

OU Book Theme

USER DOCUMENTATION

The OU Book Theme is an extension of the [Sphinx Book Theme](#), adding Open University specific theming, as well as custom directives and roles. It is meant for use with [Sphinx](#).

You can also download a [PDF version](#) of this document.

1 INSTALLATION

To use the OU Book Theme, first install it into your project:

```
$ pip install ou-book-theme
```

Then enable the theme in your `_config.yml`:

```
sphinx:
  extra_extensions:
    - ou_book_theme
  config:
    html_theme: ou_book_theme
```

Next, create a `_static` directory and add an empty `favicon.svg` file. This will automatically be overwritten by the theme, but needs to be in place for the build process to know that the files exist.

Then set the necessary settings in the `sphinx.config.html_theme_options.logo` and `html.favicon` keys in the `_config.yml`:

```
sphinx:
  config:
    html_theme_options:
      logo:
        image_light: "_static/logo-light.svg"
        image_dark: "_static/logo-dark.svg"
    ...

html:
  favicon: _static/favicon.svg
```

You are now ready to build your book with the OU Book Theme.

2 MARKUP

The Jupyter Book setup uses MyST Markdown as the markup language for writing content and provides a wide range of markup functionality, which is documented in detail [here](#).

2.1 Numbering and referencing figures

When figure captions are generated, the caption will, by default, be prefixed with an automatically generated figure number taking the form *Figure 1 Caption text*.

Figure reference numbers may also be generated with a section number prefix, for example *Figure 1.1 Caption text*. Specify which figure numbering approach to use via the `_config.yml` file:

- `sphinx.config.numfig_secnum_depth: 0`: incremental count over all figures (e.g. *Figure 1*)
- `sphinx.config.numfig_secnum_depth: 1`: incremental figure count within a section (e.g. *Figure 1.1*).

If the `_config.yml` file includes the setting `sphinx.config.numfig: true`, figures may be referenced from markdown text using the construction:

Make a figure reference from the text, see {numref}`figure_ref`.

```
:::{figure} path/image.png
:name: figure_ref
```

Caption text

Longer description text.
:::

The format used for the reference text may be configured via the `sphinx.config.numfig_format` setting; for example, `numfig_format: {'figure': 'Figure %s'}`.

By default, Sphinx will generate inline reference numbers that include the session number, rather than using the simple incremental count over all figures. To guarantee that the inline figure reference style matches the figure reference style in the figure caption, you should explicitly set `sphinx.config.numfig_secnum_depth` in the `_config.yml` file.

3 EXTENSIONS

The OU Book Theme provides a number of markup extensions for OU-specific functionality.

It also automatically installs the following Sphinx extensions, which can then be enabled as needed:

- **Mermaid**: for generating diagrams using **Mermaid**.

To enable Mermaid diagrams you need to enable the extension in the `_config.yml`:

```
sphinx: extra_extensions: - sphinxcontrib.mermaid
```

3.1 Activity-related

The `{activity}` and `{activity-answer}` blocks can be used to mark up activities and answers associated with those activities.

3.1.1 Activity

The `{activity}` marks out a piece of practical work that is undertaken by the student:

```
:::{activity} Activity 1
```

This is an activity that you can undertake in your own time.

```
:::
```

Activity 1

This is an activity that you can undertake in your own time.

3.1.2 Answer

Optionally the activity can be provided with an answer that is initially hidden:

```
::::{activity} Activity 2
```

This is an activity you should undertake on your own, but we have also provided an `↪`answer.

```
:::{activity-answer}
```

This is a sample answer for the activity, which the user can show by clicking on the `↪`link.

```
:::
```

```
::::
```

Activity 2

This is an activity you should undertake on your own, but we have also provided an answer.

Activity Answer

This is a sample answer for the activity, which the user can show by clicking on the link.

3.2 Errata

The `{errata-list}` and `{erratum}` blocks are used to simplify adding errata to the site.

3.2.1 List of errata

The list of errata is generated using the `{errata-list}` block. This is an empty block and all its content will be automatically generated based on the `{erratum}` blocks used in the project:

```
:::{errata-list}  
:::
```

- **25.02.2025**
 - *Errata*
Something went wrong again.
- **20.02.2025**
 - *Errata*
Something went wrong here.

3.2.2 Single erratum

The `{erratum}` block generates a single erratum and automatically adds it to any `{errata-list}` blocks across the site. The `{erratum}` **must** have a title and some content:

```
:::{erratum} 20.02.2025  
Something went wrong here.  
:::
```

```
:::{erratum} 25.02.2025  
Something went wrong here.  
:::
```

20.02.2025

Something went wrong here.

25.02.2025

Something went wrong again.

3.3 Video

The `{video}` block is used to embed a video:

```
:::{video} https://video.ocl.open.ac.uk/ui/#/embed/51b632d5-0144-421b-800c-bf7b5f420542  
:::
```

Video

<https://video.ocl.open.ac.uk/ui/#/embed/51b632d5-0144-421b-800c-bf7b5f420542>

Transcript

Welcome to this short video in which we will install Podman Desktop and then also run through the basic onboarding process. So I've downloaded Podman Desktop for my operating system and I'm now just going to run the installer to start the installation process. This will take a few seconds and then Podman Desktop will start automatically.

Here we go. This is Podman Desktop after the initial start and you will see that there's a notification saying that Podman needs to be set up. So we're going to now click on the setup and run through this onboarding process. The first thing it will tell us is that it can't find Podman. Now Podman Desktop is just the graphical interface we will use. The actual software for running the virtual computing environment is called Podman and that we now need to install and for that we're just going to follow the on-screen instructions here.

So yeah it's not installed. Yes we want to install it. We need to install WSL so the Windows subsystem for Linux as well just because that's how the software then actually runs. So we just click on install and run through and it runs through the installation process and when that's completed we just click on close and go back into the onboarding.

Now we can set Podman to start automatically when we launch Podman Desktop and that's generally useful so we're going to set that and click on next and then it'll tell us that it can't find the Podman machine. This is essentially a virtual machine in which the virtual computing environments will then run so we just need to walk through the process of creating one and again we don't need a machine with privileges and we want to start the machine now and so then we just go ahead. Everything else we can leave in its default settings.

This process can take a bit so you just need to be patient.

Now we've got everything set up we can click on next and we're back at the dashboard. We can see that Podman is running and so now we are ready to move on to running our virtual computing environment.

3.4 Where Next

The `{where-next}` block is used at the end of a part to indicate that the student is ready to move on to the next part and to give an indication of what the student can expect to see there:

```
:::{where-next}  
You are now ready to move on to the next part.  
:::
```


Where next?

You are now ready to move on to the next part.

3.5 Time

The `{time}` block is used to indicate that something will take a given amount of time and is generally used with `{activity}`:

```
:::{time} 20 minutes  
:::
```

 20 minutes

4 FIGURES

As well as embedding images using `{Figure}` directives, images can also be generated using the `mermaid.js` diagramming tool.

The generated image is saved as a `.png` file and automatically linked to.

Diagram scripts may be specified using the `{mermaid}` directive:

```
```{mermaid}
:alt:
:caption: Publishing workflows from MyST markdown

flowchart LR
 A[Jupyter Notebook] --> C
 B[MyST Markdown] --> C
 C(mystmd) --> D{"Sphinx\n+\nnpandoc"}
 D --> E[LaTeX]
 E --> F[PDF]
 D --> G[Word]
 D --> H[XML] --> I[OU-XML]
 D --> J[HTML]
 I --> K[OU-VLE]
 I --> L[OU-PDF]
```
```

Diagram scripts can also be included in a markdown file using colon fenced blocks:

```
:::{mermaid}
:alt:
:caption: A class diagram showing the Module, JupyterBook, and Theme. The Module is linked to the JupyterBook, which in turn is linked to the Theme
classDiagram
  Module -- JupyterBook
  JupyterBook -- Theme
:::
```

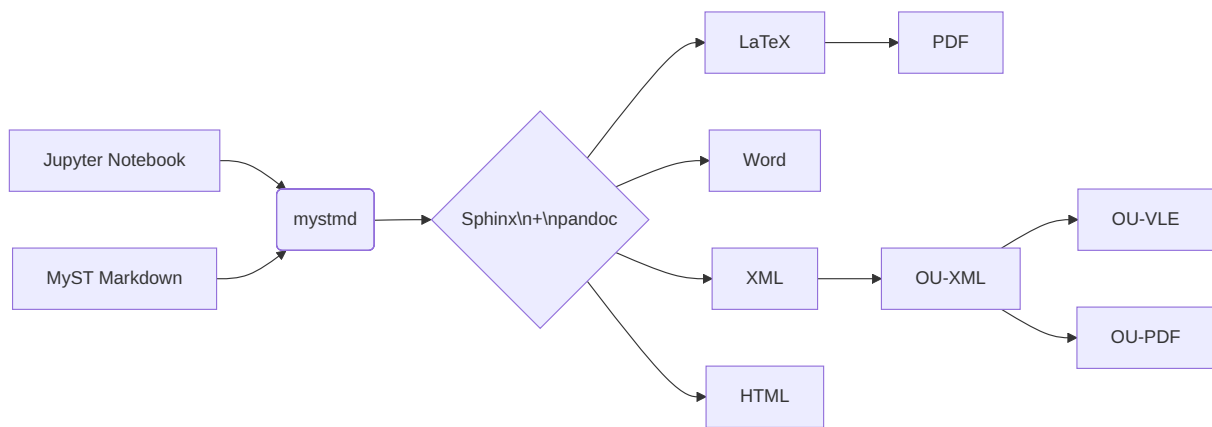


Fig. 4.1: Publishing workflows from MyST markdown

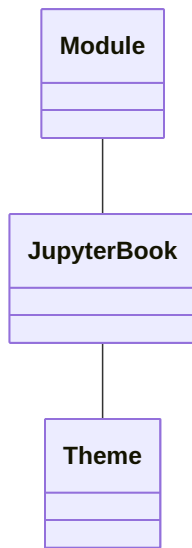


Fig. 4.2: A class diagram showing the Module, JupyterBook, and Theme. The Module is linked to the JupyterBook, which in turn is linked to the Theme

5 COMMAND-LINE

The OU Book Theme provides an Command-line interface (CLI). To run the CLI commands use:

```
$ obt
```

The following additional CLI commands are available:

5.1 build – Build the book

Use the *build* command to create the HTML files:

```
$ obt build {PATH}
```

The built HTML files are then in *PATH/_build/html*.

5.2 serve – Run a local development server

Use the *serve* command to run a local development server:

```
$ obt serve {PATH}
```

The book is then available at <http://localhost:8000>.

When you make changes to the book content, the book is automatically rebuilt and the web-page reloaded. Depending on the size of the book, this may take a few seconds. Check the terminal for any errors.

You can configure the host and port to make the book available at by providing the `--host {IP_OR_HOSTNAME}` and / or `--port {PORT}` options to the *serve* command.

6 DEVELOPER DOCUMENTATION

This area of the documentation contains information for developers of the OU Book Theme.

6.1 Updating the OU headers and footers

To update the OU headers / footers follow these steps:

1. Replace the content of `ou_book_theme/theme/ou_book_theme/ouheaders` with the newest versions of the `gui` and `js` folders from the updated theme. Then:
 1. In the `ou_book_theme/theme/ou_book_theme/ouheaders/gui/headerfooter.min.css` replace all occurrences of `/ouheaders/gui` with `..`
 2. In the `ou_book_theme/theme/ou_book_theme/ouheaders/js/src/ou-header.js` replace all occurrences of `'/ouheaders` with `document.querySelector('html').getAttribute('data-content_root') + 'ouheaders.`
 3. Run *hatch run build-ou-branding* to build the minified version
2. Replace the contents of the `ou_book_theme/theme/ou_book_theme/ou-header.html` with the content from the updated theme. Then:
 1. In the updated file replace all occurrences of `/ouheaders` with `{{ content_root }}ouheaders`
 2. In the updated file comment out the Google Tag Manager tracking iframe
 3. In the updated file comment out the Skip-to-main-content link
3. Replace the contents of the `ou_book_theme/theme/ou_book_theme/ou-footer.html` with the content from the updated theme. Then:
 1. In the updated file replace all occurrences of `/ouheaders` with `{{ content_root }}ouheaders`
4. Replace the contents of the `ou_book_theme/theme/ou_book_theme/ou-head.html` with the content from the updated theme. Then:
 1. In the updated file replace all occurrences of `/ouheaders` with `{{ content_root }}ouheaders`

7 CHANGELOG

7.1 2.1.0 (15.01.2026)

- **New:** Added a full LaTeX template

7.2 2.0.3 (28.07.2025)

- **Bugfix:** Fix the build and serve commands

7.3 2.0.2 (28.07.2025)

- **Bugfix:** Fix CLI commands

7.4 2.0.1 (28.07.2025)

- **Bugfix:** Remove JupyterBook hook

7.5 2.0.0 (28.07.2025)

- **Breaking:** Remove JupyterBook dependency
- **Breaking:** Remove support for Python 3.9

7.6 1.5.1 (20.02.2025)

- **Bugfix:** Fix a bug with empty errata lists

7.7 1.5.0 (20.02.2025)

- **New:** Added support for errata
- **Breaking:** Support for unsupported Python versions is dropped

7.8 1.4.0 (30.09.2024)

- **Update:** Improved the display of activities and videos in PDFs

7.9 1.3.1 (20.09.2024)

- **Bugfix:** Fix a bug preventing videos from being shown fullscreen

7.10 1.3.0 (06.09.2024)

- **New:** Added support for videos from the OCL video site

7.11 1.2.0 (27.06.2024)

- **Update:** Added OU branding

7.12 1.1.1 (27.03.2025)

- **Update:** Add ability to specify “serve” command host and port

7.13 1.1.0 (26.03.2025)

- **New:** Added JupyterBook CLI extension

7.14 1.0.0 (31.01.2025)

- **Breaking:** Removed the OU-XML related functionality
- **New:** Added basic testing
- **New:** Added support for dark mode
- **Update:** Upgrade to sphinx-book-theme >= 1.0
- **Update:** Update styling to closer match brand guidelines

7.15 0.5.2 (15.08.2023)

- **New:** Add support for cross-references within documents and parts
- **Update:** Update docs - ouxml generation
- **Update:** Minor updates to tag handling (Image/legend)
- **Update:** Update copyright notice in accordance with convention check

7.16 0.5.1 (29.06.2023)

- **Bugfix:** Fix the OU-XML tag for multi-line code blocks

7.17 0.5.0 (12.06.2023)

- **New:** Add support for single-part content

7.18 0.4.0 (30.05.2023)

- **New:** Added a version command to the CLI
- **New:** Ensure external links open in new tabs

7.19 0.2.2 (18.04.2023)

- **Update:** Various accessibility improvements

7.20 0.2.1 (08.03.2023)

- **New:** Added sphinxcontrib-mermaid dependency
- **Update:** Updated sphinx-book-theme to $\geq 1.0.0, < 2.0.0$

8 ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT FOR OU BOOK THEME

The Open University is committed to making its websites and mobile applications accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

This accessibility statement applies to the OU Book Theme.

We want as many people as possible to be able to use our websites and mobile apps, and accessibility is an essential part of our mission. On our [Accessibility Hub](#), you'll find everything you need to answer any questions you have about accessibility, whether you're a student or a member of staff.

To adapt the content to your needs or preferences you should be able to:

- Change colours, contrasts levels and fonts.
- Resize text up to 200% without impact on the functionality of the website.
- Zoom in up to 400% without loss of information or functionality.
- Navigate the website using just a keyboard.
 - tab to 'Skip to content' links at the top of the page to jump over repetitive information to the main content.
 - tab through the content; the current location will be indicated by a clear visual change.
 - control the embedded media player to play audio and video materials.
- Use a screen reader (e.g. JAWs, NVDA) to:
 - listen to the content of web pages and use any functionality on the page.
 - list the headings and subheadings in the page and then jump to their location on the page.
 - bring up a list of meaningful links on the page.
- Use transcripts or closed captions with most audio and video materials.
- Download learning materials in alternative formats (e.g. Word document, PDF, ePub, Kindle eBook).
- If you have a print disability we provide [SensusAccess](#) to students, which is an automated service that converts files from one format to another, for example, PDF to text, audio, Word or Braille.
- [AbilityNet](#) also provides advice on making your device easier to use if you have a disability.

8.1 Compliance status

This website is fully compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.2 AA standard.

8.2 Preparation of this accessibility statement

This statement was prepared on 26.06.2023.

The statement was last reviewed on 26.06.2023.

The website was last tested on 26.06.2023.

The website was tested using a combination of automatic accessibility checking tools as part of the website's standard development process.

8.3 Feedback and contact information

If you find that a certain section of our website is not accessible and you can't get access to the information that you need please use the Open [University Accessibility Feedback Form](#) to request support and we will ensure that you are provided with the information you require. You will need to provide your contact details and Personal Identifier if you are a student so we can get back to you. You should expect to hear back from us within 5 working days.

The OU is very experienced in meeting accessibility needs for our students. In many cases we are able to provide module and other study support materials in alternative formats for students who indicate a need for this when completing a [Disability Support Form](#).

In addition, some module materials are available in different formats and can be downloaded from module websites. Students can contact their [Student Support Team](#) for advice.

If you are a student, or someone who has had contact with the University before, and have a complaint about the accessibility of our websites, you should raise a complaint via the [complaints and appeals process](#).

8.4 Enforcement procedure

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for enforcing the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (the 'accessibility regulations').

If you are based in the UK, and you're not happy with how we respond to your complaint, contact the [Equality Advisory and Support Service \(EASS\)](#). If you are based in Northern Ireland, and you're not happy with how we respond to your complaint, contact the [Equalities Commission for Northern Ireland \(ECNI\)](#).