

# How loyal are BA/BSc (Hons) Open degree students to specific disciplines?



Helen Cooke SFHEA, Senior Manager, Curriculum Innovation, The Open University

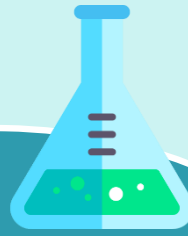
The **BA/BSc Open degree** (available with and without honours) is the OU's most popular qualification. One of the many advantages it offers students is the wide range of subjects they can choose in order to build their own personalised degree...

**But do students actually take advantage of this, or do they choose to study within just one main subject area?**

In 2014/15...

**44.2%**

studied across 2 disciplines



**25.3%**

Science, technology, engineering, maths (STEM)



**17.3%**

Arts and social sciences (FASS)



**2.6%**  
Business and law (FBL)



**10.6%**

Wellbeing, education and languages (WELS)



**2,428**



*Degree with honours*

**1,786**



*Degree without honours*

*Number of subjects studied*



*(based on high level JACS codes)*

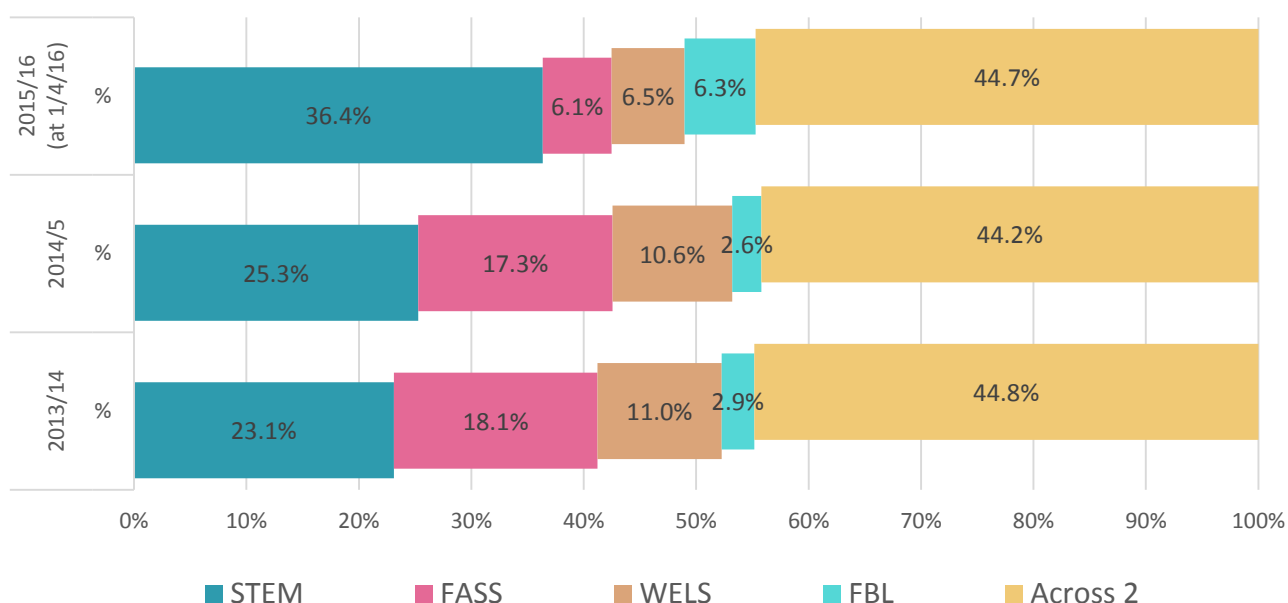
## Background / purpose

- To assess the level of multidisciplinary subject support required by Open Programme students and enquirers.
- To provide improved, relevant advice and guidance for students studying within or across subject areas.
- There was some consideration being given by the Faculty of STEM to develop a STEM-based Open degree to attract more students eligible for funding, as there is an opportunity for students who already have a degree to access loan funding for second degree if it is in a STEM subject. This degree is now in development.

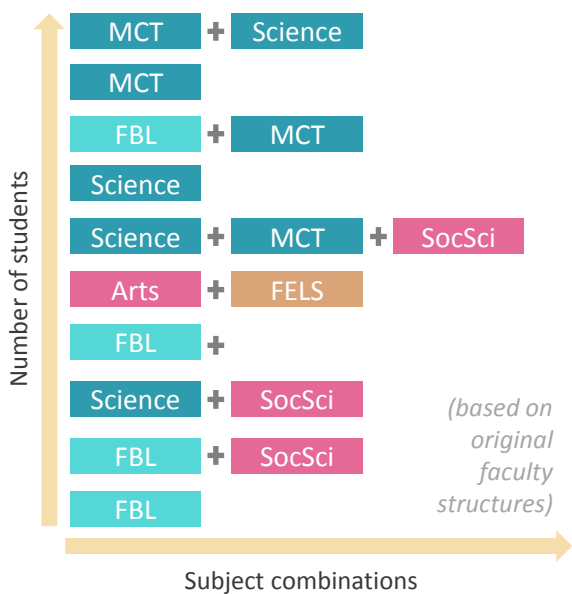
	2013/14		2014/5		2015/16 (at 1/4/16)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>STEM</b>	844	23.1%	870	25.3%	196	36.4%
<b>FASS</b>	662	18.1%	595	17.3%	33	6.1%
<b>WELS</b>	403	11.0%	366	10.6%	35	6.5%
<b>FBL</b>	106	2.9%	90	2.6%	34	6.3%
<b>Across 2</b>	1638	44.8%	1521	44.2%	241	44.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3653</b>		<b>3442</b>		<b>539</b>	

Data provided by Information Office, April 2016

**Note:** 2015/16 data is currently incomplete therefore should be treated with caution. This is in the process of being updated.



## Top 10 most popular combinations



## Main findings (2014/15)

- Approximately half of Open degree graduates chose to study modules owned by one faculty (based on the new faculty structure), with STEM being the most popular.
- However, almost half still chose to study across more than one faculty, therefore there is still a need to support students across faculties.
- The most popular cross-faculty combination was FBL and MCT.
- Arts and FELS was the most popular combination of modules that did not use STEM modules.

## “The small print”:

- If a student has gained both an ordinary degree and Honours in the same year, they were allocated to the count of Honours degrees (ie. No duplication).
- Only those modules that actually counted towards the qualification i.e. passed, were counted.
- Students were allowed 1 module of “free choice” outside of the discipline area.
- Credit Transfer students were not filtered out of the analysis as this is not possible with the current dataset, and only students that had studied 3 or more modules were included.
- Openings modules were excluded as these cannot easily be attributed to a Faculty and cannot be counted in the Open degree going forward.
- Collaborative modules were excluded, again as these could not be easily attributed to a Faculty (and are few in number).
- IET modules were included in the analysis (as PG modules can be counted down to the Open degree).
- No account has yet been taken of the size of modules, eg. 3 x 10 credit Science modules would be counted the same as 3 x 30 credit Arts modules.
- Some (old framework) students may have counted more than 360 credits towards their degree.

**Acknowledgements:** with thanks to Claire O’Byrne (Info Office) and Phil Berry (LTI) for their help with the data analysis.