The CEC is asked to:-

i) receive the recommendations from the review carried out by SUMS Consultancy.

ii) discuss the models described in the report in order to identify a preferred option.

1. Attached is the final report from Sums Consultancy following the recent review of the English regions. The review, that took place at the latter end of 2015, included key stakeholder interviews, a survey of active members of Assemblies, a student consultation as part of the OU’s student consultative process, a workshop involving Executive Committee members and a focus group event drawing on the experience of past and present active members of the OU Students Association. The review was supported by a working group comprising of the Vice Presidents Representation and Administration and a number of Office staff.

2. In its conclusion, the report asserts that the current English regional structure is unfit for purpose and continually fails to attract sufficient participation from the student body to warrant its continuation in the same format.

3. The research identified a number of key purposes for OU Student Association involvement in the English regions these being, democracy including student representation, student community, volunteering opportunities and student awareness.

4. The report outlines four alternate models describing ways that the OU Students Association might organise its regional involvement in England into the future to fulfil these key purposes. Brief descriptions of these models are as follows:
• Option A – Improved Status Quo (points 38 – 45)

This model retains the 10 English Regions which are assigned to 3 SARs: the Assembly structure remains and a larger recruitment drive is undertaken during 2016/17 to improve numbers of students taking part in the election process and other involvement at a local level.

• Option B – Larger Geographic Regions (points 46 – 51)

This model merges the current English regions to create three large territories. Elected positions are set at 8 per revised region, in line with national assembly executives and one Student Association Rep is appointed to each English region.

• Option C – Mixed Model – Faculty and Local Structures (points 52 – 62)

This is a mixed model that is not bound to the English regional structure. It highlights both the representative purpose and the social purpose of the organisation and displays a recognition that many students want to be involved with their Students Association on a social basis alone while others are happy to involve themselves with the democratic function.

• Option D – The OU Students Association Embedded in Curriculum Delivery (points 63 – 70)

This model seeks to embed the OU Students Association within the curriculum delivery structures of the Open University.

5. Option C was the model recommended by the consultant and subject to modification where necessary and further discussion over detail, was the favoured option of the working group. It is this option that we draw to your further attention below.

6. Option C FURTHER EXPLAINED AND INTERROGATED

I. Point 52: Faculty Representatives are currently accounted for within the OUSA Byelaws. These are elected roles to the Central Executive Committee. Current agreement is for 9 Faculty Reps, however role descriptions, numbers etc. are being revisited as part of the preparation for elections 2016.

II. Point 53: A new layer of student volunteers, referred to here as Programme Reps, is described. It is envisaged that these would be appointed roles, less formal in status and available as required. It is hoped that this level of volunteering could be a starting point for students interested in the representational aspect of the Association and attract new students to get involved. These Reps would act as the eyes and ears on the ground, in student forums, on social media, and in local areas feeding information and student views to the Faculty Reps and informing their discussions on the CEC
III. Point 54: Details to consider about this new cohort of volunteers. What are they called? How many are needed? Where are they sourced from? When are they appointed and for how long? Details of their role? How do they feedback?

It is noted that these volunteers are separate from the Central Reps – but would have links to them through the Vice President Education Policy.

IV. Point 55: An English National Executive that exists on a similar constitutional basis to Ireland, Scotland & Wales is mooted. Considerations needed as to the purpose and remit of this body.

V. Point 56: Some suggestions for a possible purpose for this body include providing support for local Groups signposting students to local volunteer opportunities, raising awareness of the Students Association and supporting local events.

VI. Point 57: This model includes the formation of a network of local groups. Central support would be required to promote and publicise groups and establish resources to support their activities. Relationships with Societies could be encouraged.

VII. Point 58: This model suggests a central register of volunteers. Central support would be required to identify new opportunities and match those to interested students offering a range of differing levels of commitment.

7. Conclusion:

With certain modifications, the working group believes that option C could deliver on all of the key purposes identified by participants in this consultation. A distinct element of this model considers how students can be involved in aspects of the organisation which most interest them whilst not being deterred by those aspects that don’t. Additionally, it is hoped that this model could encourage participation from different groups of students as different levels of commitment are welcomed and encouraged and different ways of engaging are explored.

8. Resource Implications

The adoption of option C in particular would have significant resource implications; these might include additional staff time to properly support the establishment of a network of student groups, the management of a volunteer register, the support of a team of new representatives all sustained by additional administration capacity. The Students Association would also require an improved data-base and management information system to better deliver an improved service to its members.

The Student Association has been in talks with the University Secretary to discuss the matter of any additional resources that the implementation of changes following this review might require. Early indications are that there is considerable support for the Association to be properly resourced in order to take this work forward.
9. Next Steps

Subject to any modifications discussed, the CEC is asked to identify its preferred option. Following this meeting and with consideration to the model that has been approved, a business case will be drafted in order to procure the necessary resources without delay.

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