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The good news this week for thousands of Open University students is the confirmation of a BSc option for their degrees. Yes, at last, OU graduates will have the right to call themselves scientists.

For the past twenty years, whatever the actual profile of their degree, and with perhaps more science courses than arts courses completed, people have emerged with a BA Honours.

Since 1983, the Students Association has been pressing for a change, one objection being the status quo is confusing for employers on the lookout for people with a scientific background.

I'm joined now by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Anne Floyd and an OU student partway through his degree, Richard Taylor.

Interviewer:

This shift to the BSc, a big event really for the Open University after a lot of wrangling, a lot of pressure, yes?

Anne Floyd:

Yes, that's right. Well, we've always had a general degree with a whole range of possibilities within it. And it's a major change to start thinking of two degrees rather than one. We're doing it because the students have said to us for a long time that they want that. And it's taken a long time to review that and we've now decided that because of surveys that we've mounted of both students, graduates, and indeed employers, that the point that students have been making to us for many years is valid and that therefore we should change.

Interviewer:

And it does in a sense bring the OU into the general fold of universities in the UK, most of them have got BScs, haven't they, on offer?

Anne Floyd:

Yes, yes, that's right.

Interviewer:

What about those people who've currently got a BA, and who have done primarily science? Could they convert to a BSc?

Anne Floyd:

We very much hope to be able do that.

Interviewer:

Dick Taylor, can I bring you in here? Any reactions to that, this idea that the OU is changing, and [there] is now going to be a BSc syllabus on its books?

Richard Taylor:

Well, I'm not a science student, but the students I know will welcome this universally. I mean, all the science students I've spoken to really like the idea of a BSc because employers know exactly what they do. And they'll be on a par with students from all universities then.