What does this change mean for me and the support I receive?

This recommendation, if approved by the University's Council at the end of November, will not result in any of the support services you receive being withdrawn. All students are currently supported by a Student Support Team for the curriculum area they are studying in, rather than their nearest OU office. The proposal would not alter these arrangements, but the location that your Student Support Team is based in will change. The reason for proposing these changes is so we can increase the support we offer you, such as having longer opening hours so you can contact us outside of the working day. Any transition would be very carefully managed.

Does this mean that you will be reducing the support provided by tutors?

This proposal for the change of office locations will not reduce any of the support you receive from your tutor. Your tutor will continue to be your first point of contact for any teaching enquiries about your course and assignments.

Will I now have to travel further to tutorials and exams?

All local arrangements such as tutorials and examinations will remain in place. If your tutorials or exams are currently held in a regional office, then alternative arrangements will be made in your local area.

Does reducing the number of regional offices mean the level of support I receive will also be reduced?

The proposed changes would mean quicker response times and more proactive support at times when you may need additional guidance. We know that many of you have commitments during the working day and this proposal allows us to provide longer opening hours.

Going into a regional office was really helpful in looking at prospectuses and study material and supported me in choosing my course, how will I be supported with course choice in future?

Not all regional offices were able to offer this service to students and where this service was offered it was not well used. The overwhelming majority of our requests for support and guidance come from telephone calls and emails. We plan to still hold regional events to give advice for people who need guidance on course choice, for example, over the last year we held over 1,000 local student recruitment events in public places such as libraries and shopping centres. This proposal will help us increase the support and guidance we are able to offer you at key times, such as when choosing your next course.
Are you reducing the support provided to disabled students?

We are not reducing any of the support we provide to disabled students, but the location of the office that provides this support would change.

I am a disabled student and I’m supported by a member of staff in an affected office – will I still get the same support as now?

You will still receive the same level of support as you do now. We recognise that some students’ support needs can be complex and benefit from a member of staff that has an in-depth knowledge of them. If the proposals are agreed, as part of our planning we will ensure that specific arrangements are transferred to any new relationship and that this is facilitated as smoothly as possible.

Do these closures mean The Open University is in financial difficulties?

No, The Open University is in a strong financial position and this proposal will allow us to improve the service we deliver to you.

This proposal means you will have larger centres which means there will be no personal support?

Providing the highest quality support to students is our priority. These proposed changes will help us to provide more of that support at times when you need it. Having a larger centre allows us to improve the response time to your enquiries, provide more guidance and to open for longer hours so that you can contact us outside of the working day. We will still provide advice from a dedicated team of experts from your subject area and because more of our staff will be working from the same location, we will be able to answer more questions quickly rather than needing to refer questions to staff in multiple locations. All of this means we will be able to improve the support we give you.