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 30 March 2015.

PRESENT

Ruth Tudor, President (Chair)
Peter Cowan, V P Educational Support & Research (4th Officer Trustee)
Jonathan Fudge (External Trustee)
David Humble, V P Administration
Andrew Hulme (External Trustee)
Anna Jenkins (Student Trustee)
Nik Morris, Deputy President
Carey Shaw, OU Council Member (Non-Officer Trustee)

IN ATTENDANCE:
Rob Avann, General Manager (Secretary)
Leanne Quainton, Executive Assistant (Minutes)
Wendy Burrell, Head of Engagement & Support (part)

SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. WELCOME

1.1 The President welcomed Trustees to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Al Thomas (Student Trustee)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Minutes (BoT 3/15/M) from the extraordinary meeting in February were approved.

3.2 Matters arising from both the February and September meeting were discussed due to time constraints not allowing the item at the last meeting. For item 13.2 (BoT 3.14.M) The Deputy President reported that nothing further had been received from BResilliant with regards to the OU’s involvement in a community app for disabled students.
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 The employee consultation is underway for the proposed changes to the U S S pension scheme, closing 22 May 2015. OUSA staff have received the information pack as well as an invite to attend the OU/U S S information sessions taking place 13-14 April.

4.3 Pooja Sinha had been appointed as Research and Information Officer (maternity cover) and starts with OUSA 16 April. Six candidates were scheduled for interviews 2 April for the position of Operations Assistant.

4.4 The General Manager had been notified by the N U S that they will no longer be offering Association of Managers in Student Unions (A M S U) membership to unions that are not affiliated with the N U S. OUSA is not affiliated to the N U S but has had a special arrangement that has still allowed us the use of the former A M S U services such as online resources, the N U S Connect website and access to events for staff, Officers, and Trustees. The N U S have undergone substantial changes recently and it is expected that OUSA will be approached for affiliation again so we will await further discussion on whether this would be appropriate.

4.5 The remainder of the report was noted without comment.

5. OU PROCESS FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS AGAINST OUSA

5.1 V P Administration introduced the revised OU procedure to Trustees explaining that all of the University’s complaints and appeals process were being reviewed to become more succinct and efficient. The process for handling complaints against OUSA is a small part of the overall review and he highlighted that there had only been small amendments to the policy, keeping it in line with the rest of the OU’s complaints procedures.

5.2 It was agreed that the term ‘Officer’ in section 2 of the scope of the procedure was clarified to cover all OUSA role-holders. It was also agreed that ‘fair’ should be removed from point 4 in line with recent changes to other OU complaints procedures.

5.3 RESOLVED: With the proposed amendments, the procedure was approved.

5.4 OUSA STRATEGY

5.5 The General Manager advised that as part of the work around creating a new OUSA Strategy, the C E C had held a discussion session around the OUSA ‘Get Engaged’ Survey results and how we use the challenges highlighted to create a vision and direction of the strategy. It is intended that feedback received will be collated and a
draft strategy will be presented to the next CEC in July for comment before presented to the BoT for approval.

SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DECISION

6. FINANCIAL MATTERS

6.1 The overview of expenditure to date, forecast to end 2015/16 and update on the subvention negotiations for 2015/16 was received. Further up to date details of expenditure and forecast will be circulated to Trustees following the meeting.

6.2 The OU have indicated that they would like to propose to pass over the work of coordinating student expenses to OUSA. The current system is a confusing one with increased numbers of students sitting on OU committees and project groups and added inconsistencies in the systems and payments offered to student representatives. There are many factors to consider and further investigation will be fundamental as to move towards this change would mean a significant increase in workload for the Resources Team as well as having implications on funding. It was thought that the OU would come with a proposal at the next round of subvention negotiations beginning in June 2015. Trustees agreed that the University would need to make a full and tested proposal for their consideration.

6.3 Some concerns to be addressed included the growth and spread of expenses across the University and not just limited to governance. There could be issues for OUSA on budgeting for expenses and not excluding students with large travel or expense needs. A question was raised as to how the OU work addressing this with the AL representative body. Trustees had concerns over the prospect for drift as opportunities increased and so did the OUSA expense bill and how this would be perceived externally. Finally, Trustees would want assurances on system issues; a corporate expense style IT system based online and assurance that expenses would be handed over in a healthy, stable state without hidden or ongoing issues.

6.4 DISCRETIONARY EXPENDITURE

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

7. AFFILIATIONS

7.1 The General Manager asked Trustees to consider a proposal to affiliate with the Charity Finance Group (CFG) for one year from 1 April 2015. It would enable staff to access the resources of the network which would include specialist advice and support, regular communications, discounted rates for training and events plus would put staff in contact with others in similar roles across the charity sector. It was thought this would also extend to Trustees having access although the General Manager would check this.

7.2 RESOLVED: Trustees agreed to the cost of £320 for the year subject to an annual review of cost and benefits.
8. **NIGHTLINE**

8.1 Wendy Burrell, Head of Engagement and Support was in attendance for this part of the meeting to present the data on the Nightline Service to date. In the short period that the figures covered of 15 September – 23 January, Nightline had received 393 contacts from OU students, which had made up a third of Nightlines calls to the service overall.

8.2 Trustees agreed that this was an overwhelming figure showing a successful service that was already a benefit to OU students. It was agreed that Nightline should be funded with a contribution from the OU and not only by OUSA. The Head of Engagement and Support explained that the OU have advised that they will require an evaluation once the service has been running a year before any discussions can take place so funding will not be forthcoming from the OU for the continuation of the service for 2015-16, but we will be trying to secure it for 2016-17.

8.3 On the whole, the BoT were keen to see a proposal to support the continuation of the service for a further year. The Head of Engagement and Support explained that a meeting with the Chair of Nightline’s Trustee Board had been arranged for 6 May 2015 and a proposal would be put to the Trustees for consideration via the forum as soon as possible after this.

9. **STAFFING MATTERS**

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. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1 None recorded.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next face to face meeting of the BoT will be held on Monday 7 July 2015. VP Educational Support and Research tendered early apologies to this meeting.

Discussions will continue online in the meantime.