OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (C E C)
13 – 15 November 2015

STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES (SARs) REPORTS FOR REGIONS & NATIONS

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:-

S A R for Wales
S A R for Scotland
S A R for Northern Ireland
S A R for Southern Europe
Central Executive Committee (C E C)
13 – 15 November 2015

REPORT OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (S A R) FOR WALES

Wales Assembly Executive and Members

Since my last report there have been no additional meetings of the Assembly however there has been discussion on the forums about what members would like to see happen in the future. Also, with the elections for new members ongoing at the moment there has been some interest expressed in the forum and via our Facebook page.

Lu Richardson is now representing Wales students on the Senate Reference Group. I am also continuing to attend this meeting as the C E C Representative not on Senate. Unfortunately due to a long-standing prior commitment I am unable to attend the C E C meeting but after a request for volunteers Julie Lynch-Wilson will be attending in my place.

We have also co-opted a new member Barbara who some of you may have met at the 2014 Conference.

OU in Wales Associate Lecturer (A L) Development weekend

Along with a member of the assembly executive, Mair Kromrei, I attended the annual A L Development weekend at the end of June to deliver a workshop. It went really well even though our session was one of four optional sessions happening at the time so only a small group attended our session. Those in attendance were grateful to find out a bit more and find out that there was another area of support for students. The slides that we prepared can be seen in the assembly forum: http://learn1.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/discuss.php?d=64904. Afterwards we discussed the possibility of attending in future years and having a session which all delegates would attend and it was felt that this would be a good idea.

Social Meetings/Groups/Activities

There has not been any social group activities over the summer. However, I have organised a coffee meet-up in central Cardiff on Saturday 7 November in which quite a bit of interest has been expressed. I hope to repeat this on a monthly basis.

Social Media

The OUSA Wales Assembly Facebook Group now has 311 members with a lot of new faces joining the group during the Freshers activities. We hope to continue to engage with more students this way and are looking into improving our use of other social media channels such as Twitter and Instagram.
The OU in Wales marketing team contacted us about the #LovePartTime campaign and made bi-lingual banner pictures available. I encouraged the Assembly Executive and Members to tweet and share posts as part of this campaign and shared many of my own. It was also a great opportunity to refresh our Twitter account which now has 400 followers.

I continue to be present in the regional V L E Forums where I have been answering queries and offering support.

**Consultative process/meetings**

Unfortunately students in Wales have not had a consultative meeting this year. There are still plans by the OU in Wales to host an event in North Wales and would be excellent for OUSA as there has been little engagement with students in North Wales and it would be great to exploit any opportunity. It is likely that this event will now happen in February.

**Other Updates**

On the last weekend in June I will be attending an Associate Lectures Conference hosted by the OU in Wales along with a member of the assembly executive.

**Activities since last C E C meeting**

13-14 October Senate Reference Group meeting

**Future Commitments**

7 November OUSA Cardiff Coffee & Chat
February (TBC) OU in Wales open day and student consultation

*Claire Smith*

*Student Association Representative for Wales*
REPORT OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (S A R) FOR SCOTLAND

This report will cover both my activities and those of OUSA in Scotland since my last report to the C E C in July.

Scottish Assembly

The Scottish Assembly met in Glasgow in August and a number of topics were discussed not only at the face to face meeting, but also the corresponding online element which ran alongside it.

A review of June's OUSA in Scotland Open Day event was undertaken with discussions mainly being around the poor attendance from the event, future planning and what lessons could be learnt from this year's event. In terms of attendance, it was suggested that the timings could partly explain reasons for the low attendance with the June scheduling having been in "exam season". Also the weather on the day was very poor and this may have been another factor. It was also suggested that some students were unable to locate us within the venue used on the day. In terms of planning, it has been suggested that planning for the 2017 event should begin much sooner, following OUSA Conference next June. Though there were a few lessons to be learnt, the event was on the whole positive in terms of the demonstration of StudentHome and Dashboard function, the old study materials which students, Assembly and Executive members had brought along to the event and the session with Jim Miller (former Director, OU in Scotland) who had also come to the event to talk to students, had gone down well.

The Assembly discussed the Scottish Committee which took place in Edinburgh in June and how the process of promotion, recruitment and attendance in relation to the event had gone. It was agreed that this had gone well due to the different approach that had been taken with the majority of the places prior to the day itself’ being filled. This did not equate to a 100% turnout on the day however, with some apologies submitted prior to the meeting. The Scottish Working Committee met earlier in October and I will cover in that section of the report continued interest from those that had attended in June, as well as some early discussion on next year's Scottish Committee.

Online delivery has continued to be a topic for discussion with the suggestion from some members at the meeting being that some believe that they can't use computers and therefore give up trying to do so, which is an issue with elements of modules that are conducted online (only). It was suggested this could be a future topic for our ongoing Student Feedback Forum (which it was recognised needs to be better publicised than at present) but with more thinking needed on how best to utilise any responses that we obtain and the purpose of what we are asking our students in Scotland. Assembly Grant Funding was discussed as well as Freshers’ and our plans around it (the Freshers’ event will be covered later in this report). Publicising and
promoting the current Assembly/Executive elections was discussed and it was recognised that our own OUSA in Scotland website does need some updating.

With the current elections to the Assembly/Executive in mind, in order to allow those who may be elected to introduce themselves to each other and give them an introduction to the OUSA Scotland Assembly/Executive, I made the suggestion that the next meeting be held online shortly after the results are known, with a view to the next face to face meeting being held early in the New Year. It is hoped that the online meeting is held in early to mid-December.

ScotCampus Freshers’ Festival/OUSA in Scotland Social

OUSA in Scotland were invited to have a presence at this year’s ScotCampus Freshers’ Festival held at the end of September at the S E C C in Glasgow. Myself and Patricia Gray from the OUSA in Scotland Executive and Sue Goodyear, V P Representation, attended the two day event which I am told saw a footfall in the region of 5,000 students attending over the two days (although we do not know the exact numbers who visited our stand at the event). The event did see both a diverse and varying mix of students visit us – those who had not heard of us or indeed the OU, had not considered studying with the University, those new to study with the University, and those who had been around a while. For those students that came to us with specific study issues such as navigating their module websites and finding their T M A, for example, we were able to point them in the right direction, as well as making students aware of us and what we do. One particular group of students came from colleges that are currently in partnership with the O U in Scotland and as a former college student, I was hopefully able to “sell” the benefits of OU study to them, including the progression opportunities that are available to them (credit transfer being one for those in possession of Higher National Certificate/Diploma qualifications for example). This is one area that I feel we can work with the O U I S on. Student Ambassadors were also part of that conversation, hopefully these ideas will develop. I feel that it would be good for the O U I S to support us should we attend future events as for a first “run” at this event, it went successfully for us and should be an event we regularly attend as it does both raise awareness of OUSA and our work but also hopefully attracts students to become involved with us. We were also able to have a look at what others had to offer at the event and this includes “freebies” that were being given away – merchandise is something we could have a further look at in the future. Promotion was carried out prior to the event in our forums, via social media and by emails to students in Scotland. I also continued to promote via social media (my S A R Twitter account) during the event, thanks go to both the Comms Team in the OUSA Office and the O U in Scotland for supporting the promotion efforts in the run up to the event and over the two days. We met the S I E (Scottish Institute for Enterprise) intern, Jane Meighan who was present at the event and also attended our social. We have helped promote their activities previously on our forums and Jane has written a piece for our forthcoming newsletter. S I E aim to help encourage students interested in setting up and creating their own business ventures. From a postgraduate perspective, an external group, Enterprise Campus, got in touch prior to the event to see what we could do in helping them promote their activities and what they offer postgraduate business students (which are very similar to S I E’s activities) and they visited us also at the event.

As part of our presence in Glasgow, Scottish Assembly member Matthew Walker organised a social event for students to attend, mingle, and also to grab some
food/drinks, which was held at the Counting House Wetherspoon in Glasgow city centre on the first evening of the Freshers’ Festival. We had an encouraging turnout and it was good to see faces that we had seen during the day at the Festival. Matthew hopes that these events in Glasgow will be more regular and another is planned for late November. Overall, we had a successful time at the event, a number of learning points which we can take forward and hope that we will not only take forward what we have learnt from the event but have got students engaged with us, been able to increase awareness of us and our work, and be able to attend future events of this nature. Thanks to Patricia and Matthew for their considerable efforts in the run up to and over the two day and also to Sue for her considerable efforts and for coming along to assist us.

OUSA in Scotland Strategy

As part of the Scottish Assembly meeting in August, a workshop was held which aimed to look again at the ways in which we currently engage with our students in Scotland and to come up with a strategy for how we engage with our students in future, the ways in which we undertake that work and any relevant background information that we use to do so.

The workshop looked at our current approach to student engagement in three distinct areas – statistics, style and strategy itself - whether we are doing this in the right way, whether or not we are sufficiently informed about student wants/needs and where we seek the appropriate information to be able to succeed in our aims in terms of student engagement.

Student demographics were considered in terms of age group, faculty, interests and what interest students have in OUSA more generally and where we can obtain information from in these areas. In terms of interest, the workshop asked what the potential was for students to become involved in our activities and those of OUSA more generally, whether that be representation on University committees or activities as students, what we can measure our success in our aims/strategy against and how we set achievable targets for that.

Our suggested strategy aims to communicate our “message” better to students across a number of platforms – social media, forums, modules, faculties and societies as well as the Study Skills workshops which we have been regularly attending (with some success) in Scotland. Also, Scotland specific content and issues were discussed, such as courses with Scottish content, geography and our separate issues with regards to funding. In terms of style, we looked at how receptive our students in Scotland are to our communications with them and whether we need to communicate in a different way in respect of the various platforms/media that we use, and how we can do this.

We concluded by looking at what the intended strategy aimed to achieve, which it is hoped that it will increase awareness of OUSA in Scotland and our work, to increase response to us and involvement with us, to maintain interest in us and to build a community.

O U in Scotland Committees

Scottish Working Committee (S W C) met in early October. Following our efforts to promote the opportunity to attend the main consultative meeting, Scottish Committee in June, I contacted all those that had both expressed interest in attending the June meeting and those that had attended, to ask if they were attended in attending the
October meeting. Initially the responses were mixed with some students less than positive in being contacted again by us. However, some expressed that they wished to attend and including those on the Assembly/Executive (and myself as S A R), five of the six allocated spaces for students on S W C were filled with four attending in person on the day. It’s encouraging to us that students continue to wish to be involved and put their views across to the University in Scotland. John D’Arcy, Director, OU in Ireland in his capacity as Acting Director, Scotland, chaired the meeting. The main focus for discussion was around the current Locations Analysis and what impact the proposed changes would have on Scotland. The Edinburgh office will remain, with the P G Student Support Team (Business and Management) currently located at the Edinburgh office being moved with the workload being replaced. It was noted that an “enhanced” dual affiliation model would be introduced. I queried what this would mean in practice for our students as the Associate Lecturers/Staff Tutors were also unclear. It would mean that the Edinburgh office would be responsible for students in Scotland with “link officers” to have input into modules where Scotland specific elements were required. This discussion tied in with the recently announced faculty mergers and what implications, if any, would be had on Scotland, which it was felt that there would be no specific implications for Scotland.

The Group Tuition Policy and Early Tutor Student Allocation was also on the agenda for the meeting, which is hoped will be in place for the October 2016 module presentations. The basic principles behind the former will be that students should be able to sign up for events (online and face to face) up to three months in advance which will provide more versatility for students. Concerns were raised in respect of the policy around cancellation of an event, who would decide whether a tutorial, for example, was cancelled due to lack of attendance (or sufficient numbers) as small groups can still benefit from such events, the size of tuition groups and the possibility of smaller groups covering larger geographical areas which would make face to face tuition more difficult. The meeting made note of the Part Time Fee Grant review, which is still awaited with the O U I S’ response being submitted back in March. The review could potentially have an impact on the Y A S S (Young Applicants in School) scheme. The process for recruitment of the new Director, Scotland was also briefly mentioned with the hope being that the process would be concluded by mid-October.

Student recruitment figures were covered and noted that in some groups, figures were below target. College students were one of those groups and as mentioned earlier in this report, I suggested this could be an area in which we could work with the University in Scotland given the numbers of college students that visited us at the Freshers’ Festival event who attend colleges that are in partnership with the University.

The next meeting of S W C is scheduled for early February. Early dates have been suggested for next year’s Scottish Committee with it being agreed that the meeting should be held in line with the other Consultative meetings elsewhere. Further suggested dates will be circulated in due course. I will be liaising further with the Committee secretary on embedding an OUSA element into the main consultative meeting following the format that currently operates in the English regions. Also, as I have mentioned in previous reports to the C E C, an induction to the committee has long been asked for. I spoke with Martha Caddell, Deputy Director (Learning, Teaching and Curriculum), at the OU in Scotland on this a few weeks ago and it is being progressed forward with myself and a member from the A L side providing what
we would like to include as part of this induction. Further updates will be provided as this progresses.

**Study Skills Workshops**

Assembly/Executive members once again attended the latest round of Study Skills Workshops run by the O U in Scotland over mid-late September, with those members attending events in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and in Glasgow. In the case of the Aberdeen workshops, in the region of 30 students attended with a few of those students expressing interest in the current Assembly/Executive elections and others with general student queries. In Edinburgh, initially 60 students attended, reducing to 50 later on as some students left (not due to our presence!) due to different expectations of the workshop itself. Students asked questions around our forums and the N U S discount card (and one mention of the Unidays one). Similar numbers to the Edinburgh workshop were found at the Glasgow, again with generic student queries. The C E C will be aware from my previous reports that we use a PowerPoint presentation as part of our chat to students at these workshops and an updated version of this is hoped to be used for the next set of workshops, scheduled for venues across Scotland in early-mid November.

**Other activities**

Shortly following the last C E C meeting, S A A S (Student Awards Agency for Scotland) got in touch with me on their plans for student engagement and more closely with student officers in Scotland. This includes a S A A S Student Forum being held in the week after the C E C meeting (I am unable to attend due to other OUSA commitments) but will be kept updated on what issues come out of this forum. I met with Sinead Wylie, Student Engagement and Policy Officer at S A A S at the end of July to find out more and to outline some of the issues our students in Scotland face around funding/fees and how S A A S can engage more with us.

**Activities since last meeting**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>24 - 26 July</td>
<td>Central Representative Training, Milton Keynes</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 July</td>
<td>Appointments Committee Meeting, Milton Keynes</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 August</td>
<td>OUSA In Scotland Scottish Assembly Meeting, Glasgow</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 - 24 Sept</td>
<td>ScotCampus Freshers’ Festival, S E C C, Glasgow</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 October</td>
<td>OU in Scotland Scottish Working Committee, Edinburgh</td>
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<td>13 - 14 Oct</td>
<td>OUSA Senate Reference Group and Induction, Milton Keynes</td>
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**Future Diary Dates**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 Nov</td>
<td>Student Engagement Conference, Milton Keynes</td>
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<td>23 Nov</td>
<td>Student Experience Committee, Milton Keynes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 2015 (TBC)</td>
<td>OUSA in Scotland Scottish Assembly Meeting (online)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 - 24 Jan</td>
<td>C E C Meeting, Milton Keynes</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Jan</td>
<td>OUSA Senate Reference Group, Milton Keynes</td>
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Mark Cameron  
*OUSA Student Association Representative for Scotland*
Central Executive Committee (C E C)  
13 – 15 November 2015

REPORT OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (S A R) FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Since my last report I have been in regular contact with Assembly members and students in the region. I have met with students to discuss the OUSA response to the Department for Employment and Learning (D E L) consultation on part time and post graduate student finance. The OUSA response to the consultation can be accessed via the Northern Ireland (N I) regional student forum.

We held a student social event in October and plans are under way for further social meetings throughout the year.

In October students celebrated their success at the Open University Award Ceremony at the Belfast Waterfront Hall. Special thanks to John Murphy as volunteer graduation co-ordinator and students Martin, Margaret, Patricia and Hedvig for their hard work on the OUSA stall.

Appointments

Nicola Simpson has been appointed as a student member of Senate.

Dave Milliken has been appointed as a central representative (including membership to the Senate Reference Group (S R G)).

John Breslin has been appointed as a central representative (including membership to the S R G).

Vacancies

There is now a vacancy for a student from Northern Ireland on the S R G. S R G members ensure that student members of Senate are able to draw on the diversity of circumstances, views and opinions of students. S R G members are required to attend meetings in Milton Keynes (approximately 4 times per year) to share your views. Any student who is interested in the role should contact ousa-sar-nireland@open.ac.uk.

Upcoming Events

OUSA N I Student Social, Sat 21 Nov, 4PM, The National (62-68 High Street, Belfast). Students are invited to attend a student social in Belfast Cathedral Quarter. The National serves food, teas/coffee and alcohol. We will meet from 4PM. Please RSVP to ousa-sar-nireland@open.a.c.uk
Activities since last C E C meeting

24 – 26 July Central Rep Training (Milton Keynes)
18 Aug Locations Analysis Project Team Meeting (Online)
22 Aug Meeting to discuss D E L N I consultation on student finance
26 Aug Locations Analysis Project Team Meeting (Online)
24 Sep Online Learning Experience, OU Campus visit (Milton Keynes)
2 Oct Director's Lunch, Degree Ceremony, Waterfront Hall (Belfast)
3 Oct Open Book Club, Common Grounds Cafe (Belfast)
13 Oct Senate Reference Group Induction (Milton Keynes)
14 Oct Senate Reference Group (Milton Keynes)
14 Oct Senate (Milton Keynes)
16 Oct OUSA Regional Assembly Stakeholder interview (Telephone)
17 Oct OUSA N I Social, Woodworkers Bar (Belfast)
21 Oct Higher Education 'Big Conversation' Discussion, QUBSU (Belfast)
22 Oct Meeting with Frances Morton, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, The Open University in Ireland (Cancelled)

Future Commitments

11 Nov Combined Communications Conference
12 Nov Student Partnerships Event organised by Department for Employment and Learning
13 Nov Community Tool Project Meeting
13 – 15 Nov C E C
21 Nov Open Book Club, Location TBC
21 Nov OUSA N I Social, The National
18 – 20 March 2015 C E C
22 – 24 July 2016 C E C

Dates to be confirmed

National Students Survey Task force Meetings
N I OUSA Assembly Meeting
Rescheduled meeting with Frances Morton

Nicola Simpson
Student Association Representative for Northern Ireland
Central Executive Committee (C E C)
13 – 15 November 2015

REPORT OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (S A R) FOR SOUTHERN EUROPE

The OUSA VLE forums have been relatively quiet as usual.

Facebook group members: S.Europe 234; Greece 168; France 136; Spain 227; Italy 89; SA Switzerland 187. All Facebook groups have been relatively quiet with the exception of some posts about degree recognition issues at the Greek group. OUSA & OU events are regularly shared to all relevant Facebook groups.

OUSA Southern Europe has a new twitter account with 42 followers and 74 tweets: @OUSA_SEurope. OUSA’s new twitter logo and profile picture for Southern Europe have been used for this account.

The Southern Europe S A R has permissions as forum moderator in all Southern Europe forums as well as at “OUSA Moderators” forum.

OUSA Southern Europe Executive Assembly has a newly elected member as result of the bye elections: Brigitte Audeoud. An Executive Assembly member expressed interest in becoming Finance Officer at the last Assembly Executives Seminar. Tasks and responsibilities have to be newly distributed and discussed within the new Assembly. The previous efforts to set up a live meeting for the Southern Europe Executive Assembly were without success.

OUSA Southern Europe Executive Assembly has a new OUSA forum with limited access in order to have online meetings. I have already set-up the 1st meeting however with limited participation.

Activities since the last C E C meeting

27 August 2015 – today: Online meeting of Southern Europe Executive Assembly
28 September 2015: Locations Analysis OU Live Meeting

Future Commitments in 2015

October-November 2015: Athens face to face meeting (rescheduled due to elections).
November-December 2015: Regional Newsletter, C E C November 2015 meeting.

Michail Kasoutas
Student Association Representative for Southern Europe