

NO CUTS AT THE O.U.

The Open University grant for 1975 has been supplemented from £15.8 million to £18 million, and an extra grant has been given to admit 3,700 new students in 1976. (The main reason for this is that OU students are taking longer to graduate than initially anticipated.)

Equally, most of the courses postponed from 1977 to 1978 result from academic pressures as much as financial reasons.

New tenured posts are still being created at the OU, expense allowances have not been cut, and postal costs are mounting day by day.

Life at the Open University still runs on 625 lines.

F. Mulley

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We at the OU have not been badly affected by the crisis. Indeed, some people here have scarcely noticed that a crisis is happening. This is perhaps the only privilege that comes with working in the bargain basement of the higher education system - the whole multi-storied structure can be falling down about one's ears, but those in the safety of the basement are left relatively unscathed.

That is not to say we have got off completely scotfree, although until mid-May it looked as though we might. At that stage it was suddenly realized that the OU deficit for 1975 was likely to fall between £500K and £1500K. With accumulated reserves of only £955K (less, presumably, than most other universities), the following actions were immediately taken.

- (a) Student numbers for April 1976 were fixed at 51,760, implying an intake of 17,000 new students, compared with an anticipated 20,000.
- (b) A postponement of $2\frac{1}{8}$ new courses planned for 1977, leaving 12 new courses in that year, and a total of about 60 courses overall.
- (c) The associate (non-graduating) student scheme is being deferred from 1977 to 1978.
- (d) An embargo is to be placed upon the provision of cassette recorders for students.
- (e) The BBC is making 10% cuts in its OU expenditure

In addition

- (f) Student fees are increasing from £25 to £40 per course in 1976, thus maintaining the rule imposed unilaterally by the DES that 15% of the total OU budget (£15.8 million in 1975) should be recouped from student fees. (The corresponding figure for other universities is around 5%, although higher in Colleges of Education, and the percentage which actually falls on students or their families is nearer 2%.)

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