OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 October 2016

OFFICER AND COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

The CEC is asked to:

i) receive the reports

ii) note that unless this paper is starred for discussion prior to the meeting, printed copies will not be supplied.

Reports submitted by:-

President
Deputy President
Vice President Administration
Vice President Communications
Vice President Community
Vice President Education
Vice President Equal Opportunity
Vice President Representation and Research
Vice President Student Support
Student OU Council Member
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

It’s been a learning curve and an exciting time over the last two months. As President, my remit includes all students, the Students Association, University and external affairs, of which, I have had our student community at the heart of my decision-making and representation.

Direct Student Communications

As President, I am happy to hold direct open dialogue with students. I have had multiple talks with individuals online and face-to-face around campus and events, which has helped maintain a grassroots perspective. This has helped during decision making and representing the student voice, in areas such as our virtual learning environment, forums, tuition fees and during talks with parliament around the higher education and research bill.

However, due to the volume of communications, I am limited by time, therefore I rely only the great work that the Association team are doing to represent students. I feel we should enable direct student action, for those who would prefer the independence to shape the Student Association and University.

Group Tuition

The Students Association has been working hard on behalf of students to answer and deal with as many student queries as possible and we have been working with the University to challenge what has happened. I am pleased that the University has committed to an external review of what went wrong and look forward to seeing the report and findings.

Handover Weekend

The role has fortunately included meeting the past team and learning about their roles, responsibilities, aspirations and achievements over the past 2 years. I found their experience, support and passion for students inspiring.

The past President, Ruth Tudor was particularly helpful with her advice and guidance for the next future 2 years. Our subsequent meetings’ following the handover was and still are more than appreciated.

Induction Weekend

During the induction weekend, we as the new team were able to gain a further understanding into our roles, build our relationships and I was able to see the good decisions that the students had made in the elections.
Teamwork was a focus during the weekend and we had a presentation by Kat Merchant, World Cup Rugby winner, who showed us her story of success and the value of teamwork and resilience. We also had a talk on diversity and inclusion, which provided an interesting look on how context and empathy is important in our roles as representatives.

We also enjoyed talks on student engagement and undertook some social media training that enabled us to understand how we could improve our online communications.

A governance review was given, which helped us understand the big picture and substructures that create the university.

Team values and agreements on how we would like to work together were discussed, which helped highlight the team's similarities and focus us. The weekend enabled me to appreciate the team and how they want to work throughout the next two years.

**Students Association**

I've had meetings or been in communications with nearly all the Association staff team. They have been kind and supportive in helping me in many areas such as, setting up financial accounts, external communications to show support for our university challenge team, community engagement by recording for our radio station, project ideas and some much needed tech support.

I've had the majority of my meetings with the General Manager and we've been in communications most days, with a focus on reports, papers and meeting the senior University team. We had our first Board of Trustees meeting, where we discussed the Association's recruitment, staffing, risk strategy and finance.

**University**

I am in communications with many members of the university and have had meetings with the Vice Chancellor's Executive and other members of staff.

New Director of Academic Services, Jonathan Wylie, is our key link into the University at a senior level. We were able to introduce ourselves and talked about how we might work together on digital direct democracy.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Academic Strategy, Kevin Hetherington. We discussed the new Graduate School and the possible impact of Brexit on research funding.

Pro Vice Chancellor Learning, Teaching and innovate, Hazel Rymer. We discussed what the University could learn from Futurelearn in the way learning is presented and I gave my views on the virtual learning environment and the need for an overhaul. We also discussed the possibility of putting online educational tools in the hands of students.
Project Director for the Group Tuition Policy, Michael Flack. We talked about the learning from the May 2016 pilot and how that learning was going to be incorporated in October.

Head of Governance, Dawn Turpin. We met to deepen my understanding into more areas of Governance and also to talk about forthcoming Executive Dean recruitment.

Senior Manager for Governance, Sue Thomas. I attended training for Senate and we discussed the possibility of converting the Senate and Council reports into video bite sized formats for social media, so that students could easily digest the big decisions that are being made.

Sarah Butterworth. I attended my first briefing on finance and student fees and pushed for greater transparency for European Postgraduate students on how their fee is set. I also compared the post Brexit pound devaluation and effect this may have on student intake and discussed how this may effect tuition fees.

Director of Student Support, Pat Akins. We discussed Group Tuition and Student Support Teams. We spent a considerable amount of time discussing the recent issues and we took the opportunity to flag the issues that students were suffering with the implementation of this, which has dominated recent weeks.

Project lead for the Online Student Experience Programme, Louise Olney. We looked at the new virtual learning environmental that has been rolled out to around 17,000 students and talked about the next stages in potentially working together to review and change the student community forums to be more user friendly. I was happy to hear that our involved was desired for any changes and the implementation of further improvements could be completed in quarterly cycles.

I attended a Council induction day and development with Barbara Tarling. We had member induction sessions on University Strategy, the Student Journey, the Role of the Open University Academic and the Financial Position/Challenges facing the Open University. We also worked in groups focusing on what council was, what it could be and the atmosphere we’d like to create, in order to make the best decisions.

An extraordinary Council meeting was held. Here we discussed the Council governance review report, building better communications with council and membership committee diversity policy. A proposal for a new governance and nominations committee was discussed and I have subsequently appointed Barbara Tarling to be our representative on this committee.

External Affairs

The NUS (National Union of Students) invited the Association to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Students to speak on the research and higher education bill that is currently progressing through parliament. I represented students by highlighting the missing student representation and decision-making powers in the office for students. I recommended they add students to the highest position possible such as in the Teach and Excellence Frame work panel and Office for Students board.
I also raised key points around updating a bill from the 1990’s without dated 1940’s business philosophy, which has been scientifically disproven. I recommend using an intrinsic model of university appraisal that would support our social mission of being open to all.

In regards to the teaching and excellence framework, I recommended taking two approaches, one for 18-22 year olds in full time education and another for life learners in part time education, as judging these two different categories under the same criteria is not a fair comparison. Our university ranking would drop under the current proposed model, as we have a low level of retention and progress, which would result in a lower perceived degree valuation. In addition I called for an end to tuition fees and not an increase, which is what the new bill suggests.

I recommend three years of set funding to give stability to disabled and other disadvantaged students to plan their studies and not have Universities and students worrying year to year.

I called for more investment in life long learning, pointing out that many new and younger students will go through several job and career changes and must be able to re-skill and study again to help the economy.

I attended the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education training for Students as Governors for my role on Council. It was interesting to understand how all universities have some common themes and are asked similar questions. For example our representatives are often asked for the student perspective on many big issues, when research should be commissioned to answer the question from a representative sample of our student population.

**Future meetings in October**

6 October  
Director of Academic Policy and Governance

7 October  
OU Students Association General Manager in Reading

13 October  
Students Consultative Executive meeting

14 October  
University Secretary, Keith Zimmerman in Oxford

14 – 16 October  
Central Executive Committee weekend

18 October  
Pre-Senate Reference Group briefing

19 October  
Senate Reference Group meeting

19 October  
Senate

19 October  
Director of Academic Services

20 October  
Essential Finance for Trustees training in London

21 October  
Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Executive Dean recruitment

25 October  
Government and External Affairs team

10 November  
PVC LTI (Learning, Teaching & Innovation) Hazel Rymer

19-21 November  
Officer Team meeting

22 November  
Board of Trustees meeting and training from legal advisors

The first two months of my role has mainly entailed climbing the learning curve, through training at weekends, reading a large amount of paperwork and on the spot experience in Council, Board of Trustees and parliamentary meetings. It has given me more of an insight into the vastness of the university and the great work all the
teams I've been involved with are doing, I'm looking forward to continuously representing students throughout my role.

Chris Pane
President
Since taking up the role of Deputy President on the 1st August I have attended several meetings on campus in Milton Keynes, kept in regular contact with members of the Central Executive Committee (C E C) and continued to engage with the wider membership of the Association through the Association forums and social media. The role and responsibilities of the Deputy President are many and varied and I continue to develop my understanding with support from members of the Association staff team.

Please find below a summary of work undertaking during the period 1 August – 25 September.

Central Executive Committee (C E C) Induction Meeting

I attended the C E C Induction Meeting in Milton Keynes. This was a great opportunity for the new C E C to develop our understanding of our roles and to get to know one another. The weekend was a great success. It included a tour of the Open University library and a number of quests speakers on a range of topics including:

- Jerard Bretts: How do the OU Engage with students?
- Jiten Patel: An Introduction to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Dawn Turpin: An Introduction to Governance
- Kat Merchant: What it took for her team to win the 2014 rugby world cup

Student Association Media Activity

I contributed to the OU student magazine, sharing my experience as a volunteer for the Students Association, published a blog post to the Student Association website about Student Voice and being a Central Representative and took part in a short film to welcome students to our Freshers Events.

Student Association Regions Review Implementation Group Meeting

The group received an update and discussed next steps in relation to Local Communities and Groups and Societies which are proving a popular way for students to get engaged with the Association. We also considered how the Association might engage with more students at local OU events (Resi Schools, Day Schools, OU Freshers events etc). We hope we can develop these opportunities over the coming months.

We considered the new volunteer role 'Learning Experience Reporter (L E R)', how students might be recruited, what the responsibilities of an L E R would be and how L E Rs might communicate with other student volunteers. Students will be appointed by the Student Association and a new online space will be created allowing for networking between L E R s and other student volunteers (Central representatives, Faculty Association Reps).
The group discussed the English National Executive and Regional Assemblies. Please see paper 10/16/14 for further information.

**Student Association Volunteer Steering Group**

A Volunteer Steering Group is being established by the Association to consider ways to reward and recognise the contribution volunteers make to the Association. I will be the Student Sponsor of this work, alongside the Student Association Head of Student Volunteers.

Recruitment for the Group is under way and going well. This group will include about 12 current or past volunteers and will be formed by November. As well as thinking about ways to recognise our volunteers in the short term, we hope to work towards a vision of how students should be recognised in the future.

**Open University Students Consultative Executive**

I attended a meeting of the University Students Consultative Executive (U S C E) sub group meeting. In 2017 there will be two rounds of face to face consultation meetings, in Spring and Autumn. The Spring meetings will take place in Exeter, London, Milton Keynes, Manchester and Newcastle and it is envisaged that the Autumn meetings will include additional locations. The meeting to be held in Milton Keynes will include a student led tour of campus. The agenda of the Consultative meetings will be discussed at a meeting of the U S C E to be held in December (date T B C). The Students Association will invite students to register for the Spring meetings in January 2017.

**Student Engagement Project Work stream A (Student Feedback and Communications)**

A meeting of the Project group was held on 14 September. Much of the work of this work stream (established in Jan 2016) has focused on a proposed new Student Engagement Website which allows students to access information about student engagement opportunities and student feedback and consultation. The group hopes that the site will be ready for launch in the New Year.

**National Diversity Awards**

I attended the National Diversity Awards along with OU staff members: Jiten Patel (Head of Equality, Diversity and Information Rights) Jenny Stewart (Head of University Secretary's Office) Jonathan Wylie (Director Academic Services)

The Open University sponsored the Positive Role Model Award for L G B T which was won by Moira Smyth. You can read more about Moira and the other Award winners here: [http://www.nationaldiversityawards.co.uk/](http://www.nationaldiversityawards.co.uk/) It was an inspiring evening and a great privilege to be invited to attend.

**Student Hub Live & Student Engagement Workshop**

I attended a hands on workshop on campus in Milton Keynes. The aim of this workshop was to come away with several proposals for the evolution of Student Hub
Live, and several ideas for new engagement events, to be shared with the Vice Chancellor’s Executive. I have asked for an update from the University about the next steps that will be taken (if any) as a result of the ideas generated at the workshop.

**Meetings attended since the last CEC (at a glance)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 – 11 September</td>
<td>CEC induction Meeting</td>
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<td>12 September</td>
<td>Regions Review Implementation Group Meeting</td>
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<td>13 September</td>
<td>Freshers Welcome Video Recording</td>
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<td>13 September</td>
<td>Group Tuition Student Hub Live Preparation</td>
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<td>14 September</td>
<td>Meetings with members of Association Staff</td>
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<td>14 September</td>
<td>STEP Work stream A Meeting</td>
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<td>15 September</td>
<td>USCE Sub Group Meeting</td>
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<td>15 September</td>
<td>Meeting with Library Services Manager (Student Engagement)</td>
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<td>16 September</td>
<td>Student Hub Live &amp; Student Engagement Workshop</td>
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<td>16 September</td>
<td>National Diversity Awards</td>
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<td>22 September</td>
<td>Meeting with members of Association Staff</td>
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<td>22 September</td>
<td>OU Student Association Board of Trustees Meeting</td>
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**Future Commitments (at a glance)**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>26 – 30 September</td>
<td>Freshers and Student Hub Live Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 September</td>
<td>Scotland, Ireland and Wales Open Day</td>
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<td>29 September</td>
<td>National Student Survey Communications Taskforce</td>
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<td>1 October</td>
<td>Student Association Meet Up, Belfast</td>
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<td>10 October</td>
<td>World Mental Health Day Activities</td>
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<td>13 October</td>
<td>Inclusion Meeting</td>
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<td>13 October</td>
<td>University Students Consultative Executive</td>
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<td>14 - 16 October</td>
<td>Central Executive Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>20 October</td>
<td>OU Student Association Board of Trustees Training Event</td>
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<td>21 October</td>
<td>OU Award Ceremony, Belfast</td>
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<td>1 November</td>
<td>Student Consultation Staff Event</td>
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<td>19 - 20 November</td>
<td>Open University Student Association Officer Team Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 November</td>
<td>OU Student Association Board of Trustees Meeting</td>
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<td>December (TBC)</td>
<td>University Students Consultative Executive</td>
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<td>27 – 29 January</td>
<td>Central Executive Committee Meeting</td>
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Nicola Simpson  
Deputy President
Since taking office on August 1\textsuperscript{st} I have found this role to be both challenging and rewarding in equal measure. There has been a steep learning curve in adapting to a new role which is markedly different from my previous one as VP Educational Support and Research. Also there has been the challenge of an almost entirely new Central Executive Committee team to work with.

I am grateful to the Office Staff and my predecessor for their help and support in managing this transition and to my CEC colleagues for all the teamwork and support as we establish a new team to carry forward the hard work of previous CECs.

As my predecessor, David Humble, remarked in his first report as VP Administration, August and to some extent September is a fairly quiet time in the annual cycle of University meetings. However, for VP Administration the change of the Financial Year on August 1\textsuperscript{st} means that it can be anything but that.

Notable events relating to this are:

Signing off on Society Accounts – these are in progress as Societies submit them

The annual audit and the ensuing Audit Meeting to ensure the Association’s accounts (as well as those of OSL and OUSET) are correct and comply with necessary legislation and regulations. The Audit meeting took place on September 22\textsuperscript{nd} and a final report is due.

Setting the Association’s budget for the financial year 2016-17. This has been done and was presented to the Board of Trustees on September 22\textsuperscript{nd} and after some minor points were clarified accepted by the Board.

VP Administration sits on the Board of Trustees in an \textit{ex officio} role. Details of the Board’s activities since the last CEC meeting are presented in a separate paper to the CEC.

While the general oversight of Societies was moved from the VP Administration to the VP Community remit two areas were retained. Signing off on Accounts and authorising grants is one and that is, as noted above, in progress. Also VP Administration has to approve the constitutions of societies wishing to affiliate with the Association and this too is in progress with three societies currently under consideration.

VP Administration also has responsibility for keeping Bye laws in good order and these need some minor alterations to reflect changes in structure since August 1\textsuperscript{st}. These will be presented to this CEC meeting for approval and forwarding to the Trustees for final approval. Additionally more sweeping changes may be needed after the CEC meeting depending on decisions made in the Regions’ Review Paper.
presented there.

As noted earlier this period of August / early September is quiet in terms of meetings. Significant ones attended relating to the VP Administration remit or CEC membership were:

**September 9th-11th**
Induction Meeting for the new CEC. A chance for the new CEC to meet together with the Senior Office team for the first time as a group on their own.

**September 12th (am)**
Regions Review Meeting – a paper from this is on the agenda for this CEC meeting

**September 12th (pm)**
Student Casework Steering Group – reviewing statistics for student complaints. Attended with General Manager. One factor emphasised by both of us was the need to keep students informed as to the progress of their complaint as there was significant slippage beyond the target dates for cases to be handled if reducing case handling times could not be achieved.

**September 12 (pm-2)**
Meeting with Johnathan Wylie the new Director Academic Services. This was a ‘get to know you meeting’ as he will be leading subvention negotiations from the University side.

**September 22nd**
Board of Trustees

**Also attended:**

**September 16th / 17th**
Graduation Ceremonies, London

**September 26th**
Graduation Ceremonies, Brighton

**Future Diary of all meetings**— includes meetings due between submission of his report and CEC meeting.

**September 29th**
Student Engagement Project

**September 29th**
OUSET training

**September 29th**
Meeting new audit team

**October 10th**
Arts Board of Study (tbc)

**October 20th**
Board of Trustees training day

**November 12th**
Societies Meeting Day

**November 19th/20th**
Officer Team Meeting

**November 22nd**
Board of Trustees

*Peter Cowan*
*Vice President Administration*
REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

Since taking my role on in August 2016, I have hit the ground running. I have had several meetings with the communications team which have been beneficial to the beginning of my term.

OU Students magazine

- Content sourcing, we invited the student body to contribute content, we also encouraged reps to contribute content.
- Discussions with the magazine editorial team about new content for magazines such as themed seasonal productions, these are a work in progress as the first deadline for the magazine content was 21 days after my new position had started.
- Encouraged students within Facebook/Twitter to write or provide content suggestions for our magazines and contacted societies for bio's to share in the magazine for the new academic year.
- Deadline for next magazine content: 11th November 2016.
- Next scheduled magazine: 1st December 2016.
- Magazine clicks for:
  - July 2016 (Conference special): 5,722.
  - August 2016 (Autumn edition): over 43,000 clicks (at the time of writing)

Promotion of community meet ups and a working temporary form

- The communications team have been regularly promoting student led Association and university events through our digital media channels. We endeavour to continue to promote these alongside the student community team. We have edited the pre-existing web form for community meet ups which was adapted for the new community project. We distributed this to OU Students Association regional groups and on our resources page. This has been successful as we now have no less than 2 pages (since August) of student and association meetups on our news and events page.

Starting to remove OUSA acronym from regional pages on Facebook and the V L E.

- The editorial team for the magazine created a small feature in the students’ magazine (Autumn 2016) to explain that we are removing OUSA from all of our platforms (print and digital media).
- Some regional groups have not added the V P communications to their admin teams and some groups have no active admins at all. Most regional groups now have the correct expanded acronym in their titles following the rebranding of the Association.
Social media guideline overall

- We have been working on these guidelines since I started my term. We encouraged all representatives to participate in a simple survey that would allow the communications team to see what members of the CEC wanted on social media. We have now asked for a working group to be created to carry forward the discussion with view to presenting to the CEC with the results and feedback.

Discussion of website improvements

- It has been suggested that with the events such as coffee mornings we include a map for meetings which can be done by google maps and location pin’s for home to meet up.
- It was also suggested that we separate the news and events pages to have a dedicated student community page with information about meet-ups and resources for students hosting these events. This is something that we are keen on and will be looked at in further detail alongside website development project.
- Suggestions have been put forward to the communications team in the office for a gallery. The idea of having a gallery would encourage student virtual footfall to our website rather than just the Association Facebook page. We would like to proceed with this as we feel that engagement can be increased and isolation can be lessened if students can get an idea visually about what happens at events or in volunteering roles throughout the Association.
- Some reps and students would like to see in our website changes that we amend the way that our papers are displayed. We cannot currently use search terms to find a discussion and this can cause students to lose interest in our work. We are looking to form a working group in January 2017.

Social Media

- At the start of my term I created a set of social media pages (twitter and Facebook). My twitter account is in my personal name and I will tweet about my studies as well as sharing news about Higher Education. I also tweet and retweet the OU students account and interact daily with posts. My Facebook personal profile is closed; to combat this barrier I have established a Facebook page. This page is in my official role with a bio explaining who I am, my role and my term. This page directs students to the association website and sign up form for the newsletter. This page is also linked to my twitter account (any tweets on twitter including retweets except replies are sent to my Vice President Communications page).

- At the time of this edit (30/9) I currently have 165 likes for the Vice President Communications page, and 144 followers on twitter (@shortie2901). During the past week I have been sharing the respective published statements from the Association and the University (which have been originally placed on student home and the association website). These three statements were copied to my page and shared into all OU Students Association regional groups alongside some of the bigger student led groups. To date these three statements have been shared over 92 times with over 15k students being
reached. I have also shared other information such as the L E R opportunity and the student magazine for Autumn 2016.

- On social media platforms I interact with students on a personal level (student to student) and I will also act in my role with sign posting students to places and taking part in some discussions. I now differentiate between which hat I am wearing as inspired by Cherry. <Posting as VP Communications> or <Posting as a student>.

- I have also entered matters to share this information and to interact with some students. The other areas of the VLE such as regional groups have been quiet.

- Current Facebook likes on O U Students’ Association page (as of 27/09): Just over 26k.
  Twitter followers (as of 27/09): Just over 17k.

**Diary**

Hour long monthly meetings with the communications team and bi-weekly 15-30 minute catch-ups (dependent on the needs of both myself and the office).

November 2016: Officer meeting.
January 2017: CEC meeting.

*Rachel Hughes*  
*Vice President Communications*
This is my first report as the new OU Students Association V P Community. I had a good handover process from the outgoing Vice President Representation Sue Goodyear and an enjoyable 7-8 weeks in my new role. I have a lot of support from the office staff team (including regular skype meetings) which has helped me to understand the various parts within my remit.

Local Community Project/Student Meet Ups

The pledge drive from conference 2016 resulted in 99 pledgers (11 of whom got in contact via email). Students pledged either to stay in touch with students in their area via a local Facebook group or through meeting face to face. Following the pledge drive, 22 clusters of students were identified by separating students in the UK by county and those outside the UK by area. 24 students were the only ones to do so from their county/area.

The Local Communities project helps students to get involved in local meet-ups. It encourages students to attend or host their own social gatherings (which can be face to face or online). Students can fill in a ‘OU Students meetup form’ to inform the Community Team they are setting up an event or activity. The Association will promote this through the website and social media areas. Students can also contact the Student Community team directly through student-community@open.ac.uk to find out more about the project and the students who are listed (through their pledges at Conference) as interested in meeting other students.

Support packs were sent out to 81 students in time for the August Bank Holiday. These students were those who had pledged to get involved in face to face meet-ups. These included various items to help support students meeting up including tips form experienced meet-up organisers. We have helped to advertise 15 meet-ups taking place in September. 5 of the 14 organisers were pledgers.

We plan to send out the next batch of Support Packs in early October to ensure that existing organisers have the same support items as new organisers. The recipients of the next batch will also include any new organisers that have come forward in the meantime. In November we are looking to extend this to new meet-ups and students who have not been involved so far.

OU Students Association Freshers (Planning & Video)
I have been working behind the scenes with the OU student’s association staff team to develop Freshers, with a programme full of events and activities that will happen between 26-30 September 2016. These include live Facebook chats (Welcome to the OU Student community! Societies Fair, Disabled Students Group, Meet OU students in your area, Students supporting students) hosted by student volunteers who will engage with new students. We also have periscope live video sessions and a slot during Student Hub Live.

I realise by the time this report is published Freshers would have happened! But at this moment in time the Freshers pages on the website are under construction and nearly ready to open. This includes a new video that Nicola Simpson (Deputy President) and I filmed on 13th September 2016 on the OU Campus.

**Bath Residential School**

I attended Residential School between 12-14th August 2016 at the University of Bath. Sue Goodyear gave me invaluable information about the volunteer and coordinator roles; including how the residential schools fitted within my remit of VP Community. I enjoyed networking and getting to know the Open University staff. I learnt about each of their roles, setting up and running of the residential schools and more about the OU as an organisation. I was given a tour of campus (thanks Sue) which took about an hour and helped me to orientate myself. I was then able to easily direct students in the direction they needed.

Sue did a friendly informative presentation at the ‘Student’s Welcome Meeting’ which summarised the Association, who the student volunteers were and why we were on campus. It was noticeably beneficial for students to have volunteers at the residential school and an excellent point of contact for the Students Association through the volunteers.

I talked to some of the engineering students about how they were feeling. There was a range of questions that they felt comfortable asking us, from ‘where is...?’ to ‘help my key doesn’t work what do I do?’ and many others. It was clear students found Association volunteers approachable. We had students come up to us about the quiz, merchandising and even asking us about our studies. I really enjoyed this part!

Although I didn’t attend the quiz, Sue did show me the quiz questions that were provided. Having this prepared for the volunteers ahead of the residential schools is a great idea, I hope this will be repeated next year. Students were very interested in the activities with the Association and having time to socialize together during their heavy week of studies.

I haven’t experienced the residential school training process personally. Having attending the one in Bath from a newbie perspective (having had no training) I can understand the training process is important. I am lucky that I have had Association volunteering experience, so it didn’t take me long to orientate myself and settle in to helping. I would like to help develop training for residential schools as well experience
the training myself. We had a new volunteer who was helping during this weekend who did not have the time to attend the face to face training, who felt it was something he wished he had attended. Lots to think about next time around.

I feel having something more visual or interactive would be useful for volunteers who cannot attend the live training. Podcasts or videos could be something that could be accessed when volunteers have the time to use them and could give them some insight into the role they have accepted. An online OU live training session could give volunteers a chance to talk with staff and experienced volunteers; giving everyone the option to ask questions and get to know each other. However face-to-face training is important for those who can attend, to gain skills and insight ready for their volunteer role.

I enjoyed attending this last residential school at Bath, it gave me a good insight of the work volunteers and coordinators do when they attend. It was a rewarding and valuable experience at the beginning of my 2-year term as VP Community. I am looking forward to learning more about the residential school recruitment process and hopefully having an active part in them in the future.

**Vice President Community Role**

I have been getting my head around other parts of my VP role and the other forms of work and engagement it encompasses. I check the forums and my emails daily if I can, which can at times take an hour or more. I am in regular contact with the Area Association Representatives helping to support them in their role. I work closely with VP Representation and Research, VP Admin and VP Communications. I have found our roles overlap frequently and we are building a solid working relationship.

I also work with Affiliated Societies encourage and enable their work. I was invited to and attended my first societies meeting during the handover weekend on 23rd July 2016 (chaired by Cath Brown). I look forward to future meetings and working with them further.

I have written a blog post for the association website [Central Executive Committee Handover Weekend](#) and a piece for the Student Magazine about my study journey and my role (which will be released soon).

I attended a Regions Review Implementation Working Group meeting on 12th September 2016 at OU campus. We updated the attendees about the Local community project and Freshers plans. Discussions took place about the Learning Experience Reporter roles and recommendations around an English National Exec and Celtic Nation National Execs.

I met with the Operations Staff team on 13th September 2016 where I learnt about the award ceremonies and how they related to my remit. I am looking forward to being involved in this process and helping to develop training further. I have requested that
I can be trained as co-ordinator so that I can ‘fill-in’ or help where necessary. My responsibilities as a Director of OSL (OU Students Shop) was explained, that involves the merchandising and running of the OU shop. I would like to learn more about the operations side of this business and have accepted the offer to visit the warehouse when there is an opportunity to do so.

In my capacity as a CEC member have been accepted as a member of OUSA Controller Advisory Panel (CAP) and currently learning the role from other experienced embers of the CAP team.

I am honoured to be invited to help host the Disabled Students Group Day event in my role as VP Community on 28th September 2016.

**Looking to the future**

There are many changes ahead. We are updating the definition of Societies and Affiliated Groups and have realised there is a gap where some groups fall in-between them both. They are not as formal as Societies and do not hold the remit for affiliated groups. We are hoping to soon be running with a new type of group that can benefit from the help from the Association, which will fall under ‘Clubs’. These will be less formal and will be based on interest groups, hopefully this will facilitate the needs of students to have their smaller groups associated with the Association.

We are looking to launch a project next year involving a presence from the Association at Day School’s presence, which was recently trialled by experienced volunteers. More information will follow.

I am looking forward to meeting a *New* Staff Team Member in the Community Team later this year. Job applications have currently been accepted and there are planned interviews due to start soon. This new Community Team member will help to work on the upcoming projects we have in the future.

**List of Activities/Meetings I have attended since the last CEC**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 July</td>
<td>Societies meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 - 14 August</td>
<td>Bath Residential School</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 September</td>
<td>Regions Review Implementation Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 September</td>
<td>Freshers Filming on Campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 September</td>
<td>Meeting with Operations team on Campus</td>
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**Future Commitments:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>28 September</td>
<td>D S G Day Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 - 16 October</td>
<td>C E C Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 November</td>
<td>Societies meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 – 20 November</td>
<td>Officer Meeting</td>
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**Stephanie Stubbins**

*Vice President Community*
REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION

Although it’s less than 8 weeks since I officially started in my role as V P Education, I feel as if I’ve been doing it for much longer.

The Induction Weekend for the new C E C members in early September was a good way to build a strong team. This is the first time we have had such an induction and I hope it will continue in the future.

I have answered emails from some students and asked for or sent information to several Faculties but most of my time has been taken up with trying to have Central reps in place on OU committees for the new academic year.

Central Representatives

My most pressing business to start with was helping to set up the new Central Representatives Appointments Committee. There was a lot of interest and it’s great to have new voices, but with that comes the challenge of a new team working together. The Committee members are in the process of looking at application forms and appointing Central Reps to OU committees. This involves quite a bit of online discussion and is quite time-consuming. The huge change in the way the OU now runs its system of governance means we have had to adapt to a new committee structure, including a new Faculties structure.

Regions Review Implementation Working Group

This meeting was with several members of the C E C and Association staff members and we came up with the rather radical (for the Association) ideas for the paper that is being presented to this C E C meeting - Paper CEC 10/16/14

Academic Progress Group

This group is discussing how to handle the situation when students are not doing well with their studies.

Group Tuition Steering Group

The discussion held here is now irrelevant as implementation of the Group Tuition Policy did not go as planned and has left many students not knowing about their tutor and tutorial provision early enough.

Meetings Attended

9 – 11 September 2016  C E C Induction Weekend
Sept 2016 – ongoing  Appointments Committee
12 September 2016 Regions Review Implementation Working Group
14 September 2016 Academic Progress Group
22 September 2016 Group Tuition Steering Group

**Future Meetings**

30 September 2016 Group Tuition Project Meeting
14 – 16 October 2016 C E C Meeting
17 October 2016 Meeting with several Association Officers and Staff
18 October 2016 Senate Reference Group Briefing
19 October 2016 Senate Reference Group
19 October 2016 Senate
26 October 2016 Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) Steering Group Meeting
3 November 2016 Group Tuition Project Meeting
9 November 2016 Meeting with Director, Library Services
9 November 2016 Qualifications and Assessment Committee
19 – 20 November 2016 Officer Team Meeting
8 December 2016 Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) Steering Group Meeting

*Lorraine Adams*

*Vice President Education*
This Report outlines my activities since starting the new role of V P Equal Opportunities on August 1 to date. My steep ‘perpendicular’ learning curve started then and continues as follows.

AUGUST

- Downloading and reading vast amounts of information from V P Student Support (within whose remit this role used to fall) subsequent to the C E C Handover Weekend at the end of July.

- Handing over ‘Chair’ D S G (Disabled Students Group) position to an acting ‘Chair’. As ‘Chair’ of the O U Students Association D S G, I had to take the hard decision to step down before the annual D S G Elections in November because of my additional workload in this new role. However, because the D S G falls within the remit of V P Equal Ops, I remain on the Committee as a non-voting ex-officio Officer with access to the forums on the V L E and am still an Admin in the large (and very active) Facebook group. I also participate in all of the Group’s regular themed Events.

SEPTEMBER

Over 2 days prior to CEC Induction weekend in September, I had introductory meetings with the following:

- Dr. Chetz Colwell, Senior Learning & Teaching Development Manager (Accessibility). Chair of Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) Co-ordination Group and co-Chair of Post Graduate Module H810 Accessible online learning: supporting disabled students

- Michala Robertson, Assistant Director Widening Access and Success Services

- Helen Maxwell, Senior Manager, Offender Learning Academic Services

- Jiten Patel, Head of Equality, Diversity & Information Rights, Academic Policy & Governance

- Sas Amoah – Black and Ethnic Minority Network (B M E)

- Geraldine Huzar, Learning and Teaching Librarian – O U Library

- Sat in on the replacement Tripartite Meeting. V P Student Support, Simon Duckworth (Head of Business Relationship Management, I T), Sue Breese (Business Relationship Analyst, I T), Rachel Hawkins (Assistant Director,
As stated above, these were all introductory/for information meetings with some of the OU people I will be dealing with in my role over the next 2 years. Apart from the replacement Tripartite Meeting, the people I met told me about their areas of responsibility; current/on-going/future projects and how the Association is/could be involved. Future reports from me will therefore contain much more specific subject detail and not just a list of names and dates.

Meetings – Online/by ‘phone’

- As a student Central Representative, participated in a Board of Studies Open Programme Committee Meeting. Barbara Tarling attended in person. This meeting lasted over 3 hours and was a totally new area for both Barbara and I. I didn’t say much but subsequent to a pre-brief conference phone call with Barbara and Helen Janes a couple of days before, Barbara was able to raise some points. Report being written. Next meeting is scheduled for first week in January 2017.

Diary dates:

Saturday September 24  Regular monthly West Sussex Coffee & Chat for local OU students. Event organiser
Tuesday September 27  Travel to Milton Keynes for OU Student Radio broadcast for Freshers Week.
Wednesday September 28  Student Hub Live – ‘on camera’ – 2 slots for Freshers Week. (1) Talking about how the OU and the Association supports students with health issues. (2) With Nichola Simpson – Association Deputy President – talking about our roles and the work the Association does.

Upcoming Meetings:

Thursday October 13  Travel to Milton Keynes for Inclusion Meeting (issues affecting students with barriers to study) and CEC meeting weekend.
Wednesday October 19  Senate Reference Group meeting on Campus – Remote or ‘in person’ attendance to be arranged/confirmed.
Saturday October 29  Regular monthly West Sussex Coffee & Chat for local OU students. Event organiser
Tuesday November 15  On Campus or via Skype - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objective 1b Working Group
18 – 20 November  Officer Team Meeting
Saturday November 26

Regular monthly West Sussex Coffee & Chat for local O U students. Event organiser

The past 8 weeks have been really ‘full on’ in terms of getting to grips with my new role and learning about the many subjects that come within the V P Equal Ops remit. Everyone I’ve met to date at the Open University have been more than welcoming and willing to engage with me personally and the Association as a whole. Therefore, although I can see some ‘challenges’ ahead, I’m hoping this good start bodes well for the future.

Cherry Day
Vice President Equal Opportunity
LER (Learning Experience Reporter) Project

I attended a meeting on Monday 12th September between 9.30am and 2.00pm with some of the other Officers and members of staff. We discussed how the LERs would become a new voluntary role collecting information for the FARs - according to the motto of being their "eyes and ears". The rollout would commence during Freshers week and would initially not be limited, since at this point there was no certainty regarding the popularity of the role. The information from the meeting was shared with the FARs and feedback provided is to be incorporated into the implementation process.

Research

I will have a meeting with Pooja Sinha on Monday 17th October about possible new research projects. I am in favour of a project on what students expect from their Association which would consequently enable to raise awareness and engagement in line with these expectations. This was inspired by a discussion on the forums earlier in the term. Another idea which was forum inspired is whether students would like a personal tutor but this is much more specific and may therefore be more suitable to carry out at a later date. Pooja and I will chat about possible questions to ask as part of the survey, channels and the survey scope.

Survey Management Working Group

I have newly joined this working group and will have a meeting with two members of staff from the OU on Monday 17th October. I anticipate this to be a session on receiving an overview of what the working group has done to date and which questions might be asked as part of a future student consultation. There will be up to six meetings a year for this working group.

LENZ (Learning Experience Network Zone) Project

Part of the meeting I attended on Monday 12th September also related to a new set of forums which will be used by the FARs and the LERs in relation to their respective faculty. This is a shared remit between VP Education and VP Representation and Research. I communicated relevant points to the FARs and received some feedback which was forwarded to the relevant channels for consideration moving forward with the project.

Caroline Poppenga
Vice President Representation & Research
Please copy and paste any part of this Report if you feel it will be of interest elsewhere. If you would like to respond to anything please email ousa@open.ac.uk.

This is the first Report in this 2 year term as Vice President Student Support. The name of this role hasn’t altered since Conference 2016 but the responsibilities have. No longer will I be looking into issues affecting students with barriers to study which I did until July 31st. Vice President Equal Opportunities will be taking on many of those aspects which includes convening and chairing the Inclusion Meeting and being the main Association Officer ex-officio member of the Disabled Students Group Committee.

I will continue as an OUSET Trustee (the Students Association Charity, Open University Students Educational Trust), overseeing Peer Support and Blogging. My most recent blog asked for positive or helpful experiences you’ve had with the OU so I can pass them on to the appropriate OU departments or Staff. It can be found here.

This role’s new direction means I will have my radar tuned to issues which can affect all students rather than for those who have particular barriers to study. Since August 1st I have been acquiring knowledge about the new areas I’ll be dealing with and that learning will be continuing.

Peer Support

Peer Support is a Students Association Service which will have an exciting addition in October. This will be called Peer Support Through The Gate (T T G) A small number of our Supporters volunteered to be part of this venture and have received training to enable them to offer support specifically aimed at students who have been released from a secure unit and are likely to encounter additional problems to those which many students face. The new service is available to anyone with access to the internet and can be found here.

Our Supporters will be continuing to help all students via the Request Forum which can be found here. They are there to complement, not replace, the OU Student Support system or your tutor, but think of them as a listening ear. If you want a quiet word with a fellow student who isn’t going to judge you, please contact them.

Nightline

Nightline hotlines are open again after the summer break and we’ve been supporting their recruitment for new volunteers.
Tripartite

Tripartite meetings were held 4 times a year to discuss anything relating to online activities. Its format meant that some items we raised were dealt with very slowly. One of these was Eduroam which we were told would be available to students in 2016. We recently discovered that some students might have Eduroam access towards the end of 2016 with more students added later.

Tripartite is no more but following its demise we considered replacements which will more effectively look into a number of areas. One of these includes a meeting which has recently been set up between the Students Association and OU staff from Academic Services and IT (Information Technology). Our first meeting was held in September with the next one in October. Items under discussion could include StudentHome, Eduroam, process of booking online tutorials, forums and contacting the computing helpdesk.

Fees and Funding Meeting, including Postgraduate Loans

In late March the OU found out that certain restrictions which had originally been proposed for Postgraduate Loans would be relaxed meaning our students in England would be eligible for Postgraduate Loans. Unfortunately, some students will still not be able to make use of these loans because they are paid to the students in instalments rather than at the beginning of their study. This conflicts with the OU process which requires module fees to be paid in full at the start, or via an OUSBA loan. Potential students who cannot successfully apply to OUSBA nor pay the module fee up front will not be able to study a Postgraduate module or qualification with the OU.

The OU is exploring ways to ensure that students who are eligible for a Postgraduate student loan can use it to pay for their OU Postgraduate module fees. However, they need evidence that potential students want the OU to make changes to enable them to study. If you, or someone you know, is affected and would like that passed on to the OU, please email the Students Association at ousa@open.ac.uk

Student Feedback and Communications Work Stream

The OU, alongside the Students Association, is considering how the OU can improve its responses to early signs of students’ concerns and in publicising how it has used student feedback. We are continuing to work with the OU to provide a website that is student friendly, has useful information, and will be used.

Induction and Handover Meetings

I attended these two Central Executive Committee meetings which had various functions. They helped those new to the Central Executive Committee to settle in, get to know each other, and learn about the Students Association and their roles. It also gave us all time and space to hand over and / or receive what was needed for the new C E C to be ready to start our new roles on August 1st. There were many mixed emotions, including sadness at saying goodbye to many I had volunteered with over a number of years and too many to mention you all here. Many thanks for all you have given me. Fortunately I still see many of them on Social Media. There
was also a mixture of trepidation and excitement at getting to know the new members and it looks as if we’ll have a good team.

One useful message came through in these meetings - working remotely means it is difficult to appreciate external factors that might be affecting other members of the team, it would be easier to have that awareness if we were meeting 5 days a week. I also learnt a neat little trick of when being given instructions to read, don’t assume there is only one instruction but read to the end of the sheet of paper where more might be written! No idea how that useful bit of information passed me by all these years.

**Meeting with Assessment, Credit and Qualifications (A C Q)**

Examinations and Assessments is an area where I need to expand my knowledge to enable me to fulfil this role. In October VP Education and I are meeting staff from A C Q to discuss various issues in this area and I will also be using this as a general learning opportunity to find out more about the responsibilities within this department.

**Commitments**

- 30th September 2016: Freshers Facebook Chat - Supporting Students
- 14th October 2016: Tripartite Replacement
- 14th to 16th October 2016: C E C Meeting
- 17th October 2016: Assessment, Credit and Qualifications (A C Q)
- November 2016 (tbc): Feedback / Communications Work Stream

*Alison Kingan*

*Vice President Student Support*
As reports go I'm afraid this one is rather light on actions and achievements. Most of my time has been spent reading the vast quantities of background information that have been helpfully passed my way. I have also attended a training course on 'Students as Governors' run by the FFHE (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education), although I had to leave before the final session in order to talk to HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) about my appointment as a member of the TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) Panel - which was tricky, because the news was still embargoed at that point.

The OU's own induction sessions for new Council members are scheduled for 27th September, just as the deadline for submitting this report expires. They will be followed by a late afternoon meeting of Council, the first of the 2016-17 academic year. The only items on the Agenda concern the Council Governance Review, which proposes major changes to the membership of Council (though not to the student membership) and the way its committees are organized. Many of the changes focus on defining the relative roles of Senate and Council and strengthening the relationship between them, so my experience as a member of Senate will be particularly valuable. The papers are available on the intranet for anyone who would like to read them but I'll also be happy to give a verbal update to the CEC when we meet.

Meetings attended

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<tr>
<td>14 September</td>
<td>LFHE Students as Governors event</td>
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<td>21 September</td>
<td>Meeting with OU Head of Governance</td>
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<td>27 September</td>
<td>Council Members Induction and Development Day</td>
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<td>27 September</td>
<td>Council Meeting</td>
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Future Commitments

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<td>14-16 October</td>
<td>CEC</td>
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<td>19-20 November</td>
<td>Officer Team</td>
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<td>21 November</td>
<td>Meeting with University Secretary</td>
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<td>23 November</td>
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Barbara Tarling
Student Member of OU Council