

degree@ultralab.net

the **Ultraversity** project

creating a new on-line degree, for school support staff already occupied full time, who want to stay that way but want to study for a degree too.

our first cohort registered will all be non graduate school staff seeking a degree, but wanting to stay in post, doing what they enjoy, for example:

ICT and other technicians, classroom assistants, bursars, play assistants, play leaders, nursery staff, school administrators, parent helpers & others.

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Ultralab also offers a wide range of on-line CPD for schools, teachers & headteachers, to doctoral level

“it could just be the
most radical take on
higher education since the creation of
the Open University”
The Guardian

the key characteristics of this new degree are:

- your degree lets you study what you are already doing full time: a young mum studies everything from child development to early years education, an ICT technician in school studies learning alongside technology;
- the core of the degree is action research;
- the degree ends with each student building an exhibition of their action research - and these exhibitions will be in schools, libraries and other communal spaces;
- a national network of “experts” including many retired people, will contribute their wisdom and experience to the learners’ community
- the learning and research completed by Ultraversity project students will grow into a substantial body of ideas and work for future students to build on too;
- Ultralab will be working with a number of universities to pioneer this new degree, but the first 500 students will be registered with Anglia Polytechnic University;
- the degree is entirely on-line, with 24 hour access, 365 days per year. On-line students won’t find a mass of pre-designed “content” but will find support, ideas, help and a community of practice built by the many others also engaged in action research in this way;
- the degree builds on the expertise you have and progresses it.

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what is this all about?

Everyone knows someone who could have studied at university but for some reason didn’t get there. Money, job, commitments, finance... At Ultralab we decided it was time to revisit undergraduate study and we have completed the development of a radical new way to study fully on-line; we believe that this will fit those that conventional university has not fitted.

Each learner will be treated differently, each will begin on an exciting three year journey that requires them to stay in their job and research what they are doing rather than leave to “go” to university or study in their leisure time at home.

why are you writing to schools?

We want our first undergraduates to come from schools. This is an invitation to schools’ non graduate staff to be part of the first cohort, to be registered by 31st July 2003.

Our new undergraduates will not stop working; their personalised degree will be built around their job. After three years they should have an accredited British degree.

what kind of staff; give me some examples :

Playground supervisors might research “play”, “learning” or the “cultural history of games”. An ICT technician might move to a better understanding of pedagogy and ICT, or networking and creativity. A bursar might want to build financial understanding. After three years at work, they will each have done enough to be able to graduate.

are you building thousands of new courses then?

There are no courses (although there are some key common themes), each individual follows a personal, supported pathway that leads them to their own action research with a final exhibition of their research and learning. We expect these exhibitions will be in schools for children, staff and parents to see, but they could be in any public place, for example libraries.

we don’t have much money for CPD!

Just like a conventional university, we may have to levy a tuition fee but changes in government policy mean many may avoid these fees. There is no residential, no major book costs, no enforced trips. And of course our undergraduate learners keep on doing their job full time while they study. Their job is what

they are studying!

remind me, who are Ultralab?

Ultralab is a not-for-profit, public service, learning technology research team of 64 people. You might know Ultralab as the team that built Talking Heads, the community of the UK’s head teachers, that built the new on-line NPQH (for aspiring heads), that built Notschool.net the virtual school for long term excludeds (now with 99% accreditation rates), or that helped build Tesco SchoolNet 2000 project, the world’s largest Internet learning project. Some media coverage:

“the UK’s leading ICT in education research lab” *Guardian*

“one of the most respected research centres in e-learning in the world” *Financial Times*

won’t an on-line degree be virtually useless!?

Very witty! But fortunately not true. Our degree will be validated through UK universities and will carry the full currency that you would expect of a British degree.

do potential students need to hurry?

Yes and no! There are a limited number (500) of places for the pilot cohort. Registrations are open; we suggest quick action.

I know the very person; but she has few of the right exams behind her.

Undergraduates can start on a foundation degree, with a very flexible approach to what is needed, or the “regular” degree where past qualifications will help. Both take three years to complete, both have action research at their heart and an exhibition at the finish. We’re confident that we can support our learners all the way to their graduation.

finally then, tell me about the exhibition please.

The exhibition is the completion of the degree. At Ultralab we are really excited about the impact that many thousands of new undergraduates will have as they exhibit their learning to their local community. The third year is focussed on building that exhibition. We know it will be fun to do, build and show.