The C E C is asked to :-

i) **receive** an update on this project.

ii) **discuss** the recommendation that the Celtic nations should be automatically included in this restructure.

**Introduction**

Following the January meeting of the Executive, at which the recommendations of the Regions Review project were discussed and broadly accepted, the associated Working Group met to consider some first steps towards implementation. The Group has been expanded to bring further relevant participants into the mix and currently includes, Sue Goodyear, David Humble and Josh Brumpton, Vice Presidents with responsibilities for Representation, Administration and Education Policy respectively; the supporting members of staff are Helen Janes, Kate Snapes and Wendy Burrell.

This early discussion centred on the details around the democratic aspect, including the name and remit of the proposed ‘eyes and ears reps,’ the viability of a National Executive for England and the early inclusion of the Celtic nations in this restructure. A further objective was to produce some detailed ideas that would inform work to be completed at the Assembly members’ seminar on 5th March.

The following points were noted by the Working Group.

1. The name and numbers of Faculty Association Representatives (FARs) were endorsed. However it was evident that Access students and students of IET are not covered by any of the FARs. It was therefore suggested that a member of the CEC should be nominated to have responsibility for them. It was noted that responsibility for FARs falls under the remit of the new VP Representation and Research Officer.
2. The decision was taken to change the name of Student Association Reps (SARs) to Area Association Reps (AARs) to better explain the nature of this post.

3. That the proposed new volunteers, initially mooted as ‘Programme Reps’ are not strictly representatives and therefore a new name was required and belatedly Learning Experience Reporters (LER) has been settled on.

4. That these volunteers would be the eyes and ears of the Association on academic and learning related matters. They would require a narrowly defined and clear remit. They would be talking to other students in social and module forums, at tutorials, in society spaces and all places where OU students frequent. They would be proactively gathering information, students’ views and opinions of their learning experience and identifying and gathering reoccurring issues that might arise. They would also have access in relevant Student Support Team Consultative forums.

5. They would participate in online meetings and be talking in regular online conversations with FARs and Central Reps. They might be commissioned by FARs to gather information on issues of the moment and on recurring themes.

6. There would be no direct reporting line but rather a ‘spider’s web’ of conversations would be encouraged and online areas where LERs, FARs, Central Reps and CEC members could gather would be facilitated and opportunities where these groups could communicate to the best effect.

7. There was general agreement with Vice President Administration that the CEC should be having more conversations around policy matters at its meetings that could inform and instruct the involvement and participation of our volunteers.

8. An appointment process for LERs should be of the lightest touch, thoroughly inclusive with few barriers to taking part. An application might simply ask for a few words about why a student would like to be involved and show an appreciation of what is expected of them.

9. There would be minimum training which could be completed online; a role description might read ‘talking to students and getting feedback, feeding that info back to other activists in online conversations and meetings.’ A critical judgement would be a necessary attribute for this role and an understanding about what would be most relevant and appropriate for them to be reporting on.

10. The posts would last for 12 months. Numbers yet to be identified but would have to be a manageable number in order to run online meetings. A holding list could be created for if interest in the role was high.

11. It is proposed that a pilot exercise is planned to include volunteers from the Open programme. This might last for one month with a further 10 days for evaluation. This will help us to understand how popular this role might be and
help define and embed its requirements. FARs would need to be in post and past the first CEC meeting of the next term before the pilot is rolled out so that they can be familiar with what is expected of them and start to understand their own remits and how they would best work with this new group of volunteers.

12. This role would be promoted to students as an opportunity to make a difference by working on behalf of fellow students to improve the learning experience for current and future students. To pick up on gripes and problems but also to get involved in the big conversations. That there would be little face to face involvement as much of the activity would take place online. To be part of a bigger team, to get some good experience and a chance to hone communications skills and they’d be supported throughout by the office team.

13. It was decided that the need for an English Executive was imperative to bring England into line with the Celtic nations. That the 3 English AARs would have a seat on this alongside 10 other places for elected reps who might be sourced from anywhere across England. Core tasks could include the encouragement and support of local groups, volunteering, and local activities and to signpost students to Student Association service. Also to facilitate student involvement in the student Senate Reference Group and Student Consultation Activity.

Assembly Members Seminar

The Assembly members’ seminar took place on the weekend following this meeting. The agenda was organised in a way for the Working Group to explain and discuss the major changes in the pipeline and ensure that our active students understood the implications that this brought with regard to their current positions. The intention was to include members in discussions going forward and to gather their input and suggestions to inform the future work. Also to help them understand where they might fit into the revised structure and what prospects and opportunities there would be for their future involvement.

There was a small amount of dissension in the room when it was understood that the current structure would no longer be supported from November and that this group of Assembly members were the last incumbents in these roles. However there was also much general support and an understanding of the sense of moving away from elected structures that over a long period have been proving to be barriers to local student involvement.

Other activity at the seminar included group discussions about the Learning Experience Reporter roles; building student community and local groups; the role and remit of an English Executive and further volunteering opportunities.

In support of the Regions review, Vice President Representation has organised an Action Research Volunteer Programme to understand what sort of opportunities there might be for students to organise local events and have a presence at local OU
happenings. Students at the seminar were asked for their input on this and to think about opportunities that they could arrange or be involved in. Members were provided with examples of OU students establishing local Freshers Fairs, having a presence at Chemistry Residential Schools, at a Psychology Society event and a science revision weekend. It was also reported that the Business School has agreed to a trial Student Association presence at some of their three day Residential Schools this year and members at the meeting were given the opportunity to be part of this.

Activities that were organised for the seminar have been replicated online to allow other current Assembly members to be involved in these discussions.

**Inclusion of Celtic Nations**

The Working Group discussed the ongoing question of the Celtic Nations being included in this restructure. Currently Ireland has expressed a wish to be included but no conclusive communication has been received from Wales or Scotland. However members of the Working Group believe that there is no practical or logical justification for any of the Celtic Nations to be operating under a different structure and recommend that they be included in this exercise without delay.

The Central Executive Committee is asked for opinions on this recommendation.

**Wendy Burrell**

**Deputy General Manager**

**On Behalf of the Regions Review Working Group**