OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (C E C)
27 – 29 March 2015

OFFICER AND COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

C E C 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 Education Policy
Vice President Education Support and Research
Vice President Representation
Vice President Student Support
O U Council Member
This report covers the time from March C E C meeting until now – June and life as President continues to be very busy.

Learning Systems Advisory Group (L S A G)

Both myself and the Deputy President had been working with this group which has now placed the Dashboard on your student homepage. This has been an on-going process since we both came into our roles so it was with relief that we saw it finally go live. We have tried to ensure it is as student friendly as possible so hope that, for most students, it is a useful tool. There will be more student testing of the Dashboard where more students will be on campus to test it out and give feedback.

Student Charter Review Group

Myself and OU Council Member, Carey Shaw, continue to attend these meetings where the Student Charter was reviewed. Its progress has meant many changes which we believe will enable us to hold the University to account but, equally, lays out the Universities expectations of its students. A recent consultation found that many students did not know where to find the Charter so OUSA has been working with the University to decide where best to put the Charter to raise its profile. Work is also being done to raise awareness amongst staff of the Charter and to embed it in as much of what the University does as it possible.

Student Engagement

Both students and staff from the OUSA office are part of a Student Engagement Working Group. This group is working to ensure that the university engages with students wherever it can. It identifies where best practice is and will arrange a meeting in the Autumn to invite brick universities to share best practice. We hope this will allow the university to see what other institutions are doing to engage with its students and see how we can adapt these ideas to the OU Student body. OUSA will be part of organising this day alongside the university.

Charter Day

Charter Day, in April, had been in my diary for some time, however as it approached I was asked if I and two other students would be willing to be part of a student panel to answer questions from the audience on the day. The audience consisted of OU staff, students and visitors from companies in Milton Keynes with an interest in the OU. Myself, the Deputy President and one other student, Barbara Tarling, reluctantly agreed to be part of the panel. However, as ever, my fears were unfounded as we fielded questions and were able to answer them all between the three of us, sharing our varying experiences over the years. Afterwards the feedback that I received was very good so I would take this opportunity to thank Nik and Barbara for agreeing to
do it and then making such a good job of it. After the various events there was an opportunity to visit the Learnabout Fair and it was nice to see stands from areas of the university that we quite often never hear about. As myself and Nik wandered around we were often approached and congratulated on our panel session so we decided that this meant it had been a success. I am always struck by how keen OU staff are to meet with students as it is a rare opportunity for them to see ‘real, live’ students. Hopefully we can continue to work together to arrange more events that will bring students to their campus.

**International Conference on Online, Flexible and Distance Learning in Paris**

Some time ago I had met with the International Council for Open and Distance Education (I C D E) to discuss the student perspective of distance and flexible learning. This resulted in an invitation to Paris to their International Conference on Online, Flexible and Distance Learning. I was asked to be the student representative on a panel, taking questions from the floor, and then to present in one of the breakout sessions on the same day. With an enormous amount of trepidation I accepted the invitation and plans were made for me to go to Paris. In the meantime I was given a brief for a five minute presentation (no death by powerpoint thankfully) and one for a ten minute presentation – which did include death by powerpoint! With the help of Belinda Tynan (whose fault it was I was doing this!!), Pro-Vice Chancellor, Learning and Teaching I put together a short presentation on what being a student means in an institution which delivers distance learning. The room was full of decision and policy makers so I used the opportunity to raise awareness of the good and bad points of distance learning. I was able to take questions from the audience afterwards and found that as a student I was the novelty! The afternoon saw smaller breakout sessions so it was a little less scary as yet again I raised awareness of what life is like as a distance learner. I was able to show my audience the video advert which recently ran on British T V which shows all the ups and downs of being an OU student. The following two days were less eventful although I was called up on one more time to represent the student view with about ten minutes warning. Fortunately I had been paying attention to what had been discussed so was able to respond. I was very proud to be representing the OU and OUSA in this manner and I can only hope that I made the rest of the delegates think about how they will go about making distance learning accessible and worthwhile. What it did make me realise is that for all the faults the OU has we are very lucky in what the OU provides and how it provides it. I certainly came away with a bigger appreciation for the OU.

**Diary Dates**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>23 – 26 March</td>
<td>Various Meetings on OU Campus</td>
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<td>27 – 29 March</td>
<td>C E C Meeting</td>
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<td>P V C Research recruitment shortlisting</td>
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<td>20 – 21 May</td>
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<td>2 June</td>
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<td>9 – 11 June</td>
<td>U N E S C O-International Council for Open and Distance Learning High Level Global Forum.</td>
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**Future Diary Dates**

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<td>15 October</td>
<td>Student Consultative Executive</td>
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*Ruth Tudor  
President*
In a departure from my usual reports I am not going to set out all the occasions by date that I have been on campus or attended meetings. Instead I am going to write about what I’m currently involved in and where that is (or what is coming up next).

**Online Student Experience Project (O S E P)**

The President and I have been involved with this project for some while now. It came out of a meeting that we attended with Learning and Teaching Solutions (L T S). The project revolves around making the online experience for students better than it is now. This has taken in some of the issues raised from the My OU project as well as the student dashboard, which many of you will already be aware has gone live, and at the time of writing the President and I will be attending a workshop on the 18 of June. This workshop will be attended by other students not currently active within OUSA as well as some OUSA activists so it is hoped a broad perspective will be given. I can provide a verbal update on this project at the C E C meeting.

If you haven’t already had a look at the student dashboard please do. Feedback has been largely positive and this is something that OUSA reps have been asking for a considerable time, so we really should give credit where it is due but also make use of, and make suggestions for, any improvements we can see may be required.

**Student Radio broadcasts**

In my recent absence I was very relieved that the President approved the next round of our OU Students radio broadcasts. This is set for 2 of July in the evening so will have been and gone by the time we arrive for the C E C meeting. Our presenting team is VP Representation and SAR Scotland, but I would appreciate any volunteers if you would like to be involved. You can of course do non-live interviews as the shows always contain a number of pre-recorded materials. It’s a great experience, we always have a lot of fun doing the shows, and of course can increase your own skill sets! The radio show this time around has the theme of mental health and mindfulness which we felt would be a useful subject to discuss for students, and we are aiming to have conversations with interesting people, students and OU staff, around that theme. If you have any suggestions or thoughts please let myself or the engagement team in the office know.

**Engagement strategy**

I attended the very first meeting of this project recently along with V P Represntation and S A R Northern Ireland, a very productive afternoon and some threads were made with a number of projects that OUSA are currently involved in, some more formal than others. I’m sure that many of us agree that engagement is a key activity for OUSA and has formed a part of our overall OUSA strategy for a few years now so all thoughts, suggestions, comments I’m sure will be gratefully received.
Charter Day

As in previous years OUSA has been involved with the University’s Charter Day activities. This year the President and I along with another student were invited to take part in a panel discussion as part of the events around the Vice Chancellors inaugural speech to the university. We were really happy to be joined by Barbara Tarling, whom many of you will know, on the panel as the non CEC student and on the whole had a very good day and a really interesting panel discussion. It was very cheering to note that we didn’t need to approach any people afterwards to talk about all things OUSA as lots of people approached us. Hopefully we represented OUSA well. We were also asked to invite a couple of students to this event and took the approach that a couple of younger students would be an interesting idea. What we weren’t prepared for was their being encouraged by a PVC to start a selfie frenzy, nor were we prepared for the VC finding this hugely entertaining and all the senior members of the OU getting involved. Those following the Twitter feed will most likely have seen these selfies but if not do go and have a look, it was refreshing to see students being students and staff having fun with them.

Meet the Lawyer

I was asked, in a very roundabout way in the first instance, if I could be available to meet someone on campus with a small group of students. As I was available that day I agreed only to discover it was Justine Milliband a few days before the general election. All was well however as this wasn’t a political event! A small group of us met with Justine and talked over coffee about what life as an OU student is like and about our individual studies. Her interest was primarily in those taking Law (her own work interests are Environment Law) but she was evidently very interested in part time education and adult education. I suspect she had a very steep learning curve that day as we all had very different backgrounds and experience, however it was wonderful to represent OUSA and Mrs Milliband herself was very charming and attentive.

Postgraduate Poster Competition

I was delighted to be asked to attend the P G Poster competition as judge and presenter of the OUSA prize this year. The entrants were very good and it was quite a hard task for the several groups of judges to come to a decision but in the end we had 3 joint first prizes and 4 runners up. All of extremely high quality, both in their poster work and presentations. I was delighted to present the OUSA prize to Steve Kelsey. This event is really interesting to be involved in, and came out of my attendance at the Postgraduate induction day. I can’t emphasise enough how impressed I was with the quality and variety of research undertaken at the OU, much of which could be absolutely life changing. I would encourage anyone with an interest to seek out more information on the research being done at the OU.

This also sparked some ideas about how OUSA can be involved and strengthen our links with the research student community on campus and how we may be able to highlight their research to the wider student community. I will update on this when we have further concrete plans. If anyone has any interest in being involved with this please let me know, or Helen Janes in the OUSA office.
OU Parliamentary Summer Reception

The President has asked that I stand in for her at this event due to prior commitments which I have of course agreed to do. It is taking place on the 23 of June so I can provide a verbal update at the C E C meeting. I intend on making sure that as many people in attendance have heard of the OU Students Association as possible by the time I leave, and of course how fantastic it is, how professional, our major achievements and anything else I can get in to conversation. In the words of V P Representation they will be OUSAed.

Staffing

As many will know the position of Deputy General Manager is in the process of being recruited for. Interviews will be held soon and it is hoped that there will be news by the time of the C E C meeting. I have been chairing the panel involved so some of my time in Milton Keynes has been due to attendance for this reason.

Tripartite

I am certain that V P Student Support will cover in detail the items at Tripartite that are within her remit. However there was one item on the agenda that was of particular interest to me as I have been pushing this for some time, and that is OU student access to Eduroam.

At the previous Tripartite meeting we were informed that the lack of access was due to the requirement to change from the current SAMS login system to a different one. This project was in the pipeline and as a consequence students should gain access to Eduroam so we were awaiting an update of when all the processes had been undertaken and when the project could start, then we'd have a better idea when this access would be provided. At this last meeting we were told that the project had been scaled back and this change in login would only be provided to staff. I informed the OU staff, and in particular the IT department member of Tripartite that I felt this was a huge disservice to students, particularly those on taught P G qualifications where this kind of access at other university campus is almost essential, not to mention may be a factor in whether they sign up or not. I also got the point across that I wasn't prepared to accept this and would continue to press for students to get access to Eduroam. As a consequence the member of IT staff contacted myself and VP Student Support after the meeting to arrange a meeting date to discuss this issue and how we can make it happen. We will keep the C E C updated as to progress but we are very much standing firm on this.

There were some comments made at the Tripartite meeting by another member regarding the over reliance on IT and some requests for action not happening and that this should no longer be tolerated. In my short time on Tripartite, and in my meetings elsewhere in the university, I have also noted this and so supported the member on their comments. This is minuted and available in the Tripartite minutes.

A final word about the new OUSA webshop with my OUSA Sevices Limited (O S L) hat on. Things are moving apace and the new webshop should be available soon. Needless to say I will be shouting loudly about it everywhere once it is. What I wanted to say in my report was a huge vote of thanks to the Operations Team in the
OUASA office who have been working hard on both the merchandise review as well as the new webshop in recent months. The merchandise review has already made the world of difference to our offers in the webshop and at various events and the new webshop will only assist (and having seen some screenshots it really does look great!) So thank you to all in the Operations Team.

As I noted above this style of report is an experiment. I won’t provide a list of dates of when and where I’m attending things as that doesn’t seem intensely interesting to read, but I would be interested in feedback if people feel this style provides the information

Nik Morris
Deputy President
To begin at a couple of endings – Council has approved both the changes to our Constitution passed at Conference 2014 and the revised procedures for Complaints Against OUSA. A lot of work went into these documents along with the consequential amendments to our Bye-Laws and the Association owe a debt to all those staff and members who contributed to these improvements. As usual the Constitutional situation is slightly messy due to people being elected by different procedures but come Conference 2016 we will be back in sync.

In the meantime we have to implement new procedures, particularly in relation to the new challenges presented by the move to One Member One Vote but also in order to cope with the addition of Faculty Representatives. This work has begun but much needs to be done over the coming months.

The projected overhaul of our Disciplinary Procedures is presently hanging fire pending the appointment of new Deputy Manager. The appointment process is continuing as I type this report and may well be completed by the start of this C E C meeting.

We have however made progress in the other ongoing project of reviewing Officer remits. The recent Officer Team meeting agreed some basic principles which came out of the Working Group. These include a need to make it clear which Officer is finally responsible for given aspects of our work along with allocating new projects which are presently unallocated and indeed traditional roles which people have come to assume on an ad-hoc basis. But above all the Team were of the opinion that the burden placed on the role of President is unsustainable. It was therefore felt that the post of Deputy President should include within its remit some specific duties which have previously been reserved to the President.

The Working Group will now be producing more detailed suggestions after consulting with others outside the Group and in particular, as a starting point, both the General Manager and those post-holders whose present remits are likely to be most affected. I would expect there to be draft proposals on the table for discussion at the September Officers Team meeting with a paper for final approval being presented at the November C E C.

As is the way of the world we also have the usual ongoing business in hand. A 2015/16 Budget Paper is included on the Agenda elsewhere. I won’t comment on that in any detail here because 1) some (alright, most) people feel it’s quite bad enough reading this stuff once without duplicating the information and 2) we hadn’t had the Budget Meeting when I wrote this stuff. It is however worth reminding people that from now on we won’t be able to rely on large undesignated reserves and, quite rightly, a rather stricter budgetary control will be needed. Such is life.

In addition a new round of subvention discussions has begun. Once again the first meeting had not taken place when I sat down to “type” (all right painfully pick out) this
report. However I anticipate our being asked to try and produce a broad brush 3 to 5 year financial plan. This is always difficult, especially in an environment where Higher Education income streams are increasingly unpredictable, but our situation as a democratic member-led Association is especially delicate. In particular I am aware that regardless of what happens at Conference 2016 a new Officer will be responsible for the financial remit and many of the present CEC will probably not be standing at all. Nevertheless working with Rob as General Manager and Sally as Head as Resources, Ruth and I will be trying to put together some suggestions which will provide the opportunity to fund improvements in the services we provide members. We shall see what we shall see.

I would like to commend the work both staff and Societies Reps have done on preparing for the upcoming Societies A G M, Networking and Training Event on 11 July. The Engagement Team have done an excellent job in preparing an exciting programme which will be invaluable in helping Societies to fulfil their potential.

Finally I would just like to mention a couple of other meetings I attended. Firstly the Induction Lunch Thingy with the incoming Vice Chancellor and Pro Chancellor. Both of them asked some sensible questions and made some of the right noises – I hope they got the right answers. I also pitched up at two of the Student Consultation Regional Meetings where the students asked extremely sensible questions, made exactly the right noises and may or may not get the right answers in the fullness of time. In my opinion the Consultation meetings were slightly more informative, much more entertaining and, surprisingly enough, had by far the better catering. Go figure!

Meetings attended since the last C E C report

March 21 Assembly Seminar
March 27-29 Central Executive
March 30 Board of Trustees
April 22 SRG and Senate
May 2 Societies Committee
May 9 OU Consultation Meeting – London Region
May 16 OU Shakespeare Society A G M
May 30 Officer Team
June 2 Vice-Chancellor/Pro-Chancellor Induction
June 4 Social Science Faculty Committee
June 10 SRG and Senate
June 13 OU Consultation Meeting – South-East Region

Meetings booked between this report and CEC meeting

June 15 BoT Appointment panel
June 16 Subvention meeting
June 19 Budget meeting
June 26 BoT Appointment panel

David Humble
Vice President Administration
REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

The Social Media Guidelines were passed at the March C E C and are now available on OUSA’s website.

The draft Communications Strategy was also passed and the Comms Team have been working on the final document which will be presented at the July C E C.

The summer edition of the OUstudents magazine was sent out in June and the podcasting project has taken off, with more episodes coming soon. “OUstudents Podcast” is available on iTunes with links on our website and on social media.

The Comms team, along with student volunteers, were at the OUSA stand at the Learn About Fair at the OU on 22-23 April to talk to OU staff about OUSA.

I attended the Assembly Executives Seminar in March which I felt was very successful as there were lots of ideas put forth, with new Assembly members having a chance to learn quite a lot and network with students from other regions. There are now top tips for producing a Newsletter in the OUSA Newsletter Temp and Tips forum http://learn1.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/view.php?id=7927

I have also attended more meetings of the OU Analytics Ethics Policy Working Group by phone. This is not an ideal way to attend a meeting and not being able to access all the papers is far from ideal. However OUSA V P Student Support and I give as much input as we can.

Meetings Attended

12 May 2015  Analytics Ethics Policy Working Group
29 – 31 May 2015  Officer Team Meeting
1 June 2015  Analytics Ethics Policy Working Group

Future Meetings

July (date unknown)  Analytics Ethics Policy Working Group
13 - 15 Nov  C E C

Lorraine Adams
Vice President Communications
Central reps

The recruitment process for Central Reps in 2015-17 has now closed and resulted in a large number of applications - both new and continuing - and the Appointments Committee has met to give initial consideration to these.

Planning for the seminar in July has now begun, building from the feedback received after last year’s event.

Academic Governance Review

The recommendations from this review have now largely been approved. The university’s central committees will be significantly modified from September, including those which we have student representatives on.

Work continues on the consideration of the future of governance within faculties.

Academic Appeals

Following the approval of the complaints and non-academic appeals procedures, proposals have been put forward for the new procedure for academic appeals. OUSA is working closely with the university to refine this proposal and ensure it is appropriate for students.

Curriculum Programme (previously Curriculum Fit for the Future)

Work is continuing on the implementation of the principles generated by this project. This includes proposals for Joint Honours degrees - initially a limited number but with a view to increase over time as the systems are developed. Also included is a consideration of entry to the university and the support and advice that can be provided - there is currently no indication that the principle of Open Entry will be lost.

Module size, shape and presentation patterns are now not under consideration within this area. A separate piece of work is being undertaken to review this.

Quality Assurance Agency (Q A A) Review

In March I attended a training day run by the Q A A for students and university staff involved in reviews. While much of the information provided had already been shared with us, it was useful to see other perspectives on how to approach this.

A meeting has been arranged for the university and OUSA to meet with the manager of our review to discuss any concerns and requirements.
In order to inform the OUSA student submission a survey has recently been conducted. The number of responses received was quite high and this has been very useful in developing the submission.

### Planned Future Meetings

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<td>Q A A prep meeting</td>
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<td>Central Reps Seminar</td>
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<td>Appointments Committee</td>
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<td>Academic Governance Review - devolution to faculties</td>
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*Josh Brumpton*

*Vice President Education Policy*
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)
3 – 5 July 2015

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT & RESEARCH

Since the last CEC meeting a temporary replacement, Pooja Sinha, to cover Kate Buttery’s maternity leave had been appointed as the Research and Information Officer in the OUSA office, which has allowed progress to be made on the next OUSA Research project. This will be exploring student attitudes and perceptions of teaching materials provided online or onscreen. It was presented to the Officer Team at the end of May and will be presented to the whole CEC at the upcoming meeting.

Aside from this it has been a busy three months with a full round of consultative meetings both face to face in the Regions and Nations and online via the Student Consultative Forums, the first round of Graduation ceremonies as well as being a busy period for the selection of Residential School representatives and new and continuing Central Representatives.

The Student Engagement Project has also been active with monthly meetings.

ATTENDED SINCE LAST CEC MEETING

April 4  Brighton Graduation Ceremony
April 15  Student Engagement Project
May 9    South Regional Meeting (OU / OUSA)
May 16   Ireland and Northern Ireland National Meeting (OU / OUSA)
May 20   Student Experience Advisory Group
May 21   Student Engagement Project
May 23   South East Assembly Meeting – Face to face element
May 30-31  Officer Team Meeting
June 3    Appointment2 Committee

AFTER REPORT DEADLINE / POST CEC

June 25  Student Engagement Project
July 24 – 26  Central Representative Seminar
September 18-19  London Graduation Ceremonies

Peter J Cowan
Vice President Educational Support and Research
Residential Schools

The OU Residential School Team visited the Warwick University campus at the end of March. Kate Snapes and I were invited along to oversee the OU planning activates for the Residential School covering modules in psychology, engineering, and mathematics. The planning covered everything around the accommodation requirements, doors and entry points to all areas that OU students will use. The input from the representation team was to ensure that anything that OUSA required for a successful presence at the Resi School can be taken into account. The entertainment and merchandising areas were discussed with the venue’s hospitality team and with the OU teams.

A lot goes into the planning of the Resi School e.g. the logistics for the delivery of all equipment, building the knowledge about the exact location of the machinery and office equipment, collections of the equipment and photographic evidence.

The call went out for Coordinators and Resi Reps with responses coming through. The training of the Coordinators and the subsequent training of the Reps is ongoing at the time of this report.

Degree Ceremonies

I was able to attend the Degree Ceremony Coordinators training held at Kents Hill Training Centre in Milton Keynes. This day allowed for the coordinators to understand processes that are undertaken in the manner that allow the operations of the stall to run smoothly. One notable moment to the day was the understanding of the repackaging of the items for the couriers; which if not done properly does have implications further down the line at the warehouse and subsequent sales to online purchases. There are some minor continuous issues with the figures inputting into the card machines; so due diligence is required to ensure that the correct payments are taken.

Equality Objectives Steering Group and Student Engagement meetings

I attended the meetings on campus. Future meeting will take place in June and September 2015.

OU Student Consultations

The online elements of the international and regional consultations questions had begun. The international forum thread was collated via skype and google documents and organised by the mods from Europe and myself. It was quite a lengthy process to sort through the threads and organise them in line with the posted thoughts from the
students.

I also attended the OU Consultative meetings in Nottingham, London and Birmingham. They were all well attended as were the OUSA events in the afternoon. The main topic for discussion was Tutorials.

**Assemblies Seminar**

Having enjoyed a training weekend at Kents Hill the feedback received from the attendees was very assuring and seemed to create quite a positive after event mood. There seemed to be a better understanding of the bigger picture of what the regions and nations contributed to OUSA and the OU. A Facebook page of those who attended seemed to spring up overnight and helped to keep the regions and nations in contact, this being better than the use of the forums for the same purpose.

I have been invited and I am planning to attend some of the face to face meetings/events including Scotland, Nottingham, Tonbridge, Leeds, Cambridge and Manchester.

The younger students’ forum led by Jack Jeavons seems to be finally taking off together with Facebook and Twitter and an online forum being set up.

**Council Lunch May 2015**

I attend the Council lunch on campus, during which time I and Nicky took a tour of the observatory and other areas of campus including the library enjoyed a lunch (ooh) and spoke about OUSA and our respective roles as a S A R and V P Representation. Pictures on facebook and a sound recording done by. You can find the photos [here](#) and the podcast [here](#).

**Blog thing for the office**

I received a call to describe a day in the life of OUSA V P Representation; the first draft amazed me as it came across as quite boring. When in fact it isn’t in the slightest. So a second draft was done and I felt that that was far more representative of the Reps role.

**Officer Team meeting**

I attended this meeting in Birmingham. A busy agenda but productive ahead of the C E C meeting later this month.

**What I got out of the last few months since my previous report.**

You can spend a lot of time answering emails and then all of a sudden all those efforts come to life. What with the assembly seminar, the resi school training and the degree coordinators training, meeting the volunteers for this year’s events and knowing that the planning is working is brilliant. I am still enjoying the role. Yes, I indeedy do.

*Sue Goodyear*

*Vice President Representation*
REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT STUDENT SUPPORT

The role of Student Support mainly involves trying to help students who have particular barriers to their study. It includes attending various meetings but also keeping involved with Peer Supporters, the Disabled Students Group and the Open University Students Educational Trust (O U S E T) plus responding to students who contact me directly.

Peer Support Service

The volunteer supporters continue to put in many hours each week answering questions and also providing longer one to one support. They are all current or past OU students who know what it’s like to juggle study with life. If you would like to know more about what our Supporters offer, please follow this link - http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/help-and-support/peer-support If you post onto the forum, only you and the Supporters can read what you have written.

Open University Students Educational Trust (O U S E T)

A student who thought O U S E T (OUSA’s charity) only helped with module fees recently contacted me. Well get ready for some exciting news, cue the drum roll – O U S E T can help with any study related costs. Unfortunately, that doesn’t include help to buy a bottle of champagne after the exam. There’s more information here – http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/help-and-support/ouset

Widening Access and Success and Strategy (W A S S) Review

I met with various OU staff, including those in Student Support Teams. The aim was to review the Widening Access and Success Strategy and to ensure that students are supported in a timely and appropriate way in the future. We considered what happens before new students register on their first module and before they start that module. We also discussed how to ensure students have the right information when choosing their next module, and what could be available between modules. It appeared to be a very useful meeting and hopefully will result in more students not only completing modules but also getting the best results they can and continuing to study with the OU.

Blog

Until recently it has been a weekly event but will now be fortnightly and are all available on the OUSA website or on my Facebook Page. I’ve recently blogged about what is available between modules and hope shortly to do a couple of my interview type Blogs with a couple of volunteers.
Disabled Students Groups (D S G)

Similar to Peer Supporters, the Disabled Students Group could not exist without active, knowledgeable and dedicated Committee members. The D S G Chair, Cherry Day, even whizzes up to Milton Keynes on occasion to advertise the group and help ensure voices of students with disabilities are heard. There is also an active Facebook Group. More information can be found here.

Inclusion Meeting (Issues affecting students with barriers to study)

Also attended by OU staff, the President and D S G Chair.

Special circumstances Exam / EMA reporting - Please use the online form to report any special circumstances by midnight the next day. Invigilators, tutors and Student Support Teams cannot report on your behalf. If your additional needs have not been met, also complete the online form.

Disabled Students Allowance (D S A) - The OU is continuing to work with relevant bodies to ensure that the difference between OU students and those in brick built universities is well understood.

Module Descriptions - In future these could include more information about accessibility issues.

Offender learners and students in secure units - Students in secure units will shortly be receiving their own copies of OU students magazine, without any names, identifying features or photographs.

Tripartite Meeting (Discussions relating to anything presented on screen)

Also attended by the Deputy President, tutors and OU Staff. This was a lively meeting because various items have been unresolved for too long. These items include students who choose their own background colours losing some functionality; Peer Supporters frequently being timed out of their forums; student access to Eduroam; and the infrequent but annoying issue of tutors and students losing access to OU Live in the middle of tutorials. We were promised that there will be more action before the next Tripartite meeting about these issues.

May Disability Conference

This annual OU Conference is attended by staff who have an interest in enhancing the study experiences of students with disabilities. I’ve written three blogs about this. One includes, amongst other items, suggestions about students using OU Assessors for D S A Assessment and the other has more about the Moodswings Charity and D/deaf awareness. The second blog suggests that students who have problems hearing OU Live sessions contact their Student Support Team to discuss alternative arrangements. The third Blog includes information about U D L (Universal Design for Living) It also mentions Steve, who lost both his legs and while recuperating and learning to walk, studied with the OU who made all the necessary adjustments to enable him to complete his degree.
Learners in Secure Units

I, alongside various OU and OUSA Staff, are trying to ensure that students in secure units, and those through the gate, have information to help with their study. This includes a different version of OUstudents, as previously mentioned. Information about the OU Students Association and O U S E T will be included in a leaflet, produced by the OU, for those continuing to study upon their release. We are planning on enlarging the Peer Support Service so once students are through the gate they can contact a Supporter with queries specific to their experiences.

Future Commitments

25 June   Widening Access and Success (Online Seminar)
27 June   East of England Student Consultative Meeting (Cambridge)
16 July   Senate
September (tbc)    Inclusion Meeting
16 October    Tripartite Meeting
13 – 15 November  Central Executive Committee Meeting

*Alison Kingan*

*Vice President Student Support*
Central Executive Committee (C E C)
3 – 5 July 2015

REPORT OF STUDENT OU COUNCIL MEMBER

The May meeting of Council took place on Tuesday 12 May, with Mr Richard Gillingwater (Pro-chancellor) in the Chair and with Mr Peter Horrocks (Vice-Chancellor) attending on his first occasion since he had taken up the post a week previously.

In his report to Council, the Vice Chancellor indicated that his Charter day address appeared to have been well received and that the need for the university’s focus to be on “Students First” had been identified as the major item for his agenda. He had already been meeting with external stakeholders (Funding Councils, Regulatory bodies and university groups) as well as with bodies within the university, both formally and informally, in order to gather ideas and discover barriers to change.

The 2015 Institutional Performance Report was presented, setting out performance against the measures of success previously agreed. It was noted that student numbers in England generally had declined but that the OU’s performance had not declined at the same rate as performance in the part time sector overall. Nevertheless, there were identifiable weaknesses in areas such as taught Postgraduate numbers and of international student numbers.

HEFCE Annual Assessment of Institutional Risk – the OU is ‘not at higher risk’ – its standard category. Formal report still to be received and assessed but no active recommendations from HEFCE.

Projected Financial outturn figures - within expected tolerances but noted that OU now more vulnerable to variations in income from teaching fees than under previous model.

Finance Committee Highlights that HEFCE grant was above expectations because of enhanced Student Opportunity Allocation (the successor to Widening Participation funding). The future of this was under political pressure and the phasing out of Transitional Arrangement funding would not be helpful so that planned cost reductions in order to achieve target surplus were important.

Question posed about FutureLearn revealed that it was currently exceeding existing revenue targets set out in business plan (although planned still to be a “loss leader” at this time).

Reports from Strategic Planning and Resources Committee and Development Committee both received.
Report from Senate received. Discussion about the importance of the Q A A review and dependence on incorporation of the student voice in governance.

OU-OUSA Relationship Agreement – A question was asked about procedure of appointment of Vice Chancellor’s delegate in cases of student complaints about OUSA. Response was that if Vice Chancellor’s delegate requested action with which OUSA declined to comply, it was probable that issue would be referred to Council. Procedure approved and amended to incorporate the procedure from 1 August 2015.

11 additional student members attended for lunch (2 from C E C, 9 from openly advertised invitations.

The afternoon session was dedicated to a strategy review workshop (with several “breakout” sessions), ranging over “best guesses” about direction of travel of new government in the field of Higher Education and Vice Chancellor’s Charter Day presentation and taking up issues of recent changes.

After presentations on O U projects overseas and on I T analysis of data gathered by Milton Keynes Council (mainly transport and parking), The annual Council evening dinner followed, including a briefing presentation on recent progress of FutureLearn.

The next meeting of Council will take place on 14 July 2015. A presentation planned for that meeting will be the Vice Chancellor’s vision for review and rationalisation of the upper echelons of the university’s management governance structures, incorporating faculties into “superfaculties” with incorporation of their representation into the Extended Leadership Team, as disclosed to Senate and announced to O U staff generally.

Despite the comments made in my previous report, originally scheduled meetings of the Locations Analysis working group have been deferred until after all consultations about its earlier report have taken place. The Student Charter review working group has now completed its review and has reported to Senate.

In addition to these matters, I have taken part in the Regional Student Consultations, having joined the meeting for East Midlands at Nottingham and planning to attend the East of England meeting on 27th June.

Carey Shaw
Student Member of O U Council