

# Sanitary Support Scheme Best Practice Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019

## ADDRESSING DISTRIBUTION CHALLENGES - THE OPEN UNIVERSITY IN SCOTLAND

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1. Introduction to The Open University in Scotland
2. Some facts and figures
3. The challenge
4. The solution
5. What we have learnt

# About The OU in Scotland

- The Open University is a distance learning provider – we have no campus!
- 2019 is our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – Scottish roots
- 200,000 people have studied with The Open University in Scotland over the past 50 years (2 million across the UK)
- We are open entry – no undergraduate entry requirements
- OU is unique in operating across the four devolved UK nations
- We are funded as 1 of the 19 higher education institutions in Scotland by the Scottish Funding Council

# Our students in numbers

Based on 2018-19 FTE figures

- **17,076** students studied with The OU in Scotland in 2018-19
- **63%** of our undergraduates are female
- **75%** of our students are in full or part time work
- The median age of our new undergraduates is **27** years old
- **18.7%** of new undergraduates live in Scotland's 20% most disadvantaged areas (SIMD20). **39.3%** in SIMD40
- **72%** of new undergraduates earn less than £25,000 (in receipt of part-time fee grant)
- **19.3%** of new undergraduates join without standard university entrance qualifications
- **21.8%** of new undergraduates live in remote and rural areas of Scotland
- **22.8%** of our undergraduates declare a disability
- **64** students in 14 secure facilities across Scotland (2017-18 figures)

# YASS

Over **7,500** students have taken YASS modules since the programme started

All **32** Scottish education authorities have schools who have participated in YASS

Over **25** modules offered to YASS students



# The challenge

- Potentially providing sanitary products to over 10,000 students...
- Could we send sanitary products to students by post? To everyone? Costs prohibitive and potential for causing offence...
- Align to the in-demand service on campuses; apply Scottish Government's take up rate of 35% = approximately 3,500 students
- Costs of providing an on demand service of products: the costs of the products, warehousing, the postage and the administration costs of despatch and record keeping.
- Could we send vouchers to those that asked?
- Who would be the provider - Boots? Semi-Chem? Would that be accessible to all our students across Scotland?

# The solution

- Provide a grant of £35 each academic year (covers holidays)
- Student contacts us to access this grant
- We check their eligibility (i.e. currently registered on a module and domiciled in Scotland)
- We do not ask for the student's gender
- Our finance team issues a cheque and closes the service request.
- We have no control whether the money is used for its intended purpose. We do check that a student hasn't applied more than once for a grant in a year.

## Sanitary products

The Open University in Scotland is part of the Scottish Government scheme to offer free sanitary products to our students. Funds of up to £35 are available to support the purchase of sanitary products under this scheme. To be eligible for funds, you must be resident in Scotland and enrolled on a module for the current academic year. Subject to continued funding of the scheme, you can apply each year that you are registered with us.

To apply, please send an email to [Scotland-AFSP-Scheme@open.ac.uk](mailto:Scotland-AFSP-Scheme@open.ac.uk) with **your name**, **student personal identifier** and **your current module code**.

# What we've learnt

- Language – understanding of the term ‘sanitary product’

The Open University in Scotland is part of the Scottish Funding Council Government scheme to offer **free sanitary products to our students who menstruate**. As a distance learning university, we are offering each applicant a small cash payment towards the costs of sanitary products.

## Eligibility

You must be:

- resident in Scotland
- currently enrolled on a module

## How to apply

You can apply once each academic year by emailing [Scotland-AFSP-Scheme@open.ac.uk](mailto:Scotland-AFSP-Scheme@open.ac.uk) . Please include your name, student personal identifier and current module code. Details can also be found on The OU in Scotland website: <http://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/study/fees-and-funding>



## What we've learnt contd.

- Cheques are becoming an outdated form of payment
- Finding the right balance in promoting the scheme
- Providing products in our offices too
- Could we do more to encourage students to consider reusable products?
  
- It's a great thing to do!



SCOTLAND

The Open  
University

50  
YEARS