

[Home](#) > Psychology graduate Carolyn proves it's never too late for a career change

## Psychology graduate Carolyn proves it's never too late for a career change



Halfway through her working life in corporate marketing, Carolyn Freeman knew she needed a career that would give her greater work satisfaction.

With a Diploma in Marketing under her belt, but no other academic qualifications that would allow a career change, Carolyn embarked on a study journey towards a [BSc \(Hons\) Psychology](#) at The Open University (OU).

She proved dreams can come true with determination – and a helping hand from

the OU – to move from marketer to successful cyberpsychologist and entrepreneur.

After six years of study Carolyn was on track to pursuing her end goal, finding hidden depths of resilience, and making study friends along the way. Carolyn, 51, said: "I'd reached the highest point that I'd planned to in my corporate marketing career, and I wanted to change career direction. I decided I wanted to spend the rest of my working life in a career which would give me greater satisfaction.

"As a mature student, I couldn't attend the local bricks-and-mortar university without first completing a bridging course. As I already had a tertiary education and had just left an International Marketing Manager role, I found this frustrating and a little demeaning.

"That's when I applied to study at the OU, and it ended up being a much better option. It allowed me to choose several different – and in my opinion more interesting – subjects that I wouldn't have been exposed to at a traditional university. It also allowed me the time to simultaneously juggle work and life while gaining a degree."

### Creating her successful business Cybercology

After her OU degree, Carolyn continued her studies with a master's in Cyberpsychology at the University of Buckingham. She explained that cyberpsychology is the practice and science, within the discipline of Psychology, that focuses on the interaction with, and impact on, digital technology and human psychology/behaviour.

"My OU qualification allowed me to follow this new career direction – one that I really wanted to pursue," explains Carolyn. "I have set up a Cyberpsychology consultancy, [Cybercology](#), doing talks and seminars on the human impact of technology in the workplace – especially among remote and hybrid workers."

Carolyn continues: "I have several projects that I'm working on including research, writing, talks, workshops and a few other things bubbling away in the background. I love what I do mostly because it holds a deep interest for me and work is no longer a chore, and something to be accomplished. I often see the difference I make to people's lives – something I would never have seen in my previous life and that is worth waking up for. I'd never have been able to apply for a master's in Cyberpsychology without my OU Psychology degree."

### Carolyn's inspiration to make a change was close to home

Taking a leap to a new career was something very personal for Carolyn, who remembers her mother, a teacher, having an unfulfilled dream of retraining as a geologist.

She says: "It made me sad to think she spent all her life working in a job she didn't really enjoy, semi-regretting the career choices she'd made. I didn't want to also get to the end of my career and have regrets, wishing I'd done or achieved something else.

"I know I would have really regretted not giving the dream a chance. Being able to finally pursue the career path I should've taken right at the start has been a life-changer for me."

### How the OU can work for you

When asked how she kept her studies on track, Carolyn says: "Throughout my six years of study, every year posed both difficult and amazing moments, from personal illness to bereavement to real highs. I got married, lost my mother-in-law, sold two flats, bought a house, rebuilt the house, got two dogs, set up and managed a consultancy, changed career, and moved my parents over to the UK from South Africa.

"I sometimes used my studies as a distraction, sometimes as a bit of an anchor, and sometimes as a motivational goal. Having a supportive base of my husband, family, friends and study buddies was also a huge part of my resilience."

### How the OU helped Carolyn change her life

"Studying with the OU has changed aspects of who I am," Carolyn concludes. "I realised that I have a lot more resilience than I thought. I was often told growing up that I didn't stick with things very long, so I got to prove to all those historic voices – and to myself – that I most definitely am a finisher.

"I'm a lot more confident in my abilities and it has made me emotionally stronger and generally more resilient.

"If there is any possible way you can find strength to keep going, find it and keep going. It is a long haul. It is tough. But the rewards at the end really do outweigh the trials and doubts."

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