

Open Forum 41 1979: The First Ten Years

Clip transcript: Inventing ways of teaching

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David Grugeon

Michael Pentz

David Grugeon:

The new academic staff who joined the OU in the early years, found themselves heavily engaged in working in course teams, an entirely new concept and one of the University's outstanding innovations.

Michael Pentz:

Course we had to invent the whole thing more or less as we went along, it was an enormous bit of improvisation. I mean there we were we had a course team, we had to make a course, nobody knew how you did this, we weren't even quite sure to start off with why we wanted a course team, we learnt about that in the process. And we had to improvise every aspect of the whole system. Of how, what sort of course materials are appropriate for the part-time distant learner. How should they be produced, how should they relate to each other? I mean the most elementary things hadn't occurred to people, nobody for example realised that you actually had to have professional editors, and as the time for actually producing, actually producing the foundation courses, loomed up on us, I remember going along to Walter Perry and saying for God sake we've got to have an editor you won't have a course or you'll have a dead dean or something, we had no editors. The idea of a computer marked assignment for example, which is common place now, they had to be invented. Home experiments, I mean the invention of home experiments was really quite ludicrous, it went right back to, oh it must have been in the spring of 1969, and I remember the Bursar coming into my office in Belgrave Square, that was before we moved up in the world to the prefabs at Walton Hall. And he said "hey I hear you've got some idea about home experiment kits," and I said yes, so he said "well can you tell me how much they're going to cost?" Well, well when do you want to know, so he said "tomorrow", you see.