OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
22 – 24 January 2016

STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES (SARs) REPORTS FOR REGIONS & NATIONS

CEC 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 South & South West
S A R for Wales
S A R for Scotland
S A R for Southern Europe
Since the last CEC meeting, I have had a meeting with Student Consultant, Claire Taylor, regarding regional assembly structures in England (and whether they are ‘fit for purpose’ in their current form), the future of our regional offices, the potential impact of planned closures and my concerns regarding the possible consequences if these closures were to take place. We also discussed my (admittedly limited) personal experiences with democratic structures within OUSA, and my reasons for putting myself forward for the SAR role, and my objectives for this role.

Sue (Goodyear) and I have nominated students from various English regions who have put themselves forward to take part in the online University Students Consultative forum.

I am hoping at some point, to look at scheduling the next lot of regional assembly meetings, particularly for the South West, as I have yet to have attended one for this region. I will discuss this with my regional assembly members for both the South and the South West in the near future.

Claire Lannigan
Student Association Representative for the South and South West
Central Executive Committee (CEC)  
22 – 24 January 2016

REPORT OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (SAR) FOR WALES

Wales Assembly Executive and Members

Following the assembly executive and assembly member elections in November the OU Student Association in Wales Assembly is now made up of six assembly members and one executive member. Most have responded to a welcome post in the forum and it has been suggested that a face to face meeting takes place during February. However, a date has not yet been agreed. Three of the members are new to the Association.

The number of regional forums have been reduced as many were no longer being used and had not been in use for some time.

Response to call for information on Welsh Government draft budget proposals for 2016/17

The National Assembly's Finance Committee issued a call for information on the Welsh Government’s draft budget proposals for 2016/17. The OU in Wales made the assembly aware of the implications of these proposals and a response from OUSA in Wales has been drafted. Support was provided from both the OU Student Association office and the OU in Wales which included sight of their own response. I am particularly grateful for the support of Wendy Burrell of the OU Students Association and Michelle Matheron of the OU in Wales.

The proposals include a cut to the funding of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) that amounts to £41 million. This would impact part-time students as HEFCW manages the institutional part-time learning and teaching grant which has contributed to keeping fees in Wales at a certain level. The impact of a cut will be detrimental to students and higher fees for the 2016/17 intake would be unavoidable. At the same time funding for full-time has been protected with an additional £10 million raising issues of equality of opportunity.

I have been invited to attend a meeting between the OU in Wales and HEFCW on 22 January following which I hope to provide an update on funding for part-time students.

Social Meetings/Groups/Activities

Since November, there has been a monthly coffee meet-up for students in central Cardiff. The group will continue to meet on the first Saturday of the month. There is a lot of interest shown in this group and hopefully the numbers attending will increase as it becomes more established.

There are plans to launch a social group in Wrexham over the coming month.
Social Media

The OUSA Wales Assembly Facebook Group now has 335 members and there are 426 twitter followers. 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.

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

Consultative process/meetings

While there was not a consultative meeting during 2015 there are two meetings planned for 2016. On Saturday 30 January at Glyndwr University in Wrexham there will be a consultation meeting followed by an event for newly registered students.

Later in the year, on Saturday 7 May there will be a consultative meeting at the OU office in Cardiff.

Other Updates

Along with Simon Horrocks, Assistant Director (Development, Learning and Teaching) I have met with representatives of WISE Wales. WISE Wales (originally named Wales Initiative for Student Engagement) seeks to promote the student voice and share best practice between student representatives and higher education institutions. There will be student representative conferences taking place in February and June of this year which OUSA representatives will be able to attend.

Activities since last CEC meeting

19 November 2015 OU in Wales and WISE Wales meeting to discuss support for OUSA Wales
5 December 2015 OUSA Cardiff Coffee & Chat
16 December 2015 SAR meeting with Simon Horrocks at OU in Wales to discuss Welsh Government budget proposals and consultative meetings.

Future Commitments

9 January 2016 OUSA Cardiff Coffee & Chat
22 January 2016 OU in Wales and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales meeting
27 January 2016 Senate Reference Group meeting, Milton Keynes
30 January 2016 Student consultative and new student event, Glyndwr University, Wrexham
3 February 2016 WISE Wales Course Representative Conference (details to be confirmed)
6 February 2016 OUSA Cardiff Coffee & Chat

Claire Smith
Student Association Representative Wales
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
22 – 24 January 2016

REPORT OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (SAR) FOR SCOTLAND

This report will cover both my activities and those of the OU Students Association in Scotland since my last report to the CEC in November.

Scottish Assembly

The new OU Students Association in Scotland Assembly/Executive have been elected and all are able to access the respective forums. A date is currently being agreed upon for our first online meeting and topics which will form the agenda have been suggested, both in the Assembly and Executive forums prior to Christmas. Newer members have asked for a summary of work done and issues for the previous Assembly and the challenges for us going forward. I have asked the re-elected Assembly/Executive members to work on this with a view to having it on the agenda for the online meeting, as well as issues that we are carrying forward to this new Assembly year. Newer members have also suggested further simplification of our forums (ease of navigation and keeping things “current” rather than past issues).

OU in Scotland Committees

As I have mentioned in previous reports, as part of an induction package being prepared for Scottish Working Committee and Scottish Committee (amongst the OU in Scotland committees we have representation on), I am contributing to this from a student perspective. The package is intended to be tabled at the forthcoming Scottish Working Committee in February for comment from members. The package intends to include information on how the committees fit into the AL (Associate Lecturer) structure as well as our structures, processes for discussing topics/issues and meeting papers prior to meetings and helpful hints on contributing to meetings.

The Scottish Committee, in line with the consultative meetings being held elsewhere, is scheduled to take place on Saturday, May 7th, in Edinburgh.

Student Participation in Quality Scotland (SPARQS) Annual Support Visit

Prior to Christmas, along with the OU Students Association President, I attended the annual support visit at the OU in Scotland from SPARQS. These meetings are intended to inform SPARQS on current activities in terms of student engagement, and for SPARQS in turn to inform the OU in Scotland of their activities in terms of student engagement, but also to see how they can help and learn from those activities and developments and also the OU in Scotland (and our) priorities going forward. Amongst issues mentioned peer support, accreditation and recognition of academic representatives in terms of employability incentives for students, online representative training (and face to face interaction) and a student learning experience tool stood out for me from the meeting. Also, a student rep’s “life cycle” and the selling the benefits
(and the role itself’) of being a student rep, I felt, were quite important. SPARQS are aiming to have resources forthcoming in other areas discussed during the meeting, such as guidance on gaining feedback from students (a student feedback “toolkit”) and staff development module and guidance on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) also.

**Other activities**

I was fortunate once again to be asked to take part in the OU Student Radio broadcast at the beginning of December. The programme was very enjoyable for the presenters as I hope it was for all students listening! I also attended my first meeting as a Central Representative alongside VP Communications at the end of November on the new Student Experience Committee. The new committee has taken over much of the work from the previous Student Experience Advisory Group (SEAG) but isn't intended as a direct replacement for it. The same day I attended the Student Engagement Conference being held on campus in Milton Keynes. This was a very useful and informative event and I found it both positive and interesting to see how other institutions approach student engagement. Along with other CEC members, I will be involved in one of the workstreams set up following the event.

Prior to the SPARQS Annual visit, along with the OU Students Association President, I was invited to meet with the new Director, Scotland, Susan Stewart. Susan succeeded the previous Director, Scotland, Jim Miller at the beginning of December. I was hopefully able to provide Susan with issues of note for us currently and what we are hoping to achieve in Scotland and how the OU in Scotland could work with us wherever possible. The meeting was a positive one and hopefully will be able to meet with Susan again going forward.

**Activities since the last meeting**

- 23 November  Student Engagement Conference, Milton Keynes
- 23 November  Student Experience Committee, Milton Keynes
- 9 December   OU Student Radio broadcast, Milton Keynes
- 17 December  SPARQS Annual Support Visit, OU in Scotland, Edinburgh
- 17 December  Meeting with Susan Stewart, Director, OU in Scotland, Edinburgh

**Future Diary Dates**

- TBC  OU Students Association in Scotland Assembly meeting, (online)
- 25 January  Student Engagement workstream meeting, Milton Keynes
- 27 January  Senate Reference Group, Milton Keynes
- 3 February  OU in Scotland Scottish Working Committee, Edinburgh
- 23 February  Student Experience Committee, Milton Keynes
- 18 - 20 March  CEC Meeting, Milton Keynes

*Mark Cameron*

*OUSA Student Association Representative for Scotland*
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
22 – 24 January 2016

REPORT OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (SAR) FOR SOUTHERN EUROPE

The OU Student Association VLE forums have been relatively quiet as usual.

Facebook group members: S.Europe 242; Greece 170; France 133; Spain 225; Italy 88; SA Switzerland 188. All Facebook groups have been relatively quiet with the exception of some posts about degree recognition issues at the Greek group. OU Students Association and OU events are regularly shared to all relevant Facebook groups.

OUSA Southern Europe’s twitter account (@OUSA_SEurope) has 45 followers and 121 tweets.

There was a face to face meeting in Athens in which 8 OU students participated and apologies were received from other 3.

Activities since the last CEC meeting

16 December 2015 Athens face to face meeting.

Future Commitments

February 2016 Athens face to face meeting (cut the pita event).

Michail Kasoutas
Student Association Representative for Southern Europe