



ASIAN ASSOCIATION OF OPEN UNIVERSITIES

The 38th AAOU Annual Conference Proceedings Have Been Officially Released

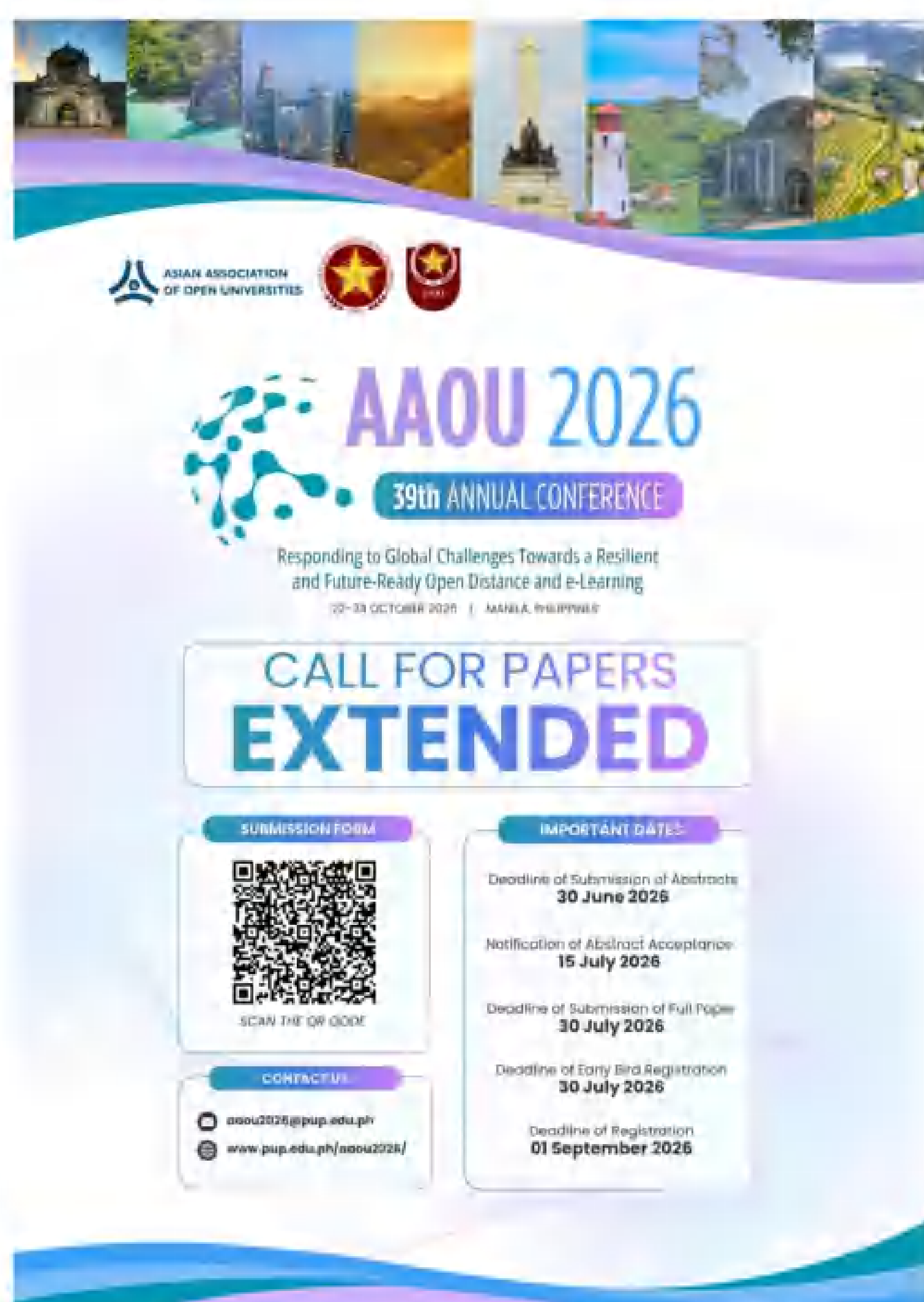
The Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) have been officially released and are now available for download on the conference website. The proceedings feature a rich collection of papers covering key sub-themes, including Digital Education, Lifelong Education (Adult Education), and Open, Distance and Online Education.

Held from October 21 to 23, 2025, in Beijing, China, the conference was hosted by the Open University of China (OUC) under the theme "Transforming ODL for a Sustainable Lifelong Learning Society." The event brought together nearly 300 participants, including university presidents, scholars, and educators from over 20 countries across Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

You can click the following link for obtaining the proceedings:

<https://aaou2025.ouchn.edu.cn/ui/home/#/AAOU/articleInfo?id=2993&smId=66515>

The 39th AAOU Annual Conference 2026— Important Dates Extended



The 39th AAOU Annual Conference will be hosted by the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, from 22-24 October 2026.

Raising the theme "Responding to Global Challenges Towards a Resilient and Future-Ready Open and Distance Education," the 39th AAOU Annual Conference encompasses a diverse range of sub-themes, designed to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and innovation. The **sub-themes** are as follows:

- Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Learning Technologies
- Immersive, Flexible, and Next-Generation Learning Environments
- Equity, Accessibility, and Digital Inclusion

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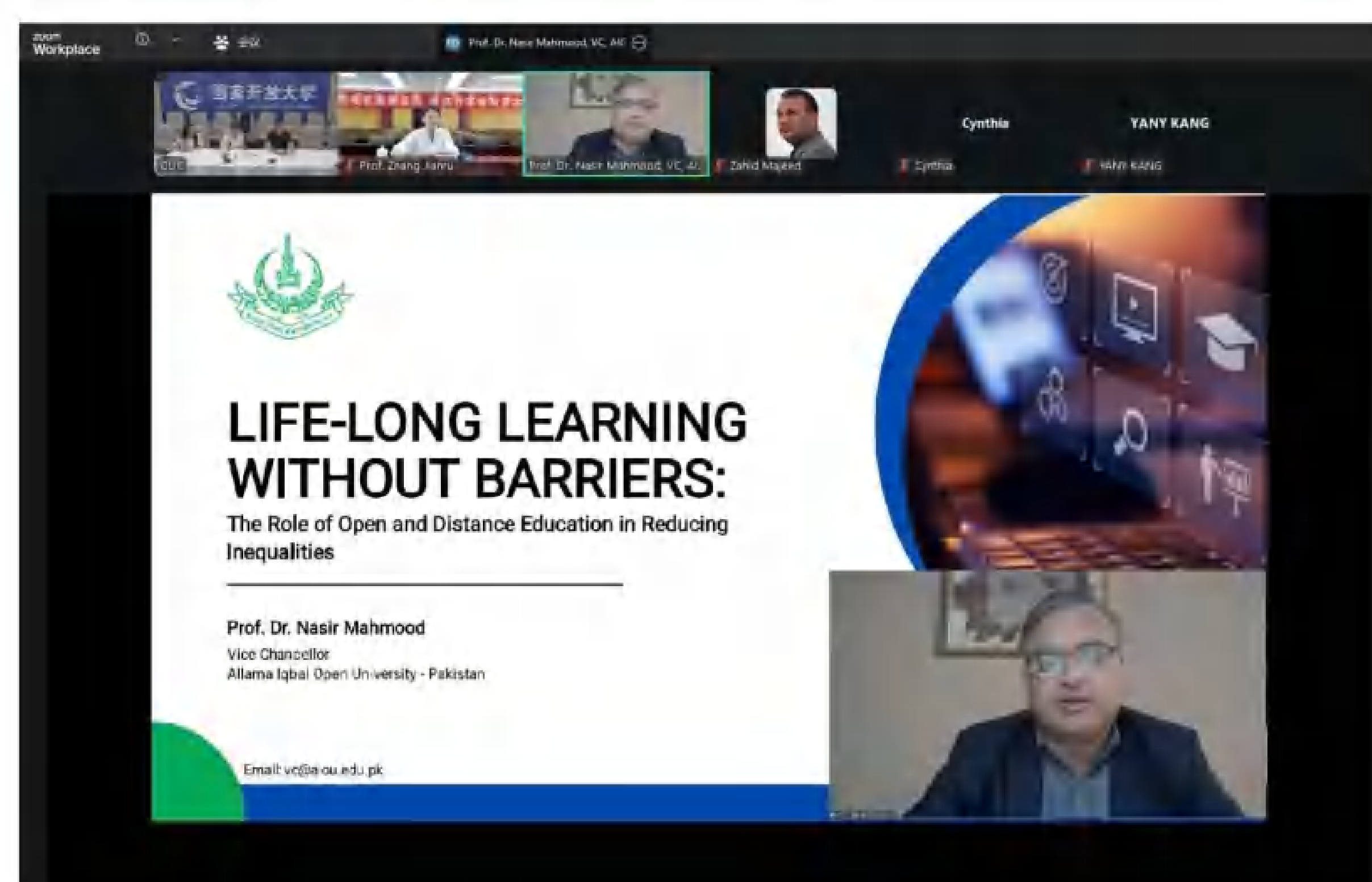
IMPORTANT DATES (EXTENDED) :

Deadline of Submission of Abstracts	30 June 2026
Notification of Abstract Acceptance	15 July 2026
Deadline of Submission of Full Paper	30 July 2026
Deadline of Early Bird Registration	30 July 2026
Deadline of Registration	01 September 2026

- Learner Support, Engagement, and Well-being
- Quality Assurance, Assessment, and Credentialing
- Institutional Resilience, Policy, and Governance

Conference Website: www.pup.edu.ph/aaou2026/
Contact: aaou2026@pup.edu.ph

AAOU Held the First Episode of Webinar Series 2026



The Secretariat of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) held the first episode of AAOU Webinar Series 2026 with the theme "Ubiquitous and Accessible Lifelong Learning: Reducing Inequalities through Open and Distance Education" virtually through the Zoom platform, on 5 June 2026.

The webinar gathered over 160 registered attendees from the Asian open education community. It presented two keynote speakers, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood (Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University), and Prof. Zhang Jianru (Vice President of Inner Mongolia Open University).

Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood was the first keynote speaker to deliver his presentation on "Lifelong Learning without Barriers: The Role of Open and Distance Education in Reducing Inequalities." He introduced his university's practical experience and stressed how open and distance learning helps advance educational equity and expand higher education access.

Prof. Zhang Jianru delivered her presentation on "Innovative Practices of Open and Distance Education for Persons with Disabilities." She outlined local support programmes for learners with disabilities and shared a holistic multi-support model for inclusive higher education.



AAOU will continue to promote and disseminate knowledge, innovations, and best practices in the realm of education. It is expected that the webinar series could give broader knowledge, enhance and build good working relations, and promote quality educational practices to public, particularly in open and distance education in Asia and beyond.

The second episode of AAOU Webinar Series 2026 is scheduled to take place in November 2026, with further details to be announced in due course.

AAOU Accreditation Service is Now Available

Introducing the AAOU Accreditation Service

Designed specifically for ODL institutions, the AAOU Accreditation Service provides an objective and rigorous evaluation to help you enhance your standards, build credibility, and achieve international recognition.

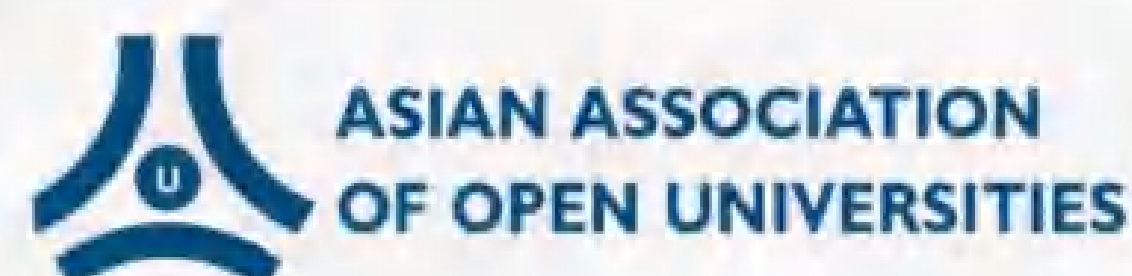
Why do you need the accreditation?

- ✓ Strengthen your ODL institutions
- ✓ Improve your ODL-based programme quality and learner outcomes
- ✓ Gain regional and global trust

Contact the AAOU Secretariat today to learn more about how to get your institution accredited and stand out in the field of open and distance education.

Application form (docx):

https://docs.google.com/document/d/_1nylZg0GEdd4X6SY-PElan-mPBAVqNUP2DK7Blfcsugs/edit?tab=t.0



AAOU IS NOW OFFERING ACCREDITATION SERVICES

We are now offering accreditation services designed for open universities and technology-mediated education. Be evaluated for the future readiness of your institution and ODeL programs using our 10 QA-based criteria.

Get accredited and position your institution as a leader in quality open and distance learning!

APPLY NOW >>



aaou.org

aaou.secretariat@ouchn.edu.cn

New Issue of the AAOU Journal Has Been Published

The *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal* is an official publication of AAOU. It publishes articles reporting research studies, evaluations of theories, or best practices of open and distance education. The new issue, Volume 21, Issue 1 of the *AAOU Journal*, has been published. Readers may access it via the following link:

<https://www.emerald.com/aaouj/issue/21/1>.

The *AAOU Journal* has continued to strengthen its position in the field. Its

latest CiteScore has risen to 6.0. In addition to retaining its Q1 ranking in two Scopus categories, the journal has improved its percentile rankings: it now stands in the 91st percentile (#65 out of 744 journals) in Social Sciences (Miscellaneous) and the 86th percentile (#238 out of 1,698 journals) in Education. These metrics reflect the exceptional quality of the research published in our journal.

Staff from AAOU members are invited to submit their manuscripts to the journal. It welcomes high-quality

manuscripts in the following areas:

- Academic analytics
- Flexible learning
- Innovative teaching
- Massive open online courses (MOOCs)
- Mobile learning
- Online learning
- Open and distance education (ODE)
- Open educational resources (OER)
- Quality assurance in ODE
- Technology-mediated teaching
- Ubiquitous learning

AAOU MEMBER NEWS

OUM Launches New ODDE Book



On 9 April, Open University Malaysia (OUM) launched its latest publication, *"OUM-ODDE Model Unveiled: Innovating Open, Distance, and Digital Education."*

Co-authored by 17 faculty members and support staff, the book presents the academic foundation of OUM's open, distance, and digital education (ODDE) model.

Copyrighted in 2024, the model is built on three interrelated pedagogical principles: cognitive competence, flexible teaching and learning, and dynamic interaction. At its core is a learner-centred approach that promotes critical thinking, self-directed learning, and sustained academic performance.

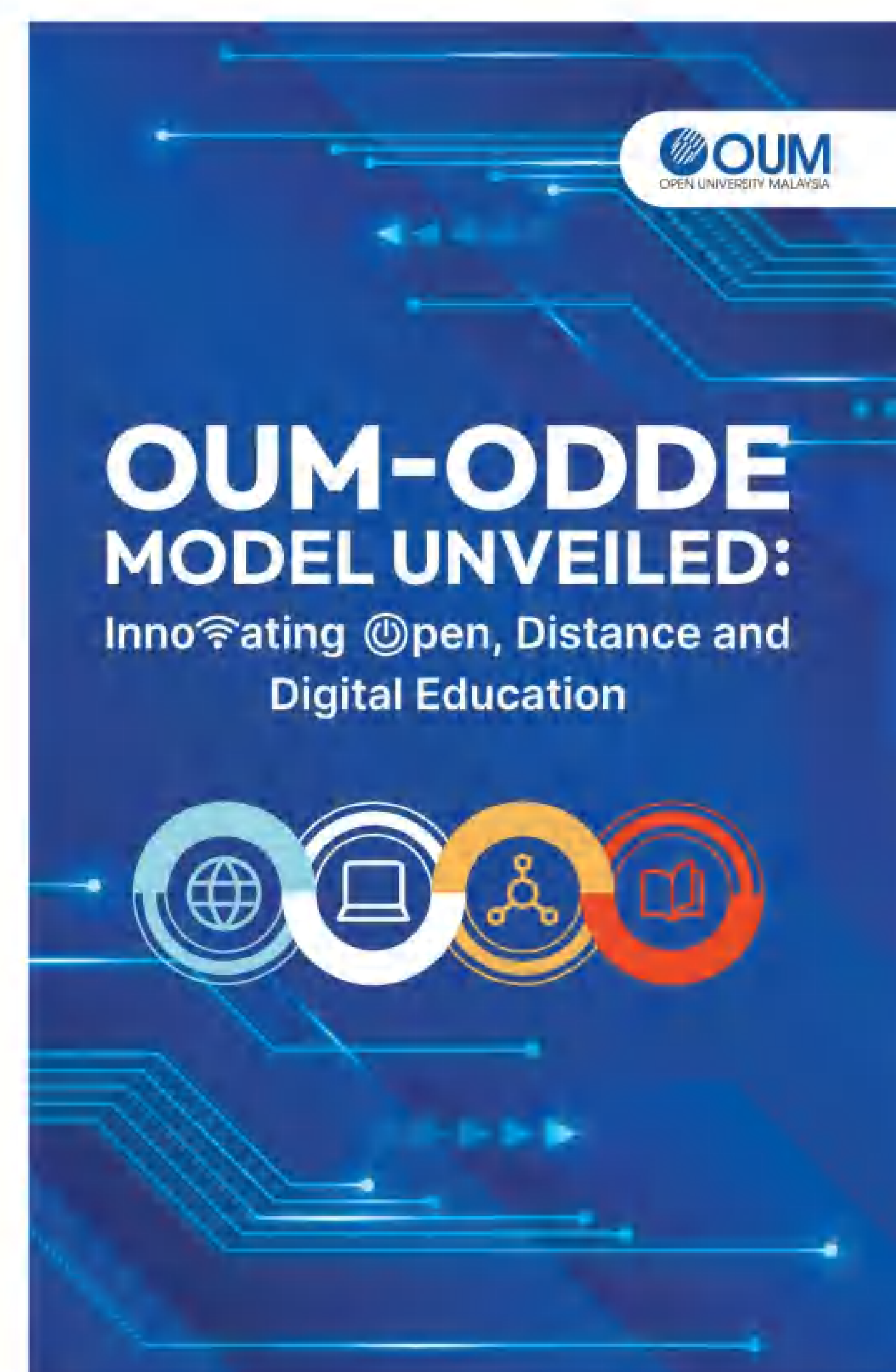
The book offers more than a comprehensive framework integrating pedagogy, digital innovation, learner support, assessment practices, and academic governance. It demonstrates how access and flexibility can be effectively balanced with academic rigour, integrity, and accountability.

Structured across eight chapters, the publication provides practical insights into how the ODDE model is operationalised across key domains of academic practice in an open university context:

1. The OUM-ODDE Model for Online Learning
2. Designing Online Courses and Learning Experiences for the Modern Learner
3. Learning Management Systems and the Digital Ecosystem
4. Synchronous and Asynchronous Teaching Strategies
5. Student Engagement and Support in Online Learning
6. Assessment, Feedback, and Academic Integrity
7. Faculty and Tutor Development for Online Teaching
8. Future Trends and Innovations in Online Learning

The final chapter explores emerging developments shaping the future of online learning, including micro-credentials and immersive technologies. From OUM's perspective, these trends present both challenges and opportunities that are relevant to open universities across Malaysia, Asia, and beyond, as we advance into its next phase of ODDE evolution.

This publication offers valuable insights for ODDE institutions, practitioners, and scholars seeking to design inclusive learning experiences that support learners in



balancing academic, professional, and personal commitments.

Currently distributed within Malaysia, OUM aims to extend availability of the book to its partners across the region, including members of the Asian Association of Open Universities.

WOU Recognised for Excellence in Digital Learning



Tun Dato' Seri Zaki Tun Azmi presenting the award to Prof Chan. Photo courtesy of KSI

Wawasan Open University (WOU) has been recognised for its role in advancing digital learning in the open education landscape with the **Malaysian Digital Learning Excellence and Leadership Award** at the 9th Malaysian Education and Learning Summit on 16 April 2026 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

WOU's Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Lily Chan, accepted the award on behalf of the University from Tun Dato' Seri Zaki Tun Azmi, Chancellor of Multimedia University and MAHSA University.

The summit, organised by KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific in collaboration with Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities and National Association

of Private Educational Institutions, brought together stakeholders from education, technology, and industry to address the alignment of talent development with Malaysia's AI- and digital-driven economy.

Commenting on the recognition, Prof. Chan said:

"This reflects the progress we have made in building a digitally enabled learning model for working adults at scale, and reinforces WOU's position in digital open and distance learning. As continuous upskilling becomes the norm, WOU is positioned to support a shift towards lifelong, skills-driven learning aligned with the needs of a digital economy."



*Prof. Chan discussing the roles of universities in lifelong talent ecosystems.
Photo courtesy of KSI*

At the summit, Prof. Chan also participated in a leadership dialogue on *"Integrating Universities, TVET, and Industry into a Single Talent Market – Delivering Blueprint Outcomes Through Market Coordination"*, where she discussed the evolving role of universities, graduate readiness, as well as targeted workforce planning leveraging AI and data analytics.

Prof. Chan highlighted how universities can act as central connectors linking learners, TVET providers, and industry players through digital platforms and labour market insights to support a more integrated national talent framework.

"Universities must become "talent platforms" where workers return throughout their careers for continuous talent development. This means designing programmes that allows individuals to enter and exit learning at different stages of their careers, while maintaining relevance to industry needs," she emphasised.

WOU's recognition and participation at the summit reflect its ongoing commitment to supporting Malaysia's workforce development agenda, particularly through flexible learning pathways, digital open learning, and closer industry collaboration.

WOU and Polytechnic University of the Philippines Partner to Scale Digital Open and Distance e-Learning

Wawasan Open University (WOU) has formalised a strategic partnership with the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) to accelerate the advancement of Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) and expand inclusive educational access across Southeast Asia.

The collaboration was officially established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed virtually on 17 April 2026. Representing their respective institutions were WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Professor Ts. Dr. Yap Eng Hwa, and PUP President, Dr. Manuel M. Muhi.

This five-year agreement creates a robust framework specifically designed to enhance the ODeL ecosystem



Prof. Yap and Prof. Dr. Anna Christina Abdullah, Dean of School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences with the signed Memorandum of Understanding.



WOU academics hosting the PUPOUS delegation during a benchmarking visit to WOU's main campus on 29 April 2026.

bridging both institutions. Key areas of cooperation include joint academic research, faculty and student mobility, co-organisation of scholarly engagements, and the mutual sharing of digital educational resources to address the evolving needs of an AI-driven regional workforce.

Delivering a speech on behalf of WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Lily Chan, Prof. Yap emphasised that the partnership is a proactive response to the demands of a skills-based economy.

"There is a profound resonance between WOU's mission and PUP's

commitment to inclusive, globally relevant education. In today's competitive landscape, continuous upskilling is the bedrock of professional resilience. This partnership underscores the vital role of cross-border education in driving national development and economic growth for both Malaysia and the Philippines.

In his address, Dr. Muhi welcomed the partnership as a significant step in widening access to quality higher education through digital transformation.

"This moment signifies not only the beginning of a formal partnership

but also a shared vision of advancing open, distance, and flexible learning in our respective institutions and across the region. In an era where learning transcends physical borders, such alliances enable us to exchange knowledge and innovate in delivering quality education to diverse learners."

Moving forward, both institutions will leverage their respective expertise and resources to drive digital teaching and learning advancements that mutually benefit their academic communities and propel ODeL innovation in ASEAN.

A Shared Vision for Innovation in Open Distance Education

As a follow-up to the MoU signing, WOU hosted a senior delegation from the PUP Open University System (PUPOUS) for a comprehensive benchmarking visit on 29 April 2026.

The PUP delegation was led by Dr. Rudolf Lacerna, Executive Director, and Dr. Pamela Muhi, Internationalisation Focal Person. The visiting group also included Associate Professor Karen G. San Diego, Academic Programme Head; Dr. Diana Lee Tracy Chan, Chief of the Centre for Research and Extension; Richard Sana, Programme Coordinator; and Dr. John Mark Distor, Course Specialist.



Prof. Chan presents a memento to Dr Lacerna as Prof. Yap looks on.

The benchmarking visit included in-depth briefing sessions where Prof. Anna provided an institutional overview, while senior academics Associate Professor Dr. Tan Saw Fen and Associate Professor Ir. Dr. Arjuna Marzuki explored synergies in research and publications under the Centre for Research and Innovation (CeRI).

Further discussions led by Dean of the School of Graduate Studies Associate Professor Dr. Lee Heng Wei and SEHS Deputy Dean Dr. Sean Ooi focused on aligning postgraduate matters and colloquium standards. These sessions aimed to define specific, actionable initiatives to enhance the ODL experience for students in both Malaysia and the Philippines.

AAOU 2026 Inter-university Staff Exchange Fellowship by Beijing Open University, China

Beijing Open University (BJOU) is offering two short-term fellowships from AAOU member institutions for the year 2026. This programme aims to provide a platform for capacity building and establishment of sustainable partnerships as well as fostering knowledge exchange and promoting mutual understanding among staff of the open universities of Asia.

Number of fellowship	2
Duration of the fellowship	1 week
Schedule of commencement	13–19 September 2026
Closing date	June 30, 2026

The BJOU will provide successful candidates with the following:

1. A formal invitation letter for visa purposes
2. On-campus accommodation during the visit
3. Breakfast and lunch on weekdays
4. Office space with internet access

For more details, please refer to the document down below or contact wsc@bjou.edu.cn.

Please download the document here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1o9vMAZgTIMNp561OuT_ZsWlhwc2JbPia/view?usp=sharing

AAOU 2026 Inter-university Staff Exchange Fellowship by Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is offering four short-term fellowships from AAOU member institutions for the year 2026. This programme is intended to provide a platform for capacity building and establishment of sustainable partnerships as well as fostering knowledge exchange and promoting mutual understanding among staff of the open universities of Asia.

Number of fellowship	4
Duration of the fellowship	2 weeks
Schedule of commencement	26 October - 9 November, 2026
Closing date	5 August, 2026
Notice of acceptance	10 August, 2026

The UT will provide successful candidates with the following:

1. A formal invitation letter for visa purpose
2. Full accommodation at UT Guest House and daily meals
3. Office space with Internet access, computer, printer, and stationary
4. Local transportation to research sites (regional offices) if needed

For more details, please refer to the document down below or contact dikinian@ecampus.ut.ac.id and pri@ecampus.ut.ac.id.

Please download the document here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gN6rRlqx0LsyCpM8tRREdzy_Xv1yGvrP/view?usp=sharing

OPEN CALLS

Call for Nominations for the AAOU Meritorious Service Award 2026

Every year, the AAOU may present a Meritorious Service Award (MSA) to an individual for his/her outstanding services and contributions to open and distance education. Individual academics or administrators may be nominated by AAOU member institutions. This prestigious award shall consist of a plaque and a citation. The Executive Committee of AAOU will have the honour of selecting the recipient of this award based on dedication, effort and contributions upon recommendations by the Adjudication Committee. Presentation of this award shall be made at the AAOU Annual Conference. The purpose of this Award is to provide

tangible recognition for exceptional service or achievement of an individual. The Award comprises a citation and a plaque of appropriate size as symbols of acknowledgement that will be presented by the AAOU President to the recipient during the AAOU Annual Conference.

If you wish to submit a nomination, please note the following details:

- Individual academics or administrators may be nominated by AAOU member institutions or by senior faculty (not below the rank of Full Professor) working in AAOU member institutions.

- Nominees need not be restricted to persons presently working for or associated with the member institutions of AAOU.
- Nominations must be signed either by the Chief Executive of the nominating institution or by at least three Senior Academics of AAOU member institutions.
- More than one nomination can be made.

For each nomination, the following three documents must be submitted: a signed nomination letter; a statement of no more than 1,000 words giving the reasons for making the nomination; and a copy of the nominee's Curriculum Vitae.

The deadline for nomination is **30 July 2026**. Send your nomination to aaou.secretariat@ouchn.edu.cn.

Shall you have further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us!

For more information, you can download the document here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PjGzAfjj0JYzGDsP8Yb7f8Ga0cHzRvjS/view>

Call for AAOU Expert Accreditors (2026-2028)

We are excited to introduce the *AAOU Accreditation System*, an innovative model of assessment designed **particularly for institutions offering study programmes in the open and distance learning (ODL), online, or technology-enhanced mode** in order to maintain and recognise their quality.

We call for qualified persons to join our **Pool of Expert Accreditors**, who will include accreditors for institutional reviews, for study programme reviews (according to subject expertise) and for supporting reviews with expertise in local accreditation systems and standards.

Why AAOU Accreditation?

Unlike traditional accreditation models, the AAOU Accreditation System is tailored exclusively for those institutions who run online/distance learning, ensuring that their unique strengths, challenges, and innovations are properly reviewed and recognised. Accreditation reviews can be conducted at institutional or programme level.

Apply to be an Accreditor!

We are looking for experienced professionals and academics with expertise in ODL to contribute as accreditors, Who will review institutions and/or relevant study programmes, and offer constructive and practical advice on improvement or advancement.

This is an opportunity to:

- Play a key role in promoting quality standards for institutions offering ODL or relevant programmes; and
- Contribute to advancing quality in open, distance, online, and technology-enhanced education.

Accreditors should:

- Have solid experience in formal accreditation for institutions/programmes as an independent expert accreditor (Involvement in relevant work for one's affiliated institution is not considered an independent accreditor in this application);
- Possess qualifications and management experience generally considered acceptable for the expert accreditor role in the international community; and
- Support the accreditation principles and approach of the AAOU.

If you satisfy the above requirements and are passionate about advancing quality in ODL and have relevant accreditation experience, we encourage you to apply! Download the application form below, complete and submit it with required documents!

Should you have further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us at aaou.secretariat@ouchn.edu.cn. See you on board!

Please download the application form here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N-krRjkZpLMnrsUnvBAe7neZ8VDyTmHC/edit?usp=sharing&oid=107613424890042489148&rtpof=true&sd=true>