The CEC is asked to:-

i) receive a report on progress

ii) discuss recommendations about the future of Assembly Executives (point 8.4, 9.3 and 10.1)

1. Background

1.1 A review of the structure and organisation of Student Association activities took place in late 2015. This included key stakeholder interviews, a survey of active members of Assemblies, a student consultation, a CEC workshop and a focus group exercise drawing on the experience of past and present involved members. In its conclusion, the final report asserted that the English regional structure was unfit for purpose continually failing to attract sufficient participation from the student body to warrant its continuation in the same form. The CEC supported recommendations for an alternative model and a number of suggested new initiatives. Although the report was based on activity in England, agreement was reached that all home nations would be included in the new structure which would result in a move away from regional and national assemblies, the development of a new layer of volunteers concerned with the learning experience, the development of local networks, groups and clubs and a more coordinated approach to different volunteering roles. The review was supported by a Working Group of Officers and staff who initiated much of the early work.

1.2 In July, a bid for funding that centred on the development of 6 new staff roles to support the projected new work streams and initiatives, was made to the University who supported the proposal in full. A recruitment drive is now underway and it is hoped that all posts will be operational prior to Christmas.

1.3 A revised Working Group met on Monday 12th September to progress areas of the work considering recommendations put forward by Officers in the original Working Group. Those present were the Deputy President, Vice Presidents for Representation and Research, Education, Administration and Community. Staff members, Wendy Burrell, Jess Smith, Helen Janes, Pooja Sinha, Kate
Dungate and Beverley Woodbridge were also in attendance. The following details outline the progress of current work streams and discussions to date.

2. **LEARNING EXPERIENCE REPORTERS**

2.1 Learning Experience Reporters, (LERs), the new volunteer opportunity for students interested in amplifying the student representative voice, will be advertised from Freshers week with a big promotional push to all interested students and a publicity campaign is currently being drafted.

2.2 LERs will be the eyes and ears of the Association gathering and feeding back student views and opinions, spotting reoccurring themes and on occasion charged with seeking feedback on specified issues. They will operate in all spaces where students gather. They will identify themselves as operating on behalf of the Students Association with the purpose of providing evidenced feedback for elected and appointed student representatives to use in their conversations within the University.

2.3 An appointment process will be of the lightest touch. Students will self-nominate, submitting a circa 100 word statement about why they’d like to take up this role. The Office team will ok all appropriate applications and monthly reports on recruitment will be available to VP Representation and Research for her oversight.

2.4 A set of guidelines will be provided to all LERs and they will be invited to take part in optional online training workshops.

3. **THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE NETWORKING ZONE (LENZ)**

3.1 A new suite of forums will be created in the Student Association business area to be referred to as the Learning Experience Networking Zone (LENZ). This will consist of 19 forums, one for each new Board of Study (BoS). In these forums, LERs from that BoS will have access to relevant Faculty Association Reps, Central Reps and Officers. LENZ will be the space where student opinions are delivered and sought and where these different layers of volunteers share information and experience.

3.2 Faculty Association Reps (FARs) will moderate the forums with the lightest of touch and current VLE codes of conduct apply.

3.3 A regular newsletter will be collated and despatched on behalf of FARs which will keep LERs aware of where their information is going and what impact it’s having as well as keeping them informed of Association successes and other issues in the wider higher education world.

4. **LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

4.1 The Local Communities project that were launched via the Pledge Drive at Conference are starting to take off. The pledge drive resulted in 99 pledgers (11 of whom got in contact via email). Students pledged either to stay in touch with students in their area via a local Facebook group or through meeting face to face. Following the pledge drive, 22 clusters of students were identified by separating students in the UK by county and those outside the UK by area. 24 students were the only ones to do so from their county/area. Support packs
were sent out to 81 students in time for the August Bank Holiday. These students were those who had pledged to get involved in face to face meet-ups. The packs included various items to help support students meeting up including tips from experienced meet-up organisers.

4.2 To date, the Association has helped to advertise 15 meet-ups taking place in September. 5 of the ‘hosts’ took part in the Pledge Drive. We plan to send out the next batch of Support Packs in early October to ensure that existing organisers have the same support items as new organisers. The recipients of the next batch will also include any new organisers that have come forward in the meantime.

5. GROUPS, SOCIETIES & CLUBS

5.1 The Group project was discussed and how responsibility for this work stream will be in the remit of the new Projects Officer (Community) which is currently out for recruitment. It was noted that to date there are two ‘supported’ Student Association Groups (Disabled Students Group and Younger Students Group) with a third, Plexus currently being debated. It was felt that a third more informal ‘grouping’ of students was necessary and the idea of ‘Clubs’ was suggested. Clubs were described as being a more fluid means of like-minded students coming together that wouldn’t necessarily need any formal structure or rules and that Club activity would wax and wane to meet students’ interests over time. However, support will come from the office and Vice President Community in the form of guidelines, promotion and resources (such as goodie bags etc). Clubs would provide opportunities for students to meet either face to face or online and could also be the breeding ground for new Societies.

5.2 There are currently 21 affiliated Societies with 4 others close to formal affiliation and many more enquiries every day. An aspiration for the Association is to have doubled the number of Societies within the next two years. Becoming an affiliated Society would be a natural progression for ‘clubs’, which will help meet this aim. Additionally, ‘clubs’ will provide an appropriate home for the many students who set out to form a society but don’t have the necessary time, energy or interest from fellow students to enable them to make it to affiliation, but nevertheless have enthusiasm for getting students together.

6. HEAD OF VOLUNTEERING

6.1 Beth Metcalf has recently been appointed as Head of Volunteering to work with other teams to develop a strategic approach to volunteering and improve operational processes including highlighting good practice, consolidating opportunities and recruitment cycles where possible and making consistent our approach to volunteer recruitment, support, training and reward.

7. TEMPORARY PROJECT LEAD

7.1 A temporary project lead is being recruited to oversee the projects arising from the Regions Review recommendations and ensure that we deliver on expected outcomes and objectives in a timely way. The post holder will collect, collate and analyse data, reporting on progress, guiding projects to
their objectives and providing regular management information which will form the basis of reports not least to inform the University about how the added resource is being used and what impact it is having. This role is timed to last for six months.

8. **ENGLISH NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

8.1 The Working Group discussed at length a possible purpose and remit for an English National Executive. After considerable debate, a majority agreed that there was little viable role for an elected body to play that could not be effectively covered elsewhere. They noted that the three recently elected English Association Reps were cooperating well together and working hard to carve out their own roles and that certain tasks, for example finding representatives for the Senate Reference Group, for the Consultation Forums or local Observers for Central Executive Committee meetings could be left to them.

8.2 Group members failed to pinpoint any specific and substantial remit that would leave role holders in an English National Executive feeling as if they had a strong role or a very purposeful part to play.

8.3 Discussion centred on how elections were costly and staff resource heavy and how in recent years they had attracted minimal support from local students. Moreover, elections were regularly cited as barriers to taking part in student conversations that fed into the Regions Review.

8.4 **Recommendation 1:** On the basis of the discussion, the Working Group recommend that the idea of an elected English National Executive be discarded.

9. **NATIONAL EXECUTIVES IN THE CELTIC NATIONS**

9.1 The Working Group further discussed arrangements regarding elected National Executives within the Celtic Nations. It was noted that members of these National Executives had infrequent occasion to take part in meetings with Nation government agencies and in this respect differed from arrangements in England where this form of meeting would be attended by representatives elected centrally.

9.2 It was with reference to substantial experience in the Group that questions were raised about the continued viability of Celtic Nation Executives. It was noted that in relation to the numbers of students studying in all Nations, very few students stood for positions on the Executives, very few students took part in the election process and very few students engaged with the elected Executives. It was agreed that once again this means that substantial resource is being expended on election processes that benefit few students.

9.3 **Recommendation 2:** On the basis of the discussion, the Working Group recommend that there should be no elections for the Celtic Nation Executives in November and that after this time these bodies be disbanded. Any particular involvement they have previously had with government agencies should be in the remit of the respective Area Association Rep with the ability to offer opportunities to take part being offered to all students in the locality.
Any current existing Executive should be given support to form a Local Group or other appropriate body as will be the case of the current English Regional Executives which are in the process of being disbanded.

10. EXECUTIVES IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE, the REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

10.1 **Recommendation 3:** In line with the previous recommendations, Assembly Executives in the above locations should cease to exist from November and no further elections should take place. Any representative involvement from students in these areas should be facilitated through the appropriate Area Association Rep or in the case of the Rest of the World, the co-ordinator or in the absence of a co-coordinator, through the Vice President Representation and Research.

10.2 The CEC is asked to discuss these recommendations with a view to making a decision about the future of Executives.

11. NEXT STEPS

11.1 Following the outcome of this discussion, the Vice President Administration will amend Association Bye-Laws as appropriate and seek agreement for these changes in the CEC forum.

11.2 Any proposed changes will be put to the Board of Trustees at their next meeting in November.

Wendy Burrell
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