CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)
27 – 29 January 2017

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held over the weekend of
27 – 29 January 2017 at Kent’s Hill Training Centre in Milton Keynes MK7 6BZ

PRESENT
Lorraine Adams – VP Education
Cath Brown – Faculty Association Rep Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)
Peter Cowan – VP Administration
Sarah Couling – Area Association Rep England
Victoria Crawford – Area Association Rep England
Cherry Day – VP Equal Opportunities
Amelia Gackowska – Area Association Rep Continental Europe
Patricia Gray – Area Association Rep Scotland
Rachel Hughes – VP Communications
Alison Kingan - VP Student Support
Cinnomen McGuigan – Area Association Rep Northern Ireland
Caroline Poppenga – VP Representation and Research
Anca Seaton – Area Association Rep England
Nicci Simpson – Deputy President (Chair)
Claier Smith – Area Association Rep Wales
Steph Stubbins – VP Community
Barbara Tarling – Student OU Council Member
Jan Thompson – Faculty Association Rep Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS)

IN ATTENDANCE
Wendy Burrell – Deputy General Manager
Liz Davies – Observer, Wales
Jodie Denton – Projects Officer (Student Community) (part)
Kate Dungate – Projects Officer (Students Community) (part)
Magda Hadrys – Head of Operations (part)
Sam Harding – Head of Student Voice
Beth Metcalf – Head of Volunteering
Tim Pomfret – Observer, England
Nicola Powell – Student Volunteer Officer (part)
Leanne Quainton – Executive Assistant (minutes)
Graham Rimmer – Observer, England
Julie Robinson – Observer, England
Sarah Robinson – Observer, England
Verity Robinson – Grassroots Projects Lead (part)
Paul Severn – Digital Comms Officer (part)
Bev Smit – Observer, England
Jess Smith – Head of Student Community (part)
Arnold Stewart – Observer, Northern Ireland Observer
Michael Taylor – Observer, Central Representative

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. PRESIDENT’S WELCOME

In the President’s absence, the Deputy President was voted to chair this meeting.

B. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Rob Avann – General Manager
Chris Pane – President
Jamie Slater – Faculty Association Rep Business and Law (FBL)

C. MINUTES

C.1 The Minutes (CEC 10/16/M) from the October meeting were approved. Minor corrections that were sent through to the office were included and no others were raised.

D. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

D.1 None recorded.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL AND REPORT

1. RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES CEC 1/17/1

2. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES CEC 1/17/2

3. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES CEC 1/17/3

4. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS & OU STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBER CEC 1/1/4

4.1 VP Equal Opportunities apologised for submitting an incorrect report advising that an extended version will be included in the paper that goes to the April CEC.

4.2 The Deputy President added to her report advising that developments had been made in The Student Engagement Partnership (TSEP) written submission pilot. The theme selected is the effectiveness of student voice. The completion for the work is
These Minutes will remain subject to approval until the next meeting of the CEC

anticipated April/May 2017 however it will go on later in the year if additional research is carried out.

5. RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT CEC 1/17/5

6. REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES CEC 1/17/6

6.1 The Deputy General Manager introduced the report from the Board of Trustees, which is a regular update to each CEC meeting and a formal opportunity for members to raise any questions relating to the Trustees. The BoT held its last meeting on 22 November 2016 and the minutes can be found on the OU Students Association website.

6.2 Since the paper was published, Kate Dungate had been appointed as maternity cover for Head of Student Community and started in post from 1 February 2017.

7. STUDENT CONSULTATIVE PROCESS CEC 1/17/7

7.1 The paper gave an update on the activities that had taken place in the student consultative process since the last meeting. It was noted that the first of the Board of Studies (BoS) Student Consultative Forum took place from 24 November – 7 December 2016 for the Open BoS. The Consultative Executive will be monitoring whether other BoS take part in the process of running student consultations in their subject areas.

7.2 Over 1,200 students have registered interest in attending one of the spring consultative meetings. The Student Voice Team are working to ensure that students turn up to the events and additional communications throughout the process are being used to help minimise the dropouts on the day.

8. GRASSROOTS PROJECT CEC 1/17/8

8.1 At the CEC meeting in October, the Committee rejected recommendations put forward by the Regions Review Working Group about the future of the Nation Executives. A new Working Group, the Grassroots Project, was then established to look specifically at the structure that should replace the English Executives and Assemblies and the future of the Celtic Nation Executives and Continental Europe Executive.

8.2 Work has been ongoing with discussions in the dedicated forums, Facebook chats and a survey sent to the entire student body with over 2,000 responses received to date. Results will be collated and analysed and the Working Group plan to come back to the April meeting with a full set of proposals for a new structure.

8.3 A discussion was had around the idea of creating a layer of local support similar to the network of LERS (Learning Experience Reporters) that would provide a framework to
give students the opportunity to plan local initiatives whilst getting the support centrally.

8.4 An area that was yet to be considered by the Grassroots Project, was whether students in these roles were to be self-nominated/elected/appointed with many of the CEC agreeing that elections cause an additional barrier to involvement. It was however noted by the Northern Ireland and Scottish AAR that an election or appointment process will be needed in the Celtic nations due to the government focussed nature of the AAR roles who rely on the help of the Nation Executives to stand in for various events.

8.5 ACTION: The Working Group will take all comments away and bring back a full set of proposals to the next meeting.

9. WEBSITE REDEVELOPMENT

9.1 This discussion was of a confidential nature and has therefore been reserved to the confidential section of the minutes.

10. SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

10.1 Following the decision at the previous meeting to update the Association’s Social Media Guidelines, a Working Group had been set up to carry out the work in reviewing the guidelines that would take into account the changes in social media usage since the last update in 2015.

10.2 The Working Group made a number of amendments to the guidelines that will serve as guidance for any student of the Association as well as elected representatives, Societies and Groups, that want to have a presence on social media. VP Communications reiterated that there is no requirement for post-holders to use social media but that it is a choice and the CEC’s primary way of contacting students remains through the forums on the VLE.

10.3 Vice President Student Support commended VP Communications on her efficiency and workload in organising the Working Group.

10.4 RESOLUTION: The Social Media Guidelines were approved and will be available on the OU Students Association website in due course.

11. OU STUDENTS COMMUNITY FACEBOOK GROUP

11.1 VP Community outlined the proposal for establishing a new group on Facebook with a community focus. It will be a closed group for volunteers and students who are keen to become more involved with the student community and the Association, to chat and share events and best practise in a social space.

11.2 There be a trial period to evaluate how the space is used making sure it is managed correctly with student checks being carried out for those requesting to join. Feedback will be brought back to the next meeting and if it is a success, the team will look to
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replicate this activity on the forums for those students not on Facebook.

11.3 **RESOLUTION:** The proposal to create a student community Facebook group was approved.

12. **OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION STRATEGY UPDATE**

12.1 The Deputy General Manager introduced the Strategy highlighting the updates that had been made against the objectives to date. In light of the strategy now being over a year old, the Deputy General Manager asked for feedback on how the Association builds on what is already incorporated and to add any new ideas.

12.2 The CEC made a number of suggestions to be considered and agreed that those objectives in green denoted as underway or completed, need to be communicated to the student body. The CEC shared the opinion that the strategy is a valuable document for their purposes but will not be of interest to the majority of students and that only the significant key areas and successes should be highlighted and communicated in visual, creative ways. Some ideas for achieving this were:

- Facts and information shown through fun infographics.
- More ‘you said we did’ articles in the magazine that also explains the reasons why some projects have not been completed or have been put on hold.
- Increased podcasts with CEC members that will enable members to include updates on their areas of the strategy.
- ‘A day of the life of a CEC Member’ piece in the magazine.

12.3 **ACTION:** The CEC to continue to identify other priorities to add to the strategy on their forum.

13. **DIGITAL DIRECT DEMOCRACY**

13.1 This paper had been withdrawn from the Agenda.

14. **ELECTIONS REVIEW**

14.1 The review on the elections process is underway. A survey has been circulated to collect feedback from students that will remain open until the end of February 2017. The survey will help identify items particularly in need of consideration by the Working Group. Bye-elections are due to take place in April 2017 and it is hoped that some of the recommendations from the review will be implemented following CEC approval.

14.2 Results and findings will be reported back to the CEC via the forum, and to students via the usual communications channels.

15. **VOLUNTEERS STEERING GROUP**

15.1 Head of Volunteering reported on the discussions that had taken place by the Volunteer Steering Group, a group that has representation from all volunteer roles across the Association. A number of projects/initiatives have been discussed, including a number of possible new roles, a refresh of the code of conduct and a volunteer recognition event.
15.2 Two new volunteer roles that were initially identified were for OUSET Ambassador, which will be put before the OUSET Trustees for their views. The other, a Radio Host, which had been launched during Freshers Week in January. A creative writing role for the OU Student magazine is also in the pipeline and the idea of a regular column linking up with the Write Club is being explored.

15.4 Detailed discussion about the volunteer recognition event took place and the feeling in the room was that this was a very positive idea. A funding bid will be sent to the Board of Trustees shortly, and approval of the proposal will enable costs to be covered. Some ideas for the weekend included: a tour of the University campus and a celebration event in the evening. It was suggested that an online element should be available for those unable to attend.

15.5 A couple of questions were raised about the suggested attendees at the event, and these will be taken forward outside of the meeting.

16. **OU / OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT & STUDENT CHARTER**

16.1 The Deputy General Manager ran through the background of the Relationship Agreement between the Association and the OU which sets out how out how the two organisations works together by fostering and maintaining a culture of partnership. The agreement is reviewed annually and any changes discussed at the CEC will need to be approved by the BoT before it is taken to the University’s Council for final approval.

16.2 The CEC made a number of changes to the document that that will be fed into further discussions with the OU. Once approved, the final version of the Relationship Agreement will be brought back to a future meeting.

16.3 The Deputy President will be discussing the CEC’s suggested changes at a meeting with the University Secretary on 1 February 2017.

16.4 **ACTION:** Amendments to the Student Charter will be discussed online.

17. **EXTENDED MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSOCIATION**

17.1 Extended membership was introduced in 2014 when the University moved from module to qualification based studying, that allowed students to extend their membership to the Association for a further 2 years after they had graduated. The Bye-Laws were updated to reflect this decision but no clear guidance had been provided as to the process. VP Administration had proposed criteria for the CEC’s approval.

17.2 **ACTION:** VP Administration to amend the Bye-Laws in line with the criteria agreed with the addition of requesting PI numbers and an email address. To be clarified that extended membership would be backdated to when the student ceased being registered as a student with the OU for a maximum of 2 years.
18. CONSULTATION ON SUPPORT – PART OF THE LEARNING & TEACHING STRATEGY  

18.1 Dr John Butcher, Deputy Director, Access & Curriculum was in attendance to gain feedback from the CEC on support in terms of learning and teaching.

18.2 The CEC discussed their most effective learning experience and then the aspects that led to their least effective experience. Effective learning examples were:
   - Having a good, available tutor meaning that trust and confidence could be built
   - Face to face tutorials
   - Having a mixture of study materials
   - Study Skills day schools at the beginning of studies
   - Well-developed module materials.

18.3 Experiences of ineffective learning consisted of:
   - OU Live - technical issues as well as the tutors nor students using it properly
   - Tutors that are unprepared; contradict each other; no support; are unavailable
   - Out of date materials.
   - No print on demand available.

18.4 John collected the comments highlighting that a new approach for supportive learning is needed that builds on the effective practise and removing the ineffective as well as having a mixture of pastoral, support for skills and academic support. The CEC went on to suggest improvements that would better support them through their studies:
   - A personalised and customised study planner on the website that incorporated all dates and deadlines for each module being studied.
   - Having all content that needed to be downloaded within a module in one place, rather than scattered throughout a module website making it easier to download and print all at once.
   - Bridging support and keeping engagement between the break points of study. Generic skills workshops or MOOCs that would assist in preparation for the start of the next module.
   - Module websites open earlier and/or weekly bits of information posted on the website before e.g. study skills, DSA information, tutor information, videos.
   - Better articulated expectations for the student/tutor relationship
   - Generic letters are not popular; a personalised app could be a better way to communicate with students this way.
   - An allocated Tutor at the start of study that stays with you throughout.

19. RECIPROCAL OBSERVER STATUS  

19.1 VP Administration proposed a reciprocal observer status for CEC and BoT members to attend each other’s meetings as a way to reduce any potential conflict between the two bodies and to better understand how the other operates. They would have the same observer rights as the current observer process, that is no voting rights and would not receive any confidential papers (unless permission was given by the Chair). The arrangements would be the same for CEC members attending a Trustee meeting.
19.2 VP Administration will be carrying out a full review of how observers are invited to CEC meetings so will include this detail into that review. The review will also consider the inclusion of faculty based observers.

19.3 **RESOLUTION:** The CEC agreed this was a good idea and positive step forward in understanding each other’s remit better.

20. **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL**

20.1 The Student OU Council Member provided the background around one of the recommendations that came out of last year’s Council Governance Review (CGR) for members of Council to increase their engagement with the Students Association. The Governance and Nominations Committee (GNC) has asked for some proposals from the Association to take back to their next meeting in February.

20.2 The Student OU Council member had outlined some proposals that the CEC agreed would be positive steps forward to engaging with Council members and were happy to assist where possible. A number of the committee would take up an opportunity to attend a Council meeting as an observer but on the understanding there may be some sensitivity around issues of confidentiality. They were happy for a member/s to be invited to the autumn dinner of the CEC with a possible session from a Council member in the afternoon giving an overview of the role of OU Council. It was suggested that the informal contact between the Council and the Association could also be greatly improved with articles in the magazine or an interview with a Council member if it could be arranged.

20.3 **ACTION:** Student OU Council Member to take proposals back to the next GNC Meeting.

21. **OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION FORUMS**

21.1 VP Administration reported on the approach that will be taken to review the current comprehensive guidelines for the OU Students Association Forums that is required before a full restructure of the forums can begin. The work will be overseen by the Controller Advisory Panel (CAP) with two Mentor Mods and will start from the bottom, working up, looking at the code of conduct, Moderator duties and responsibilities, a review of the disciplinary procedures and training for Moderators. The review is anticipated to be completed by April 2017 when the project will be handed over to VP Communications to look at a restructuring exercise and ways to improve the forums themselves.

22. **OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION MATTERS FORUM**

22.1 VP Communications explained that OUSA Matters was set up originally to provide a safe and constructive environment for students to request information and ask questions of their Association. There is now a feeling that this space no longer offers that safe environment for representatives to engage with the electorate and vice versa. The new proposal recognises the need for a space for students and representatives to have discussions, share information as well as somewhere that the Committee engage with the electorate and can be held accountable for their decisions and actions.
22.2 The proposal suggests to creation of a new safe space, bearing a new name, where activity is moderated and where students can discuss and question the CEC on any Association matter. It recommended that a Q&A area would need to remain for Moderators to alert Officers of any questions or issues.

22.3 The Deputy President discussed the risk of the CEC duplicating workload having to answer questions in this forum as well as all of the other existing channels which could be time consuming on already high workloads. It was agreed that expectations for this forum will need to be considered before any changes made.

22.3 RESOLUTION: The CEC approved the proposal and tasked VP Communications with forming the Working Group to be made up of CAP, current OUSA Matters Mods, and Cinnomen McGuigan and Victoria Crawford from the CEC.

23.4 ACTION: The Office to arrange some Online Confrontation Training for CEC Members.

23. ASSOCIATION BUSINESS BETWEEN MEETINGS CEC 1/17/23

23.1 The Deputy President started the discussion about how the CEC could increase awareness of formal business within the student population and whether more Association policy is needed in particular as a basis for consistent responses to emerging issues.

23.2 The amount of business that takes place in-between meetings was discussed but the point of regular synchronous meetings received mixed views. A member highlighted that it was already difficult at times to keep up with discussions on forums with some committee members a lot more active online than others resulting in some members not having involvement in conversations. This could hinder any online meetings.

23.3 ACTION: OUSA Controller to add ‘Like’ buttons onto the CEC Forums to make it easier to see who has read and agreed with posts that would help in discussions had online.

23.4 It was felt that feedback was missing between the Senior Association Officers in-between their reports and some additional information on the President and Deputy Presidents agendas would be helpful. VP Communications will be proposing a ‘round robin’ communication that could assist with this. Another suggestion was to provide minutes or a summary of discussions and decisions made on the forums.

23.5 Whether Association policy should be introduced was discussed with some members thinking it was needed in some areas and others advising the benefits of remaining fluid and discussing things that arise on a case by case basis, gaining feedback that way. VP Administration noted that policy decision is in the President’s remit but engaging with CEC on this matter is not taking place.

24. DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, LUCIAN HUDSON CEC 1/17/24

24.1 The OU’s Director of Communications, Lucian Hudson was in attendance at the meeting to provide a perspective on the work of the OU Communications team and
how better communications are achieved. He explained how communications should ‘Inform, Involve and Inspire’ and emphasised the importance of team work at every level.

24.2 Lucian expressed how OU communications is a very powerful area that reflects the vision of the University and focuses on promoting its value including the contribution to national life, its focus on the next generation as well as its distinctiveness and continued relevance. He said the objectives were around campaigns to build reputation, promote lifelong learning, employability and academic excellence.

24.3 He explained how the Communications team needs to support the institution and how it positions itself particularly in regard to contentious matters. He agreed that it was counterproductive to not ‘tell it how it is’ at the risk of building distrust.

24.4 A discussion took place around some recent communication to students that had been badly managed and poorly timed. Lucian agreed that lessons had been learnt and that team work between the Student Association’s Vice President Communications and OU Communications had helped to resolve the situation in a timely way. It was agreed that this working relationship should be fostered for the future.

25. **STUDENT VOICE WEEK**

25.1 Head of Student Voice, Sam Harding highlighted the activities planned to date for Student Voice Week taking place from 11 – 17 March 2017. The week will see students invited to campus to take part in activities with the Association and OU departments highlighting the impact that the student voice has across the university.

25.2 Activities will include Learning Experience Reporter training, student voice blogs, a radio show, staff symposium and will finish with the Milton Keynes Consultative Meeting. It is anticipated that there will be an online version of the event and invitations will start going out in the next couple of weeks with the final programme finalised at the end February. There will be lots of opportunity for the CEC to get involved throughout the week and the Head of Student Voice will be available for any ideas to be included.

25.3 The STEM FAR requested that all FARs be kept in the loop for all activities involving the LERS (Learning Experience Reporters).

25.4 VP Communications confirmed that the OU Comms Team have offered to help promote Student Voice Week, through their channels.

26. **GENERAL MANAGER’S BUSINESS**

26.1 None recorded.

27. **PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS**

27.1 None recorded.

28. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
28.1 Graham Rimmer, Observer for England and Chair of Plexus awarded Jess Smith, Head of Student Community with the first Honorary Life Membership of Plexus.

29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

29.1 It was confirmed that the date of the next meeting would be over the weekend of 21 – 23 April 2017.