CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)
22 – 24 January 2016

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held between 22 – 24 January 2016 at Kent’s Hill Training Centre in Milton Keynes MK7 6BZ

PRESENT
Ruth Tudor - President
Nik Morris - Deputy President (part)
David Humble – VP Administration
Lorraine Adams - VP Communications
Josh Brumpton - VP Education Policy
Peter Cowan - VP Educational Support & Research
Sue Goodyear – VP Representation
Alison Kingan - VP Student Support
Carey Shaw – OU Council Member
Claire Lannigan – South & South West
Mark Cameron – Scotland
Claire Smith – Wales
Nicci Simpson – Northern Ireland
Michail Kasoutas - Southern Europe
Derek Naysmith – Arts Faculty Rep
Dave Milliken – MCT Faculty Rep
Jan Thompson – FELS Faculty Rep
David Reed – Science Faculty Rep
Nicki Hadjipanteli – FBL Faculty Rep
Melanie Philpott – Open Degree Faculty Rep

IN ATTENDANCE
Rob Avann - General Manager
Wendy Burrell – Deputy General Manager
Sally Kitchingman – Head of Resources
David McCann – Head of Technology & Communications
Leanne Quainton – Executive Assistant
Joel McBrearty – Team Supervisor (part)
Kate Dungate – Projects Officer (part)

SECTION A: INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. PRESIDENT’S WELCOME

The President welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as giving a special welcome to the Faculty Representatives that will attend the next two CEC meetings, trialling and developing the new roles before the formal elections for the positions in the new term. Joel McBrearty, Team Supervisor and Kate Dungate, Projects Officer from the staff team were both also in attendance as part of their inductions to their new roles.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Christian Klein – Northern Europe
3. MINUTES

3.1 The Minutes (CEC 11/15/M) from the November meeting were approved.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

4.1 Item 11 (11/15/7) from the November meeting - VP Educational Support and Research advised that draft questions for the second survey of the Module Delivery research will be ready for the CEC to view at its next meeting ready for the survey to open early April. Results will be assessed in May and the findings will be available at Conference.

SECTION B: ITEMS FOR APPROVAL AND REPORT

5. RECEIVED: STATE OF UNITS AND SOCIETIES CEC 1/16/1

6. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF STUDENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES (S A Rs) FOR REGIONS AND NATIONS CEC 1/16/2

7. RECEIVED: OFFICER & COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS CEC 1/16/3

7.1 The Deputy President apologised that her report had not been finalised in time to be included in the published paper. An extended update will be included for the March CEC meeting.

8. RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT CEC 1/16/4

SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

9. REDESIGNING STUDENT SUPPORT FOR THE NEW WORLD CEC 1/16/5

9.1 Pat Atkins, Acting Director, Student Support, Academic Services was in attendance to present on a new programme of work that focused on the Student Seamless Journey. Building on the university's existing Student Support Team model and to cope with the structural changes within the University, this will introduce Student Recruitment and Support Centres, that will bring together knowledge and support which are at the core of the student journey.

9.2 The aspirations of the project included better advice to students in educating them in the patterns of the ‘most successful’ students; to have more conversations, whether it be in the form of a phone call, webchat or forum; a formal process around the difficult transitions, especially those in the early stages of study and implement a guardianship around that to better protect students, and; better support for students on degree programmes.
9.3 The idea of Progress Tutors was discussed with the CEC and thoughts and suggestions were fed back to Pat.

10. REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  

10.1 The General Manager went through the report, highlighting the work undertaken by the BoT since the last meeting. Various financial matters had been the main focus due to the ongoing funding negotiations with the University and work in securing a 3 year agreement.

10.2 The OU had indicated that exam papers are expected to be supplied to students free of charge from 2017. The implications of this had been discussed by the BoT who had pressed for the OU Students Shop to continue to supply them to ensure the traffic through the website is maintained. The OU have assured us that the profit made from the sale of the papers, which has always gone into OUSET (OU Students Educational Trust), will be preserved. Discussions are ongoing.

11. STUDENT CONSULTATIVE PROCESS  

11.1 The General Manager went through the update report highlighting the consultation on the future of the Association’s regional structure that ran from 4 – 18 November 2015. This was the first consultation put forward by the OU Students Association and has helped inform the Regions Review work.

11.2 Arrangements are in place for the 2016 regional consultative meetings, which for those being held imminently are vastly oversubscribed. The CEC’s suggestion of a Q&A with a member of the CEC on the panel has been incorporated. These sessions will be monitored to ensure they are run effectively and are a useful addition to the students attending.

11.3 Wales are holding their consultative meeting on 30 January with a Freshers event the following week. The CEC look forward to the feedback from the Wales SAR.

11.4 ACTION: The General Manager to enquire about sharing delegate details with the CEC members attending each meeting.

12. OFFICER REMITS  

12.1 VP Administration had carried out a review of the Officer remits in response to the increased workload in many of the roles, largely from the improvements in engagement with the University.

12.2 The work had the aim of decreasing the pressure on the President with their ever increasing workload, handing more to the Deputy President, and giving better definition to that role which has been missing in the past. The Deputy President will focus on the inward OU Students Association activities leaving the President to be the outward face with the University and other external contacts.
12.3 A new VP Engagement role was proposed, to take some projects from the current Deputy President and to alleviate pressure on VP Representation. VP Representation would take on the research aspect, and education would remain solely with VP Education, removing the role of VP Educational Support and Research. It was also proposed to re-establish the VP Equal Opportunities role to share the workload of this key area with VP Student Support.

12.4 The CEC agreed on the basic intent of the changes and went through the document role by role making further comments and suggestions. One comment being that the VP Engagement title will mean something different to the University that will cause confusion so the title of this post is to be rethought. The General Manager also highlighted the implications on the staff team, with VPs Engagement, Equal Opportunities and Student Support potentially sitting with one team in the office, causing an imbalance in workload to staff. It was agreed that although each Officer should have a lead member of staff for support, we would move to more of a system of contacting the person involved with the project/piece of work, rather than through one channel, as has always been the case in the past. The General Manager would discuss this with the Staff Management Team where these roles would best sit for lead support.

12.5 The role of the Nation and English SARs were debated and the differences between the two. SAR Northern Ireland stressed her view that additional resource in helping Nation SARs with policy issues is needed as there is a gap in this area of work currently.

12.6 RESOLUTION: With the amendments discussed incorporated, the proposals were agreed and recommended to the Board of Trustees that the remits be approved.

13. ONE MEMBER ONE VOTE (OMOV)

13.1 Luke Ashby and Ruth Dunlop from Electoral Reform Services Ltd (ERS) were in attendance to demonstrate the newly created online portal that will enable the Students Association to hold the 2016 student elections following the agreement of implementing one-member-one-vote at Conference 2014. ERS are the leading suppliers of election services in the UK and have worked with the Association for 5 years in assisting with Conference voting in the form of handheld devices, but OMOV now means elections will be more accessible for students, opening it up to the entire student body meaning elections moving online.

13.2 ERS ran through the first draft of the election website that incorporates the OU students Association branding and allows nominations, voting, and the ability to ask questions and leave comments all in one easy to navigate space.

13.3 Single Transferable Voting (STV) will be the method used - a preferential voting system that asks the electorate to rank candidates in order of preference. This method is recommended by the National Union of Students (NUS) with it being used by most Student Unions. ERS explained the detailed process behind the method of STV, advising that from a student perspective, the method is straightforward and simple to understand with the complexities taking place in the count behind the scenes.
13.4 Lengthy discussions were had regarding the use of STV and how it will work for the Students Association. It received mixed views from the Executive however it was agreed that as OMOV is such a fundamental change to the way the Association runs its elections, we would take the advice of the experts advising us.

13.5 ERS will continue to develop the site, taking on the comments received and continue to work with the office staff in finalising the site before nominations are due to open in March 2016.

14. QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY (QAA) REVIEW 2015 CEC 1/16/10

14.1 This discussion was of a confidential nature and has therefore been reserved to the confidential section of the minutes

15. ELECTION PROCESSES CEC 1/16/11

15.1 VP Administration had put together a paper containing proposals on some improved changes to the OU Student Association election processes as well as taking into account the implementation of one-member-one-vote.

15.2 In-depth discussions continued into the use of Single Transferable Voting (STV) causing difference of opinion amongst the CEC. The debate focused around a ‘re-open nominations’ option, namely in the multi-position vote and the implications this would have on how the votes were counted and whether ensuring the ability to not elect individuals is kept. It was strongly advised that ERS had recommended this not being an option.

15.3 RESOLUTION: The CEC voted in favour of a ‘re-open nomination’ option for single positions (Officer Roles and Council Member, Faculty Representatives and Europe/Nation SARs) 15 – 3 in favour. It was agreed that for multi-position voting, elections will need to follow ERS expertise in this complex issue, and go forward with STV process.

15.4 The CEC were generally happy with the removal of restrictions on debate, allowing candidates to campaign in any forum and social media platform.

15.5 The requirement of nominations and whether this function was needed having removed the requirement for SARs at last Conference was questioned for the Officer roles. This generated mixed opinions over whether candidates should be entirely self-nominating or not. It is seen as an additional unnecessary barrier in the elections but also acts as a safeguard.

15.6 RESOLUTION: The CEC voted in favour of removing the nominations process for all roles, making all positions self-nominating.

15.7 The composition of Faculty Representatives had first been envisaged that they would be elected on the basis of ‘schools’ in line with the OU, although it is now known, the intention is for 16 schools, making it too larger a number for the CEC. It was therefore discussed whether Faculty Reps should remain mirroring the old structure of 9
faculties (including the Open Programme) or should represent the new ‘Super-Faculties’.

15.8 RESOLUTION: It was agreed there would be 1 Faculty Representative per Super-Faculty plus one for the Open Programme resulting in 5 in total. This was taking into account the outcome of the Regions Review in having Programme Representatives working closely with the Faculty Representatives in this more robust structure of feedback and information giving.

15.9 RESOLUTION: All other proposals were agreed and VP Administration will make the necessary changes to the OU Students Association Bye-Laws.

16. REGIONS REVIEW PROJECT CEC 1/16/12

16.1 Vice President Representation introduced the report and explained how the recent review had concluded that the Student Association’s current English regional structure was unfit for purpose and continually failed to attract sufficient participation from students to warrant its continuation in the same format.

16.2 The report from the Consultant discussed four possible options for a future structure, these being: A) an improved status quo, B) larger geographic regions, C) a mixed model to include faculty and local structures, D) the Students Association embedded in OU Curriculum delivery. VP Representation explained that option C was the model recommended by the consultant and subject to some modifications,favoured by the Working Group. She asked the CEC for their feedback on the report with this recommendation in mind.

16.3 Members of the CEC all agreed that option C was the preferred option, although option D is the aspiration of working towards in the long-term future. It was noted that option C was purposefully light on detail and that if members were in favour of this idea, work would continue to produce a more detailed structure.

16.4 The SAR for Northern Ireland thought that option C was very exciting but that it shouldn’t just be considered for England but for the Students Association as a whole. The SAR for Wales supported this view that the structure should apply throughout the organisation.

16.5 Other comments received included general approval of the creation of Programme reps, although their role would need to be carefully defined and their appointment period considered. Being sought for in the spring and appointed in August was welcomed as they would be ready to welcome Freshers by late September. It was felt appealing to get rid of regional elections and spend time concentrating on getting students involved and engaged with the opportunities that the Students Association has to offer.

16.6 Vice President Administration was in favour of a form of option C and said that he liked the idea of a the Programme reps as a team of volunteers appointed at a lower level to feed the work of the Faculty Reps. He felt that we should be wary of too much structure around these volunteers and that we should move towards their development on a gradual basis to see how they might work. He felt that they would need clear
guidance as to what was expected of them. VP Administration did not have a strong feeling either way about the existence of an English Executive and agreed that it would need a sufficient and varied role to be meaningful. He understood that the argument for having this was because of the structures in their Nations.

16.7 The idea of a more structured volunteering process, including a register that was organised and managed centrally, gained full approval. It was also agreed that this could be a way of getting students involved and engaged at different levels.

16.8 A number of members showed their support for either hoodies or tee-shirts to identify volunteers that would be different from anything sold in the webstore. It was thought that these would be good for engagement purposes, also to reward volunteers and give them a sense of identity.

16.9 **Action:** The Nations SARs were asked to consult with their Assembly Executives and report back with a decision about whether their Nation would like to be included into the future plans for the revised Student Association structure.

16.10 **RESOLUTION:** It was agreed that Option C should be adopted and that the working group should reconvene bringing relevant others into the conversation to take the work forward and produce more detailed proposals and including the Nations as appropriate. There was general support for option D which it was agreed should be a long term aim but to which the Association was not yet prepared for. A forum will also be created in the CEC area to include the wider CEC in the conversation.

17. **UPDATE ON THE OU STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PROJECT**

17.1 The Deputy General Manager gave a brief update on the project highlighting the 3 project work streams now in place, with one group already having met and work underway. Each project has 5 places for the OU Students Association which the Association had increased from 2 originally suggested by the OU.

17.2 **ACTION:** Project work stream meeting papers to be shared with the CEC.

18. **STUDENT COMMUNITY TOOL**

18.1 The Head of Communications and Technology gave an overview of the progress of the project. He highlighted that the proof of concept stage is due to start imminently which will involve a small group of students (the CEC) carrying out thorough testing before it goes to a full pilot with a bigger number of students. There are reservations from both students and staff over the use of Yammer, which has been suggested by IT as meeting the requirements for the community area, and a survey will be circulated to all proof of concept users towards the end of the trial to gauge reactions.

18.2 It was noted that the Disabled Students Group (DSG) will be invited to test the site when it meets the pilot stage.

18.3 **ACTION:** Faculty Reps to be added to the trial.
These Minutes will remain subject to approval until the next meeting of the CEC

19. CONFERENCE 2016

19.1 The date for Conference 2016 is 17–19 June. The Conference Steering Committee has now been formed with discussions underway. The list for students to register their interest in attending Conference is now open with registration formally opening in April. The Deputy General Manager asked that if anyone has any suggestions for the programme of events, to let the Engagement and Support Team know.

19.2 VP Educational Support and Research to post the list on honorary graduates onto the CEC forum.

20. KEY MEETING DATES FOR 2016-18 TERM

20.1 Due to time constraints, this item will be taken online following the meeting.

21. GENERAL MANAGER’S BUSINESS

21.1 The General Manager proposed to the CEC that rather than each Officer and SAR producing their own individual reports to be collated into the report that goes to Conference as has been the procedure in the past, that the Conference Business Team in the Office compile a report from each CEC member into one concise document of the activities throughout their term which will then be passed to each member to check and add to. The CEC agreed to this new procedure.

22. PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS

22.1 The President advised that she, together with the General Manager are both involved in the next stage of the Student Recruitment and Support Centres Programme (SRSC) handling the implementation of the recommendations and will provide updates to the CEC as and when they became available.

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

23.1 It was confirmed that the date of the next meeting would be the weekend of the 18 – 20 March 2016.