

# Building a Community of Physics and Astronomy Distance Learners

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# Introduction

- Building a website
- To support physics and astronomy students
- Throughout their studies
- Include VLE tools
- And student experiences

# Background

- Degrees: Open -> named degrees
- Change support focus: course -> programme
- Provide tools for interaction between students
- Encourage students to consider free-standing residential courses
- Bring in careers thinking
- Introduce the wider community

# The site

<http://learn.open.ac.uk/site/PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY>

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window displaying the 'Physics and Astronomy at the OU' website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://learn.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3948&sesskey=T4BInd3K2A&switchrole=5>. The website header includes the Open University logo and navigation links: 'OU Home', 'Study at the OU', 'About the OU', 'Research at the OU', 'Search', and 'Contact the OU'. Below the header, the page title is 'Physics and Astronomy at the OU' and the sub-page title is 'PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY'. A 'Return to my normal role' button is visible in the top right corner.

**Welcome to this new website.**  
Once you have looked over the site, please use the Feedback link to send in your comments and suggestions.

**News from Physics and Astronomy at the OU**

**Planned course changes**  
12 June  
(Updated 16 July, 15:36)  
Two new 30 point courses, S382 Astrophysics and S383 The Relativistic Universe, are planned to

**Welcome to the Physics and Astronomy subject website for students**

This site is for all students studying physics and astronomy courses. You will find information here about our range of courses and about the qualifications framework, together with resources to help you get the most out of your studies.

- > Your physics and astronomy pathway
- > Extra study skills
- > Residential schools
- > Postgraduate study
- > OU physical science community
- > Physical science community and resources
- > Careers
- > Ideas and feedback

**News from Astronomy.com**

**Do medium-sized black holes exist?**  
21 August  
Black holes might come only in small and large.

**A magnetic monster in an erupting galaxy**  
21 August  
Hubble images the strong magnetic field around galaxy NGC 1275.

**See you again in 22,000 years**  
19 August  
Astronomers find an unusual new denizen of the solar system.  
View all messages in full

**Headlines from Physicsworld**

**Spinning electrons make for an unconventional metal**

- > Your physics and astronomy pathway
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- > OU physical science community
- > Physical science community and resources
- > Careers
-  Ideas and feedback

# OU physical science community

This page provides links to other OU physics and astronomy people and their work.



## **Associate lecturers**

your tutors and study advisers



## **Fusion**

the OU Physics Society



## **Physics and Astronomy Department website**

information about the department and research



## **CEPSAR**

Centre for Earth, Planetary, Space & Astronomical Research



## **PSSRI**

Planetary and Space Sciences Research Institute



## **piCETL**

Physics Innovations Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning



## **Science Faculty website**



## **Events in Second Life**

If you are interested in Second Life, there is currently a Science Discussion group, and a Challenge Group (building a model spacecraft exhibit). Check the events calendar for details. The OU and the Institute of Physics have sites in Second Life.

# Associate Lecturers

PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY: Associate lecturers - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help


http://learn.open.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=128951&direct=1

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Accessibility

Physics and Astronomy at the OU

PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY ► OU physical science community ► Associate lecturers



**Anne Campbell**

In my AL duties I tutor S282 (Astronomy), S283 (Planetary Science and the Search for Life), and S207 (The Physical World) in Glasgow and the west of Scotland. I also work on the Science Short Courses as a generalist and specialist adviser. I also work part-time as Project Coordinator for AL Online Training in the Learning Development team in the OU's Edinburgh office. I'm also a member of the OU's Scottish Online Support team.

In the past I've done academic research in diverse areas - gravitational waves detectors, microwave thermography for detecting breast cancers, mesoscale atmospheric modelling, laser ionisation studies. My current research interests in plasma physics are just getting going again as an Honorary Research Fellow in Glasgow University's Department of Physics and Astronomy.

I am a Chartered Scientist, a Chartered Physicist and a member of the Institute of Physics. I am also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

In my spare time I like to play the piano, listen to

# Physical science community and resources

PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY: Physical science community and resources - Mozilla Firefox

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http://learn.open.ac.uk/mod/resourcepage/view.php?id=126619

Google

The Open University

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Physics and Astronomy at the OU

**PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY** ▶ Physical science community and resources


- ▶ Helpful organizations
- ▶ Physics sites
- ▶ Astronomy sites
- ▶ Observer's page
- ▶ International Year of Astronomy 2009: UK

← [PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY](#)


# Observer's page

Here are some links to resources to help you develop your understanding of the night sky and some observing tools.

## Wiki

 [Observing](#)

## Tools


 [Guide to using your OU planisphere](#)

 [Stellarium planetarium software homepage](#)

A popular and powerful tool, used on S194 *Introducing Astronomy*

 [Maxim DL](#)


The image acquisition, processing and analysis software used on SXR208 *Observing the Universe*. 30 day trial available.

 [Virtual Moon atlas](#)

Download this software to study the lunar surface.

 [Heavens above](#)

Satellite, Space Shuttle and International Space Station sighting predictions

 [SXR208 public 'Project links' page](#)

This page provides links to a wide range of sophisticated tools for professional astronomers - and SXR208 students.

# Student careers

PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY: Careers - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

http://learn.open.ac.uk/mod/resourcepage/view.php?id=158716&direct=1

The IoP careers provides links to resources describing the kind of jobs that physical science graduates do, and offers advice on planning your career and finding a job, or on setting up your own business. Mentoring and local careers discussions are offered. Check your local Institute branch pages - some provide information about employment locally.

### OU student career histories

The links below provide case studies kindly supplied by students who studied physics or astronomy courses with the OU. Many studied just one or two courses, others specialised in physical science.

Some students set out to forge a new career, some found their studies bearing fruit years later, and others gained benefits from their degrees although they stayed in their existing careers, or carried out unpaid work in physical science.

- [New career in physical science 1](#)
- [Developing physical science career 1](#)
- [Developing non-physical science career 1](#)
- [Into teaching 1](#)
- [Into non-physical science careers](#)
- [Voluntary work in physical science](#)

[Careers forum](#)

[← PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY](#)

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# Visiting Edinburgh

PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY: Visiting Edinburgh - Mozilla Firefox

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http://learn.open.ac.uk/mod/resourcepage/view.php?a=39207

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Physics and Astronomy at the OU

PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY ► Residential schools ► Visiting Edinburgh

### Visiting Edinburgh for SXR103

The city of Edinburgh is an important centre for physics and astronomy, and you may wish to explore some of the historic sites during your stay.

#### Physics and astronomy

##### Calton Hill observatory

The most prominent astronomical landmark is the City Observatory on Calton Hill, at the east end of the main shopping area, Princes Street. This is close to Waverley Station.

The cluster of domes and classical-style architecture is an odd sight, but the hill top provides fine views over the city. The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh meets in and operates the observatory.

An electric cable used to stretch in a single span from the observatory to the Castle to operate a signal gun to mark the time accurately.

##### The Royal Observatory

The Royal Observatory sits on Blackford Hill on the south side of the city. Look out for its two green cylindrical 'domes' on the skyline. The site houses the University of Edinburgh's Institute for Astronomy and the UK Astronomy Technology Centre. Unfortunately the Visitor Centre is only open for pre-booked groups.