

# universities

## introduction

Lots of people decide to go to university to learn more about subjects which they're really interested in. As the name suggests, you can study just about anything in the universe at a university, from distant stars and planets to art, history or languages. But universities do more than just teach students, they are also places where new and important knowledge is produced. For over a thousand years, people in universities all over the world have carried-out amazing research which has led to some of the most important scientific, social and cultural innovations in history. There is a lot of debate about when and where universities first appeared, but it is generally agreed that the oldest surviving university in the world is the University of al-Qarawiyyin in the Moroccan city of Fes, which was founded by Fatima al-Fihriyya, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, in 859 and still teaches students to this day.

## questions to think about

- How is studying at university different from studying at school?
- What are some of the skills you can gain at a university?
- How many jobs can you think of that rely on a university education?
- How does the research done by universities help us?
- How does the Open University work?
- How do you think universities will work in the future?



The oldest university in the world, al-Qarawiyyin University in Fes.



## where to find out more

- Learn more about Fatima al-Fihriyya and other extraordinary women from Islamic history:  
<http://www.1001inventions.com/womensday>
- Why go to university?  
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/news/why-do-students-go-university-and-how-do-they-choose-which-one>
- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/student-life/12047754/Four-reasons-why-university-is-still-a-great-life-choice.html>
- The Open University Open Learning website:  
<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>