



OU Students  
Association  
Services Limited

A Guide to OUSA (Services) Ltd (O S L)

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## Introduction

### A Guide to OUSA (Services) Ltd

This is a guide to OUSA (Services) Ltd (O S L).

No matter which position you hold within OUSA, you will more than likely come across our company, either through purchasing or through volunteering to assist at one of the degree ceremonies or residential schools.

OUSA (Services) Ltd, relies heavily on the band of volunteers who assist us with our retailing operation, which in turn allows us to market OUSA, OUSSET and O S L. Without volunteers O S L could not function at the level we do, and we would miss the valuable opportunity to promote OUSA and raise awareness of our student association amongst our members.

While it is hoped that this section of the handbook will answer most of the questions you may have, if you have any further questions on our company please do not hesitate to contact the OUSA Office.



## 1. Why OUSA (Services) Ltd

OUSA (Services) Ltd (O S L) is a registered company [Registration number 03074570], which is wholly owned by the Open University Students Association.

The company was established by OUSA in 1995 to deal with the retailing operation of OUSA, to ensure that the requirements of the Education Act were fully complied with.

OUSA (Services) Ltd was established primarily to provide a service to our members. Any profit made is passed to OUSA through a Deed of Covenant. In turn, OUSA normally donates all such profit to OUSET our charity.

## 2. Running OUSA (Services) Ltd

As a registered company, OUSA (Services) Ltd are bound by company law, and its directors are legally liable for all actions taken by the company. The company has two £1 shares, one being held by the OUSA President and the other being held by the OUSA General Manager on trust on behalf of the shareholders who are the OUSA Executive Committee.

### 2.1 Board of Directors

The company is managed by a Board of Directors, which comprises of the following members:

- General Manager, who also acts as Company Secretary
- President
- Vice President Finance
- Two members of the Executive Committee, elected by the Executive Committee
- One Executive Committee for a Geographical Area, nominated by the President

The Board of Directors elect from amongst its membership the Chair of the Board who, along with the Company Secretary, act on behalf of the Board between meetings.

### 2.2 Corporate Responsibility

Under company law, the Board of Directors have corporate responsibility for the company's actions, and as such although elected by the Executive Committee or appointed by virtue of their

position, the Executive Committee can not instruct the Board of Directors.

The Chair of the Board of Directors will report on a regular basis to the Executive Committee, who will during the year hold General Meetings of the company, and the Chair will present the companies accounts to a general meeting of the company, before including them in an annual report to OUSA Conference.

At one meeting of the Executive Committee each year, the formal Annual General Meeting of OUSA (Services) Ltd is held, where its' board of directors are elected.



### 3 Basis of Operation

Although the Executive Committee can not instruct the board of directors, in establishing a limited company OUSA set down a basis of operation which the board of directors must follow. OUSA insists that the directors of OUSA (Services) Ltd ensure that the company:

- provides value for money.
- sustains financial viability.
- covenants any profits achieved to OUSA with the purpose of enabling OUSA to make a donation to OUSET.

## 4 Objectives of OUSA (Services) Ltd

When setting up OUSA (Services) Ltd (O S L), the Association set up a series of objectives for the company, objectives which have been reviewed over the years and which comprise of the following:

- O S L shall act as a platform from which to promote OUSA, enhancing its credibility with both students and the University and encouraging the active participation of students within the main stream of OUSA work.
- O S L shall be a means of fostering a corporate identity for all students of the OU by providing goods which promote and enhance the image of the OU and give students a pride in being identified as OU students.
- O S L shall provide goods and services for students which can be of real utility and benefit thereby enhancing the reputation of the Students Association.
- O S L shall act as a means of promoting support for OUSET, the charity created and run by OUSA.

## 5 Retailing versus Marketing

Many members of OUSA believe that O S L is there to sell t-shirts. However the role O S L plays within the wider Student Association is much more than simple retailing, since its role is to market the whole of the Association and its charity OUSET.

O S L gives OUSA and OUSET a unique opportunity to raise their profiles and promote their services, in a very simple and inexpensive way. O S L is for many students their first contact with their students association and as such must portray a professional image which gives credit to the student association and the wider university.

## 6 Services provided by O S L

O S L offers students of the Open University a variety of services to help them with their studies, foster an identity as students of the university and to celebrate that they have successfully completed a degree or other award. Through O S L presence at Residential Schools and Degree Ceremonies we are also able to promote the services available from OUSA and OUSET.

O S L is the only organisation or body authorised by the university to produce merchandise with the O U shield and crest, and the university themselves often place orders from our company for items from our presentation range.

### 6.1 Exam Papers

O S L is the only organisation or body authorised by the university to reproduce and sell past examination papers. No one else, including its own tutors and staff, have authority under the University's copyright to reproduce past exam papers whether for sale or to give away. By allowing O S L to

reproduce past examination papers, the O U is allowing O S L to provide one of the most valuable services to students, and through the busiest of periods this side of O S L's operations can account for the majority of O S L's orders. While we sell papers for the vast majority of courses, there are some papers which we are not permitted to sell. This is usually because such papers contain sections for which the University itself does not own the copyright. We only sell those papers for which the University has expressly granted us permission to do so. O S L is also unable to provide answers for the papers.



## 6.2 Merchandise

O S L offers a broad range of merchandise items.

When many students graduate from the O U, they do so after a lengthy and often difficult period of time, and quite rightly want to mark their graduation. O S L is pleased to be able to offer a selection of quality gifts which graduates, family and friends can buy to mark the momentous occasion. The majority of these items feature the OU Coat of Arms.

O S L also has a more general selection of products which is aimed at students to give them a pride in being identified as OU students. All goods within this range carry the O U logo. These items include a range of study aids, clothing, stationary etc and they are promoted and sold via leaflets, the website and at face-to-face events such as residential schools.

## 7 Ordering from O S L

Ordering from O S L can be done in various ways, depending on where you are and access to the web or telephone.

### 7.1 Mail Order

The traditional mail order method of ordering from O S L consists of members completing the paper order form and mailing it to O S L at the OUSA Office. This method is the most time consuming of the various options available, and delivery can only be guaranteed with 28 days.

### 7.2 Telephone Ordering

O S L currently has Interactive Voice Recognition software for placing orders for past examination papers. This reduces the amount of administration attached to processing of orders and O S L can usually guarantee delivery of past exam papers ordered via this method within 7 days.

O S L intends to allow this method of ordering for all our product ranges in the near future.

### 7.3 Web Shop Ordering

O S L has a web shop which allows us to market our full product range (merchandise and past exam papers) on line. This reduces the administration attached to orders, and helps to speed up the delivery of the orders to our customers. The web shop can be accessed from the home page of OUSA ([www.ousa.org.uk](http://www.ousa.org.uk)), and allows those placing orders to view photographs of our product range, use the virtual shopping basket before checking out through a secure server, paying by credit or debit cards.

### 7.4 Degree Ceremonies/Residential Schools

O S L also uses the opportunity that our presence at degree ceremonies and residential schools provide to market some of our range to visiting students. Owing to the need to transport our merchandise to the sites, the ranges available at graduation ceremonies and residential schools is restricted, although O S L does try to ensure that the items available match the demand of our customers.

## 8 Degree Ceremonies

O S L is proud to be able to play an important part in the university's degree ceremonies, by being onsite with our commemorative items from the range. This allows O S L and OUSA to help graduates celebrate their important day, while promoting our range of services.

## 9 Residential Schools

At all residential schools during the main residential school period, OUSA and O S L are on site with products and past exam paper booklets that are suitable for sale to our residential school visitors. O S L provides an opportunity for OUSA to meet face to face many thousands of members by providing the retailing mechanism which allows OUSA representatives to market the whole organisation. O S L is indebted to the hundreds of volunteers who assist in this important operation, and is grateful for the time they freely give up to allow both our company and OUSA to promote our services.

## 10 Raising funds for OUSET

As well as any profits from O S L being covenanted to OUSA and donated to OUSET, O S L also raises a large percentage of OUSET's income through direct donations made by students when they place an order. These donations are not included in OUSA (Services) Ltd accounts as they are paid direct to OUSET, but O S L is delighted to be able to offer this additional method for funds to be raised for our student charity.