The C E C is asked to:-

i) **receive** an update on this key Open University Project.

The OU Students Association was well represented at the Student Engagement Conference ‘Putting Students First’ held on 23 November on the OU Campus. There were a number of Executive Committee Members present together with a group of other interested students as well as staff from the Students Association Office. The event was opened by the Vice Chancellor and the Student Association President, underlining the importance that is being attached to this project throughout the University.

Presentations were provided from the Universities of Manchester, Lincoln, Exeter, Sheffield Hallam and Winchester showcasing a range of student engagement initiatives happening on their respective campuses. It was inspiring to hear about the levels of participation that these universities enjoy from their students and the amount of commitment there is from the different institutions to engage with students at the highest decision making levels.

A speaker from the University of Lincoln reported on the practice of ensuring that five student representatives were present on all senior committees as part of an institutional commitment to student engagement; speakers from the University of Winchester discussed their student partnership approach and how student engagement plays a major part of the everyday working world. Speakers from Sheffield Hallam explained how student societies are aligned to courses and how there is a relevant society for every student. There is also an expectation that every student will take part in their relevant society and these were described as dynamic communities that support the development of a strong sense of belonging that adds real value to a student’s course and to the overall student experience. We heard how students who are engaged in societies ‘ooze enthusiasm and happiness.’

Manchester University speakers described how the University has its own dedicated student engagement office and a commitment to employ students as consultants.
across a number of internal projects. Speakers from the University of Exeter described the ‘change agents’ initiative and how students have been empowered to suggest projects that will bring about the sort of changes they want to see to improve the student experience. We heard how there have been more than eighty of these projects successfully completed, many of which have made a lasting impact on the campus.

A fascinating element of the presentations involved hearing from the students who were concerned with or affected by these various initiatives and their personal enthusiasm, motivation and excitement for the work spoke volumes in favour of the benefits of real student engagement.

For those with access to the OU’s intranet, the presentations referred to above can be viewed at http://stadium.open.ac.uk/stadia/preview.php?whichevent=2615&s=31

The Conference was followed by a workshop where members of the project team were able to enter into more in depth discussions about some of the initiatives referred to during the morning’s sessions.

The Student Engagement Project team is now taking forward a number of initiatives through three work streams from January 2016. These are as follows:

- Student engagement in curriculum design and learning design
- New models of student engagement (including student internships, student fellows, work shadowing)
- Student feedback and communication (including principles, policies and procedures for handling ad hoc student feedback and the development of a Student engagement communications strategy and student-facing website)

The Students Association is being represented by four individuals, comprising of students and staff members, on each of these projects and the initial meetings are taking place over the first few weeks of January and into February. We will keep the committee updated on the progress of the work as it develops.

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