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 Administration
Vice President Communications
Vice President Education Policy
Vice President Education Support and Research
Vice President Representation
Vice President Student Support
O U Council Member
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Student Engagement

Following the success of the Conference in November last year, this project has moved on to its next phase. There are now three work streams all of which have staff and CEC involvement. Myself, VP Education Policy and the General Manager are part of work stream C which is looking at new ways of student engagement. There are three current ideas being researched: internships, work shadowing and academic/student partnership project scheme. All three are still in their infancy and still be developed to see how they may work.

Locations Analysis

This project has also moved on now and has become Student Recruitment and Support Centres. There will be a paper provided to CEC for this. So far myself and Rob have attended two meetings of the Executive Group.

Student Wants List

Following the input from the CEC this was returned to the University Secretary. Following a great deal of work from Jenny Stewart, who is Head of the University Secretary’s Office, it was returned to us. This has now been placed back in the CEC forum for comment and for CEC members to let me know whether they are satisfied with the OU responses. We are now in a position where this is a working document which is also a discussion between us and the university. I would encourage CEC members to contribute to this document.

Meetings Attended

27 January Senate
28 January Meetings on Campus
3-4 February Meetings on Campus
10-11 February Meetings on Campus
12-14 February Officer Team Meeting
24-25 February Meetings on Campus
2-4 March Meetings on Campus
7-8 March Council
16 March Education Committee
17 March Interviews for Director of Academic Policy & Governance
18 March Interviews for Director of Academic Services
18-20 March CEC Meeting
Future Meetings

23 March  Meetings on Campus
24 March  Board of Trustee Meeting
13 April   Senate
14 April   Meetings on Campus
20-21 April Meetings on Campus
26 April   Charter Day
4 May      QAA Student Advisory Board
7 May      Scottish Committee
10 May     Council
11-12 May  Meetings on Campus
13-15 May  Steering Committee/Officer Team Meeting
19-20 May  Meetings on Campus
21 May     Belfast Consultative Meeting
25-26 May  Meetings on Campus
8 June     Senate
8-10 June  Periodic Programme Review
15 June    Senior Team Strategy Day
17-19 June OUSA Conference
22 June    Meeting on Campus
6 July     Education Committee
6-7 July   Meetings on Campus
8-10 July  Central Rep Training Weekend
12 July    Council
21-22 July Meetings on Campus
22-24 July CEC Handover Meeting.

Ruth Tudor
President
This is my first report for some time so I will begin by giving a quick update on the personal circumstances that have led to that gap.

I originally fell ill in August last year and consequently agreed to “take it easy” in relation to OU Student Association activity (and indeed activity generally). Unfortunately this did not result in any improvement – quite the contrary.

Eventually in mid-September I was admitted to hospital during the early hours on an emergency basis. Things went from bad to worse, including a brief period when I was arguably no longer with you, but after some sterling work by the ICU I was eventually transferred to another ward. However in all I spent some five weeks in hospital, escaping only towards the end of October. I remain unwell and am unable at present to attend face to face meetings. I have also had to scale back on work I had agreed to undertake in relation to liaising with the University.

I am extremely grateful to my fellow members and Association staff who have been extremely supportive and understanding during this period.

There is, moreover, happier news insofar as I have managed to attend several meetings by phone, including the subvention committee, working groups, the Officer Team weekend and of course the last CEC.

There has also been a lot of work recently involving changes to the current officer remits (which I am pleased to say were largely agreed at our last meeting), our upcoming budget for 2015/16, additional expenditure and requirements for the current year, our radical proposals for OU Students Association local and representational structure and various other stuff. Then there are the upcoming elections and Conference 2016!

I am all too well aware that occasionally having to handle all this on-line will have been frustrating for my colleagues and appreciate their patience – especially on those occasions when I may have struggled to respond quickly!

Nevertheless I think we have handled this regrettable development in the correct manner – in particular there was no way I could have handed the remits work to anybody else with a reasonable expectation of reaching a conclusion.

So in summation I am happy with the work that has been done to date, proud of the way the team has coped and optimistic for the future – or at least as optimistic as usual.

David Humble
OUUSA Vice President Administration
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
18 – 20 March 2016

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

As it’s less than 8 weeks since I wrote my last report, here’s a short round up of what’s been happening.

The Comms team supported Freshers week which included daily live chats on Facebook and the radio show broadcast on 29 January. We moved to YouTube Live streaming for the radio show this time and had 224 people listening to it live with 385 messages in the YouTube chat, a marked improvement on some of the past shows.

There has been a decline in students doing the National Student Survey over the years so the Association decided to support the University’s efforts in encouraging eligible students to complete the survey. For the first time an email was sent from the Association to those eligible and it appears to have had results. During the week the email was sent, 11.54% of eligible students completed the survey, as compared with 7.4% at the same point in 2015. More work needs to be done for the survey next year.

We’ve been working on promotional material. A new pop-up banner for OU students in Wales (in Welsh) has been redesigned and ordered, as have business cards for the Disabled Students Group (DSG).

Production of the March edition of OU Students magazine is happening as I write this and it should have hit student inboxes by the time this report is read. It includes a broad range of articles from students, with an emphasis on Conference and the history-making one member one vote. It’s well worth a read.

And finally some community figures as of 1/3/16…
Twitter: 15,621 followers
Facebook: 23,894 likes
Instagram: 1,683 followers

Meetings Attended

About every 2 weeks Analytics Ethics Policy Working Group (although these are often cancelled)
12 - 14 February 2016 Officer Team Meeting

Future Meetings

13 – 15 May 2016 Officer Team Meeting
17 – 19 June 2016 Conference
22 – 24 July 2016 CEC/Handover

Lorraine Adams
Vice President Communications
Central Executive Committee (C E C)  
18 – 20 March 2016

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION POLICY

Central Reps

Further appointments have been made to fill vacancies on committees.

A session was held for a group of reps who were appointed for the first time this committee year. This was a fairly informal discussion to share experiences and advice as well as make suggestions for improvement of support and processes. Those who attended indicated they found it beneficial and there have been some initial discussions about holding a similar event again in the near future.

Research Students

In February I met with a research student (who is also a central rep) to discuss our representation of this group of students and ways the OU Students Association could better identify and respond to their needs. A further, larger meeting is currently being scheduled for mid-March to explore this further.

Faculty Reconfiguration

Along with several others from the Association, I have been involved in a number of conversations about the future of student representation within faculties once their structures change this summer. Our priority is to ensure sufficient input that the student voice continues to be heard in all appropriate places. All Executive Deans have seemed quite welcoming of this and are keen to have student involvement where possible.

Group Tuition

I continue to attend meetings at which the implementation of the new Group Tuition Policy is discussed. One of the key issues I am following up on is the need for the university to communicate well in advance to students about any changes that will have an effect on their study experience. Another is that there must be flexibility in the system for booking places at tutorials so that students are not disadvantaged.

Academic Strategy

I have attended the first 2 meetings of the steering group established to oversee the development of an Academic Strategy for the university. This is intended to cover a very wide range of concepts including student experience, academic staff development, curriculum and several others – all underpinned by the concept of “academic excellence” (the definition of which is slowly emerging from discussion) and supported by existing policies and frameworks.
Joint Honours

The university has recently approved a series of joint honours degrees (in which two “half degrees” of 180 credits each are studied to make the overall degree, with both subjects recognised in the qualification title). This is considered a pilot, with the intention (if further approval is given) of expanding the number of halves available and – potentially – allowing students to mix and match to create their own combinations.

Student Engagement Project

I am part of the OU Students Association groups attending two workstreams of this project.

One is considering possible ways for students to become involved in the work of the university – including internships, joint student/staff owned projects, work shadowing and several other ideas. These are still being developed, but represent interesting opportunities.

The other concentrates on student involvement in curriculum and learning design. Ideas for how and where to facilitate this type of input are at an earlier stage but could potentially be a significant change to the way students are involved in developing modules.

Josh Brumpton
Vice President Education Policy
As it has only been a few weeks since the last Central Executive Committee meeting there is not too much to report on although, as always, it has been a fairly busy and interesting time.

There have been two stand-out moments:

I was lucky enough to be a presenter of the OU Students’ radio show for the recent Freshers’ week which was a great experience both in the taking part and in seeing the response of the day as we were live.

I was also involved in the University Challenge event where the team selected got together for the first time the night before their audition for the televised rounds to get some practice against a team of OU staff (won handsomely by the student team) and a team from the Central Executive Committee augmented by a University Challenge veteran in the shape of Peter Horrocks, the Vice Chancellor. It was close with the CEC team almost pulling off a famous victory being pipped at the post by the Students. It was an auspicious start for the student team and hopefully augured well for their audition.

The research project into student views of the means of presentation of module material continues and will hopefully be going live towards the end of March with a survey of a representative student group. In parallel with the survey the research forum will be opened to get a broad selection of views from the wider student body.

I have also been involved with the Entry Project and the Student Engagement Project (although could only submit written comments as work commitments prevented me from attending on the day).

Most recently I attended the South Region consultative day which was well attended by students and which highlighted that both the online/onscreen/print debate and the matter of face to face tutorials are still high among student concerns. It was also good to see how engaged the student attendees were towards the topics selected for discussion.

Finally I was able to attend a Nightline Affiliates evening along with Jess Smith from the OUSA Office. This was an interesting evening which gave us some practical experience of Nightline and its operation, the training it gives its volunteers and the range and type of calls it has to deal with.

**Meetings attended:**

- 22 January University Challenge Warm up
- 23 – 24 January Central Executive Committee Meeting
- 29 January OU Students’ Radio
- 12 – 14 February Officer Team Meeting
27 February  South Region Student Consultative Meeting
29 February  Nightline Affiliates Meeting

Forthcoming Meetings:

12 March  North West Region Student Consultative Meeting
14 – 15 March  Student member of interview panel for the Heads of Schools in the FELS / Health and Social Care Faculty
18 – 20 March  Central Executive Committee Meeting
24 March  Board of Trustees Meeting
21 April (tbc)  Student Research Project Panel
22 – 23 April  London Graduation Ceremonies
30 April  South East Graduation Ceremony
4 May  Library Services User Group Meeting
14 – 15 May  Officer Team Meeting

Peter J Cowan
Vice President Educational Support and Research
Central Executive Committee (C E C)
18 – 20 March 2016

REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT REPRESENTATION

The review of the regional assemblies has continued to take up a large part of my time with both online and face to face elements as each stage progresses.

OU Student radio! What a fantastic thing to continue to be a part of. If you haven’t listened then please do. Different themes every time makes each show interesting. The next one will be on the 21st March at 18.00pm UK time, and available on listen again for those of you who can’t get the live version.

There was an Officer Team Meeting held in Milton Keynes over Valentine’s weekend which was interesting - don’t you just love being an active student? At least you get to be at a dinner table with loads of people who are happy being there and actually talking to each other!

Today as I type this message to you all I have been at a meeting with the OU about a ‘New Model for Student Engagement.’ This work is all about looking at different ways of how to get OU students more involved at different levels of decision making within the University.

Next weekend (5th March) I will be back in Milton Keynes for the training Seminar for the regional and national elected students helping them to become more aware of the changes to the structure of the Students Association recommended by the recent review. If it’s anything like the event we held last year it will be a productive and enthusiastic time for all concerned and the chance to be part of something bigger and have a better understanding of the great organisation.

Residential School planning for Bath continues and the call has gone out for students in the Bath area to come and volunteer their time as a residential school rep over the summer.

The regions and nations continue to have various amounts of activity within their areas and there was much enthusiasm for some of them to hold Freshers events at the start of this year.

I will be attending the OU Student Consultation in Harbourne in Birmingham and am looking forward to meeting with the students from the West Midlands who are attending and also listening to the student discussions that will take place.

Here ends my short but sweet report.

Sue Goodyear
Vice President Representation
REPORT OF VICE PRESIDENT STUDENT SUPPORT

These Officer reports seem to come round more often than my Blog. 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 OUSET plus responding to students who contact me directly.

Peer Support

We were so fortunate that Emma Greenstein, the OU’s Mental Health and Disability Processes Adviser, was involved in a new initiative regarding on-the-role training for our Peer Supporters. We are hope that similar training sessions will happen in future.

Peer Supporters will be available throughout the Easter break, both replying to one off queries in the Request Forum and also providing longer 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.

Disabled Students Group (DSG)

I attended the DSG Facebook Chat on January 27th between 6 and 8pm for new students with disabilities. I found it a bit difficult to follow all the questions and comments that were coming in thick and fast but hopefully, between us, the experienced folk present answered enough questions so that no new students felt ignored. If you would like to join the DSG, it has closed forums for members and a great deal of activity takes place on the closed D S G Facebook Group. Students contribute useful information about studying with the OU but also cover a range of other topics related to disability.

The new Committee have already started to gel and are enthusiastic about helping other students with disabilities. I can see that the DSG is definitely safe in their hands.

University Mental Health Day

By the time this report is published Student Minds’ March 3rd University Mental Health Day will have passed but as I write this report, March 3rd is still in the future so I can only report on what was planned, not how it all went. Various events were planned to coincide with March 3rd. The DSG planned for safe places for conversations to take place between interested students on one of the DSG closed forums and on a closed Facebook Group. I hope if you were interested you will have taken part in those conversations or sent in your Mindapples suggestions to the Students Association’s Social Media accounts of Twitter and Facebook. If you would like more information about a whole range of information and support related to keeping mentally healthy, please read my 3 Blogs on this subject. For more information, read on.
Trilogy of Blogs

I was extremely lucky to talk to Emma Greenstein about a wide variety of matters relating to keeping mentally healthy. As a result of this interview, alongside support and information currently available, I was able to create a Trilogy of Blogs. However, I must admit they aren’t quite up to the Back to the Future Trilogy of films from the 1980s. Blog 1 focuses on Mindfulness and can be found here. Fans of our Student Association’s radio show might remember Emma’s talk on Mindfulness last year and a link to that podcast can be found here. The 2nd Blog was about events for March 3rd plus useful information and ongoing support was posted here http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/news-and-events/news/blogs/university-mental-health-and-wellbeing-day-%E2%80%93-march-3rd-2016
The third Blog should be posted in the Latest News section of the OU Students Association Website on March 10th in this area. It will focus on activities and actions that students can take which will help mental wellbeing. And if you can take care of your mental wellbeing that can only help with that thing we all do – studying.

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 have raised the issue of access to EduRoam for students for a few years. We have recently learnt that the OU is planning to make EduRoam available to students in 2016. In addition, Office 365 will be offered to students in 2016. Unfortunately, I cannot currently give details about exactly when, nor what will be included because the OU has not confirmed the precise offering with Microsoft. The OU will update students when they have more information. Don’t worry if you prefer to continue to use your current Office Package because students will not have Office 365 forced upon them. However, it is important that the Students Association reminds the OU to continue to accept various formats for electronic submissions of Tutor Marked Assignments and End of Module Assessments so students are able to choose not to accept Office 365.

At the January Tripartite meeting the President and I were assured that the OU is not intending to suggest that students must use Facebook for study related conversations. Therefore, students can continue to study without having to use Facebook.

Inclusion

I meet with various OU staff when issues relating to students that fall within my remit are discussed. Our next meeting will be on March 24th. We will discuss various Disabled Students Allowances issues; what information could be available to new students with disabilities; how students with disabilities will be supported in the future; a pilot peer mentoring scheme; and some general information about Fees and Funding.

Library

On March 17th I will be at the launch of the Library’s new OU Digital Archive (OUDA), more information is available here. By digitising the material it will help preserve some of the OU’s institutional and teaching materials. This can then be made available both internally and externally and will include audio, video, images, printed materials, and archived module web sites. Students, hopefully past and present, will be able to
eventually access these materials. It will be with great sadness that those present at that event will be saying goodbye to Nicky Whitsed, the current Director of Library Services, who retires on March 18th – and I’ve been told it isn’t connected to seeing me on March 17th. I couldn’t have studied quite a few modules without the Library’s assistance, the nearest University Library being about 50 miles from where I live, so I will always be grateful to Nicky and her staff for making my study possible.

Student Feedback and Communications Work Stream

The OU, alongside the Students Association, is considering how the OU can make improvements both to improve its responses to early signs of students’ concerns and in publicising how it has used student feedback. I attended the Work stream for this along with the SARs from N Ireland and Scotland plus two Students Association staff. There were some interesting points including how to encourage more students to respond to the National Student Survey and how to become aware of students early concerns, especially on social media. It was suggested that the OU should explore how best to learn about students concerns from official OU and OU Student Association social media sites. This Work Stream will consider from where, and how, student feedback on social media is acquired whilst ensuring that students’ confidentiality is maintained. It will also consider how the OU can make best use of that feedback to improve students' experience. It was felt a positive step forward would be an accessible, user friendly, interactive web presence enabling students to see how feedback is actioned by the OU.

Future Commitments:

18 – 20 March C E C Meeting
24 March Inclusion
24 March Feedback Work Stream
31 March Tripartite
9 April Consultation Meeting (Cambridge)
13 April Senate Reference Group
16 April Consultation Meeting (Nottingham)

Alison Kingan
Vice President Student Support
REPORT OF STUDENT OU COUNCIL MEMBER

The meetings of CEC are slightly closer together than the meetings of Council on this occasion and there has not, at the time of composing this, been a further meeting of Council since the November meeting, which I reported on for the last CEC meeting. This report can, therefore, be very brief.

The March meeting of Council is due to take place next week (8 March, in Edinburgh), but that will be too late for the deadline for papers for the March meeting of the CEC. However, I will be happy to provide a brief verbal report to the CEC at our meeting, if wished.

By way of consolation, since the last meeting of the CEC, I have attended meetings of the Senate Reference Group and of the Officer Team, and these, together with four OU Student Consultations (on the OU Strategy, Student Experience of entry to the OU, the Student Consultation for the Arts faculty, and latterly on the Student Charter), have kept me out of mischief (or possibly not, some may say).

So far as the consultations are concerned, I should point out that these provide excellent opportunities for discovering what issues bug other students, so that I can file such facts away in what I choose to call my mind, for future quotation when the opportunity presents itself. In an attempt to avoid seeding, or fermenting, notions in the minds of other students during consultations (or being thought to be guilty of the latter), I try to stay silent for at least the first 4-5 days of each consultation, but the comforting thing is that the thoughts presented by other students appear to correspond well with my own prior thoughts – so I console myself that I appear to be reasonably in step with the consensus view of students when I try to present a student viewpoint! The consultations themselves, of course, are open for all to read online.

Carey Shaw
Student Member of OU Council