



Launched in July 2013, The Open University's OpenScience Laboratory is an internet-based platform for teaching practical processes to online students.

It began in response to the challenge of combining the practical elements of science, technology, engineering and maths study with distance learning.

It has been so successful that it is being integrated across The Open University's science curriculum and has become a core element of the institution's STEM degrees, allowing the university to explore and analyse fresh approaches to science learning.

To provide distance-learning students with access to relevant online experience, the university worked with the Wolfson Foundation, a charity that awards grants to support and promote academic excellence, in order to engage leading software developers and researchers in the platform's design. Most of the 50 online investigations developed as a result are used in undergraduate modules, and many are freely available to the public.

Martin Hamilton, futurist at Jisc and one of our judges, said that the OpenScience Laboratory gives STEM distance learners "the closest possible experience to studying in a real lab".

He added "It strategically supports distance learning at a variety of educational levels, providing resources through open access to a wide range of potential audiences."

The judging panel felt that it was a "genuinely exciting" project, Mr. Hamilton said.

"It clearly demonstrates the power that technology has to enable people in higher education to perform at the forefront of international practice," he concluded.