OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
18 – 20 March 2016

ENTRY PROJECT

The CEC is asked to:-

i) **receive** a presentation by Nick Hamp, Office of PVC Academic on the Entry Project.

ii) **note** that Nick is attending on behalf of Dr John Butcher, Director Access and Curriculum on the Entry Project, therefore all comments and queries will be taken back for response following the meeting.

The OU, since its inception, has offered opportunities for Higher Education (HE) study to those who would not normally be able to access courses elsewhere, primarily due to a lack of prior educational qualifications. It has also demonstrated that these learners can be and are successful. But open access comes at a cost not just to the university but, more importantly to the student. Non-completion of qualifications has always been an issue and the very low numbers of students graduating within 7 years has long been a concern but in an environment where those who wished to only study small amounts of credit could do so, the problem did not appear so acute. However, as the cost of study in all four nations of the UK increases and residual government funding is increasingly linked to successful outcomes, it is crucial that our strategic aim of more students qualifying is achieved.

When, as now, students have to make such a significant financial investment in their learning the University has a responsibility to ensure they are given every chance of being successful. That does not mean that standards should be lowered but that we need to understand the factors which contribute to success and how we can best support our students from the very start of their journey with us. Of particular importance is the need to address the high levels of attrition at Level 1 which could be attributable to a range of factors but not least that students lack the information to make informed decisions on where to start studying and what to study. Ensuring that students begin their study in the right place - at the right level, at the right study intensity and on a programme of study which suits their aspirations - is one of the mechanisms available to us to provide that support.
It should be noted that the principle of open access is fundamental to our identity and one of the ways in which we are unique in the sector. The fact that students with no prior qualifications can be successful studying with us is testament to our ability to support the acquisition of the necessary learning gain. This is not something we should seek to undo - rather we should consider how we manage open access to insure more students qualify.

The Entry Project has been established to develop an Entry Policy and to develop the necessary tools to enable it to be delivered. The presentation given to the CEC on the 19th March 2016 will provide an update on the project, its progress so far as well as providing an early indication of the emerging policy.

Nick Hamp
Office of PVC Academic