OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (C E C)
22 – 24 January 2016

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

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 from the beginning of November through until Christmas.

Student Engagement

The Student Engagement Conference took place on the 23rd November. It was chaired by Ireland Nation Director – John D’Arcy and opened by the Vice Chancellor with myself giving a small speech afterwards. The morning was spent listening to speakers from other Universities giving us an insight into the various projects which happen in brick institutions. These came from student officers, university staff and students with varying experiences. There were a few good ideas which I hope can be carried forward and adapted to suit the Open University. The afternoon was set aside for workshops which enable the Project Group to speak to and ask questions of the speakers of the morning presentations. We were able to answer their questions to allow them a better understanding of current student engagement at the OU and how it can be improved.

The Student Engagement Project has now identified three work streams and with thanks to CEC volunteers students and OUSA staff have been identified for this work. The first meetings are in January.

Faculty Changes

The merger of the faculties down into four faculties continues and so far myself and VP Education Policy, Josh, have met with three of the Executive Deans with a meeting set up in the new year for the fourth. So far the Exec Deans are more than happy to continue to work closely with the OU Students Association and involving students wherever appropriate. There is still much work to be done by the interim deans but so far it would be fair to say that we are happy with the meetings we are having. These are meetings which we expect to be holding with the Exec Deans on a regular basis.

Locations Analysis

Unsurprisingly most of my time between Senate and Council, on the 24th November, was taken up with conversations with the proposal for Locations Analysis and its implications. Everywhere I went somebody wanted to discuss it with me. Keith Zimmerman, University Secretary, and I spoke on a daily basis and Keith came to the Nov CEC meeting to update students on the progress from Senate. This allowed CEC to hear the changes that were coming and a bit more about the implementation. As you will all now be aware Council voted, overwhelmingly, to carry forward the proposal and between now and 2018 seven of the regional offices will close. This will leave Manchester, Nottingham and Milton Keynes as the three centres providing support for England. As part of the relevant Council meeting I was asked to make a statement. As part of this statement I pledged to hold the University to account. This will start in January as I attend my first implementation group meeting, the details of which I will feedback at the January CEC meeting.
Student Wants List

I asked the CEC to come up with a list of changes or new things which would benefit students which we prioritised and I then took to the University Secretary, this was discussed One item which did appear on the list was regular, more formal meetings with SSTs as they are set to become the lynchpin for support – with the closing of the regional offices. This is already in progress as I have a meeting with Pat Atkins and Christina Lloyd in January. It is our intention to make this a regular meeting.

Meeting Dates

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-5 November</td>
<td>Various Meetings on Campus</td>
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<td>12-13 November</td>
<td>Various Meetings on Campus</td>
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<td>13-15 November</td>
<td>CEC Meeting</td>
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<td>16 November</td>
<td>Board of Trustee Meeting</td>
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<td>23 November</td>
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<td>24 November</td>
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<td>3-4 December</td>
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<td>20-21 January</td>
<td>Various Meeting on Campus</td>
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<td>22-24 January</td>
<td>CEC Meeting</td>
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Future Meeting Dates

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>28 January</td>
<td>Meetings on Campus</td>
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<td>10 February</td>
<td>Interviews for Head of Student Policy &amp; Regulations</td>
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<td>11 February</td>
<td>Meetings on Campus</td>
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<td>12-14 February</td>
<td>Officer Team Meeting</td>
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<td>24-25 February</td>
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<td>2-3 March</td>
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<td>7-8 March</td>
<td>Council</td>
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<td>16 March</td>
<td>Education Committee</td>
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<td>17 March</td>
<td>Interviews for Director of Academic Policy &amp; Governance</td>
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<td>18 March</td>
<td>Interviews for Director of Academic Services</td>
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<td>18-20 March</td>
<td>CEC Meeting</td>
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Ruth Tudor
President
Central Executive Committee (CEC)  
22 – 24 January 2016

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

Combined Communications Conference

I attended the Combined Communications Conference (CCC5) on 11\textsuperscript{th} November, along with some other Officers and members of the OU Students Association staff. The theme was Part-time Matters and the main speaker emphasised the rapid changes in technology and social media and how this affects communication in an ever evolving society.

Student Engagement Conference

Even more enlightening was the Student Engagement Conference on 23\textsuperscript{rd} November where speakers from various universities explained what they were doing to encourage students to become actively involved with their union/association. Although most were from brick universities, I’m sure both the OU and our Association can adapt many of the ideas to distant learning.

OU Students Radio

The last OU Students radio show was on 9 December. There were 85 live listeners as well as over 100 comments in a lively chat. A highlights version of the show has now been produced and 140 have downloaded it. The number of listeners (in comparison to the Freshers themed show) is a little disappointing so we will continue to try different student themes, interviews and broadcast times. The next radio show is planned for Friday 29\textsuperscript{th} January 2016, 2-3.30pm to coincide with Freshers week. Special thanks to the presenters of the December show: Sue Goodyear, Mark Cameron, Cath Brown, Nicci Simpson; and guests: Marianne Cantieri (Past President), Ruth Cammies (University Archivist) and Dave Milliken.

OU Students Magazine

The latest edition of the OU Students magazine was sent to students on 3rd December and to date 61,200 click-throughs have been recorded (as well as 15 clicks to the text-only version). In this edition of the magazine efforts were focused on student content and highlight successes of our student volunteering team. We summarised the Officer Team reports and this will be a regular feature from now on. Excellent feedback has been received from both students and OU staff. The magazine was also sent to offender learners and, for the first time, to Honorary Life Members of the Association.

OU Students Website

Due to student feedback a few changes to the homepage of our website have been made, including adding a direct link to our podcasts and controls (including a play/pause button) to the carousel. We have also launched a simple page on the OU’s internal network site as an introduction to the Association, which we hope to develop further.
over the coming year to make O U staff even more aware of what the Association is doing.

Newsletters

Again following student feedback, and in collaboration with VP Representation and the office team, the process for Assemblies to create newsletters and send emails to students in their local area has been simplified. Students can design their own newsletters, or just send their articles for the Communications team to put together. Plain-text email can also be sent if Assemblies just want to get a quick message to students or promote one of their events.

No more OUSA!

And finally, we hope to move away from the abbreviation OUSA during 2016 as it has little meaning to those who don’t know about the Students Association, as well as frequent confusion with OUSBA. This move was originally proposed as part of the launch of our new brand but old habits die hard, so this year we are encouraging everybody to spell out ‘OU Students Association’ whenever possible or to use ‘Students Association’ as the shorthand abbreviation.

Meetings Attended

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>About every 2 weeks</td>
<td>Analytics Ethics Policy Working Group (although these are often cancelled)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 November 2015</td>
<td>Combined Communications Conference (CCC5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 November 2015</td>
<td>Student Engagement Conference 2015</td>
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Future Meetings

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Lorraine Adams
Vice President Communications
REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION POLICY

It has been a relatively short time since the last reports were written and that includes the Christmas and New Year break. As such, this report will be especially short.

Central Reps

Some targeted recruitment is still ongoing to address vacancies on programme committees, but most positions have now been filled. There have been no resignations so far (and hopefully there won’t be!)

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

This has taken up a significant amount of my time since my last report but is covered elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting so I won’t comment extensively here other than to say thank you to those who were involved.

Tuition Developments

I have begun having regular (monthly) meetings with OU staff responsible for developing and implementing changes to aspects of how tuition is delivered. This is largely to remain informed of the scope and progress of their work but also provides an additional opportunity to give input and a student perspective.

AL Assembly

I attended a meeting of the AL Assembly in November as an observer. It was an interesting weekend, both the structured sessions and informal discussion outside the meetings. There was a significant focus on some of the changes that are occurring within the university and the practical implications of those changes. In a number of areas the views expressed were quite similar to those within OUSA.

Josh Brumpton
Vice President Education Policy
As it is less than two months since the last Central Executive Committee meeting this report would be expected to be rather shorter than usual. However, this does not mean that things have been quiet and there has been a lot of activity.

The Student Engagement Project held a Conference on Engagement on November 23rd with many speakers from other institutions and which was well attended by OU staff and students. The afternoon was taken up by Project members participating in a workshop with the speakers and looking into ways the good work done could be carried forward. As a result a series of smaller working parties will be considering different aspects of lessons learned and seeing how they can be put into practice.

Along with the VP Education Policy I was asked to comment on matters relating to the tutor – student allocation process this year and to suggest improvements. While I was unable due to work commitments to attend a face-to-face meeting I was able to provide a written response which was well received. In particular the problems relating to the process in London and South East were highlighted.

I took part in the selection process for the 2016 University Challenge team and after a tough selection process we have selected a team of five students who will be auditioning for the series proper on January 23rd. It was not an easy choice and the standard of entrant this year was very high. To give them a bit of a boost before the audition they will be taking part in an OU Students Association Challenge the night before against a team of OU staff and also against one of CEC members.

I continue to be a participant in the Entry Project which is now tasked with producing guidance for the Vice Chancellor’s Executive ahead of a paper being presented to Senate in the Spring regarding support for prospective students.

The Research Project regarding student views on the presentation of module material continues with the aim for a wider survey to be undertaken in the Spring with results being presented at or around Conference in June 2016.

As well as this there has been the usual business of the CEC and Officer Team which has involved responses to the ongoing Locations Analysis Project, suggesting discussion topics for the Regional / National Consultation meetings set for Spring 2016, suggestions for an improved National Student Survey questionnaire, Group Tuition and most recently over the holiday period formulating OUSA’s submission regarding the Green Paper on Higher Education.
Diary

16 November Board of Trustees Meeting
23 November Student Engagement Conference and Workshop

Forthcoming events

13-14 February Officer Team Meeting

Peter J Cowan
Vice President Educational Support and Research
Hello All. It’s been a bit quieter what with Christmas and New Year in the way, but I do have some things to report. I was unable to attend the meeting in November of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) due to a prior arrangement so I apologise to you all for that.

In late November, I attended the Student Engagement Project Conference on campus. It was very interesting listening to the different speakers about how other universities engage with their students.

Also in November, the Student Association regional elections took place with many new students getting elected following which I was busy answering emails and talking to students on forums. I am so glad that students have put themselves forward and hope they enjoy the coming year as they support and represent OU students within the regions and nations. Please do make contact with them as they arrange social events and get togethers in your area. Why not also check out the Student Association forums and Facebook and twitters spaces. All of these will help you to keep in contact with other students.

Another large part of my time has been taken up with involvement in the English Regions review alongside the consultant on the project and a team from the OU Students Association Office. Look out for the outcome of this review to be reported back to the CEC at the meeting in January.

The QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) had a face to face review meeting with a group of students on campus. I took part in discussions and questions and answer sessions for a few hours about life as an OU student which felt quite rewarding and a time to be able to explain what it's like to be a student with the Open University.

The OU Student Radio had its pre-Christmas show in December and again I was invited to be one of the presenters. A great time was had both online and live on air. The Students Association is getting a lot better in both our presenting skills and our technical expertise. Thanks to the office staff who work hard behind the scenes making it all possible and to ensure it runs smoothly.

How marvellous to turn up to a meeting that you were not supposed to attend. You enter the room and realise that the faces you see are not familiar to other meetings you attend. Anyway I was allowed to stay. It was a Group Tuition Steering group meeting. Was great to see what this meeting entailed. Thank you to Nik Deputy President for supporting me during the time in there. Although it was lovely I won’t be attending again any time soon.
The Equality and Diversity 3 Steering group held its last meeting in its present format. It will be having a new direction and title during the coming year to which I look forward to being part of.

Now that it’s the New Year, the Vice President Representative role is already busy with this year’s round of residential school preparations. The OU will be asking for details of the Students Association presence, so I'll be taking time out to get the information for them ahead of their requests.

Finally I attended the first meeting this morning of the Student Engagement Project about new models of student engagement meeting in early January. The papers were tabled and lengthy discussions took place. Watch this space for more info about this exciting project.

For the year ahead, I'm already looking forward to the OUSA Conference, the Degree Ceremonies and supporting the regional and national elected students as they engage with OU students everywhere.

*Sue Goodyear*
*Vice President Representation*
REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT STUDENT SUPPORT

It seems only last week I was writing my last Officer Report; strange to think that was last year! Vice President Student Support’s remit generally involves students who encounter some kind of barrier to their study. The role includes attending various meetings but also being involved with Peer Supporters, the Disabled Students Group and the Open University Students Educational Trust (OUSET), plus responding to students who contact me directly.

Support and Engagement Staff Changes

I was delighted to meet the new Projects Officer, Kate Dungate. As far as I know, I didn’t frighten her off and she is still in post. Although she will be working in the Support and Engagement Team, it is more likely that her work will result in contact with Vice Presidents who are more involved with Engagement than Support. Welcome to the team, Kate.

Peer Support

I attended the Peer Support online meeting in November. Peer Supporters continued to be available throughout the Christmas break, replying to both one off queries in the Request Forum and also providing longer term one to one support. The Request Forum can be found here. They are there to complement, not replace, the OU Student Support system but no question is too small for them. So, if you want a quiet word with a fellow student who isn’t going to judge you, give them a try.

We are hoping to shortly open the new Through The Gate Peer Support Service (TTG) which will be available for students who have been studying in secure units who might have additional concerns and questions, so could appreciate a separate space for them.

Offender Learner version of OUstudents

My little team of Student Association staff continues to be an important cog in producing the version of OUstudents (the online students magazine) that gets sent to OU students in secure units. Names and identifying features are removed from the edition of OUstudents that is sent to all students, as are articles that are considered inappropriate, before it goes to secure units. We are always looking for additional articles for the Offender Learner (OL) version. If you would like to contribute an article please send it to ousa-comms@open.ac.uk and mention it is for the OL copy.

Problems with Alternative Formats

I am still in discussions with the OU following the problems some students had receiving their alternative formats and getting accurate information about alternative formats for some of the new modules last October.
Communications Conference

I attended the Communications Conference in November. A little tip was to include emotion if you want the message to be remembered. There were some positive comments about how the OU is not going to stand still and is making sure the voice of the part time student is heard. However, the pockets of light were set in a more sobering scene of cuts and part time mature students not being perceived as the typical student. We also heard an OU member of staff with a sense of humour. He introduced us to the game of **Hadrian the roamin’ emperor**. Most interesting so far is the appearance of Hadrian’s ears.

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) Consultation Submission

The Government has proposed changes to the Disabled Students Allowance and a consultation was conducted by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The Government’s response to that consultation can be found [here](#). The OU has responded positively and assured students they will not notice any difference because the OU will be filling any gaps that result from the changes to the DSA. The OU has posted a message on your Student Home Page with this information and your Association has also publicised this.

One change already implemented is that students have to contribute £200 if they are awarded, and agree to receive, a computer or laptop as a result of their DSA Assessment. The OU has agreed to fund this £200 for students on low incomes; more information can be found [here](#).

Disabled Students Group (DSG)

I attended the online Annual General Meeting of the Disabled Students Group, which coincided with the Committee Election results. Congratulations to all those who were elected and I look forward to working with you while I am in post. The meeting is available in the OU Student Association forums which are open to DSG members. Various matters were discussed, indicating that although the OU provides what many students with disabilities need, there is still more to do. As usual, I learnt something new at the meeting, thank you to all contributors.

There will be a DSG Facebook Chat on January 27th between 6 and 8 pm. There will be more information on their closed Facebook Group and OU Student Association Forums, closer to the date. Cherry Day, the DSG Chair, will also post details on the open DSG Forum, [here](#), which all OU students are able to read.

If you would like to join the DSG, it has closed forums for members but most activity seems to take place on the closed **DSA Facebook Group**. Students contribute useful information about studying with the OU but cover a range of other topics related to disability.

Tripartite

Tripartite meetings are held 4 times a year when OU Student Association Reps meet with OU staff to discuss anything relating to online activities. We continue to raise the issue of Eduroam being available for students. We continue to be told that the OU is looking into this.
In my last report I stated that the Shared Activities function will close and not be replaced. I subsequently learnt that this could adversely affect students on A215 and A363 and a response from the OU was posted in this thread [here](#). Although we were pleased that the OU will look into this further for these modules, the President, Ruth Tudor, and I were concerned that the OU suggested students should use Facebook for OU study related activities. At this month’s Tripartite meeting we will be informing the OU that some students refuse to use Facebook.

**Library**

I was fortunate to be able to spend a few days in December talking to OU Library staff and users. I was surprised to learn (even in my dotage I am still acquiring new information) that the OU Library Help Desk is the first port of call in some instances rather than Student Support Teams. If you feel your enquiry is OU Library rather than Student Support, more details can be found [here](#). In December Library staff were involved in a Facebook discussion about managing your digital identity and how to change your Facebook profile settings. There were some useful suggestions and the discussion can be found [here](#).

**Future Commitments**

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<td>14 January 2016</td>
<td>Tripartite Meeting with OU staff</td>
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<td>14 January 2016</td>
<td>Meeting with OU staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 - 24 January 2016</td>
<td>CEC Meeting</td>
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<td>27 January 2016</td>
<td>Senate Reference Group</td>
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<td>13 - 14 February 2016</td>
<td>Officer Meeting</td>
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<td>18 - 20 March 2016</td>
<td>CEC Meeting</td>
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<td>March 2016</td>
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*Alison Kingan*

*Vice President Student Support*
REPORT OF STUDENT OU COUNCIL MEMBER

The November meeting of Council took place on Tuesday 24th November 2015, with Mr Richard Gillingwater (Prochancellor) in the Chair.
As will be recognised, the key issue for discussion at this meeting was the recommendations of the Location Analysis Report, no less than two hours being set aside for this.

Following from the regular report to Council by the Vice Chancellor, the definitive student registration figures for October were presented. The total undergraduate numbers for England, Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland were 107% of target and international student numbers had been up to 97% target. Postgraduate numbers were 32% below target, attributed to changes in the curriculum. Continuing student numbers were 101% of target.

The Council meeting was taking place on the eve of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review but it was recognised that Higher Education was not due to be protected in this. Prof Steveley (Vice Chair of Council) reported from a meeting of Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) which had taken place earlier, reviewing changes outlined in the government green paper which were likely to affect the Open University. Key issues were value for the tax payer, especially as viewed from employability review. It was noted that facilitation for new providers of university education was intended and that there would be consultation on how the Teaching Excellence Framework would be measured, although precisely how it would be governed remained unclear. In this respect the outcome of the present Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Higher Education review would help to determine the OU’s position in the Framework.

The Chair thanked the now retiring University Secretary, Mr Fraser Woodburn, for his contribution to the University over the period of 17 years.

Locations Analysis

The recommendations of this review were discussed – very thoroughly, with full documentation (C-2015-04-02), including all supplementary material (same reference number LAP-ADD-INFO and LAP-ADD-INFO-SUPP for those who want chapter and verses), also being made available, including in the latter supplement, analyses of the postulated outcome of permutations other than that recommended by the Locations Analysis review itself.

It was noted that the external environment now differed from that evident at the beginning of the review. Whilst the review had concentrated on operational effectiveness and facilitation of services to students, cost effectiveness of delivery,
especially in the current external environment, served to emphasise the need for an effective and timely solution.

The Strategic Planning and Resources Committee and Finance Committee had endorsed the proposals by the Locations Analysis review

Very full discussion followed, all members of Council being asked individually to contribute their perspective on the proposals, gleaned from review of the papers presented and context of their role in the university, the sentiments of colleagues and of the University community both hierarchically and generally.

To me, the balance of discussion appeared to be that the operational restructuring proposed was relatively unassailable and that subject to the transition being properly monitored during its implementation, sequencing could be optimised.

A vote on the recommendations (set out in the Council Minutes C-2015-04-M, item 7.42 – more than a single A4 page) was approved by 19 votes in favour, 5 against and one abstention.

Other issues considered by Council at this meeting included:

The University’s role in preventing (or minimising) the possibility of students being drawn into extremist indoctrination.

Audit Committee Report.


Strategic Planning and Resources Committee.

Estates and Remuneration Committee reports.

The Report from Senate.

The Vice-Chancellor’s Report (C-2015-04-16).

The OUSA Annual Report (C-2015-04-17).

Council Governance Review (a periodic review of Council, its substructure and relationships with Senate). This review, deferred from 2014-15 in view of changes at the helm, would now proceed during the current organisational year.

The next Council meeting will take place in Edinburgh on March 8th.

In addition to attending the meeting of Council, on 7th December I had the opportunity to take part in the OU Students Association face to face presentation to the QAA assessment panel (not so much a presentation really, but a question session – the QAA panel asked the questions, the eight of us responded – no, it did not consist simply of hand picked “usual suspects” - although several “usual suspects” were there, there had been a reasonably well advertised advertisement for students who were interested in taking part and able to attend on a Monday between 11am and 4pm). The topics ranged over quite a broad canvas of student experience; my own feeling was that we
covered a considerable amount of ground and I felt that we conveyed many of the thoughts on our “if only….” check list. We now await sight of the draft report (later this month, I believe).

Finally, I don’t think that it is too late to wish all who have got this far a very happy 2016.

Carey Shaw  
*Student Member of O U Council*