OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 October 2016

AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES (AARs) REPORTS

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:-

AARs for England
AAR for Wales
AAR for Scotland
AAR for Northern Ireland
AAR for Continental Europe
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 October 2016

REPORT OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES (AARs) FOR ENGLAND

Online Activity

On OU forums I am reading all the posts and slowly getting to grips with the layout. I have recently begun to post answers to posts.

On Facebook I have joined all the OU Students Association regional groups and various OU related groups where I regularly reply to student’s queries and comments. I also repost Association business that I feel may help raise awareness of the association.

On Twitter I have followed people who have posted with #OUStudents and #new2OU and I have retweeted any posts where students are looking for other people on their module. I have aiming at increasing awareness of the OU students association by tweeting about Peer Support, Social events, OU shop, volunteering opportunities, OU Library tutorials, OU access courses, Nightline and OU student association tweets. I have had positive feedback and been able to assist students who were requiring help.

Victoria Crawford
AAR England

The English regions Facebook groups were relatively quiet over the summer period, with most students were having a break from studies. In the last month or so they became quite animated, new students joined and started looking for study buddies and social meetups. The majority of these groups are very well moderated, the only issue is the South West group, where there is only one admin and the last members added to the groups were 2 months ago. I am usually just an observer in these groups, but I step in as and when required, mainly to answer questions or encourage students to set up their own meetup if there is not one for their particular area.

Anca Seaton
AAR England

English Assemblies

Things have been relatively quiet since 1st August. No meetings took place during this time. I contacted all the English Assemblies on behalf of the AAR England team to introduce ourselves. Two regions were contacted by email, the rest on the VLE Fora. We had a few responses to this, mainly by email. The local Fora are very quiet at the moment, but we are planning to raise their profile and encourage students to post.

Anca Seaton
AAR England
Events

I held a coffee morning in Grimsby on 7th September and enjoyed chatting to local students. Students from psychology, history and law faculties attended. At the end of this report there is a list of OU Student Association events that have taken place in England since August 2016, this list was supplied by the OU Students Association office.

Victoria Crawford  
AAR England

My first social meeting as an Area Association Representative for England was in Manchester on 13th August. The coffee morning was set up by a student from the region and was very well attended. We had current students, but also prospective students looking for starting studying with the OU. A very good time was had by all, and future meet ups are already planned. On this particular subject, I am one of the experienced students who helped creating a Support Pack for students who would like to set up their own coffee morning/students meetup. I have also put my name forward for being one of the contacts for the events organisers to provide help and support for these events.

Anca Seaton  
AAR England

Looking forward

Freshers – I will ‘attend’ all the online events for the OU Freshers week. I’m looking forward to talking to new and continuing students and answering any queries.

Pledges – I have confirmed with the OU Students Association office that I am happy to act as a point of contact and to offer support to those students who pledged at conference to arrange and host events.

Degree ceremonies – I have put my name forward to volunteer at the Harrogate Degree Ceremony on 18th November 2016 in the hope I can gain some experience with OU merchandise and also witness an OU degree ceremony for the first time.

Online activity – I plan to continue and increase my activity in this area. I’m interested to learn more about the use of OULive for events, especially for the many students, who for various reasons, cannot attend face to face events.

Victoria Crawford  
AAR England

Meetings attended since taken up post (1st August, 2016):

13 August 2016 – Manchester 1st Coffee Morning  
9 – 11 September, 2016 – CEC Induction Weekend, Milton Keynes

Anca Seaton  
AAR England
Future Meetings/Projects

Due to health issues, it is unlikely I will be able to attend any face to face events in the near future, but there are projects I am involved in, the work for which can be done online:

Freshers’ Week – this event is happening at the time of writing. My intention is to take part in all the Facebook events for this, and also Student Hub Live and the Radio. The aim is to help answering students’ questions and to be on signposting duties: from study skills to social meetups and support.

Local Communities Project – as I said above, I am one of the main contacts for the Local Communities Project, helping and encouraging students to set up social gatherings. One of the areas I would like to concentrate on is organising virtual meetups, Facebook events that happen at the weekend, where students can have a virtual coffee or a glass of wine and talk about their week, any study issues, but also have a good time in a relaxed atmosphere.

Anca Seaton
AAR England
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OU Students Association Exeter Meetup</td>
<td>03/09/2016</td>
<td>Imperial Weatherspoons, Exeter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee morning / Meet &amp; Greet</td>
<td>10/09/2016</td>
<td>Bean &amp; Brew, 57 St. Mary's Street, Wallingford, OX10 0EL.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strawberry Fields Coffee House, 8 The Square, CT7 9AB, Biritching, Kent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canterbury &amp; Thanet Student Meet-up</td>
<td>10/09/2016</td>
<td>Birchington, Kent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU Maidstone Meet Up</td>
<td>10/09/2016</td>
<td>Muggleton Inn, Maidstone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU Students Wiltshire Coffee Morning in Chippenham</td>
<td>17/09/2016</td>
<td>Scoff Café, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 1HS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Coffee Afternoon</td>
<td>17/09/2016</td>
<td>The Sheaf Island, Ecclesall Road, Sheffield, S11 8HW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton Meet-up</td>
<td>17/09/2016</td>
<td>Jurys Inn, Stroudly Road, Brighton, BN1 4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beers and Brews Meet Up</td>
<td>17/09/2016</td>
<td>The Water House, 65 North Road, Durham, DH1 4sQ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Student Meet Up</td>
<td>07/09/2016</td>
<td>House of Fraser, 19-21 Victoria Street, Grimsby DN31.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee morning</td>
<td>29/10/2016</td>
<td>QUAD, Market Place, Cathedral Quarter, Derby DE1 3AS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Social</td>
<td>09/09/2016</td>
<td>Yates, Liverpool City Centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chester Coffee Morning</td>
<td>24/09/2016</td>
<td>The Old Harkers Arms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Lancaster Coffee Morning</td>
<td>03/09/2016</td>
<td>Priory Hall, 10 China Street, LA1 1EX Lancaster, Lancashire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU Students Birmingham Coffee morning</td>
<td>10/09/2016</td>
<td>The Bull Ring Starbucks East Mall upper level next to Pizza Express.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlington Meet-up</td>
<td>08/10/2016</td>
<td>Mangobean, Unit 1A, Feethams, Darlington, DL1 5RD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester Coffee Morning</td>
<td>24/09/2016</td>
<td>Caffe Bolero, 2-4 St Nicholas Street, Worcester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrewsbury Coffee Morning</td>
<td>01/10/2016</td>
<td>The Shrewsbury Hotel, Bridge Place, Worcester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln OU Students Get Together</td>
<td>01/10/2016</td>
<td>Snail Square, Wetherspoons, Brayford Wharf, Lincoln LN1 1YW.</td>
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</tbody>
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Victoria Crawford
AAR England
This is a report of my activities as the Area Association Representative (A A R) for Wales. In this role I am responsible for representing and reporting upon the views of students living in Wales to the C E C and informing the C E C of Association activities within Wales.

Wales Assembly Executive and Members

There is currently 1 Assembly Executive and 6 Assembly Members in Wales who have been elected to represent the Association at a local level. I keep them informed of my activity regularly via email and our forums. I have offered to help facilitate face to face and/or online meetings and have asked for feedback on what they would like to do within their roles in the nation.

Julie Lynch-Wilson, Assembly Executive member, has volunteered to co-ordinate the Degree Ceremony on 14 October. Following an email appeal from the Association office for volunteers three students have come forward. Julie has volunteered at past ceremonies but it is the first time she has been the co-ordinator and I’m sure she will do an excellent job.

Social Meetings and Activities

I have been hosting a coffee shop social meeting on the first Saturday of the month in central Cardiff. While I took a short break from this prior to the Association’s 2016 Conference I have recently revived the meetings. A change from 10:30am to 2pm was well received last month. It was great to have some students who are just starting out attending. The next event is Saturday 1 October and I have decided to stick to the 2pm start.

Social Media

The Wales Facebook group has had a recent membership boost probably as a result of Freshers’ activities. There are now 400 members. There are also 501 twitter followers. Social media continues to prove more popular than the VLE forums although I try to post across all platforms.

Higher Education Funding Council Wales – Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee

I have been asked to attend a Higher Education Funding Council Wales (H E F C W) committee as a part time student representative which I am really excited about. The Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee advises the Council on all matters relating to student opportunity and achievement in higher education, including Welsh Medium, Initial Teacher Training, widening access, equality and diversity, and skills
and employability, with the aim of ensuring that Welsh higher education meets the needs and expectations of learners and other stakeholders. The committee meets for the first time on 30 November 2016. I have also been asked to attend a workshop looking at the Higher Education Strategy in Wales as part of my membership of this committee taking place on 19 October.

**Meetings with OU in Wales**

I have met with Simon Horrocks, Assistant Director (Development, Learning and Teaching) at the OU in Wales on a couple of occasions since being appointed as AAR. Primarily, we discussed my appointment to the HEFCW committee which either Simon or the OU in Wales Director Rob Humphreys will be attending. Other matters discussed were extending an invitation to Chris Pine as newly elected Association president to Cardiff as an opportunity to highlight the differences in student support and the fee regime in Wales as well as to discuss a possible memorandum of understanding between the association and the NUS in Wales.

I have been invited by the OU in Wales to attend a workshop session on student success on 1 November. I have previously attended a workshop on this topic which was really informative and I enjoyed being able to give the student point of view. To link in with the next Freshers’ events in late January, the OU in Wales are planning to hold some sessions for new students to introduce them to the support available and help them with some basic questions new students tend to have. There will be a session in North Wales and one in South Wales but exact dates are to be confirmed. CEC and Assembly Executive members are welcome to attend and support these events when they are confirmed.

**Activities since last CEC meeting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 August</td>
<td>OU Students Cardiff – Coffee &amp; Chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 August</td>
<td>Meeting with Simon Horrocks, Assistant Director (Development, Learning and Teaching) at OU in Wales, Cardiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 September</td>
<td>OU Students Cardiff – Coffee &amp; Chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 September</td>
<td>Meeting with Simon Horrocks, Assistant Director (Development, Learning and Teaching) at OU in Wales, Cardiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 September</td>
<td>Meeting with Cliona O’Neill who chairs the Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee at HEFCW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Future commitments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 October</td>
<td>OU Degree Ceremony at Millennium Centre, Cardiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 October</td>
<td>HEFCW workshop on the Higher Education Strategy for Wales at Millennium Centre, Cardiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 November</td>
<td>OU in Wales student success workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 November</td>
<td>HEFCW Student Opportunity and Achievement Committee meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Claire Smith*

*Area Association Representative Wales*
Assembly Executives

A meeting of the Scottish Assembly was held on Saturday 6th August 2016 in Edinburgh. I attended this meeting with other Assembly Executives, and we welcomed two visiting students to this meeting.

We also held an online meeting which ran for two weeks, one week either side of the Edinburgh meeting, this allowed students that were unable to attend in person to take part in the discussions.

Other Meetings I was involved with as part of my role on CEC

Fresher’s Festival George Square Glasgow Scotland - I attended this event to help run a stand for the Open University Student’s Association. I was joined on the stand by two other students, we spoke to students that were studying with the Open University, and also by college students that were considering what university to go to after college, I was discussing the benefits of studying with the Open University, funding available, what modules were available.

I was invited to talk on video about this event, and asked what my role was, what I thought about the venue, what made the Open University student Association want to take part in the event, what attracted us to the event.

The event was busy on both days, however more students attended the first day, it is unknown how many in total attended, but I think it would be around the same if not slightly more than last year’s event, that had been held in the SECC Glasgow and attracted five thousand visitors over two days, this year the event was more central beside Queen Street station, and near Central station and the bus station. So this allowed people to attend during their lunch break.

Social night - I attended the Social night organised by Matthew that was organised as an event to coincide with the fresher’s festival. This was held on 21st September, we were joined by another eight Open University students, some were new students just beginning their studies, some were continuing their studies, we had a very good evening, and most remained until 10pm. One new student made a really nice comment, she said she was glad to have decided to attend this social because the conversation was really good, and more intellectual than a Mensa meeting she had attend previously, I thanked her for the comment and said I was glad she had enjoyed the social evening.

Activities and meetings attended since 1st August

6 August 2016 Scottish Assembly meeting in Edinburgh
12 August Ministerial launch of the Scottish Funding Council’s Gender action plan in Glasgow
12 August Lunch with Susan Stewart Director of the Open University in Scotland. In Glasgow
9 – 11 September CEC Induction Weekend in Milton Keynes
21-22 September Fresher’s Festival George Square Glasgow
21 September Social evening meet up Glasgow

List of future commitments coming up

5 October Scottish Working Committee Meeting in Edinburgh
14 – 16 October CEC Weekend in Milton Keynes
Ongoing Planning and organising for Open University Student’s Association in Scotland Festival 2017 this will continue throughout the year.
29 October Coordinating the Edinburgh Degree Ceremony in the Usher Hall
27 – 29 January 2017 CEC meeting

Patricia Gray
Area Association Representative for Scotland
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 October 2016

REPORT OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (AAR) FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland Assembly Executive

There have been no meetings of the Northern Ireland Assembly Executive since my election. The last one was 30th April to 13th May online with a face-to-face meeting on the 7th May, which I did attend.

I remain in active contact with the other members of the Northern Ireland Assembly via the VLE forums, social media and email. We have been discussing meeting dates, and will be having a small face-to-face on the 1st of October to discuss how to encourage students to stand for election and also how we can improve turnout at the next lot of elections, as last year we only managed a total of 16 votes.

Social Meetings/Groups/Activities

There was a meet-up of Northern Ireland students on 22nd August in Belfast, and it was reasonably well attended; Deputy President Nicci Simpson and VP Communications Rachel Hughes were also present.

A meeting of students will take place on the 1st October at the OU building in Belfast. OU Students Association Deputy President, Nicci Simpson and Director of the OU in Ireland John D’Arcy are both planning on attending.

Social Media

Social media has proven to be a useful way to stay in touch with our members in Northern Ireland. I am currently heavily promoting Welcome Week, the Fresher’s event for new students.

Since starting my role, I have set up a role specific Facebook page and Twitter account for the AAR Northern Ireland that are steadily gaining followers. I have gained 54 followers on Facebook and 98 on Twitter in the 6 weeks I have been in role. The OUSA Northern Ireland Facebook page is also growing with 326 members.

Social media continues to prove more popular than the regional VLE forums although I try to post regularly in the VLE and I do check in there almost every day.

Student Consultation

The Open University Student Consultation in Northern Ireland took place on 21st May 2016. I am awaiting confirmation of the 2017 consultation date.
Ruth Cuthbertson has been nominated as the Northern Ireland student representative for the online Student Consultation Forums. Ruth has previous experience of contributing to the Consultation forums and I believe she will do a great job of keeping involved and engaged throughout the year.

Activities since I was elected at Conference:

22 - 24 July Handover Weekend, Milton Keynes
22 August Student Meet-up Belfast.
9 - 11 September Induction Weekend, Milton Keynes

Future Activities/Commitments/Dates for Diary:

1 October Student Meet-up, Belfast OU Office
14 - 16 October CEC Meeting, Milton Keynes
21 October Belfast Graduation Ceremony (Co-ordinator)
TBC Assembly Executive Meeting, Belfast

Cinnomen McGuigan
Area Association Representative for Northern Ireland
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 October 2016

REPORT OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (AAR) FOR CONTINENTAL EUROPE

Social Activities

By asking on social media I can confirm interest in face to face meetings between Europe-based students, however, with exceptions, students are used to only meeting at academic events: exams and discontinued face-to-face tutorials. Students have been informed about the possibility of using an OU Live room for chatting and/or planning face to face meet-ups, as I have communicated that I can offer assistance with choosing venues, tips such as those included in the pledge pack, and spreading news of events through social media and agreement with VP Community. I aim to hold the first OU Live session in October.

Social Media

During August 2016 I created Twitter and Facebook profiles specific to this role, and aim to post four to five times per week. Facebook is the most popular source of communication amongst students in Europe, although activity in the Association's Northern and Southern European groups is lower than anticipated; students in Southern Europe have suggested that they would post more frequently if the social media policy were to allow for closed Facebook groups. The current number of group members are as follows: Northern Europe, 329 and Southern Europe, 247.

The Twitter account created for this role has 36 followers, primarily consisting of other representatives and organisations affiliated with the Association and University, rather than individual students. However, 'Tweets,' targeted to @TheOUGlobal and @OUStudents do receive direct responses.

In September I posted my first monthly update on the regional VLE forums. Active usage of these forums is very low although readership is unknown.

Other Activities

I have spoken to the former Student Association Representative for Southern Europe regarding their experience with newsletters and student meet-ups, and also for information regarding the most pressing issues which are ongoing from previous terms. Their experience concurs with comments obtained via social media that, 'Brexit,' and overseas degree recognition are the most significant current issues.
I have contacted the Research Degrees information team in order to clarify the circumstances under which Europe-based students are permitted to undertake part-time doctoral studies in the same manner as UK students, assuming sufficient laboratory and archive access can be arranged locally.

**Attended Meetings**

22 – 24 July 2016       Handover Weekend  
9 – 11 September 2016    Induction Weekend  

*Amelia Gackowska*  
*Area Association Representative for Continental Europe*