BoT 11/15/M

BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BoT)  
16 November 2015

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) held in the OU HR Training and Development Centre, Wilson Building, OU Campus, Milton Keynes 16 November 2015.

PRESENT

Ruth Tudor, President (Chair)  
Peter Cowan, V P Educational Support & Research (4th Officer Trustee)  
Andrew Hulme (External Trustee)  
Nik Morris, Deputy President

IN ATTENDANCE:  
Rob Avann, General Manager (Secretary)  
Wendy Burrell, Deputy General Manager  
Leanne Quainton, Executive Assistant (Minutes)  
Magda Zamojska, Head of Operations (part)

SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. WELCOME

1.1 The President welcomed Trustees to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jonathan Fudge (External Trustee)  
David Humble, V P Administration  
Anna Jenkins (Student Trustee)  
Al Thomas (Student Trustee)  
Carey Shaw, OU Council Member (Non-Officer Trustee)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Minutes (BoT 7/15/M) from the meeting in July were approved.

4. REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER/SECRETARY
4.1 The General Manager outlined the contents of the paper advising that the purpose of this item was to pick up any matters that had been dealt with online since the last meeting or for information purposes.

4.2 He highlighted the management changes that had taken place across the OU in the last month as a result of the Faculty restructure. He and the President had met with two of the Executive Deans who had been positive regarding increased student involvement. The Locations Analysis was highlighted and the effect on students that the upcoming strikes may have. Finally, the Government green paper that had been released in advance of a potential Higher Education Bill in 2016 that OUSA along with the OU will be responding to as part of the consultation. This will be shared with Trustees online.

SECTION B: ITEMS FOR REPORT OR ENDORSEMENT FROM THE CEC

5 OUSA STRATEGY

5.1 The final draft OUSA strategy had been discussed at the CEC with minor amendments suggested that included the addition of a one page summary plan for a simpler interpretation for students.

5.2 Trustees agreed that measuring effectiveness and reporting back will be fundamental to ensure timetables are adhered to. The strategy is intended to remain flexible and fluid therefore communicating successes as well as lessons learnt back to the wider membership should be good practice.

5.3 RESOLVED: With the changes indicated, the OUSA Strategy was approved.

SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DECISION

6. FINANCIAL MATTERS

6.1 Subvention Negotiations - The General Manager reported that the first subvention negotiation meeting with the University for the 2016/17 period was held on 29 October. This year is the third year of the current three-year agreement, so in early 2016, negotiations will start on securing a new three-year agreement. This will be done prior to July 2016 to ensure continuity with the current Officers in term.

6.2 For the current year OUSA predict an underspend of £40k, the majority of which is down to the staffing underspend due to the vacant Communications Intern and the Administration role that is due to be created in the New Year following further review into the job description. The University have advised that they are content with the uncertainty of expenditure around the Regions Review and payment for Officers as results will not be known until next year although expenditure has been built into the forecast to cater for the probabilities.
6.3 In the past there has always been an incentive for OUSA not to retain income as it would negatively impact on the subvention but the University Secretary had advised he would be content for a prescribed tolerance banding that allows OUSA to earn extra monies that would not affect the agreed position. This discussion will form part of the next three year agreement negotiation.

6.4 **Sale of Exam Papers** – An early warning has been received from the University that OUSA may be required to stop selling exam papers to students which instead should be provided free of charge from 2017. Magda Zamojska, Head of Operations was in attendance for this part of the meeting, reported on the income these sales made for OSL although sales have been declining since 2013.

6.5 Trustees agreed that if this were to happen, the OU Students Shop should continue to manage the distribution of exam papers to keep traffic coming through OUSA and the shop. The OU have indicated that due to OSL proceeds going to OUSET a charitable cause, they would make up any losses - however we would need further information to what that would look like and the timescales this would continue for.

6.6 **ACTION:** Extraordinary Meeting of the OSL Board to be called to discuss the matter. An OSL Board member to be involved in any future negotiations on this with the University.

6.7 **Governance Expenses** – A proposal paper from the OU’s Governance Team was provided to the Subvention Meeting in October regarding OUSA taking over the handling of student expenses for governance committees.

6.8 This paper did not address the specific points raised previously by OUSA and the OU have been asked to rework the proposal. It contains no mention of how expense will be handled for other projects/consultative meetings/workshops that fall outside the governance structure and gives no indication of how large these numbers are resulting in it being impossible to budget for. Nor does it include the forecast for this current year. We await a revised version.

6.9 **NUS Card Commission** – Commission from NUS cards has been rising steadily to £143k in last years’ accounts with all proceeds being donated to OUSET. OUSET reserves have now built up, mainly due to recent large bequests therefore the General Manager asked Trustees whether this funding should be used in other areas.

6.10 The original principle was that as it is money earned from sales to students, it should be spent specifically on help to students, hence it has automatically given to OUSET. However it could be used towards other projects like an event to thank and recognise OUSA volunteers or towards individual representation.

6.11 Trustees felt that a discussion on the future use of this would be important for future years once the new 3 year agreement and tolerance bandings on income are in place.

6.12 In the meantime OUSET will be looking at advertising the Trust more and possibly changing its parameters for donations.
7. LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The General Manager presented the draft invitation to tender document to Trustees asking to run a selection process to find a legal services provider with a view to the contract starting from 1 February 2016 for 30 months to July 2018.

7.2 The General Manager assured Trustees that he felt the timescale was manageable but meant that shortlisting and receiving presentations would be needed in the first two weeks of January. He also noted that although the OU have procurement and legal services department it was felt that OUSA needed to stay independent in case this caused any conflicts of interests.

7.3 RESOLUTION: Trustees approved the invitation to tender, criteria and the process involved. The Deputy President will join the General Manager and Deputy General Manager on the panel with a view to approaching Jonathan for the fourth member for his legal expertise. A skype session for shortlisting will be 6/7 January with interviews taking place 15 January 2016.

8. STAFF HANDBOOK

8.1 This discussion was of a confidential nature and therefore has been reserved to the confidential section of the minutes.

9. GENERAL MANAGER APPRAISAL

9.1 This discussion was of a confidential nature and therefore has been reserved to the confidential section of the minutes.

SECTION D: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

10. REGIONS REVIEW PROJECT

10.1 The Deputy General Manager gave an update on the project to date advising that findings and recommendations will be presented to the January CEC and March BoT.

11. STAFFING MATTERS

11.1 This discussion was of a confidential nature and therefore has been reserved to the confidential section of the minutes.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 None recorded.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next face to face meeting of the BoT will be held on Thursday 24 March 2016. Discussions will continue online in the meantime.