

OFFICER REPORTS

The following reports have been submitted:

	Page:
President	3-7
Deputy President	9-11
Vice President Communications	13-15
Vice President Constitutions	17-18
Vice President Education	19-27
Vice President Equal Opportunities	29-36
Vice President Finance including	37-38
Audited Accounts of the Association to 31 July 2009	Appendix A 39
Budget for 2009/10	Appendix B 41
Residential School Accounts Summary	Appendix C 43-46
Vice President Representation	No Report
Vice President Student Support	47-49
Student Member of Council	51-53
Chair OUSA (Services) Ltd	55-56
Audited Accounts of the Association to 31 July 2009	Appendix A 57
General Manager	59-61
Chair of OUSET including	63-64
Audited Accounts for the Trust to 31 July 2009	Appendix A 65
Chair of Societies Standing Committee	67
Progress of Resolutions and Referred Motions	69-78

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

PRESIDENT

ROZ EVANS

Quote.....

It has been everything that I expected – and so much more. It has been exciting, scary, exhausting, educational and fun and often all those in the same couple of hours..... end quote

The above quote was taken from my first President report to the Executive Committee (E C) in June 2009 and the same is as true today as it was then. I have thoroughly enjoyed the majority of my time as President – maybe I have blanked out the more stressful parts – and I hope that I have been effective in representing the concerns of the OUSA membership.

My reports to the E C have fully covered what I have been doing and therefore I have picked out some of the main issues to include in this final report. There are many others that may be of equal importance that are covered in past reports by myself or other members of the officer team or that will be included during the Conference 2010 agenda.

The following is a brief synopsis of major events during my past year as President.

Higher Education in the current financial climate

The Government has instigated an Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance. The Vice Chancellor, Martin Bean, has given oral evidence to the panel – and I would recommend that you take the time to watch this on the Review website as it emphasises the prowess of our Vice Chancellor as a very impressive speaker and, as he calls himself, the main cheerleader for the Open University (O U). The O U has also made a joint written submission with Birkbeck University and I have also made a written submission on behalf of OUSA.

Vice Chancellor

Prior to taking office, the new Vice Chancellor (V C), Martin Bean, invited me to meet with him to discuss the priorities affecting students. This initial meeting has led to improved communications between OUSA and O U departments and I believe that having a V C who listens to student concerns and then enables these concerns to be discussed with the appropriate departments will continue to reap benefits in the future.

The Executive Committee (E C) were very pleased to welcome Martin Bean to their December meeting and I believe that we have a very capable advocate for part time and distance learning in the difficult times ahead.

OFFICER REPORTS

Establishing National Contacts

As a result of my paper to the E C concerning the effect of the current financial situation on Higher Education I was invited to visit the O U offices in Scotland, Wales and Ireland to discuss the differences with regard to funding and support. At each of these meetings I was accompanied by local students and we met with the National Director and various members of the student support teams. In all cases these meetings were very valuable – to both the students and the staff – and many new contacts have been made and various initiatives for improving student support will ensue. Sometimes just sitting around a table and talking brings up really simple solutions to issues that have existed for quite a while.

I am hoping that these contacts will continue for our mutual benefit and I would like to express my thanks to all the National Directors for making me so welcome and providing me with such wide ranging agendas.

Other student bodies

As I have journeyed the length and breadth of OUSA-land I have been keen to make connections with the various National Union of Students (N U S) officers and Union of Students in Ireland (U S I) representatives and I am pleased to have been able to invite some of them to attend Conference.

There have been very interesting discussions about how we support our respective members and I am sure that communications will continue as we find commonalities within our responsibilities. The N U S in Scotland have already included O U students within a recent survey and we look forward to benefitting from the information extracted. I believe that we will benefit from a closer relationship with other student bodies while remaining independent.

National Students Forum

I am a member of the National Students Forum (N S F) - the only member solely representing part time and distance students. It has been very interesting to discover the issues that unite us with full time students and I am sure that I have been able to 'educate' other students into the problems facing our members. In this capacity I have had the opportunity to meet government ministers with responsibility for Higher Education and have not wasted the opportunity to promote the concerns of part time and distance students. Past reviews ignored the part time sector, but it appears that we now occupy a significant place within the current considerations.

Residential Schools

Following visits to all Residential Schools with OUSA representation, Nik Morris (Vice President (V P) Representation at the time) and myself worked on making our presence at Residential School (R S) less bound by red tape and tried to remove the necessity to have a Co-ordinator at each campus. Some of the day to day organisation can now be undertaken by OUSA office staff and this year we may well have one R S – Bath – without a co-ordinator, but with experienced reps taking responsibility for the on-site organisation and

OFFICER REPORTS

the advance organisation already having been undertaken by the OUSA office. This has been agreed with the Regional Office in the South West and hopefully this will remove the pressure of finding someone willing to give up such a large amount of time to co-ordinate.

Residential school reps remain the major physical presence of OUSA, providing information about the Association and I know that although it looks like fun it is often very hard work. I'd like to thank all those who have repped in the past and remind you that we are always looking for volunteers. Please contact the office if you are interested.

Degree Ceremonies

Last year I was fortunate to fulfil my dream and I graduated in Cheltenham – a wonderful day and I recommend attending your own degree ceremony to everyone who is able to.

Together with V P Rep I have made some changes with regard to the way we provide co-ordinators for these ceremonies and we now have a pool of experienced students who are willing to provide co-ordination in regions that are struggling to find someone willing to take on the responsibility. This has meant that we already have co-ordinators in place for all award ceremonies – a major improvement on last year where E C officers had to step in at the last minute to ensure that merchandising could take place. Many thanks to all those who continue to volunteer, we wouldn't be able to operate without you.

Relationship with the O U

Throughout the past year I have been invited to many separate meetings with the University, both as a member of a committee or team and also several meetings that have been arranged so that I can talk to individuals. Many of these invitations originated from an enquiry being made from OUSA about a single issue and then the offer being made of a briefing from the university to help and inform. Topics at these individual meetings have included the Student Support Review, national and international strategy and employment skills. Many E C officers are receiving similar invitations.

I welcome the opportunity for OUSA to become involved at every level of debate and discussion and I hope that this will continue as widening communication continues to be one of our main aims.

I continue to have regular meetings with Will Swann, Director Students, and find these invaluable as a method of finding out what the particular concerns of the O U are, often being given exceptionally confidential and sensitive information prior to its general release. This is something that I appreciate greatly and I believe that it shows the regard in which the O U hold senior OUSA officers. At times it really brings home the importance of the role of President and it is something that I take with a great deal of seriousness.

OFFICER REPORTS

Changes

Unless you have been hibernating for the past 2 years it is unlikely that you will be unaware of the OUSA Futures project and I leave the details to a separate report. However, this is the place where I will say a very big thank you to all those who took the time to become involved in the various consultations and meetings that have enabled the E C to bring OUSA Futures to Conference 2010. This was the first, major consultation ever undertaken by OUSA and the results speak for themselves. OUSA Futures has taken up a major amount of my time this year, but I hope that everyone thinks that this time has been well spent.

Other changes have already been instigated. I have taken a more logical approach to a variety of issues in order to make the Association run more smoothly. Some of the changes are:

- a brief meeting of the new E C directly after the close of Conference in order for new members to feel included
- moving the first E C meeting after Conference so that there is not such a long gap before we start acting as a team. The officers meeting has also moved
- resources for each V P remit to be kept centrally in the OUSA office to enable a better handover when a previous incumbent is not available
- a review of officer remits has begun with the aim of avoiding duplication and allowing officers to concentrate on specifics rather than the mundane which can be carried out by the office.

Personal

When I was elected I was in full time employment and wondered how I would be able to fit everything that was needed into the available time. Well, being an optimist, I always expected something to happen to sort this out – but I wasn't really expecting to be made redundant in July! Since then I have been seeking employment, but so far have been unsuccessful. However, in spite of the loss to my bank balance this has been a positive event for my Presidential persona. I have been able to accept invitations to meet people, give presentations and work more closely with the office staff than I would have been able to had I been in employment. In fact, I wonder now how I would be able to fit in a full time job! I hope that the contacts I have been able to make during this time will understand if I am suddenly unable to attend a face to face meeting – emails may have to suffice - but I have worked hard to establish relationships that should stand OUSA in good stead in the future.

Thanks

Finally, I have some people to thank. A lot of individuals have helped me fulfil the role of President to the extent that I have managed. Some of them have provided very practical advice – reminding me that I have to stop to eat, that suitcases don't unpack themselves, and the location of the best parking spots. Some have been there for me to rant to when there haven't been enough hours in the day to do everything I intended and then there are those who

OFFICER REPORTS

provided support for me when my personal life turned itself on its head and told me that I would come out the other side and things would get better – and they were right. I won't name them – they know who they are.

There are some who don't need to remain anonymous. The E C members and the officer team have provided such great support over the past year. There have been times when we haven't all agreed and that is just as it should be. I do not want an Executive that agrees with everything I say – reasoned argument and debate will always lead to a more reasoned outcome.

Some E C members are not standing for re-election and some have already had to leave. They will all be missed and all have made their own impressions on how OUSA operates. I hope that we will continue to stay in touch and the door is always open for a return.

My final thanks go to the office team. They provide such impressive support – they have knowledge in abundance and have always answered even my most stupid of questions with good humour and promptness. Although all of the office staff have provided me with help over the past year, I have to single out the General Manager, Trudi de Haney, for special thanks. For an incoming President, having Trudi to guide you through all the intricate protocols etc is an absolute godsend. She has guided me in the ways of the O U, never told me what to do or say, but offered her opinion when asked and then let me get on with it.

I know that I have done my best to represent Open University students in an appropriate and effective way. I am really pleased to be the President who brings OUSA Futures to Conference 2010 – being President hasn't always been easy, but it has been very rewarding and I am very grateful for being giving this opportunity to represent my fellow students.

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

DEPUTY PRESIDENT

CAROLE BROOKS

This has been an interesting and, at times, frustrating year. At the start of the year I was really hopeful that we would make progress in leaps and bounds along the path of leaving FirstClass behind, but by the end of the year it feels as though we have only moved a short way. However, a short way is better than no progress.

Soon after Conference 2009 I attended the Making Connections Conference on the University's campus, where I met and made connections with a whole range of people, some of whom I had already encountered online.

The early part of my year was heavily focussed on Open Unlimited, and as well as liaising with the University over the move from FirstClass, much of my time has been taken up with a detailed survey of the current conferencing structure, and with the administration thereof. I have also had the privilege of Chairing the Staffing Sub-Committee. As a result of my OUSA role, I have also become Chair of the National Postgraduate Committee.

With regret I have to admit that my health has not proved as robust as I had hoped, and although I was appointed to the Senate Reference Group I have had to miss some meetings.

Open Unlimited

Although I only came to this event a few weeks before it happened, in those short weeks I spent a huge amount of time in planning and organising OUSA's input. On the day we were lucky enough to get the excellent weather that we had ordered, the Timeline, photographic competition, marketing stall, raffle, bookstall, Disabled Students Group and various society stalls were well attended. I was fortunate to be invited to join the Open University String Orchestra for a performance, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

The bookstall raised £313.50 the raffle £310.50, the calendar £505 and the marketing stall an excellent £1521.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Ann Faithful (Assistant General Manager) and the office staff who worked so hard on this project, and to the students who turned up on the day and worked cheerfully and enthusiastically to make the day a success.

Staffing Sub-Committee.

There have been few changes in the office staff this year, although one of the staff did have the shock of finding she was pregnant only a few weeks before delivery, and is now the mother of a bouncing boy!! Her temporary replacement has fitted seamlessly into the current team.

Sadly I also have to report the death of Loretta Souza, who had retired not long ago, and who was a delightful lady and much respected colleague.

OFFICER REPORTS

It has been a real privilege to lead this committee, and to play an active part in the exercise of OUSA's responsibility as an employer.

Management of FirstClass

At last year's Live Hustings I stated my intention to CHAIR the Controller's Advisory Panel, and I am pleased to say that I have done just that! My colleagues on this panel have been measured and shown much wisdom, and we have worked together to good effect. I do realise that there are some decisions that have not met with universal approval, but they have all been arrived at following detailed and significant consideration.

I have been impressed with the commitment of the Mentor Mod team, and with their willingness to work with me this last year. At the time of writing we are looking to recruit some new members as 'natural wastage' has reduced the line-up over time, and I am confident that whoever joins the team will be accepted with generosity and good humour. I would like to extend my thanks to all those who work for OUSA as moderators of our numerous conferences. At times this can be a thankless task, but in truth the system could not survive without them - so I AM saying a very big and heartfelt THANK YOU!

Move from FirstClass to a web-based system

I doubt there are many people reading this who are unaware of the impending demise of our conferencing system as a result of the University's adoption of a V L E (Virtual Learning Environment). Although it had been known for some time that we needed to find an alternative modus operandi and location for our extensive suite of forums, previous to this year the communication with the University had been patchy, and beset by frustrations and misunderstandings on both sides. Early in my elected term, working closely with Laura Murphy (Student Member of Council) and Hazel Pegg (V P Communications), we ascertained that the system on Moodle as it then stood could not support our requirements. As a consequence my colleagues identified other systems that could meet them, and we commenced testing. We were then able to suggest these systems as alternatives to the University, and although they felt that this was not an option that they could easily agree to (because of technical and user support issues), this exercise enabled us to more clearly identify those things that we cannot do without. A number of the issues we identified coincided with ones raised by the Associate Lecturers, and those and others that were specific to us have now been included in the update schedule, indeed some are in place and others promised for the next two or three releases. After sundry meetings with a range of people from different departments, we now have a settled conduit for information and discussion, in the Tri-partite Committee, where we meet with senior University staff and Associate Lecturer representatives. I am now happy to report that we are making some progress with this, and hope to be able to move some the Executive Committee forums to Moodle within a few months as our first larger scale trial of the facilities available. At the same time we are now starting to

OFFICER REPORTS

look at the structure that our new 'presence' will have. If all goes well, and the improvements that are forecast appear reasonably to schedule, we are hoping to move our whole system over the latter part of the coming year. But, as Burns so appositely said "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley, An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, For promis'd joy!".

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

HAZEL PEGG

This has been a busy and productive year on the Communications front, with new technology playing an increasingly large part. Hard Copy communications have all but disappeared and the use of email and websites have become the norm. Not everyone likes this change but it was inevitable in the context of increasingly sophisticated technology and decreasing funds to finance the more traditional paper based missives. I feel that OUSA has risen to the challenges presented by these changes and adapted well to a new way of communicating.

CAMEL

The CAMEL system of emailing links to Newsletters, O U Student and other information continues to work well, although there are some concerns regarding the less than perfect match between OUSA members and those listed on the O U database as current students. However we are confident that very few interested members fail to receive CAMEL notifications and the Office maintains its own lists of 'activists' and those on extended or prolonged membership. Guidelines for the use of CAMEL are in place and the system has proved a valuable communication tool.

Newsletters

Following the introduction of the CAMEL system it has been decided that the newsletter allocation for Regions/Nations be increased to two per annum. The branch allocation remains at three per annum. The turnaround time between newsletters being received by the Office and their delivery to students is now counted in days rather than weeks (and on occasion in hours). The 'bounce-back' rate – that is where the recipient email address doesn't accept the email – is very low and the number of students requiring hard-copy due to not having provided a preferred email address is continuing to fall.

O U Student

There was much uncertainty as to the future of this magazine earlier last year but the situation has since stabilised. O U Student continues to be produced in collaboration with the O U Communications department and I am not aware of any plans for that to change in the near future. As ever, thanks must go to Als Ryan for all her work on this publication.

FirstClass

During Spring & Summer I was involved in discussions with the University about the move away from First Class and participated in assessing the suitability of Moodle and other forum software. A spell of illness caused me to miss a subsequent meeting and I have now withdrawn from direct involvement in talks about any future forum software. The Deputy President continues to lead these discussions on our behalf and it appears that progress is being made.

OFFICER REPORTS

StudentHome

We now have much more of a presence on StudentHome than at any time in the past and continue to discuss with the University other ways of raising the profile of OUSA.

The OUSA Website

The main website (www.ousa.org.uk) has been completely redone by the very competent Mick Deal and is now much more attractive to look at whilst being far more accessible than the previous version.

Several short videos have been added over the past year and I expect that we will continue to produce more. We are increasingly using the website to provide news and information and I confidently expect it to continue to improve over the coming year.

OUSA Near You

The www.ousanearyou.org.uk website has not evolved as I had hoped but does have a useful function as a repository for local newsletters, contacts and events. The aim of enabling any postholder to update pages has proved impossible to implement using off-the-shelf website templates as we have failed to find one that is reasonably accessible. Some thought was given to writing a custom site but lack of time, expertise and funds have meant that this hasn't happened.

Local Websites

During the past year we have drawn up guidelines for local websites in an attempt to get away from the muddle of the past few years. We now ask that any domain be registered to the OUSA Office using the address in Milton Keynes. This should hopefully remove the situation where in the past domains have been registered to individual students who then go on to cease involvement with the Association; leading to the website becoming out of the control of current postholders. We also now have centrally funded server space where any unit can have their website hosted free of charge.

OUSA in Second Life

We now have space in a building in the O U area of Second Life. Not having been there myself I am a little hazy as to what that actually means! But those who frequent Second Life on our behalf appear to have made contact with relevant people from the O U and to be establishing an OUSA presence there.

Social Networking Sites

We have a limited presence on Facebook and Twitter but this is not an area that I have put much energy into. Sometimes it feels that there are too many online places for any one person to be able to participate in them all and I tend to the view that focussing on our website and referring people there for news and information is more constructive than attempting to maintain communication on a wide range of platforms. My successor may think otherwise.

OFFICER REPORTS

E C Blog

This doesn't yet exist but may do before too long. The intention is that any member of the E C can post short updates about anything they are involved with. I look forward to seeing this in action.

OUSA Futures

During my time on the E C much work has been done on the Futures project and Conference this year is being asked to approve a range of motions in order that the Association can move into the future. I've been involved with OUSA on and off for over a decade and to me this years Conference is the most important that I have ever attended. I hope to end my time on the E C on a note of optimism as OUSA rises to the challenges it faces, turns its back on many of the old ways of doing things and steps confidently into the Future.

Finally

As I am stepping down from the role of V P Communications this year it only remains for me to thank all those who have helped me over the past two years and to wish my successor the best of luck with whatever the future brings.

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

VICE PRESIDENT CONSTITUTIONS

SANDY GIBSON

First of all I would like to thank Conference for electing me last year. It has been a very busy and productive year. It has had its ups and downs, but on the whole a very pleasant year.

As many of you are aware the main focus this year has been on the Futures project, it has been discussed in many areas, from the Executive Committee to OUSA Forums and Branches. It has been a lot of hard work and I hope you all appreciate the effort played by myself and others in bringing some motions to Conference 2010.

The beginning of the year was very difficult with various situations taking place within OUSA, I spent a lot of time dealing with OUSA Forums regarding how the Constitution should be used and clarifying many points to individuals within the Association, and it was not without its difficulties and a great deal of stress.

I have attended the Societies Standing Committee and I hope this year that we have built up a great working relationship; I have answered many queries to individuals, and the numerous societies that we have affiliated to OUSA.

Within a month of taking office we had the updated Constitution and Register of Decisions, which was a mammoth task to get completed in that time frame. However, I have always felt and still do, that these are important tools for our members, and I believe this was much appreciated.

OUSA Futures is leading the Association into the 21st Century, and as I have said there are motions to Conference which we will all debate, but this is not the end.

The President, General Manager and myself have been working on a model constitution which the Charity Commission has prepared and we hope that we can use this, with the ideas from our members to meet the needs of the Association in this day and age.

I was a little apprehensive coming back as V P Constitutions but I believe that I have settled into the role once more. I have made decisions which are not popular to everyone, but as adult learners we can all appreciate that the decisions made are for the benefit of the Association and all our members whether at an individual level or Executive Committee level.

I am going to keep this report short, you all have the opportunity to ask questions at Hustings and ask supplemental questions about the report at Conference, so please do.

OFFICER REPORTS

Finally I would like to thank a few people this year, my fellow Officers, the Executive Committee, and you, the Association. I would also like to thank the OUSA office staff for their support throughout the year, and many thanks to Ann Faithful, my main support in the Office. One more thank you and that is to my partner for putting up with me during this time and assisting me when he can.

Thank You.

Have a good Conference.

OFFICER REPORTS

VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION

MARIANNE CANTIERI

At the close of Conference 2009 I spent an evening with friends then travelled down to Milton Keynes on the Monday after lunch so that I could visit the O U Complaints and Appeals Department on the Tuesday to learn how the University deals with complaints from students. I had imagined I'd be visiting a group of rather stern and definitely serious people, all trying to find a way to exonerate the University from blame. How wrong I was. The light open-plan office was full of cheerful people who, when they explained what they were doing, turned out to be dedicated to finding out what had happened to the student and how they could help to solve the problem. I left full of confidence that when we recommend students to put in an official complaint, the issue will be investigated thoroughly and fairly.

Senate Reference Group (S R G)

The Senate Reference Group was set up when Senate was downsized, to act in an advisory capacity to the student members of Senate and in particular, to ensure that the student members of Senate have the benefit of a face to face meeting in which they are able to draw on the diversity of circumstances, views and opinions of students as allowed for by OUSA within its representative structures. It meets in the morning prior to each Senate meeting; members include Central Representatives, one per faculty, and Region/Nation appointed Representatives. The meeting itself lasts for two hours during which time the Senate papers are discussed. This gives the six OUSA Senate Representatives broader information upon which to base their arguments to Senate and the S R G members a wider outlook on student opinion to report to their regions. After lunch, while Senate is taking place, we organise a presentation from one of the University Departments. The opportunity to give these presentations is welcomed by the presenters as they always welcome feedback from students; it also serves as an outlet for information about new projects when the S R G Representatives pass on the information about what they have seen to their Regions/Nations and colleagues.

The presentations this year were:

- The Open Programme - Dr Terry Di Paolo, Academic Lead of the Open Programme - April 2009
- Tour of the Library - Jun 09
- Presentation by Andrew Law, Director of Multi-Platform Broadcasting - Oct 09
- Presentation of the Virtual Science Experiment Programme - Professor Nicholas Braithwaite, Head of the Department of Physics and Astronomy - Jan 10

OFFICER REPORTS

The presentation by the Science Faculty was of particular interest as the Science Faculty discussions on the reduction of practical Science courses has caused great consternation amongst students in that faculty and we had hoped for high participation in the event to enable lively, critical debate and to ensure that the information provided in the presentation was widely distributed to students in the Regions/Nations. Unfortunately only a small number of S R G Reps. were able to stay for the presentation, although I understand the discussions were indeed critical.

Level One Coherence Review

I knew when I left Conference 2009, that the Level One Coherence Review was an ongoing topic. Little did I realise then just how much time would be spent on it, both in regular discussions with members of the Project Team and impromptu talks when we coincided at other meetings as well as a presentation by a member of the Team to the Central Representatives at their week-end meeting. This is by no means a complaint; in fact I am delighted to report that OUSA was very much involved in discussions on the development of this Project throughout the year right up to its presentation to and approval by Senate. I am also glad to report that our suggestions and comments were taken into consideration by the Review Team.

I believe that the result of the Review, which will principally affect students, new to the University who have no previous experience of Higher Education, will make initial course choice simpler and the fact that they will be strongly recommended to commence their studies with a Core Level 1 course will give them the necessary learning and I C T skills to successfully progress to Level 2 study. Hopefully, the number of students who become disillusioned to the extent that they drop out of their first course will diminish.

Although the Review has now been passed by Senate, I shall be taking a close interest in its implementation phase; in fact I have already been working with the Project Team on the 'Decision Map' which is being produced as an aid for new students to help them decide which course to take first.

Student Support Review (S S R)

The Student Support Review is now in Phase three; with seven Pilots up and running, they are implementing the 28 recommendations approved by Senate in April 2008 and working on the evaluation process that will be used in preparation for the report to Senate in June 2011. The latest Student Support Review Newsletter and Podcast can be found at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/student-support-review/>

This edition has been prepared with O U staff in mind but it is open to all and the S S R Team have said that and that they would be delighted if students access it and that the next edition will focus more on the student and Associate Lecturers viewpoint. If you have the time, it's well worth listening to.

OFFICER REPORTS

We have continued to have regular meetings with the S S R Team and at their request have submitted comments and suggestions to the plans for the evaluation programme they are working on at present.

The Library

The library commissioned a review of procedures and the OUSA President and I were invited to meet the reviewers to discuss the student viewpoint. From the responses to the Quality Assurance Audit (Q A A) Questionnaire, sent out by OUSA last year we were able to say that most students who use the library are very pleased with the service; however, some students do not access the library at all. Recently the library has had a prime-place advertisement on StudentHome (alternating with OUSA) and is running online tutorials for students as well as having a page under the Study Support link, which is also found on StudentHome.

European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (E A D T U) Conference

At this Conference in Maastricht, which I attended with OUSA President, we not only met delegates from Universities all over the world but the student delegates from European Distance Teaching Universities. We were actively involved in the setting up of 'A European Student Council'; however, although we left Maastricht full of enthusiasm I have seen little activity so far.

At one of the break-out sessions where a Doctoral Paper was presented on the research carried out on how to calculate "Credit Transfer" for students entering Higher Education with no formal qualifications. I happened to be sitting beside Professor Tait, the O U Pro-Vice Chancellor Curriculum and Awards. At the end of the session, Prof. Tait asked me to pass him a copy of the book produced by the researcher. At my meeting with him a few months later I asked for his comments on the Paper and the possibility of introducing such a system in the O U. He said that this is currently being looked at as part of the Recognition Achievement Project (APEL).

Qualification-Based Strategy Project

The Project is not yet near completion, but the ideas being worked on at present are designed to provide a solution to the problems the University has in estimating future student numbers on courses, without placing the students under any obligations. If the present plans are followed through, the University would be able to offer individual students advice on the best pathway to pursue, again without obligation on the student to follow the advice.

Central Representatives' Training Weekend

As we had introduced the Online Central Representatives Training pack last year, the timetable for the training weekend was reduced from Friday mid-day

OFFICER REPORTS

to Sunday mid-day, to Saturday a.m. to Sunday mid-day. Representatives were assumed to have completed and submitted the online training pack prior to the weekend to enable the time to be spent on practical application of all elements contained in the pack. However, the new appointees did not have access to the O U intranet and were unable to complete the training pack. A new 'Open', albeit restricted version, of the pack has now been produced and is available for any student interested in the work of Central Representatives to access via:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/>

This year, for the first time recently, there was a contribution from the University. Christine Wise, a member of the Level One Coherence Review Programme, attended the Sunday morning Representatives meeting to present, what were then, current working documents of the Review. There was a lively exchange of views and ideas during this session, with Christine taking as many notes as did the Reps. I hope that the O U will participate in our Central Rep meeting in the future, especially as this was an issue raised in the Quality Assurance Audit Report.

Personalised Integrated Learning Systems (PILS)

PILS is a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). These were set up in various English universities, funded by HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) for a five year period.

PILS in particular is extremely efficient in crossing over faculty boundaries initiating faculty websites, developing teaching programmes for individual faculties or courses and then ensuring that the rest of the faculties are aware of them.

The present term for the four CETLs based in the O U, all of which are innovative and were highly commended in the Q A A Report expires in summer 2010 and the O U has not put in a bid for further funding.

Virtual Learning Environment (V L E)

I have had, at his invitation, regular meetings with the Director of Learning Innovation to discuss practical problems that students tell me they are having with using the V L E. Being an Arts and Languages student and having no idea of how or why my computer works or how programmes are produced, I leave the technical stuff strictly to the experts. But I'm not alone in my ignorance and I have been able to explain the problems that other, similarly limited students, are having and our discussions have produced solutions to many of these problems.

Illuminate meetings

Region 09 (R 09)

When the then, Vice Chancellor Designate (as he was then) visited Region 09 a meeting was set up via Illuminate so that Mr Bean could meet some of the

OFFICER REPORTS

region's staff, Associate Lecturers and students, albeit virtually. It was an "illuminating" experience. I was dreading having to use this new system but after five minutes of finding my way around (with the help of Vice President (V P) Student Support) I said "This is fun".

Apart from being fun it was a very interesting and useful meeting. Mr Bean made us no promises, but R 09 staff, ALs & students were able to explain our problems, frustrations and even some delights.

The principal topics covered were:

Fees for Continental Europe students: how frequent requests have been made for an explanation of why a student in Europe has to pay £1510 while the U K fee is £650.

Lack of face to face tutorials

The need for all courses to have an online or virtual tutorial.

The difficulties encountered in getting O U degrees recognised in Europe

Central Representatives'

The Central Representatives have, for some time now, been asking for more opportunities to meet during the Committee year to discuss issues that arise in their Committees. Bringing them all together, apart from at Conference and at their summer meeting is a costly business, so I decided to experiment with holding a meeting for the Central Representatives via Elluminate. The first part of the meeting was spent finding our way around the system and sorting out the 'glitches' and then we had a useful discussion about issues arising from the Level One Coherence Project. The experience was, I believe, a positive one; getting used to the technology was a bit problematic, some found that their microphones didn't work but were able to hear and to make written contributions, while unfortunately one person could neither hear nor be heard, which was a problem. However, on the whole Elluminate appears to be a very useful tool for verbal communications between a group of people and I hope that we'll be able to use it again to discuss cross-university issues.

North Region Committee

When we heard that the January meeting was to be cancelled because of the short agenda and frequent poor weather conditions at that time, V P Student Support and I suggested that we should hold the meeting on Elluminate and after some discussion it was agreed to do so. As it turned out, had the meeting been held in Gateshead in January, the weather conditions might well have prevented many people from attending, but Elluminate enabled us to discuss in real-time an, albeit short, Agenda. The general impression expressed in the summing up at the end of the meeting was that it had been a positive experience.

Recognition of O U degrees in Europe

I discussed the recognition of O U degrees in Europe with one of Region 09's Assistant Directors, Student Services, together with the procedures that have

OFFICER REPORTS

to be followed to obtain recognition, which depend upon the type of Recognition required, they are as follows:

Professional: - Required for entrance into profession. This is obtained by first applying for and obtaining graduate membership of the United Kingdom Professional Body and then applying to the Professional Body in the country concerned. Existing reciprocal agreements between Professional Bodies throughout the European Union should enable such applications to be successful.

Academic: - Required for Post Graduate Study. Acceptance depends upon the requirements of the University applied to, their evaluation of the applicant's Student Academic Summary and of the Research Programme Proposal.

Private Sector: - There is normally no requirement for official recognition within this sector.

Neither the O U nor OUSA have any statistical evidence about the recognition of the Open Degree in non-UK countries as students download their Academic Summary online. However, we know that in many non-UK countries the student has to apply to one or several universities which will compare the O U Degree with their own degrees and either give 'credit transfer' or on rare occasions convalidate the degree. As the regulations applied to the recognition of degrees are always country specific, students should apply to their O U Country Co-ordinator for advice.

I understand from the Chair of the Greece Branch that the Greek Government has, after years of discussion, agreed to recognise O U Philology Degrees. However she won't be celebrating until she sees students who actually have had their degrees recognised. Even so, I know that both the O U, in particular R09, and the students in OUSA Branch Greece have been working very hard over the past few years and I think they deserve congratulating.

Postgraduate Research Students Induction

Unfortunately I was unable to attend this event where I had been due to give a talk about OUSA. However, a written version of what I had intended to say was given to all the new Postgraduate Research students. Later in the year I had a meeting with the members of the Postgraduate Students Society, where we discussed the possibility of reactivating this OUSA Society and for them to run an online site to enable the part-time students to keep in touch with each other and with those based on campus.

Enhancing Academic Integrity Conference

Jude Carroll, (Deputy Director of Assessment Standards Knowledge Exchange, Oxford Brookes University), who is an international authority on the development of policy to combat plagiarism and promote academic integrity gave two keynote speeches. She is one of those speakers whose magnetism

OFFICER REPORTS

grabs you at the start and when, after an hour, she finishes you wish she'd carry on for another hour, even though you are longing to stand up, stretch your legs and find the nearest cup of coffee. It was very heartening to hear that with all her experience of programmes to combat plagiarism and develop academic integrity, in universities all over the world, she was very impressed with the work that is being done in the O U.

The break out sessions gave me the opportunity to hear the views of the O U people who actually have to deal with plagiarism, the problems they have and ideas of how to solve them, as well as being able to put the student point of view. It was encouraging to find that virtually everyone was aware of students' concern about accidental plagiarism and were very keen to ensure that students are fully informed about how to avoid it.

Developing Good Academic Practice website:

In February I was invited to discuss how to bring the Developing Good Academic Practice website to the attention of students as although it is very highly thought of in education circles it is not being visited by many O U students. Among other things I suggested that information about it should be given a prominent place on StudentHome and I invited the Project team to take a stand at OUSA Conference 2010.

Associate Lecturers' (A Ls) Conference

I was one of the OUSA Officers invited to attend this Conference which is a wonderful opportunity to meet A Ls and members of the O U staff to discuss common issues, discover other points of view and, of course, to air the students' viewpoint.

Open Programme

As a member of the Programme Committee for the Open Programme I have seen some lively debate this year. The decision to include the Open Degree in the category of Qualifications requiring at least 60 points at Level1 was not lightly taken, either in the Open Programme Committee or in the Curriculum, Awards and Validation Committee. Votes had to be taken in both committees; on the first occasion in the Open Programme Committee, the matter was referred back to the Academic Lead for further reappraisal and was passed with only a small majority on second reading.

Science Faculty Proposed Cutbacks

The Science Faculty proposed cutbacks in courses and residential schools, has caused a great deal of consternation amongst students in that faculty. OUSA has been working hard behind the scenes to try to ameliorate the perceived problems. Our most experienced Science Faculty Central Representative has led the initiative, as he has the necessary science background and, as a result of his years of experience as Science Faculty

OFFICER REPORTS

Representative, the right contacts within the department. I have had long discussions about the issue with Pro-Vice Chancellor Curriculum and Awards and with the Dean of the Science Faculty. Last November I had a meeting with the Professor who is leading the initiative to introduce virtual scientific experiments in courses. His explanations were plausible though not entirely convincing. We arranged for him to give a demonstration to the Senate Reference Group Members at the January meeting, and for an interactive version of the virtual experiments to be made available for all students to try out this coming spring. I shall try to ensure that the latter event not only takes place, but is widely advertised.

OUSA Futures

I was due to lead a session in the OUSA Futures weekend. Unfortunately my husband was taken ill and I was unable to travel to Milton Keynes. However, the technical genius of OUSA O U Council Member enabled me to take part in the session via a Skype connection. I am very glad I was able to do this as I particularly wanted to present the new-style student to student online support system, probably to be called OUSA S O S (Student Organised Support) to the meeting and to get feedback from those attending. The feedback was valuable as was the Skype experience; it would not be an alternative to attending a day-long meeting, but to enable attendance at a meeting for half an hour to an hour, it was absolutely excellent.

What else do I do?

The V P Education role is a varied one, in fact there is rarely a dull moment. My mailbox is my main connection with students, other members of the Executive Committee and the OUSA Office and its contents are as varied as the role.

Changes to courses:

Over the past year most of the documents produced for module (formerly known as course) or qualification (formerly known as award) changes have been sent to me for consideration. I have read them all and submitted my comments to them.

Study Support

Following a visit to an Assistant Director (Learning Design and Technology) I made a detailed search of the Study Support section on StudentHome and discovered the wealth of information and support that is available for new and continuing students. I also had a look at the preparative material available on OpenLearn and have come to the conclusion that the material that would be included in a 'Freshers' week is available, although not presented in one package. I am continuing to call for this information to be included in Level 1 courses as the first week of study.

OFFICER REPORTS

Student Queries and Problems

I receive a number of queries from students either via the OUSA Office or directly to my mailbox, some of which I know the answers to, but many of them require information from the University, which I endeavour to obtain.

The Central Representatives website

This has recently been updated and moved to a more prominent position on the OUSA website, which I believe it justly deserves, as to my mind representing our students on the University committees is one of the most important aspects of OUSA's work.

Central Representatives Appointments

The run up to the Central Representative Appointments Sub-Committee meeting is a hectic period, as we update all the advertisements, the forms and letters that have to be sent out each year. Once we have the applications in, they are distributed to the members of the Sub-committee to consider prior to the selection meeting which takes place in late May or Early June.

Central Representatives Meeting - July

The timetable and speakers have to be arranged, the necessary papers produced prior to the meeting and when the time arrives the weekend events have to flow smoothly, ensuring that the attendees not only all have the opportunity to hone their committee skills, but have ample opportunity to discuss University issues amongst themselves and of course renew old friendships and make new ones.

University Committee Papers

Although I read all the papers for the committees on which I sit, I do not read all the papers for all the O U committees unless requested to read a specific paper by a student committee member. I do however read all the Central Representatives' Reports on the meetings they attend and frequently refer to the corresponding committee minutes.

The O U Senate and Council Minutes, which are the definitive documents of O U policy and decisions, are available on the open website at:

Senate Minutes: http://www.open.ac.uk/foi/p5_2.shtml

Council Minutes: http://www.open.ac.uk/foi/p5_1.shtml

- 0 -

We must not forget that a great deal of the administrative work of OUSA is done in the OUSA Office and my thanks go to the Office Representation Team, Tracey and Alison and to my Assistant General Manager, Jackie whose efficiency ensures that the work gets done and their sense of humour keeps me going even when life 'outside OUSA' gets me down. Without this team work OUSA would be in a sorry state; however, I'm happy to report that I have really enjoyed being part of the Education team this year.

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

VICE PRESIDENT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

CELIA WEEKS

I came into role as Vice President Equal Opportunities following the casual election process, entering onto a vacant role that appeared to be quiet. I was soon to learn that in fact this was not the case. First on the agenda was Open Unlimited, followed by a mass of meetings within the Open University, getting to know individuals, and what their roles were. I was soon made welcome and fitted in well; representing many issues to the O U and having them seek my advice and the advice of OUSA. Here is an update of some of that work.

Open Unlimited: my first official activity when I came into role saw me gather with thousands of other students, alumni and families taking a look at what our University has to offer, along with a number of OUSA members, who had volunteered to help out on the day. This help included selling raffle tickets and Calendars, staffing the Disabled Students Group (D S G) Stall, the OUSA Services Ltd (O S L) shop, not forgetting the OUSA second hand book stall, which was a particular favourite of many who attended. A very tiring but rewarding day, most of which I personally spent selling raffle tickets and talking to students both past and new (several 1969 'A' students along with several 2009 'A' students). It was heart-warming to listen to many of the changes that have experienced over that last 40 years.

The Open University 40th Anniversary Dinner held in The Wales Millennium Centre. Attended by the O U in Wales' Director, Rob Humphreys and Mr Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister for Wales, who spoke to those present, including the heads of Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Welsh government education department, representatives of the main political parties, as well as honorary graduates, current students and long-serving O U staff. Rhodri Morgan praised both the mission and work of the O U.

Equality and Diversity Office:

I have had a number of communications and meetings with Tony O'Shea-Poon, Senior Manager, Equality and Diversity, and a leading figure in the Equality and Diversity Single Equality Plan, the working title for the Open University's new Equality and Diversity scheme, which released a pre-evaluation website and various communications to seek the views of the students, past, current and those new to the O U. The response from the campaign, at the last count, was input from over 80 students direct to the postings sent out, along with a number of opinions that had been sent directly to me that I have now forwarded on to Tony. The O U's New Equality and Diversity Scheme is the Open University's first equality scheme that incorporates the entire existing equality schemes and sets out the commitments across the O U. The scheme's introduction has been endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor Martin Bean, who noted that "the scheme was developed following a planned process throughout 2009. Its creation involved a large number of students, staff and internal and external experts."

OFFICER REPORTS

It was my personal experience that at least 100 past, present and incoming students responded to the final consultation exercise that was held in October and November. Students responded to emails on StudentHome and throughout many of OUSA'S public FirstClass forums. I also received approximately 20 responses to my personal mailbox, which I collated and passed on to the Equality and Diversity Office.

This new scheme was formally launched on the 16th February 2010, with Baroness Margaret Prosser O B E, the Deputy Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission as keynote speaker. I attended this launch and found it most enlightening. Baroness Prosser spent nearly an hour talking to me, about the role I play within OUSA and my dealings with the O U. It was nice to hear her opinions, and her view that no matter how much progress we think we have achieved with regard to Equal Opportunities there will always be more to do.

Disabled Student Services (D S S)

Meeting the D S S team. These meetings all took place on the same day. Firstly with Julie Young of the Disability Advisory Services, who provided me with up-to-date information on how the D S S are currently structured within the University along with details of individual roles within Students Services from Will Swann to the administrators. This was an excellent meeting allowing me finally to get to grips with some of the O U structures and provide me with feedback of who to approach for which sorts of issues. The second meeting was with Robin Stenham, Manager, Curriculum Access and Jeff Bashton, Visual Impairment Advise. Both Robin and Jeff made myself and Wendy Burrell, Assistant General Manager (Student Services) very welcome. Within our discussions we were able to answer many of the curriculum queries that had entered my mailbox over the past few months, and also allowed me to discuss some of the work that they are doing, one of which is the development of the Moodle forums and the effort to make the system more accessible to all. While I was still in the D S S department Robin produced a C D for me that included lots of pertinent information about Disabled Student Services, Accessibility Guides Information; also links to documents and resources much of which will be a great help to me in directing students and working with the D S S in the future. The meeting with Robin has proved to be most important as he has been a very valuable contact. I have approached him a number of times to seek advice on accessibility issues, and in each case he has provided either a full resolution of the problem or suggested another means of finding a solution for the student.

Lastly on this very busy day we met with Jenny Augustyniak from the Disability Resources Team. Jenny further advanced my insight into the O U structure and the digital agenda, giving us an insight into the DAISY system and how she perceives future developments with its use in course materials.

OFFICER REPORTS

In addition to meeting with the above and retaining contacts with all of them, a main role for V P Equal Opportunities is to act as the Chair for these important regular meetings between OUSA, Disabled Student Services and the Equality and Diversity Office. A representative from the D S G also attends these meetings.

The most recent meeting took place on the 26th February 2010.

We have four primary agenda items:

1. The protocol about recording at tutorials. – We highlighted with the O U the need for some students to be able to record tutorials. We discovered that TutorHome already hold guidelines for Associate Lecturers (A L s) about how to proceed with this. We were told that A Ls are able to allow recording, but should a student be present who is not happy with this then the recorder should be turned off on request. I also asked about the use of a Digital Camera to photograph white boards containing the A L s notes; the O U representatives felt this was an acceptable thing to do , but a student would need to gain the permission of the ‘owner ‘ of the notes on the board.
2. Accessibility of Moodle – An update. We had a long discussion on the current updates to Moodle Forums and accessibility issues. I put forward a number of issues from students with experience of working with Moodle, the Virtual Learning Environment (V L E) and P D Fs. I was happy to hear that the O U are moving towards providing full Word documents rather than P D Fs, and they are currently fine tuning how these will work. I was very interested to hear how P D Fs can differ. The example we were given was of a book that could be converted to P D F using two different P D F writers could result in completely different P D Fs as they may read characters slightly differently. Also the formatting can differ, thus producing very different versions. This is a concern that is prompting the O U to move away from P D Fs. Moodle and the V L E are currently being updated every three months, with an update that focuses on accessibility issues due in June 2010.
3. The Digital Divide – An update. The O U are not shying away from this question. They are well aware of the issues affecting students who do not currently have access to technology, or awareness of how to use the ever changing technology.
4. Disability Impact Assessment Report and Student Involvement. The student involvement in this is where OUSA comes into its own. We have been invited to approve a number of students to take part in the current stage of this consultation being carried out by the University. This will include the Chair of the Disabled Students Group, V P Equal Opps and up to 8 further students. Further consultation will take place with a larger cohort of student later in the year.

OFFICER REPORTS

Disabled Student Allowance (D S A) Office:

On the 22nd January, I again met with Heather Simons. This was another very informative meeting. It is good news that I can feed back. The original backlog of students awaiting D S A receipt of claims has dissipated, and renewals are being issued prior to course start dates in the majority of cases. The office has worked hard to get to this stage considering the new influx of disabled students. Having discussed this with Heather, it is was easy to see that most delays are usually with the assessors reports (visiting assessors). I was also given a detailed look into how the D S A Office log and keep every bit of information received which includes scanned paperwork, emails and details of telephone conversations. This was a really informative afternoon. Other discussions with Heather included:

- The 30 point rules
- The 6 year rules
- The future of D S A Department
- Some of the loops that students feel they are jumping through
- I also received a very informative afternoon, looking at the communication and recording systems that the D S A uses.

Disabled Students Group

Since coming into post, I have worked alongside the previous and current D S G Committees, answering many queries and questions. We have looked at examination arrangements, the different methods of accessibility, and the D S G has asked itself the question about how it communicates with students. I have completed tasks (shown below) that had been on the Inclusive Student Group (I S G) and Disabled Student Group Register of Issues:

Course materials in alternative formats
Access to the stage at Degree Ceremonies
O U websites
Applying Disabled Students Allowance (D S A) recommendations
D S A Complaints Procedure
Access to residential school and tutorial venues
Dragon
Facilities for transgender students
D S G Handbook
Moderating the D S G committee conference
Vice President Absence
D S G Register of Decisions/Issues
Quorum for D S G Committee Meetings
D S G Publicity and Recruitment

All of these issues have been actioned and brought to an acceptable conclusion.

OFFICER REPORTS

The Register of Issues has been updated to reflect the work that has taken place and to look at current issues. In addition we have produced a watch list of issues that are currently not active but may become active as legislation and policies change.

FirstClass Cull: Again I have only had limited input in this through the discussions with members of the I S Gs and D S G online. Although both groups do not want to have a complete cull of their forums, the feelings of the discussion was amenable to some change.

I S G review:

A number of review questionnaires have been posted. I have opened and closed this consultation twice, but have failed to receive many responses, 4 to be precise. However, I do feel that the Forums are wanted and do have a purpose: I am just not sure how to go about finding out what this is. I have asked direct questions, but to no avail. A suggestion to use case studies as an example of the difficulties that students face and ask for advice from there is an interesting concept that appears to be worth investigating.

Offender Learners

Offender Learners have received little support from OUSA in the past and I have been attempting to break down the barriers that have been met by other V P Equal Opportunities. I believe that I have achieved this following a very productive meeting with Helen Maxwell (Head of Offender Learning Project). Helen has invited V P Equal Opps to attend a prison visit, and meet with students to seek their views on how we can best support them. V P Equal Opps was also invited to attend two future Offender Learner conferences due to take place later this year.

It has been suggested that we might set up groups or networks for these students, to allow them to support each other within their environments. Should OUSA Futures be accepted by Conference 2010, this will provide the foundations that could be used.

I have produced an article for the recent edition 'Inside News' the O U Newsletter for Secure Environments – with help from the President and Vice President Communications. This article is looking to opening up communication with these 4500 students.

Asylum seekers

We have a number of students who are currently asylum seekers, who are receiving little support from OUSA as a whole. This cohort of individuals, include many within camps, some within local communities and others in European countries. Recently I have been in discussions about where OUSA can work with these students to ensure that, although this is a small group, they are included as one of OUSA's diverse groups of members.

OFFICER REPORTS

Consultations and reviews of consultations

Consultations have taken place recently, which have included students and informed the schemes such as Equality and Diversity scheme (I have not personally conducted all of these, but have conferred with O U colleagues with regards to the impact of them). Below is a list of consultations that have taken place in the last 12 months.

- Project: Identifying success factors for Black Students in Health and Social Care
- Faculty Equality and Diversity Implementation Network (FEDIN) Created in 2007, with Associate Deans taking strategic lead on equality, diversity and accessibility issues.
- O U Consultation through end of course surveys and feedback
- Consultation within FirstClass forums with regards to the future of the Inclusive Students Groups
- The OUSA Futures consultation that has been ongoing for the last two years and due to meet its conclusion over the next few weeks.
- Consultation with the Disabled Student Links and Student Support Links, with a disappointing number of results
- Consultation within the Disabled Students Group and the Inclusive Students Groups looking at Home Examinations experiences
- Consultations have been taking place throughout the O U through Widening Participation, talking to students from the various diversities. Over 12000 students from Black and Asian population for whom English was not their first language
- I have currently received a very large amount of consultation paperwork which I am still accessing, such as the action plans for future Equality Scheme including action plans from large units e.g.
 - a) Strategy Unit
 - b) Communications
 - c) Learning & Teaching Solutions
 - d) Student Services (draft)
- The full Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2009 which can be accessed at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/pics/d115873.pdf> - well worth a look
- The Disability Impact Assessment Report and Student Involvement.
- OUSA Futures consultations, on FirstClass, face to face at branch, Region/ National and global levels
- Project Strategy Feedback for Wales: I have worked alongside other members of the O U in Wales Committee evaluating why students study in Wales and what the O U in Wales has going for it?

OFFICER REPORTS

Student Queries:

- I have opened discussions with my local authority with regards to considering why they do not consider O U students to be students when considering entitlement to Council Tax Benefits. This is ongoing.
- Volunteers with the O U and OUSA, who are on benefits. We are looking at different methods to assist here. One method is for the student to claim expenses in advance to pay for travel or accommodation direct.
- Issues of late arrivals of formatted course material to students with additional study needs
- Accessibility for students on certain courses, e.g. materials
- Examination issues, re – medicals required prior to exams
- Time served as a OUSA Activist in specific roles
- Request on study issues
- Post graduate issues re – research

Moodle Discussion: I have taken an active interest in people's concerns, I have helped with evaluating some of the earlier sites that were being considered for example, Twitter and Facebook.

Online Participation:

Over the past 6 weeks the role of Equal Opportunities has come under a lot of scrutiny from within Conferences, Forums and Individuals on FirstClass. I have responded to all of these questions and queries to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Rather than repeat the exercise here, some of the subjects covered are:-

- The Role of the V P Equal Opportunities
- The actions in regards to consultation
- The input of my role within the Open University,
- The 'New O U Equality and Diversity Scheme' and the identified issues,
- The review of the 'Inclusive Student Group',
- The sexuality of students/OUSA Activists and disclosure,
- How the role promotes policy within OUSA and the O U
- The answers to all these and more can be found either in OUSA Matters Q&A or within the I S G suite of forums. In addition many other answers to queries have been sent to individual mailboxes.

A lot of discussion has also broken out with regard to having an awareness of conferences on FirstClass that fit into the remit of Equal Opportunities. Having taken a further look around I was very please to find this page on StudentHome, www.open.ac.uk or http://www.open.ac.uk/equality-diversity/p4_3.shtml The equality–diversity site provides a list of the various diversity forums along with links.

OFFICER REPORTS

Equality and Diversity Guidelines for OUSA Events (Green Handbook G2)

This has been completed, and minor changes recommended at the last meeting have been added and are currently awaiting publication.

Newsletters:

I have reviewed a number of Regional/National and Branch Newsletters to ensure they are appropriate and do not exclude any individual. I have also provided suggestions on how to provide them in alternative formats.

Calendar and guide to the most significant religious festivals.

I have acquired a copy of this calendar as produced by the O U. It is hoped that this can be produced in an accessible version as the current version is over 20 pages long. The years covered are 2009 – 2013. I will make sure this is complete or included within my handover materials.

Progressing resolutions from Conference 2009

I have also processed and completed all resolutions that come within the remit of V P Equal Opportunities.

Please be aware this is not a definitive list of activities, and should I have undertaken an action that is not here then please be patient. I am sure it would have appeared in one of my previous reports. I have found this past nine months very busy but very worthwhile and believe we have achieved a great deal for students in this time.

OFFICER REPORTS

VICE PRESIDENT FINANCE

CAROLE RADCLIFFE

The role of Vice President Finance is very diverse dealing with all aspects of OUSA finances, the Central Budget, Branches, OUSA Forums, Residential Schools and approving the accounts from Societies. I am also one of the Trustees of OUSET, on the Staffing Sub-Committee and Chair of OUSA Services Ltd. I have listed below under different headings my various activities since Conference 2009.

Resolutions

I was referred two resolutions from Conference 2009, 32M (P O) and 52M (P O). Resolution 32M Consultation with Regions which was discussed fully at the first Finance Standing Committee meeting where it was agreed that there is already a system in place. I will report on 52M (P O) in the OUSA Services Ltd report.

Unfunded Branches

Since 2008 Branches are able to elect to become unfunded. There are now eighteen Branches which have elected to become unfunded. In my last report to Conference I expressed my surprise at how few Branches had decided to take this option because the majority of Branches have not spent the monies in their CUBS account, this is still the case but the decision to become unfunded has to be made by the individual Branches. However I did not pursue this any further this year due to Futures.

Branches

Approving Branch accounts and grants is a major part of my role. For the period 01/08/2009 to 01/03/2010 I have approved 48 Branch accounts. The reserves held by these Branches are a total of £9,901.08. The total amount in grants that have been paid is £2,590.70. The majority of Branches either did not claim any grant or held twice their annual grant already in reserves.

This year I had to recommend the closure of three Branches for non-submission of accounts to the February E C meeting. I would like to thank all of the Executive Members for geographical areas for ensuring that so many Branches submitted their CUBS accounts by 30th November.

OUSA Forums

By the financial year end all but four OUSA Forums had submitted their accounts. Two of these Forums have contacted myself and the Finance team in the OUSA office and I have prepared one of them and the other one has now been received. The CUBS accounts for two Forums have now been frozen as per the Constitution.

OFFICER REPORTS

I had hoped to introduce on-line training for treasurers but unfortunately due to other commitments this was not possible. This is something that I still feel is needed.

I have encouraged Treasurers from Branches and OUSA Forums to contact both myself and the Finance team in the OUSA office. Another option for Treasurers is to contact each other directly for support, which is something that I have always tried to encourage.

Residential Schools

Last summer was unfortunately the last Residential School at Herriot Watt and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped there.

I presented my report on Residential School finances to the February Executive Meeting. In my report I informed the E C that of the 5 sites where OUSA had a presence, 3 of these had submitted Interim Accounts and only 2 sites had sent in their Final Accounts by the deadline of 31st December. I am still waiting to receive one set of accounts and I have been in contact and have been assured that these will be received at any time.

In 2010 there will be a new weekly spreadsheet implemented which will help the co-ordinators. I would like to thank the Residential School Working Group and fellow members of the Executive Committee for their help and input.

A summary of Residential Schools 2009 is shown in the attached Appendix C.

Central Accounts

Attached to this report as Appendix A are the audited accounts for the period 1st August 2008 to 31st July 2009.

I have drawn up a balanced budget for 2009/2010, as attached as Appendix B. All of the current services are maintained whilst keeping within the budget. It is due to keeping within the budget that we were able to hold the important Futures Briefing Event in January and to give the opportunity for so many students from all the Regions and Nations to attend.

Finally

There have been other duties and events that I have undertaken which do not come under any of the headings but I have listed them here. I have attended the Central Training and meetings for both OUSET and the Staffing Sub-Committee.

I would also like to thank everyone on my Standing Committee for their input and support, including the rest of the Executive Committee team. I would like to thank the staff in the OUSA office for all of their work especially Sally Kitchingman and the rest of the finance team for their help and support throughout this busy but thoroughly enjoyable year.

OFFICER REPORTS

Appendix A

Audited Accounts of the Association to 31 July 2009

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

Appendix B

Budget for 2009/10

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

Appendix C Residential School Accounts Summary

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Appendix C

SUMMARY OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL ACCOUNTS AND DISBURSEMENTS 2009

LONDON REGION: QUEEN MARY RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL		
	2008 (3 weeks – 420 Students)	2009 (3 weeks – 347 Students)
Total Income	£765.00	£361.14
Total Expenditure	£341.08	£214.53
Net Income	£423.92	£146.61
Disbursement:		
OUSA	£128.92	(£23.87)
OUSER	£295.00	£170.48
Final Accounts only received		

SOUTH WEST REGION: BATH RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL		
	2008 (5 weeks – 1350 Students)	2009 (5 weeks – 1263 Students)
Total Income	£4,606.04	£4,585.99
Total Expenditure	£2,715.98	£3,121.69
Net Income	£1,890.06	£1,464.30
Disbursement:		
OUSA	£836.04	£805.75
OUSER	£1,054.02	£658.55
Final Accounts only received.		

EAST MIDLANDS REGION: NOTTINGHAM RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL		
	2008 (4 weeks – 1290 Students)	2009 (4 weeks – 981 Students)
Total Income	£4,444.23	£3,222.31
Total Expenditure	£2,331.98	£1,931.73
Net Income	£2,112.25	£1,290.58
Disbursement:		
OUSA	£772.40	£138.07
OUSER	£1,339.85	£1,152.51
Final Accounts only received		

OFFICER REPORTS

NORTH REGION: DURHAM RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL		
	2008 (4 weeks – 1280 Students)	2009 (0 weeks – 1217 Students)
Total Income	£2,280.61	£0
Total Expenditure	£1,957.49	£0
Net Income	£323.12	£0
Disbursement:		
OUSA	117.45	£0
OUISET	£205.67	£0
No OUSA Representation at Durham this year.		

SCOTLAND: HERIOT WATT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL		
	2008 (3 week – 400 Students)	2009 (3 week – 372 Students)
Total Income	£2,297.37	£2,770.98
Total Expenditure	£1,782.24	£1,272.25
Net Income	£515.13	£1,498.73
Disbursement:		
OUSA	(£16.43)	£965.99
OUISET	£531.56	£532.74
Interim and Final Accounts received.		

SOUTH EAST REGION: SUSSEX RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL		
	2008 (4 weeks – 1310 Students)	2009 (4 weeks – 1098 Students)
Total Income	£5,005.80	} Return not received
Total Expenditure	£6,823.95	
Net Income	(£1,818.15)	
Disbursement:		
OUSA	(£2,130.52)	
OUISET	£312.37	
No Accounts received to date		

COMBINED TOTALS		
	2008 (6,050 Students)	2009 (5278 Students)
Total Income	£19,399.05	£10,940.42
Total Expenditure	£15,952.72	£6,540.20
Net Income	£3,446.33	£4,400.22
Disbursement:		
OUSA	(£292.14)	£1,885.94
OUISET	£3,738.47	£2,514.28
These are not the final figures for 2009		

OUSA CONFERENCE 2010

OFFICER REPORTS

VICE PRESIDENT STUDENT SUPPORT

TANIA ROGERS

I have had a tremendously interesting and fulfilling year as Vice President Student Support. I have been very lucky to have been able to have the benefit of the support of fellow officers, my predecessor, Chris Bell, other students and the OUSA staff in carrying out my role. I have been very fortunate to be able to attend many interesting and varied meetings and to attend both the Making Connections Conference in June and the Associate Lecturers' (A L) Conference in November.

Making Connections Conference

It was an honour to have been invited to this conference along with our Deputy President and VP Equal Opportunities. The mood of enthusiasm was set by Will Swann, Director, Students, in his opening speech where he recalled the address given by **Lord Geoffrey Crowther**, Foundation Chancellor at the formal inauguration of **The Open University in July 1969**

'This is the **Open** University.

We are open, first, as to **people**..... There are no limits on persons.

We are open as to **places**.... There are no boundaries of space.

We are open as to **methods**..... There is no restriction on techniques.

We are open, finally, as to **ideas**.'

The excellent record over the 40 years of its existence is being threatened by other providers of higher education. Funding is being severely cut and the O U must embrace digital inclusion if it is to maintain its position as a leading distant learning provider. This will inevitably mean a further reduction in hard copy distribution and we need to continue to be vigilant to ensure that those unable to access the internet are not deprived of the opportunity to study.

Associate Lecturer's Conference

This was also a very interesting opportunity to meet with A L s and participate in a number of workshops including a hands-on Elluminate training session. OUSA President, Roz Evans, made a confident and well received address to the delegates. Also attending were V P Education and V P Representation.

Open University Students Educational Trust (Ouset) Fundraising

The funds raised for Ouset are coming more from significant donations from OUSA (Services) Ltd, the N U S Card and University Booksearch. There were three fundraising activities, which coincided with the University's 40th Anniversary and the Open Day event (known this year as Open Unlimited).

OFFICER REPORTS

It was great to see everyone who managed to get to the Open Event I understand that there were about 4,000 visitors. We were given good space in the library though our display room was a little hidden. Our merchandising was prominently located as we were allocated the main library reception area. We even had to field a few genuine library enquiries.

The book sale raised £313 on the day with an additional £50 (approx) from selling the remainder to staff on campus.

The sale of calendars (101 @ £5 each) on the day raised £505. It was advertised through the Website where the take-up was limited. It seems a pity after so much work was put into the project. However, the photographs themselves were stunning and the competition winner attended Open Unlimited to collect the prize of a Sony Camera. The photo also won in the category of Celebrating 40 years. It depicted communications now, with a laptop and then, with an old valve radio.

The raffle raised £310 at Open Unlimited and added to the £185.20 raised at Conference brings the total to £495.20.

I am very grateful to those who provide the prizes in both competitions.

Complaints & Appeals Steering Group

The terms of reference for the Complaints & Appeals Steering Group are:

- (i) To provide support and guidance to the Complaints and Appeals Office in its relationships with students and other areas of the University.
- (ii) To consider significant proposals for the development of procedures for complaints and appeals handling.
- (iii) To ensure that the Complaints and Appeals Office is meeting institutional objectives in relation to student complaints and appeals handling, publicity and information systems.
- (iv) To make an annual report for the Student Experience Advisory Group who in turn inform the Learning, teaching and Student Support Committee.
- (v) To produce other reports as deemed appropriate or necessary for the Director, Students, and other senior officers or groups.

Both V P Education and I are invited to attend these meetings. The last meeting held included a demonstration of the external facing complaints and appeals website and discussion about The Draft 2008 Complaints and Appeals Report.

Health & Safety in Teaching Advisory Group

The remit of the Advisory Group is to create and implement policy and provide expert advice and guidance including legal requirements on all aspects of health and safety in teaching for University staff and students. Matters

OFFICER REPORTS

discussed this year include a Pandemic Strategy, First Aid requirements at Residential Schools and Health & Safety checks on Summer school venues.

Inconsistencies in Student Support Group

I am working with Christina Lloyd and June Tweney on a project the focus of which is tutorial support. As a spin-off from this, June and I are looking at how the O U and OUSA can support younger students.

Employability Project Management Group

This group was set up to develop an institutional approach to high level skills for employment and personal development and was sponsored by P V C - C A Alan Tait and Director, Students, Will Swann. Will is particularly interested in an embedded approach to high level skills. Clarification of what are High Level Skills is being undertaken. Broadly they map to Key Skills Level 4/5. Research has been carried out into current Personal Development Plans (P D P) and employability tools with the aim of the developing of an e-portfolio tool for O U students. I have recently been asked to participate in a discussion group looking at the design of this tool.

OUSA Futures

Over the last three years we have had the opportunity to be involved in OUSA Futures. I feel that after being a part of such a large scale consultation exercise, it is exciting to see the realisation of this truly amazing and inclusive project. There will always be some who do not want change and some who want a different change but I hope that we are able to move forward with an OUSA better fitted for the times ahead.

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

STUDENT MEMBER OF COUNCIL

LAURA MURPHY

As I sit here, trying to decide what to write in my report to Conference, I look back over the year, as documented in my reports to the Executive Committee. It's been a spectacularly busy year. One of the first things our new President did after Conference was to decide to include me with the Officer team. I'm not an officer, but Council Member is neither fish nor fowl in some ways, and she felt my experience would be helpful to the team. I've certainly tried my best to be of assistance wherever required.

I also re-read my report to last year's Conference, and then read the General Manager's report, where she managed a brevity I can only hope to aspire to, so in the interest of hoping you get to the end without falling asleep, I will try and give a snapshot of my activities, but am happy to expand further if required.

I have attended all meetings of Council during this year. Items of note to students include the setting of the fee increase for the coming years at 3% increase in fee and 3% increase in the non-U K fee supplement. I did raise the issue that at least some of the non-U K territories are in recession, so that would be a real terms increase of 5-6%, but the 3% was carried. There has been a major focus, as you would expect, on the cost cutting measures to tide us through these difficult times. Just as we were planning for the E L Q funding to be withdrawn, the world economies went into freefall, and government expenditure is being cut in all areas, including Higher Education. We've already had the almost unprecedented situation of a funding council grant letter being changed (downwards) before effective date, and no matter who wins the general election in England, we expect further cuts to H E. The University has been planning for all these eventualities though, and modelling the various cost saving options, so they are best placed to react accordingly and weather the storm. The students did have a very satisfying success at the July meeting of Council when a strategy document that had been through the entire structure with a problem being flagged by students and others at each step, was almost not approved by Council when the President raised the matter, again. The document was eventually approved with the addition of an explanatory note, which satisfied our concerns, but brings home that Council is not merely a rubber stamp, we can reject items, and the student voice is respected and sought.

We appointed a new Vice Chancellor during the year, Martin Bean. I don't think anyone expected the effect he has had on the University, he is a breath of fresh air, and very much values the views of both Students and indeed Associate Lecturers, who he feels are the public face of the university to it's customers, us the students. There has already been a noticeable change in tone of papers and approach, and I think he brings

OFFICER REPORTS

very valuable real world business experience, albeit within the education sphere. He is not an academic, and while some feel that could be a hindrance, I can only see the positive effect he seems to have wherever he goes on behalf of the O U, and he seems to get everywhere, including Buckingham Palace!

Estates development has, understandably, slowed to almost a halt. As buildings such as the new catering hub are finished, there are no new developments to take their place. We are fortunate in that almost all our buildings are ranked high on the scale of standards for such buildings, and we managed to get almost all our planned works done before the money dried up. Estates focus will be on maintaining the standards for the next while, rather than any other new acquisitions or builds.

Our pilot with Pearson Education for a Global M B A has been very poorly subscribed to. The initial presentation was deferred due to insufficient student numbers, and the May presentation is looking doubtful.

Last year was the 40th Anniversary of the O U, and I attended a number of functions in my role as Council member, including Open Day, 40th Anniversary concert, and a celebratory dinner by OUSA in Scotland, where their National Director Peter Syme was honoured in advance of his retirement this year.

I attended a number of Degree Ceremonies, including Glasgow, Versailles, and Cheltenham as a guest, and Belfast and Ely as an OUSA stall helper.

I have attended Senate Reference Group (S R G) and on occasion, Senate, when requested by the President to deputise for a missing Senate member.

I have attended Central Consultative Committee in London, and both here and at S R G, it is clear that my seat on these committees serves a valuable purpose in bringing the wider picture to students on the committees, as I would have the information behind sometimes bald facts.

I have deputised for the President on several occasions, at the National Students Forum, at presentations at the O U, and on some committees. The busiest of these is the Tri-partite committee, which is overseeing the move from FirstClass to the V L E Forums, and I have been asked to attend for my IT knowledge from my day-job. After a very shaky start, this is now progressing well, and Deputy President has covered it in her report, I'm sure, as it is under her remit.

I have held a seat on the staffing sub-committee of OUSA Executive, and was also a director of OUSA Services Limited, our trading arm.

OFFICER REPORTS

I feel it has been a busy year, I counted up at one point, and being Council Member means at least 20 trips to the U K for me each year, which I don't know is documented anywhere; although I'm not finished yet as my term of office runs to the end of July. It seems I am destined to be a go-between, in my day job where I sometimes operate as a business analyst, the translator between business users and developers, and the OUSA job, where I ferry information between the O U and OUSA. I like knowing things, and thrive on information, so perhaps it is where I am best suited.

Finally, a late breaking item, which has only come to hand in the days before I write this report. For many years we, the students, have been looking for greater transparency on fees, particularly for overseas students. I have received a reply from the Finance Director, Miles Hedges, who tells me that the overseas supplement is made up of the following items: higher bank charges in Europe; additional payroll costs from operating overseas payrolls; tax compliance; premises costs of offices in Dublin and Brussels; specific marketing activities; travel costs of U K based staff; additional overseas postage costs; higher examination costs; and, additional fee collection costs in OUSBA and bad debts. There is also an element towards the lost teaching grant from the funding councils, but the supplement does not recharge that in full to non-U K based students.

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

CHAIR OF OUSA (SERVICES) LTD

CAROLE RADCLIFFE

OUSA Services Ltd (O S L) sells merchandise through OUSA's presence at Degree Ceremonies and Residential Schools, and by mail order including through the Web store. Our presence at Degree Ceremonies and Residential Schools is important for promoting OUSA and also provides a service to students and others which is valued by the whole University community.

Degree Ceremonies

The main Degree Ceremonies begin in April and continue until September and OUSA has a presence at all of them and is therefore able to market its range. This is important for both the graduates and their families as they are able to purchase a memento of their day. On behalf of the Board I would like to thank all of the volunteers who staff the stalls because they work very hard to ensure that everyone has a lovely day.

From 2009 O S L has been unable to accept cash at Degree Ceremonies and we were unsure how this would affect sales. It was widely advertised that cash could not be taken any more and as a result the impact appears to have been minimal. From 2010 we will be introducing an electronic processing system at Degree Ceremonies; we hope that these will be easier to use than the swipe machines as well as improving the efficiency and security of our operation.

Residential Schools

Last year OUSA had a presence at five of the six sites, although due to the nature of Queen Mary in London we are only part time there. We hope that offering a range of merchandise and past exam papers makes a contribution to the residential school experience.

I would like to thank the Residential School volunteers for all of their hard work and ensuring that students enjoy their time whilst attending events.

Accounts 2008/09

The accounts are attached to this report. Although our profits were slightly less than last year the Directors were again proud to have been able to return significant funds to OUSA. In line with the terms of our covenant all taxable profits were returned to OUSA which in turn has donated them to OUSET.

Marketing

From 2009 we have marketed the O S L range by selective use of the CAMEL system and focusing on different areas of the range according to the timing of the CAMEL message and the target population.

OFFICER REPORTS

This year we have added some new items to the range including a silver charm bracelet carrying an O U shield charm. The very first one of these bracelets was especially commissioned to be presented to Professor Brenda Gourley when she retired as Vice-Chancellor in September.

Resolution

OUSA referred resolution 52(M) P O from Conference 2009 to the O S L Board for comment. This was discussed at our first meeting where it was confirmed that reviewing the items in the various ranges was already a routine part of the O S L Board operation. We are not always able to change items in our range as quickly as we would like because of the small size of our operation. We have made a concerted effort over the last few years to try to ensure that we sell out items before replacing them so that we do not again have large stock overheads of products with a low realisable value.

Finally

I would like to thank my fellow Directors for their suggestions and help this year. In the OUSA office I would like to thank Ann Faithful, Assistant General Manager (Organization) and her team for all of their hard work.

OFFICER REPORTS

Appendix A

Audited Accounts for the Company to 31 July 2009

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

GENERAL MANAGER

TRUDI DE HANEY

I appreciate that it may be a little to do with my advancing age – but I'm certain that the years get shorter. It scarcely seems possible that it is a whole twelve months since we made our return to Warwick University (my own alma mater!) for the second time in recent years – and yet here we are preparing to visit the Jubilee campus at Nottingham University, for the first ever OUSA Conference at that venue. Staff are very optimistic about the ability of this venue to 'tick all our boxes' – not an inconsiderable feat. Let's hope I haven't jinxed things by mentioning it at this delicate stage!

There is perhaps little wonder as to why this year seems to have passed in a blur. It has been full of activity with few pauses. This is not always a good thing. Space for reflection is an important part of being able to adapt to an ever changing environment and yet the imperative of modern times so often suggests that activity is to be revered above all else. For the moment however, I shall dwell on the good things that have come from our frenetic round of activity this year.

When OUSA launched its OUSA Futures project in 2007 two things at least seemed certain to me. The first was that OUSA needed to change. The second was that it was going to be a monumental task finding the commitment and energy to drive forward such change alongside delivering the normal round of activities that are crammed into an OUSA year. From the outset of the launch of the project myself and the rest of the staff have tried to exude a belief and confidence in the project that we didn't necessarily feel at the time. However I now believe that the work led by Lisa Carson and Roz Evans is about to prove that, on this occasion, we were right to be optimistic. Alongside the impressive catalogue of work and achievements represented by the reports of your student leaders in this document, the Executive Committee have also put forward a range of proposals which add up to a substantial opportunity to vote for change.

Whilst many of you may have read about the implications for OUSA of the Charities Act 2006 in previous reports published by the Executive Committee, I felt it would also be sensible to make some mention of it here. We had been aware that the Act would affect OUSA prior to it reaching the statute book. However the Act represents an enormous shake up of the whole charity sector and was enacted in such a way that various provisions affecting different types of organisations would take effect over a period of years. OUSA is a 'students union' within the meaning of the 1994 Education Act and in common with our colleagues in other students associations and unions based in England and Wales, we had been awaiting advice on the specific provisions that would affect our organisation. In autumn 2009 the NUS (National Union of Students) completed work undertaken in conjunction with

OFFICER REPORTS

the Charity Commission to produce a model constitution which would enable students unions to comply with the requirements of the new Act. Although OUSA is not affiliated to the NUS we do have a special relationship with them (hence our ability in recent years to offer the NUS Extra card to our students) and as a result of this we have been provided with the benefit of the work which they have done at a favourable charge. As OUSA is not a typical students union, it is inevitable that the model constitution will require a considerable amount of work to fit it to us. However, myself, Vice President Constitutions and the President have already spent some time reviewing this model and we believe that, whilst there will be quite a lot of work to do on it, we can adapt it to fit whatever future model of OUSA Conference 2010 decides should go forward.

In coming near to closing what is a very short report on this occasion, I'd like to say something specifically about the OUSA staff. I think that you are fortunate to have a good bunch of people working for you and I'm very pleased to see that this is generally the view of members of the Executive Committee. Although change is very often a scary thing for most of us, I can assure you that the OUSA staff are 100% committed to the Futures project and very keen to get on with supporting the incoming Executive Committee to make what ever changes you agree upon work. We know that for some of us this might mean learning some new skills or doing something that we are not used to and that might take us out of our comfort zone. Despite these worries, the reason we are keen for change is because we believe that OUSA could be so much better and we'd very much like to help you make it so. We think that, although some of the territory is uncharted, we could be spending a lot more of our time doing things that really feel as if they are making a difference, instead of doing some things because 'that's how OUSA does things' even though none of us any longer know why or what for! I feel proud and privileged to lead a staff team who portray that kind of attitude and I also feel confident that they are up to meeting the challenges that lie ahead.

Since Conference last year there have been no changes to the permanent staff group, though we all had a big surprise (not least Mandy herself!) when Mandy Turner found she was shortly about to give birth. Mandy is now on maternity leave so this is probably the first Conference she has missed since she was previously on maternity leave with her now teenage daughter. Mother and baby are doing very well and Mandy will probably be back with us late summer. Meanwhile, this year joining us at Conference we have Pat McVity who has done such a wonderful job for us in stepping in as Mandy's maternity leave replacement.

Finally, I'm sorry to have to end on rather a sad note. Loretta Souza died in January in our local Willen Hospice. Loretta worked for OUSA for over twenty years before retiring at 60 two years ago. Although Loretta was one of the very few members of OUSA staff not to attend Conference, her name and

OFFICER REPORTS

voice would be familiar to thousands of students, especially those involved in Societies. Loretta was one of those rarest of people of whom you would never find anybody with a bad word to say. She was appreciated by her student employers on the Executive Committee and loved by her colleagues in the office. The President, myself and many other members of staff attended the funeral. As requested by her family (Loretta left her husband Luis, four grown up children and grandchildren) instead of flowers we made a donation in her name to Willen Hospice.

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

CHAIR OF OUSET

LISA CARSON

This is my first report to Conference as the Chair of OUSET. The Trustee's held an online meeting in May 2009 and elected myself as Chair and co-opted Chris Bell as an additional Trustee.

As we started this year the picture was grim. The economy was in a sorry state with recession being the order of the day, the impact of the Government's E L Q (Equivalent and Lower Qualifications) policy was still unknown and Higher Education funding was due for review. Across the University the potential impact of any of these factors was being considered and all areas were having to identify where costs could be reduced while maintaining the high standards of quality and service. The OUSET Trustees had taken some measures to safeguard the funds by reviewing the criteria and limiting payments to a percentage of the United Kingdom fee and suspending new applications.

When the OUSET financial situation stabilised we were very glad to lift the suspension on new applications without delay. However, given the numbers of European students applying for assistance and the higher non-United Kingdom fees the Board maintained the link with the United Kingdom fee in order that we are able to continue to help students and distribute the funds more fairly.

The Strickland Fund has continued to present a problem for the Trustees due to the limitations imposed. We continue to liaise with the University to attempt to utilise this fund as intended when it was bequeathed to OUSET.

During the 2008-2009 year the Trustees were able to provide support to 99 students. The Accounts for 2008-2009 are attached to this report detailing income and expenditure.

For the year 2009-2010 we have received 81 applications with grants having been made to 71 of these whilst 3 await decisions from the Trustees. In money terms this equates to just under £42,538.

Funds for OUSET are raised via OUSA, from OUSA (Services) Ltd, the N U S Card or direct contributions, notably, University Booksearch. However I would also like to acknowledge the fund raising that takes place by individuals across the Association. This includes activities held at Conference, residential schools and within regions and branches. Also thanks go to OUSA Services Ltd (O S L) and OUSA whose covenant of O S L's profits to the Trust over the past few years has continued to grow and this year included a considerable contribution of profits from the N U S card. I would also like to thank those who have bequeathed requests to the Trust. All these things mean that the Trust can continue to give grants to deserving applicants.

OFFICER REPORTS

As part of the Open University's 40th Anniversary year OUSA held a photography competition and a raffle with ticket sales at Conference 2009 and Open Unlimited. Both of these events were supported with generously donated prizes of a D S L R (Digital Single Lens Reflex) camera and a laptop computer respectively. The winning entrants of the photography competition, which had the themes '40', 'black and white' 'where I live' and 'where I study', were combined to produce a calendar. Due to the financial year ending on 31st July the calendar sales will be reflected in the 2009-2010 accounts.

I wish to acknowledge the work of my fellow Trustees over the last year: The President of OUSA, Roz Evans; Vice President Finance, Carole Radcliffe; Vice President Student Support, Tania Rogers; the Open University Vice-Chancellor's nominee, Linda Brightman; co-opted member, Chris Bell and OUSA General Manager, Trudi de Haney.

Thanks also go to Als Ryan and Wendy Cursley in the Office, our members of staff who ensure the smooth running of Trust affairs on a day to day basis.

The Trustees consider all applications based on the criteria we agree but it would take a heart of stone not to recognise that for some individuals OUSET is their last hope of continuing on their path to bettering the situation in which they find themselves. Every donation to OUSET does make a difference to an individual and I would like to thank you on behalf of those students.

OFFICER REPORTS

Appendix A

Audited Accounts for the Trust to 31 July 2009

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

CHAIR OF SOCIETIES STANDING COMMITTEE

CAPT. ALASDAIR FARQUHARSON

At the OUSA Conference 2009, held at the University of Warwick Campus, the Societies Standing Committee (S S C) also held its Annual General Meeting (A G M) at which I was duly re-elected as the Chair of the Committee for a third term. At the meeting I thanked all the representatives of the various affiliated societies for all their hard work and their kind support.

In line with normal practice the Committee held the normal meetings at Walton Hall during the year with the very able support of Wendy and Sandra and staff at OUSA. We also had some online meetings prior to the face to face meetings at Walton Hall.

Despite having lost a few societies the S S C remains strong and active and we have had the addition of a few new societies joining the ranks. The benefits to O U students of having their societies affiliated continues and this further enhances the student experience at the University. The finances of the S S C and the affiliated O U societies remain satisfactory.

I am also pleased to confirm that the difficulties experienced by one of the well established societies last year involving its overseas branch structure has now been resolved to the satisfaction of OUSA and the society in question. I would like to thank all those members of the society's committee, the S S C and OUSA for their assistance in dealing with this matter.

This year the S S C as a committee has also proposed two Motions to Conference which I believe will further enhance the position of the various OUSA Representatives and ensure the compliance by all affiliated societies regarding observance of the Guidelines that set out the criteria for continued affiliation to OUSA.

Again I have also stressed at meetings of the SSC the importance of all affiliated societies having a formal display at Conference and the need for society display arrangements to be in a suitable area.

I thank this Conference and OUSA for their support of Societies and the S S C. It has been a great privilege to have served on this committee.

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

Progress of Resolutions and Referred Motions

OFFICER REPORTS

OFFICER REPORTS

PROGRESS ON CONFERENCE 2009 RESOLUTIONS AND REFERRED MOTIONS

NOTE: Comms = Communications, Cons = Constitutions, Ed = Education, E O = Equal Opportunities, Fin = Finance, Rep = Representation, S S = Student Support, Pres = President, D P = Deputy President, G M = General Manager

Notes in the Action/Status row that are in italics, indicate new actions since the last report. Where these notes are in normal text, this indicates actions previously reported.

Motions referred to the E C are shown in bold.

Motion 2 – Responsibility Cons,
Subject – Amend 4.5.2
Action / Status – Constitution amended. Completed.

Motion 3- Responsibility Cons,
Subject – Amend 5.3.2.2
Action / Status – Constitution amended. Completed.

Motion 6 - Responsibility Cons,
Subject – Delete sections 6.3.4 and 6.3.5 Amend 6.7.2 and 6.7.3
Action / Status – Constitution amended. Completed.

Motion 10 - Responsibility Cons,
Subject – Amend 7.5.1
Action / Status - Constitution amended Completed

Motion 11 - Responsibility Cons
Subject – Amend 7.5.7
Action / Status - Constitution amended Completed

Motion 14 - Responsibility Cons
Subject – Flexible dates for Conference
Action / Status - Considered under OUSA Futures.

Motion 15 - Responsibility Cons
Subject – Amend 10.3.1
Action / Status - Constitution amended Completed

Motion 17 - Responsibility Pres
Subject – 2 year terms for Officers
Action / Status – motion proposal to Conference 2010

Motion 23 - Responsibility Cons,
Subject – Amend 15.1 and Delete 15.4
Action / Status - Constitution amended. Completed

OFFICER REPORTS

Motion 25 - Responsibility Cons, G M
Subject – Add new S O1.3.3.3.5
Action / Status- Constitution amended. Completed.

Motion 28 - Responsibility Comms
Subject – More frequent updates
Action / Status – Completed

Motion 30- Responsibility E O
Subject – Accessibility awareness
Action / Status – Training given at Central Training event in September

Motion 31 - Responsibility E O
Subject – Inclusive Students Group
Action / Status – V P E O and Dep Pres currently reviewing I S G.

Motion 32 - Responsibility Fin
Subject – Consultation with Regions
Action / Status – There is already a system in place, regions / sub regions liaise with their E C Ms. No further action required.

Motion 33 - Responsibility Pres
Subject – International Strategy
Action / Status – Ongoing discussions with Will Swann, Director, Students.
Also founder member of the Student Council I C D E

Motion 40 - Responsibility Cons
Subject – Older motions
Action / Status - Noted

Motion 41- Responsibility Pres
Subject – Advisory guidelines on the conduct of elections
Action / Status – New revised procedures agreed & implemented

Motion 42- Responsibility G M
Subject – Virtual Hustings for all candidates
Action / Status - Included in casual election process post Conference 2009

Motion 43- Responsibility G M
Subject – Announcing of prospective candidature
Action / Status - Included in casual election process post Conference 2009

Motion 45 pt 1- Responsibility E O
Subject – Facilitation & Support Panel
Action / Status – F & S arrangements are being worked on to carry this issue forward.

OFFICER REPORTS

Motion 46- Responsibility Dep Pres

Subject – Release of papers for E C meetings prior to meeting

Action / Status – Discussed at February E C meeting. No change at present.

Motion 47- Responsibility Rep

Subject – face to face meetings

Action / Status - Completed.

Motion 51 - Responsibility Pres, G M

Subject – General complaints

Action / Status – Ongoing

Motion 52- Responsibility Chair OSL

Subject – Review of merchandise

Action / Status – Already a mechanism in place to do this.

Motion 54- Responsibility Ed, Rep

Subject – Postgraduate representation

Action / Status – In progress

Motion 55- Responsibility Ed, S S

Subject – Ease of access to support

Action / Status - Ongoing

Motion 56 – Rep

Subject – Lead academic links

Action / Status – Completed

Motion 57- Responsibility Rep

Subject – Training for regional forum officers

Action / Status – Ongoing. An online training pack is to be produced. Face to face training being investigated.

Motion 58 - Responsibility Comms

Subject – O U Student

Action / Status – Meeting held with Head of Publications, 7/9/9. O U Student to continue in present format for a further year.

Motion 59 - Responsibility S S

Subject – High standard of student support services by all regions / nations.

Action / Status – Ongoing

Motion 60- Responsibility Dep Pres

Subject – Adding regional / national forums to FirstClass desktop.

Action / Status -.Discussion with the O U are ongoing

OFFICER REPORTS

Motion 61- Responsibility Dep Pres
Subject – Adding branch conferences to FirstClass desktop
Action / Status -.This can not be progressed

Motion 62- Responsibility Ed
Subject – Electronic back up as proof of submission.
Action / Status – This has been discussed with the O U and OUSA has been informed that this is not possible to do so

Motion 63- Responsibility Ed
Subject – Send –off dates
Action / Status – This was raised with O U. The response was that this would be impractical from the point of view of marking and would seriously disadvantage students living in areas where proof of posting is not available.

Motion 68 - Responsibility Ed
Subject – Course expiry list
Action / Status – Course expiry dates now available in the top section of the prospectus.

Motion 69- Responsibility Ed
Subject – Openness of the O U
Action / Status – Accepted by O U.

Motion 70 - Responsibility Ed
Subject – 2 week break at end December / start January
Action / Status – Most courses incorporate a one week study break, students should adjust their studies to enable them to take this break when most convenient.

Motion 71- Responsibility Ed
Subject – Availability of e-versions
Action / Status - Course websites open a couple of weeks prior to the commencement of the course. It is unable to open the websites earlier due to late registrations.

Motion 72 - Responsibility Ed, E O
Subject – Equal access to all course materials
Action / Status – Equal access to course material is readily available and DVDs can be requested where necessary.

Motion 73 - Responsibility Ed
Subject – Printed material availability
Action / Status – O U believe that all non-online course material is sent out in hard copy.

OFFICER REPORTS

Motion 74 - Responsibility Ed

Subject – Materials for non online courses in hardcopy

Action / Status – Where material is produced online, it should not require printing.

Motion 75 - Responsibility Ed

Subject – Printed course material

Action / Status – O U is doing this.

Motion 76 Responsibility Ed

Subject – Standardisation of plagiarism guidance

Action / Status – Ongoing - Raised by central reps at every opportunity.

Guidance is now more or less standardised. Plagiarism guidance available online at:

<http://learn.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=4687&m=3>

Motion 77 – Responsibility E O, S S

Subject – Exceptional examination criteria

Action / Status – Ongoing discussions with Disabled Student Services.

Motion 78- Responsibility E O

Subject – Amanuensis

Action / Status – V P E O has been directed to Regional Offices to discuss the issue.

Motion 79 - Responsibility Ed

Subject – Legibility of examination feedback

Action / Status – Discussed with O U. Recognised as being an important issue, which will be followed up.

Motion 80 - Responsibility Ed, S S

Subject –. Level of internet access required

Action / Status – V P Ed has raised this with the O U who were unaware of the problem. She has been referred to the relevant department and will continue to pursue the matter. Where there is a broadband requirement the O U recognises that students should be advised of this prior to registering on the course. Students without efficient broadband speeds should be informed that information is on the O U website and materials can be requested in DVD format wherever required.

Motion 81 - Responsibility Comms

Subject – Default method of communication

Action / Status – Completed

Motion 82 - Responsibility Ed

Subject – Introduction to the O U On-line Community

Action / Status – Discussions ongoing.

OFFICER REPORTS

Motion 83- Responsibility Ed

Subject – Extra- curricular help

Action / Status – Study skills extra-curricula support, including I T skills, are available in the Study Support area of StudentHome.

Motion 84 - Responsibility E O

Subject – Paper based submission where appropriate

Action / Status – To be discussed again with the O U on 26 February.

Motion 85- Responsibility Comms, Dep Pres

Subject – Eduroam

Action / Status – The O U is a member of Eduroam. Currently only full time staff are able to use the service. The service is not yet available to students or ALs due to the University's current authentication systems, which are not yet compatible with the new federated identity management system. Changes to the O U systems are in progress and in due course will enable us to integrate all OU identity management systems. Dep Pres met with Director, Library Services on 1 March 2010 for further update.

Motion 86 - Responsibility E O

Subject – Individual adaptable layout of StudentHome

Action / Status – OUSA logo is alternated with the library details and is in a very prominent position with excellent links beneath it. Complete

Motion 87- Responsibility Rep

Subject – Internet access for residential school reps

Action / Status – Discussed with O U in September. Agreed that OUSA reps will have access via school office. Completed.

Motion 88 - Responsibility Ed, S S

Subject – Out of region tutors

Action / Status – Discussed at meeting on 7/9/9 *Tutor and tutorial details are released as soon as possible. The earlier students register, the sooner this information will be released.*

Motion 89 - Responsibility Ed, S S

Subject – Small tutor groups online.

Action / Status - Positive discussions on this issue are ongoing.

Motion 90 - Responsibility Ed

Subject – Online tutorials

Action / Status See above

Motion 91 - Responsibility Ed

Subject – Tutorial materials

Action / Status – The O U consider that the tutors own their own materials and therefore the O U cannot insist that they share them. The tutors' permission must be sought to publish any of their materials or notes.

OFFICER REPORTS

Motion 94 – Responsibility E O, S S

Subject – Publicising support for students with disability or additional study need.

Action / Status – V P E O and S S discussed this with D S A office Sept 09

Motion 95 - Responsibility E O, S S

Subject – Promote Disabled Students Allowance

Action / Status – V P E O and S S discussed this with D S A office Sept 09

Motion 97 - Responsibility S S

Subject – Eurofaf

Action / Status – Funding has been given for a further year but no more is expected. This will have a major impact on OUSET.

Motion 98 - Responsibility S S

Subject – Crowther Fund

Action / Status – This is open to all O U graduates but has limited fund. The time span for applications is short but there are no more funds to draw on.

Motion 99 - Responsibility Dep Pres, Cons

Subject – Harassment policy and associated procedure

Action / Status – Being progressed and an update will be available shortly.

Motion 100 - Responsibility Pres

Subject – Distance learning organisations

Action / Status – *Founder member of the Student Council of the I C D E*

Motion 101 - Responsibility Pres

Subject – CALL

Action / Status – OUSA formal support given to CALL

Motion 102 - Responsibility Pres

Subject – Improved funding for postgraduate students

Action / Status – Submission made to Independent Review in January 2010.

Motion 103- Responsibility

Subject – Reaffirmations

Action / Status – Reaffirmed in RoD. Completed

Motion 104 - Responsibility

Subject – Reaffirmations

Action / Status – Reaffirmed in RoD. Completed

Motion 105 - Responsibility

Subject – Reaffirmations

Action / Status – Reaffirmed in RoD. Completed

OFFICER REPORTS

Motion 106- Responsibility

Subject – Reaffirmations

Action / Status - Reaffirmed in RoD. Completed

Motion 107 - Responsibility

Subject – Deletions

Action / Status Deleted from RoD. Completed.

Motion 108 - Responsibility Comms

Subject – Newsletters

Action / Status We asked the O U Comms department to send a letter to all students in September 2008 but they have not done so. Systems are in place to ensure that those who need communications in different formats do so.

Unable to progress further.