OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
22 – 24 January 2016

OFFICER REMITS

The CEC is asked to:

i) **discuss** the suggested adjustments to Officer and CEC remits

ii) **agree** the basic changes along with any further alterations to the draft proposals

iii) **authorise** Vice President Administration to draft an addendum listing internal and external committee responsibilities depending on such final alterations

iv) **recommend** to the Board of Trustees that the said remits be approved and Vice President Administration asked to draft consequent adjustments to the existing Bye-Laws.

The attached schedule and list of responsibilities represents an attempt to render our current officer roles more fit for purpose in response to recent developments both within the OU Students Association and the University as a whole. I have also attempted to make it clearer where final responsibilities lie.

The major headlines include an attempt to reduce the day to day pressure on the President by delegating much of our day to day internal oversight to the Deputy President thus freeing the former to concentrate on being the public face of the Association.

To prevent even more overload falling upon the Deputy President I propose a return of some of the duties which have accrued to the present Deputy President to Vice President level. This in turn has accentuated the need to acknowledge our commitment to expand and improve both Engagement and Representation. Maintaining these aspects under a single remit seems unwise to me not just due to potential workload issues but also because slightly different skill sets seem applicable to each role.

I have also attempted to make it clearer that VP Education should concentrate on the interface between the OU Students Association and the University with the
gathering of student opinion being a question of internal representation. In my opinion the research functions of VP Education Support and Research sit naturally with aspects of a Representation role.

The Support elements of that second VP Ed remit mainly concern Equal Opportunities – elements of which also sit within the Student Support role. Frankly it seems to me that on several occasions members have found that confusing. Even more frankly I have not infrequently shared that confusion. But I am also aware that Student Support is a large remit already – which is why we changed our minds last time this matter was reviewed and shied away from simply absorbing Equal Opportunities within that role. On balance I think we made a mistake in deleting the previous VP Equal Opportunities remit and should re-instate it. Obviously that doesn’t mean that other Officers can disregard Equal Opportunities issues but it does restore our ability to have one individual formally tasked with taking an overview of this vital area.

The committee should note the proposals are based on a few assumptions regarding decisions to be made on other papers coming before this meeting.

I have assumed the OU Students Association will establish payments for the position of President and Deputy President. In my opinion the present workload for these roles are both presently untenable and liable to increase. Whatever happens in relation to payments some duties have to be devolved to Vice President level. But should those posts remain unpaid then we should consider additional devolutions.

In particular I have been in two minds regarding the responsibility for working with the University on Student Consultation. In many ways this would sit naturally with the role of VP Representation but I am also aware that this is potentially a wide, onerous and arguably over-powerful remit. I was also worried that without either consultation or a similar sized aspect within their remit the Deputy President might lack a specific day to day element to his or her role – something that has traditionally been an alleged cause of discontent for previous holders of the post. On balance I have left the task where it lies at present rather than either devolve it or leave it in the gift of the President (as a general principle I am not keen on too many roles being in the gift of the President).

I have also presumed the BoT and CEC will favour the more radical recommended reform of English Regions along with an enhanced structure of Faculty and Programme based representation. Should a different decision be reached the relevant VP and CEC member remits would need to be re-written (again).

Overall therefore we would gain an extra officer whilst allowing a more even distribution of workload and a clearer division of overall responsibility. That does not, however, mean officers should be working in silos. On the contrary at various times two or three Officers will continue to work closely on particular projects or more general aspects of our work. Nevertheless it should be possible for people to know who is responsible for any given task.

David Humble
VP Administration