The CEC is asked to:-

i) **approve** the new forum space

ii) **approve** the new name of the forum

iii) **approve** the new structure of the forum

1. **Background**

1.1 At the last Central Executive Committee meeting it was agreed that OUSA Matters would be redeveloped into a new forum. OUSA Matters is not widely recognised by the student community as a space for students and representatives to engage; it is not fulfilling its intended purpose for the students who wish to and do take part; as well as representatives of the Students Association.

1.2 Under the Bye-Law 4.1. 5 the Association and Central Executive Committee has the responsibility to provide a forum for students to raise and discuss issues that concern them.

1.3 In addition to this Bye-Law; it is the responsibility of CEC members is to be accountable to the membership. This is part of the Code of Conduct of CEC members (to quote 'act in an open and responsible manner and be prepared to be accountable for their actions).

1.4 This committee recognises the need to have a safe and constructive space for
students and representatives to have discussions, share information, ask questions, seek information and for this committee to be held accountable for our actions. The intention of this forum will be that all representatives should be able to engage with all current members of the Students Association as part of their remit, and to be held accountable for actions and decisions.

2. Proposal

2.1 The new forum will be called ‘Talk to Your Students Association’. This forum will consist of a set of sub forums underneath.

1. CEC notification of meeting and papers/reports inclusive of minutes (updated by CEC/Association) – Read only – visible to all

2. News forum – Read only – visible to all

3. Discussion forum – all current Student Association members - visible to all

4. Enquiries – Only Moderators and CEC members + Students Association office staff – only visible to moderators, CEC members and Students Association office staff

5. Contact your moderator

2.2 This new forum will be set up by the 2nd of May 2017 and the current Matters forum will be closed with a read only message directing students to this new space. The actual Matters forum will be closed and removed from the OUSA community forums in October 2017.

2.3 The Talk to Your Students Association forum will be relaunched with a campaign promoting the forum to all students to create awareness.

2.4 I have attached the working group findings and the spirit of the forum for the discussion forum.

Rachel Hughes
Vice President Communications
Matters redevelopment working group summary

Discussion point 1: What is the purpose of the forum?

This forum is for bringing up general concerns with the students association – for example OU policy changes. It also can serve as an additional means to alert specific CEC members to issues; anything that the Students Association may be able to assist with is a legitimate topic. This forum is also for students to ask questions about the services that the Association provide and a place for students outside of this forum to signpost others to.

This forum is a space where elected representatives and staff of the Students Association can be held to asked to explain their actions or decisions and where they are able to engage with students as to why decisions were made or policies changed/introduced. The representatives of the Students Association should respond in a timely manner directly into the relevant thread. All contributors must be mindful of the spirit of the forum and netiquette.

Central Executive Committee meeting notifications, papers and minutes are available on this forum as well as under the resources on the Students Association website - <Link>

Discussion point 2: User expectation

Collective expectation

- Users need to feel comfortable in this forum environment, whether they are new or existing users. They should be able to ask questions or discuss issues that concern students and post on topic in threads.
- To refrain from personal attacks.
- To be polite and avoid antagonism.
- Focus on actions or inactions rather than speculating about, or assuming, motives reasons.

Student expectation

- Users should also be able to direct questions to specific elected representatives and raise concerns. They should not make or incite direct personal attacks. direct personal attacks nor incite them.
- Users should keep within the spirit of the forum and abide by moderators’ decisions. They should be able to make specific criticisms of particular actions of the OU, the Association and elected representatives, but should be done in a respectful way. If something isn't being done or seen to be done then it is perfectly fair for a student to ask why but this can be done via a simple question and should not include opinion as to the motive of the CEC member involved.
- Attacking the collective character and/or motives of post-holders or staff may potentially fall under bringing the Association into disrepute and will be moderated at once.
- The questioner can express unhappiness but that should be at the message not the messenger, and accept the answer even if it isn't necessarily the one they want.
- Representatives of the Association may not read every thread in this forum, if there is a direct question please highlight this to the moderators and they will pass it to the elected representatives of the Students Association.

**Student Association representative expectation**

- Students should be able to ask questions and get a timely reply.
- It is suggested that any question relating to a Students Association representative should be directed at or in the remit of an elected representative. the question cannot be answered or the representative needs time then highlighting this rather than ignoring it will benefit the good running of the forum.
- Representatives of the Association may not read every thread in this forum but they must be aware that there will be some questions directed at the Association and individuals. Therefore, it is expected that this forum be visited at least once a week.

**Discussion point 3: forums within the Talk to your Students Association suite**

1. CEC notification of meeting and papers/reports inclusive of minutes (updated by CEC/Association) – **Read only** – VP Communications, General Manager, Deputy General Manager, President and Deputy President and the GM’s Executive Assistant must be able to post in here.
2. News forum – **Read only** - Every CEC member and every office member of staff must be able to post relevant, citable and sourced information about the Students Association such as current events (that are mirrored elsewhere in the communications platforms)

3. Discussion forum – **all users participation**

4. Enquiries – **Only Moderators and CEC members + office staff** can see and post in here (this enables communication of issues/questions quickly)

5. Contact your moderator
Discussion point 4: Spirit of the forum

***Discussion forum SoF***

Purpose of forum:

This forum is for bringing up general concerns with the Students Association – for example OU policy changes. It also can serve as an additional means to alert specific CEC members to issues; anything that the Students Association may be able to assist with is a legitimate topic. This forum is also for students to ask questions about the services that the Association provide and a place for students outside of this forum to signpost others to.

This forum is a space where elected representatives and staff of the Students Association can be held to asked to explain their actions or decisions and where they are able to engage with students as to why decisions were made or policies changed/introduced. The representatives of the Students Association should respond in a timely manner directly into the relevant thread. All contributors must be mindful of the spirit of the forum and netiquette.

Central Executive Committee meeting notifications, papers and minutes are available on this forum as well as under the resources on the Students Association website <Link>

Conduct of users:

All participants must abide by the OU Computing Guide, particularly the ‘Conduct and Content online’ section <link>

Collective expectation

- Users need to feel comfortable in this forum environment, whether they are new or existing users. They should be able to ask questions or answer issues that concern students and post on topic, in threads.
- Netiquette should be followed by everyone.
- It is expected that all users will refrain from personal attacks on individuals who use this forum.
- To be polite and avoid antagonism.
- Focus on actions or inactions rather than reasons.
- All users of this forum will be treated equally regardless of any position held in the Students Association.
- Participants in this forum should be aware that it is open to students under the age of 18, who are able to access it with parental guidance/approval. (There may be occasions when contributors to the Forum encounter messages containing words and expressions that might be more characteristic of one of our younger Association members and this should be considered when responding to the message.)
- Open, lively discussion is encouraged. However, all participants should conduct themselves in a civil manner and avoid inflammatory or disparaging remarks. Avoid personalising the discussion as this may escalate into hostility. Personal attacks on fellow participants - including elected representatives - will be not be tolerated.
- Users of this forum must focus on actions or inactions rather than speculating about, or assuming, motives reasons.

**Student user expectation**

- Users should also be able to direct questions to specific elected representatives and raise concerns if they feel something is not being done properly (or not being done at all). They should not direct personal attacks nor incite them.
- Users should keep within the spirit of the forum and abide by moderators’ decisions. They should be able to criticise the OU, the Association and elected representatives, but should be done in a respectful way. If something isn’t being done or seen to be done then it is perfectly fair for a student to ask why but this can be done via a simple question and does not necessarily have to include opinion as to the motive of the CEC member involved.
- Attacking the collective character and/or motives of post-holders or staff may potentially fall under bringing the Association into disrepute.
- The questioner can express unhappiness but that should be at the message not the messenger, and accept the answer even if it isn’t necessarily the one they want.
- Representatives of the Association may not read every thread in this forum, if there is a direct question please highlight this to the moderators.
Persistent breaches of this Spirit of Forum will be reported to the Students Association’s OUSA Controller and may result in disciplinary action.

**Participation of Members of the Central Executive Committee:**

**Student Association representative expectation**

- Students should be able to ask questions and get a timely reply.
- It is suggested that any question relating to a students’ association representative should attempt to be answered. If the question cannot be answered or the representative needs time then highlighting this rather than ignoring it will benefit the spirit of the forum.
- Representatives of the Association may not read every thread in this forum but they must be aware that there will be some questions directed at the Association and individuals.
- It is expected that members will familiarise themselves with the discussions in this forum for issues that fall within their remit. Elected representatives should reply to queries in a timely manner.
- All requests for assistance and advice from moderators through the enquires forum or email shall be responded to as a priority task for members of the Central Executive Committee.
- Moderators shall not be members of the Central Executive Committee.

**Discussions may be stopped if:**

The issue involves a specific complaint being pursued under formal Students Association procedures or if the issue should be more properly be pursued under formal procedures.

If moderators believe it to be in their best judgement they will state that a discussion should be stopped, if it is not productive and the tone of the discussion is not acceptable.

**Discussion point 5: Name of the forum**

The majority of the working group voted for ‘**Talk to your Students Association**’