic distance education in the Netherlands and Flanders. As such, we fulfill a social role by actively participating in various research and innovation networks in our areas of expertise. A spearhead in this regard is our own type of education: activating, at a distance and easy to follow part-time. In addition, special activities are organized for specific target groups and in the design of logistic educational processes, our focus is always on the student.

Because of good visibility (including a logically structured website), interested parties can easily find us. Good information about our educational offerings helps to find the ideal mix between conversion rate and study success. In other words, the best ratio between 'from interested party to student' and 'from student without a certificate to student with a certificate'.

Together with the students, alumni are the ambassadors of our education and we must undertake activities both at a central level and in the study programmes to bind those alumni (that want to) to OUNL and the study programme. This could be done by offering them permanent access to online training communities and the associated activities, inviting them to participate in the alumni panel, deploying them as practical experts in a study programme or inviting them to (part of) the alumni day of a study programme or OUNL's Dies Natalis. Each faculty should have an image of its own alumni and document this in a short memo. Academic Affairs will support the faculties with the alumni policy and help coordinate substantive activities. Alumni are emphatically a target group for follow-up courses, deepening substantive knowledge and other products that OUNL develops for life-long developing.

3 Support for lecturers and students

3.1 The OUNL infrastructure

Activating academic distance education is an important pillar of the educational vision of OUNL. Our students are offered education in a mix of self-study, physical and online meetings. At the same time, various activating elements keep them 'on their toes'. Education is more than consuming. Taking part in OUNL education means actively participating and being open to feedback from lecturers and fellow students. There has to be an infrastructure in front of and behind the scenes that enables this type of education. An up-to-date learning management system (LMS) is obviously a 'basic necessity'.

The LMS should serve both lecturers and students well. This means that the LMS has to offer the possibilities that lecturers and students need for activate learning (in all its forms). It also means the best possible ease of use and the LMS has to be available on every device (and be maintenance-friendly). This requires a comprehensive LMS that also functions as a 'learning environment' for students. The LMS is a platform for information and interactive communication in every conceivable form, while also offering various programmes and tools for lecturers and students.

The LMS is used for 'study': for virtual guidance meetings, for contact between lecturers and students and between students themselves. This involves asking questions, submitting assignments, giving and receiving feedback, and giving presentations. Via the portal MijnOU ('my OU'), students enter a personalized LMS environment, where they can find their courses (the 'study material') and all personal information. Also, information in the form of a personal e-portfolio guideline is stored here, and students can use it to register for courses and sign up or out for exams. This makes the LMS the primary interface between student and OUNL. The LMS itself is also an object of research, in particular by the Faculty of Educational Sciences: what is possible, what could be improved, which variants of activating education work better than others, etcetera. This research is aimed at enabling further improvements for students and lecturers.

A good system to sign up-admit-register is also part of the infrastructure. This process has to be faultless and smooth. It's the entire process of signing up (and everything related to it, like applying for exemptions for components of study programmes) for courses, but also for exams. In case of the latter, this also includes 'aftercare', such as correction, determining results and communication thereof. Diligence is of utmost importance here. However, the OUNL is more for students than a website to register and a LMS for studying. We are also physically present in the Netherlands and Flanders. We have study centers in 17 locations. The employees there are the local OUNL ambassadors and the centers serve as a meeting place for students, lecturers and other interested parties. Physical guidance meetings take place here, as well as lectures and presentations by (guest) lecturers. As mentioned earlier, study centers serve as a 'regional hub' and walk-in center for education and research. They are also home to student associations at OUNL.

In the infrastructure, detailed and current (management) information is necessary. Through the LMS, the student is kept informed of relevant developments through both general and personalized messages. And regardless of the method of registration, every student exactly knows where they stand in the study. Regarding how many credits have been obtained (and for which courses), for which courses they are registered (and when the registration period closes), for which exams he/she has registered, etcetera. Outside the LMS there is a separate management information system that offers all relevant information for administration and management. This management information consists of data about registration, admission, intake, transfer and outflow, student numbers at institution, faculty, education and course level, participation and pass percentages for exams, numbers of certificates issued, etcetera. It also contains information about student and lecturer satisfaction about various aspects of the education. The information provision is complete, correct and user-friendly.

3.2 Utilizing educational expertise

For the OUNL, the Faculty of Educational Sciences and ECO are rich sources of knowledge and experience in the field of education (development) and didactics. With the innovative strength of both, and under the responsibility of the faculties, OUNL can develop and update educational material (using various media applications) that is up to date in content and includes a rich variety of educational methods.

Activating academic distance education requires excellent didactic skills, both in educational development and in educational presentation and guidance. Substantive knowledge is largely available in all faculties. By combining this with didactic and innovative expertise on course development, testing and examination, education becomes a jointly developed and high-quality product.

OUNL lecturers are able to provide education in an expert manner. This expertise is not only available when it comes to content. They are also trained in the didactic field by OUNL. Every beginning lecturer has to obtain a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ; BKO in Dutch). In addition, all lecturers starting at OUNL – including those who already have a UTQ – are obliged to follow training in several OUNL-specific components. The UTQ certificate is issued when a series of courses in the field of (online) didactics (in the broadest sense of the word) have been successfully completed. After obtaining the UTQ certificate, lecturers are expected to keep their knowledge up to date as part of the ‘continuous lecturer professionalisation’. This is a topic of discussion in the annual talks between lecturers and their managers. In internal meetings at programme, faculty or institutional level, experiences and best practices are frequently exchanged and shared. The mutual exchange of knowledge promotes the quality of education. Part of the knowledge transfer and exchange takes place when ECO supports the lecturer (teams) in the revision of existing and evaluation of new course material.

Working on educational innovation

OUNL has an objective with regard to innovation in (higher) education. This objective requires a vision and a structural approach to educational innovation. Educational innovation is currently too fragmented at OUNL. Activities and initiatives to innovate education are happening, but in different places: quality agreements, parts of the multidisciplinary research programme Innovating for Resilience, stand-alone pilots and research projects based on external funding. Each of these activities can individually contribute to the innovation of education, but there is no system in place to establish whether findings are and are not applied in the new LMS for example, or lead to adjustments in the OUNL educational model. In order to keep track, to be able to properly allocate staff capacity, to offer the right support and to promote cooperation, all educational innovation activities should ideally be brought together in one single innovation lab. ECO, as ‘coordinator of and responsible for innovation’ should always have the overall picture of these educational innovation activities.



The aim of the innovation lab is to keep an overall picture of all innovation activities related to the LMS and the OUNL educational model, and to stimulate innovation in OUNL education, both in regard to the didactics laid down in the educational model and the use of educational technology in the LMS. By educational innovation at OUNL we mean applying innovations or changes to the LMS or the educational model that enable students to shape their learning process more effective and efficient and help to improve learning abilities. In the innovation lab, educational practice, technology and practical educational research come together.

Stimulating innovation in OUNL education takes place in at least three ways: (1) via short innovation trajectories in which small, self-managing and ultimately responsible multidisciplinary teams work in short cycles on the innovation in question. The so-called scrum approach. Team members can come from all parts of OUNL, but also from outside; (2) through projects as part of quality agreements or strategic initiatives; (3) through longer-term research projects.

3.3 Standardisation, where possible off-the-shelf, data informed (and affordable)

Good expertise and sufficient facilities make it possible to produce good and attractive educational material. However, the resources required for this are not unlimited at OUNL. Therefore, we have to make the best possible educational products with the resources we have. This means that we cannot pull out all the stops for every new educational product to make it as unique and innovative as possible. We have to look for a standard format in which most courses will fit well and only a few courses qualify for exceptions and customisation, for well-argued reasons. That is why we are jointly looking for a template that serves as a tool for organising (new) courses, but also offers sufficient freedom to deviate from it. It is important to find a good balance in the template and then make it mandatory for all course development. A recognizable structure does not only help course developers, but is also relevant for students, because 'uniformity' helps them study. While we do not expect all students to always work at the same pace each week, more structure will support the largest group of students to complete the course on time. Therefore, the revision as proposed here leads to less work pressure for the lecturer (teams), exactly because of the standardisation, although the composition of the student population means that there will always be exceptional situations due to individual requests of students.

In conclusion

This memorandum briefly describes the educational model of the OUNL. For matters that were already part of the current educational model, previous documentation was used. Much of it is included in the Knowledge portal, set up (and to be expanded) by ECO. Fortunately, the Guidelines for activating online education (2016) and the new educational model of the Open Universiteit (2013) are also still current in some aspects. In addition, grateful use was made of the Educational model revisited (2020) memorandum and the recent ideas about the Education Innovation Lab and the relevant information derived from our own surveys among students and the National Student Survey (NSE in Dutch). These surveys show a lot of satisfaction among students, but also indicate the importance of an ongoing focus on lecturer support and guidance for students¹².

Our arguments for change in this memorandum have obviously received more attention than the use of elements from the educational model, as introduced in the master's programmes (from 2014) and bachelor's programmes (from 2016). The changes are necessary to strengthen the reputation of a modern and open university, as confirmed in the Institutional Quality Assurance Assessment at the end of 2020. Due to a strong online presence, a rich multimedia educational offering, the use of learning analytics, customized educational advice, 24/7 accessibility, support by mobile applications and proactive guidance in all courses, students at OUNL are able to always study everywhere with an even greater chance of success.

The implementation of this refinement of the OUNL educational model as described in this memorandum requires considerable effort from the current employees and, certainly in the case of rising student numbers, an expansion of the formation of lecturers and student counselors. This expansion is particularly meant to create sufficient capacity for:

- More contact with students in many courses
- More time for the adaptation of curricula (including the revision of exam schedules) to allow studying at tempos higher than 30 EC
- More guidance in courses with a variable start date
- More activities for the alumni of the various study programmes
- More stimulation of mutual student meetings, for example in the form of testing grounds to see what works well
- More attention for short learning programmes

In addition, it appears from responses to an earlier version of this memorandum that attention must be paid to bridging contradictions (apparent or not): for example, we want OUNL education to be flexible and offer more structure than before; we serve part-time students and also want to enable full-time study; we would like to see more students working together and at the same time ask to take into account those who choose OUNL because of the highly individual nature of its programmes.

¹² The results from the NSE 2021 are the most recent ones to illustrate this area of attention.

