The Open University Worldwide
OU Futures

Dominic Newbould, Director External Relations, OU Worldwide
The overarching objective of the Open University has been to exploit technology, different methods, different media, to confer advantage on students.

Andrew Law, Director MultiPlatform Broadcasting, OU
In the early days, the University and the BBC worked together to deliver teaching materials, free-to-air, on radio, on television, to the nation. Over time, that relationship has changed.

If you've got possibly four or five million people watching a programme, on Thursday evening on BBC One, the relationship between the BBC and the Open University is about what opportunity that then provides.

David Attenborough
But you can't tell the story of silk without the silk masters.

Andrew Law
The primary goal of these popular programmes is to be popular. We've had tens of thousands of people, hundreds of thousands of people, crossing over from their interest from the mainstream popular television programme, into the online learning experience that the Open University provides.

And it's only in that partnership, between a popular broadcaster and a high-quality distance education institution, that you can have that journey, from passing interest to following through and doing a degree.

Professor Josie Taylor, Director Institute of Educational Technology, OU
The social networking that we are currently seeing, in the West, on the web, is of great interest to us, because, quite often, people have argued that distance education is a very lonely business.

Peter Scott, Director Knowledge Media Institute, OU
Learning is a social process, and it's absolutely the case that you're not on your own these days, on the Web, you're working in a large community.

Professor Josie Taylor
If we can cultivate the kinds of communities, the online communities, that we see in applications like Facebook, that turn them towards the teaching and learning enterprise, then we think students can give each other a lot of support.

Andrew Law
The key thing, I think, about Internet technology, is that it changes your relationship with your learners, fundamentally. You cease to be an organisation that simply pushes content out of people when you want to push it out, it allows them to take the materials when they want it, but, most importantly, it allows them to contribute to that material. They can start commenting on it, responding to it, replying to it, talking to each other about it online. And, most importantly, they can start to add to it for themselves, they can shoot their own material, they can record their own podcasts, and they can mix it with your materials and start doing things that you never dreamed of.

Peter Scott
You want to be able to reach large repositories of data and get to them as data, not just as marked up HTML pages with bold and italic. Well, the semantic web, a big topic for us now. What you're able to do with the semantic web is jump into knowledge and manipulate it as knowledge rather than bold and italic.

So, actually, I can make this a little more clear –

Professor HK Cheung, President UniSIM
I think despite the success that the OU UK, has, it has continued to look into other ways of delivering, ways in which will help the students do better in the changing environment.

Lord Puttnam, Chancellor, OU
The whole development of, as it were, 'any time, any place,' information and communication, can only play to the strengths of the OU. We will undoubtedly be moving into a kind of iTune, iPlayer, mobile-delivered learning.

Peter Scott
iTunes, YouTube, and all of the other channels, are new channels we need to be using. We have lots of ideas for which the world is not yet quite ready, and they're going to be unwrapped sometime soon. So, it didn't work? Well, of course it worked, the world's not ready. Park it, and it'll be ready soon.

Lord Puttnam
The challenge today is how do you educate a generation of people into a world that we, at present, only dimly imagine. We have no idea, the medium to long-term effects of climate change, we have no idea what a pandemic might mean. We talk about avian flu, we don't really know that's going to be. We don't know what the financial future of the world is. What we do know is only one thing, we know it'll be different, and we probably know a second thing, that it will be difficult. So, what we need to do is educate a generation of people into being adaptable, flexible, imaginative, and having the sheer guts to deal with the unknown.