OU Students Association Strategy 2015 to 2018

Vision: To encourage a vibrant and active student community with open access and equal opportunity, to which all OU students feel a sense of belonging and where they are able to positively influence the student experience and engage and support each other.

Mission: To be the community and voice of all OU students.

Values:
- Democracy: We believe that open, transparent and accessible democratic structures led by students improve our performance and strengthen our accountability to those we represent.
- Equality: We believe there should be equality for all in a community that values and respects diversity.
- Integrity: We stay true to our principles and uphold the founding mission of the Open University to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.
- Partnership: We believe that healthy relationships built on mutual trust, respect and shared goals offer the best chance of achieving our aims.

Our mission and values weave through our four key objectives:

Objectives:
- We will raise and maintain awareness amongst students and OU staff of our decisions, services and achievements.
- We will engage students in all parts of our work, building a vibrant and supportive community with an emphasis on involvement and volunteering, fostering new opportunities wherever possible.
- We will listen to OU students and represent their voice within the University and beyond.
- We will exercise good governance in an effective and accountable manner to deliver our aims.

Comment [R A1]: Some like ‘a’ rather than ‘the’

Comment [R A2]: Or should this be “Connecting OU students to each other and to their University” or should belonging be included here? Or “To be the voice of all OU students and ensure the OU is more than a place of learning – it’s a student community”

Comment [R A3]: Suggested inclusion of ‘Supportive’ as a value.

Comment [R A4]: Is this strong enough on using our own voice, maintaining independence/influence? Should ‘collective’ be in there? Representing true student values/voice?

Comment [R A5]: Another suggested wording: “We stay true to our principles and uphold the founding mission of the Open University, believing in independent and fair representation of the student voice”

Comment [R A6]: Actions?

Comment [R A7]: Suggestion that ‘foster new opportunities’ should be an objective in its own right.
We will raise and maintain awareness amongst students and OU staff of our decisions, services and achievements.

Key actions to deliver the above:

Develop and implement a new communications strategy to target our audiences, using the best possible tools and testing new approaches including podcasting and regular student radio online broadcasts.

We will raise the profile amongst students of our services and opportunities for students, including OUSET and the OU Students Shop.

Work to raise awareness of the Association within the OU, including establishing a visible and useful presence on OU Life (the intranet), and fostering relationships and understanding by delivering presentations and up-to-date information to OU units, engaging in events and undertaking timely communications.

We will improve how we communicate our policy decisions, our positions on key issues facing OU students and our achievements.

To call on the University to provide access to better email communication tools and to improve the presence of the Association’s services and student community in all marketing activities.

(Once objectives are approved, action plans to be fleshed out into columns of why/what we know, projects, outcomes, milestones, timescale, sponsor and lead staff role, measures. All action plans to run no longer than 12-18 months on a rolling basis).
We will engage students in all parts of our work, building a vibrant community with an emphasis on involvement and volunteering, fostering new opportunities wherever possible.

Key actions to deliver the above:

- Develop and implement an engagement strategy, focusing both on how we attract students to get involved and on how we develop their interest and level of engagement further.

- To work to create a vibrant student community with volunteering opportunities, societies and the engagement of students at the heart of what we do.

- To foster peer-to-peer support and connections between students to assist their study experience.

- To review and re-shape the structure and role of the Association in the regions and nations.

- To work in partnership with the University to identify, implement and evaluate new student engagement opportunities as part of the joint student engagement project.

- We will continue to ensure that we are as accessible as we can practically be, including adhering to the highest web standards and placing a real focus on ensuring students are able to access and enjoy Conference 2016.

- To call on the University to introduce better social community online tools for all students to use to forge social relationships, support networks and the feeling of belonging to a wider student community that we believe greatly assists students to undertake and complete their studies.

(Once objectives are approved, action plans to be fleshed out into columns of why/what we know, projects, outcomes, milestones, timescale, sponsor and lead staff role, measures. All action plans to run no longer than 12-18 months on a rolling basis).
We will listen to OU students and represent their voice within the University and beyond.

Key actions to deliver the above:

Develop and implement a research strategy to facilitate carrying out regular surveys, consultations and other research activities with our students to understand their needs, concerns, priorities, ideas and interests.

To use our research and information to inform our student representatives, enhancing our ability to influence the University for the continual improvement of the student experience.

To work with the University to develop a culture where students are recognised as full partners in shaping the student experience.

To call on the University to empower students to be a part of all appointment panels for the University’s most senior executive roles.

To identify and take up opportunities to put the part-time and distance learning student voice at the heart of debate.

To work with the University to improve student consultation processes and practice to close the feedback loop and improve outcomes for students.

(Once objectives are approved, action plans to be fleshed out into columns of why/what we know, projects, outcomes, milestones, timescale, sponsor and lead staff role, measures. All action plans to run no longer than 12-18 months on a rolling basis).

Comment [R A9]: Should shaping be replaced by developing, improving or enhancing?
We will exercise good governance in an effective and accountable manner to deliver our aims.

Key actions to deliver the above will include:

We will undertake a full consideration and analysis of options for ensuring our future student elected leadership roles are open and appealing to all and are rewarded for their hard work on behalf of all OU students.

We will identify and break down barriers to ensure our student representatives and volunteers are drawn from all backgrounds and present a full picture of the OU student community, introducing new approaches to encourage students to stand and to vote.

We will implement one-member-one-vote elections in 2016 to overhaul our democracy.

We will introduce faculty representation to our Central Executive Committee and ensure a close link with those students who present the student voice within the University’s academic governance structures in order to get the best outcomes for all students.

We will source the best possible partners and advisors for the Association, forging links to ensure that we develop as needed to deal with the challenges of a changing OU student demographic and wider higher education sector.

We will continue to place an emphasis on staff and student volunteer development through external affiliations, training opportunities, consultation, appraisal, attendance at events and regular visits to and presentations from a range of University units.

We will support the OU Students Shop (OUSA Services ltd) to appoint to all vacant roles on its Board of Directors to aid further development.

We will support OUSET and the OU Students Shop to develop new strategies and operations to continually improve.

(Once objectives are approved, action plans to be fleshed out into columns of why/what we know, projects, outcomes, milestones, timescale, sponsor and lead staff role, measures. All action plans to run no longer than 12-18 months on a rolling basis).