OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 July 2017

AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES (AARs) REPORTS

CEC 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 July 2017

REPORT OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES (AARs) FOR ENGLAND

Online Activity

Victoria Crawford: On the O U Forums I am reading all posts and commenting where appropriate. I am regularly checking the T Y S A (Talk to your Students Association) forum. I am regularly checking and commenting on working groups. On Facebook I am reading posts on regional groups and commenting when I can help.

On twitter I continue to follow anyone #new 2 O U. I continue to have regular chats with O U students regarding their concerns. I regularly signpost students to places they can receive the assistance they need, such as, O U Careers Service, Peer Support, the events calendar, O U Shop, Nightline, volunteering opportunities, O U Library tutorials, O U access courses, etc.

Anca Seaton: I was actively following the discussions on social media, especially the regional Facebook groups and Twitter, but it was a relatively quiet period, given that most of the students were busy revising or working on their EMAs. I publicised the forum discussions for the upcoming Students’ Association By-Election and encouraged students to take part.

Big June Meet-Up

Anca Seaton: I attended the Nottingham Meet-Up. It was a pleasant and well-attended event, with a varieties of attendees – prospective student, English Language student and STEM Students. The weather was beautiful and we discussed a wide range of topics – from the science in Star Wars to OU Redesign and beyond. There was an agreement to organise more meet-ups in this part of the country in the future. Behind the scenes, I had an ad hoc meeting with Julian Findlay and we discussed the June Meet-Up and plans for some upcoming big events, both face to face and online.

VLE Restructure Working Group

Anca Seaton: This working groups deals with the restructure of the forums on the VLE. I feel we made good progress on it. I had a meeting with Rachel Hughes, Stephanie Stubbins and Cinnomen McGuigan regarding the community side of these forums and the changes were well received in the working group. I strongly believe we’ll have a more streamlined and intuitive structure, which will help students find the relevant forum(s) and use them.
Events and Meetings Attended

**Victoria Crawford:**

21 – 23 April  
CEC weekend.
7 June  
Senate reference group 07/06/17 for Nicola Simpson (Acting President) - (as the 'central executive committee member who is not a member of senate').
14 June  
Volunteer event Facebook chat.
15 June  
Online Community Drop-in session.
17 June  
Big June Meet Up – I attended the Big June Meet Up event in Doncaster, which was being held by a new host. We enjoyed a brief but fun live link up with Anca Seaton (A A R England) at the Nottingham Meet Up.

**Anca Seaton:**

5 – 7 May  
Science Revision Weekend, Yarnfield, Staffordshire – Students’ Association stall holder
13 May  
M500 Revision Weekend – Stall holder
20 May  
Residential School Representative Training, Milton Keynes
23 May  
Online Rooms Steering Group (subbing for Stephanie Stubbins)
23 May  
Ad hoc meeting with Julian Findlay (Students Association’s Office) regarding the BIG June Meet Up

Looking forward

**Anca Seaton:**

1/2 July & 12/13 August  
Residential School Representative, Bath
11th July  
OSL Board of Directors
12th July  
Chemistry Residential Course – Students’ Association stall holder

**Victoria Crawford:**

Community Drop-in Session – I hope to attend more of the new online drop in sessions during the next period.
Anca Seaton and I intend to set up a Facebook AAR (England) page together during the next few weeks.
I am looking forward to taking part in the next set of Freshers events.
I have put my name forward as a degree ceremony volunteer for the autumn.

Victoria Crawford, Anca Seaton  
Area Association Representations England
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 July 2017

REPORT OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (AAR) FOR WALES

This is a report about my activities as the Area Association Representative (AAR) for Wales. In this role, I am responsible for representing and reporting upon the views of students living in Wales to the CEC and informing the CEC about 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 via email and our forums. While the grassroots project is ongoing there has been little contact from the Assembly although some members have previously told me that they are interested in being kept informed of the recommendations that emerge from the project.

Social meetings and activities

On 27 May there was a student meet-up in Port Talbot, the host was not on social media so I helped to promote the meet-up via Facebook and Twitter as well as in the Nation forums. There were four students in attendance although there may have been more if exams were not looming for many others.

I promoted the Big June meet-up on social media and in the forums. This included creating a poll in the Nation’s Facebook groups so students could see where there may be others wanting to meet up. In the end, there was only one Wales meet-up in Cardiff organised by a student independently and it was successful with several students attending who said they would be keen to do something similar again.

Social Media

The social media accounts continue to grow with 558 twitter followers and 437 Facebook group members. My AAR Facebook page has 47 likes.

Leadership in Digital Innovation Workshop hosted by Learning Teaching & Innovation at the OU in Wales

The OU in Wales invited me to attend this workshop on 27 April. The day started with a couple of presentations about what the Wales office is doing so this included:

1. The development of a new level 3 history module which involves direct authoring by the module team on the Open Ed X platform. It’s all online and is half content and half dissertation. It is a Welsh history module and because of the way it’s been created has cost less (not always a bonus, if it compromises
quality of course) and has been quicker to create because the module team can put content on themselves.

2. The refresh of the bi-lingual Open Learn Cymru platform and update on the Open Learn Champions project.

3. The development of specific social media accounts aimed at new enquirers and current students which aim to be more proactive than reactive. These accounts will seek to remind people of deadlines for student loans, registration deadlines and provide useful links as and when with a dedicated resource so support staff are not trying to fit in alongside everything else.

The rest of the workshop involved us coming up with ideas about how digital innovation can help students. We were asked to choose one of the ideas and think about the benefits, who we need to make it happen and the resources required. It ended asking if any groups felt they could develop their idea into a potential pilot project to form a working group and look to do just that.

**Higher Education Academy (H E A) events focused on social mobility**

On 3 May, I attended an event hosted by the H E A which they titled as a masterclass on embedding employability as a driver for social mobility. I was the only student representative in attendance among higher education teaching, executive and careers staff from Wales based institutions. They were interested to hear my views from the perspective of a part-time student on the role of employability in my own learning.

On 13 June, I attended another event looking at pedagogies of social mobility. I also took part in a panel discussion where I was able to provide feedback on what I had thought about the presentations given throughout the day.

**Wise Wales Partnership Conference**

I attended this conference on 24 May, where several higher and further education institutions shared their examples of best practice for engaging more students particularly involving them in course or governance committee representative activities.

**Summary of other activities**

In addition to the highlights above below is a summary of other activities undertaken as part of my role:

- While not strictly part of my role, I took part in a Politics, Economics, Development and Geography Board of Studies Student Consultative Forum take was open from 24 April until 7 May. There were only four or five students contributing and it was very focused on employability and progression into postgraduate study. I think the low level of engagement was possibly due to the timing as many students, including myself, were working on final T M As or starting to revise for exams.
- Completion of surveys for the annual effectiveness review for Senate and the Senate Reference Group.
- Shared information on a Twitter chat hosted by the Cabinet Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams AM who was completing her first year in the post. I was made aware of this by the public affairs staff at the OU in Wales.
As a member of the Elections Review working group, I have been taking part in online meetings and contributing on the forum.

### Activities since last CEC meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 April</td>
<td>Leadership in Digital Innovation workshop hosted by Learning Teaching &amp; Innovation at the OU in Wales Cardiff</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 May</td>
<td>Higher Education Academy masterclass: embedding employability as a driver for social mobility</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>Wise Wales Partnership Conference at Cardiff Metropolitan University</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>Online meeting of Elections Review working group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 May</td>
<td>OU Students Meet-up in Wetherspoons, Port Talbot</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 June</td>
<td>Student consultations in the Nations meeting attended on Skype</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 June</td>
<td>Higher Education Academy Summit: Pedagogies of Social Mobility at Cardiff Metropolitan University</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 June</td>
<td>Met with Pippa John-Cooke, an external project worker assisting the OU in Wales with a student entrepreneurship project which has been awarded funding by Welsh Government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 June</td>
<td>OU Students Big June meet-up at Prince of Wales Wetherspoons, Cardiff</td>
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### Future commitments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>Attendance of Central Representatives Seminar and Appointments</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 July</td>
<td>Committee meeting at Kents Hill Park, Milton Keynes</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 July</td>
<td>OU Students First Transformation Listening Event at OU in Wales, Cardiff</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 July</td>
<td>Group Tuition Policy Evaluation student focus group at OU in Wales, Cardiff (TBC)</td>
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Claire Smith  
Area Association Representative Wales
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 July 2017

REPORT OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (AAR) FOR SCOTLAND

Meetings I have attended since the last CEC meeting in April

Charter Day 4th May. Milton Keynes

This was a very good day and a nice way to celebrate the Open University’s birthday. The day began with a welcome from the Vice Chancellor, and the Chancellor, and was chaired by the Acting President.

Next there were speeches from three students, they each spoke about their individual experiences of studying with the Open University, and they were all very moving speeches. The event ended with the Vice Chancellor singing happy birthday to the OU, and cutting of the cake. It would be good to hold something like this in Scotland in future as well as in Milton Keynes, as the nation’s miss out on these events.

QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) Conference 9th and 10th May Nottingham

QAA Focus on the postgraduate experience Glasgow 18th May.

The Place of Adult Learning in Widening Access to Higher Education: exploring current policy and practice in Scotland. 25th May Glasgow

This was a very interesting event, on the agenda was a talk entitled Fair access, lifelong learning and Social Justice. By Professor Sir Peter Scott Fair Access Commissioner of the Scottish Government. And a choice of three workshops, then there was a panel discussion at the end of this event chaired by Dr. Liz Marr. This was the Scottish leg of the Widening Participation seminar series. This year it was a four nation’s event, so there has been seminars in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Telephone meeting with Natalie McCaskill on 31st May 2.30pm

To discuss case study for campaign for students that are over 22 years of age.

Meeting with Alison Gilmour and Vicky Burns in Edinburgh office on 5th June

This was a meeting I arranged to discuss the Festival of OU community life in Scotland event we are holding on 30th September in Edinburgh,

QAA International Conference 6th and 8th June Glasgow

Big meet up coffee morning 17th June in Dunfermline

I hosted a coffee morning in the Seven Kings Dunfermline, from 10.30 am to 12 noon.
As part of the Big June meet up which is also part of the Big Lunch, Great Get Together being held nationwide on 17th June. This was open to all Open University students to attend. I had ten students attend this meet up, double the amount that attended the Big Feb meet up so this was a very successful event. There were other students hosting similar events in Stirling, Glasgow, Kilmarnock and Motherwell all on the same date, I have not yet heard what attendance was like in those meetings.

**Listening Group**

Meeting in the Open University office in Edinburgh on 28th June.

**Meeting with the team from Enhanced Employability and Career Progression in Milton Keynes on 14th July.**

This is the first opportunity I have had for a meeting with this team, I am the student representative, and this meeting is to give me the chance to learn more about this project.

**Meeting with Kate Dungate on 14th July in Milton Keynes.**

I organised this meeting with Kate to update her on progress of the festival event I am organising for September. Kate is assisting with advice on promoting of this event,

**Future Appointments before the next CEC meeting in October**

SPARQS (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) that’s Quality Universities 26th and 27th July. This is a two day annual residential training event, it gives participants a comprehensive induction to the quality enhancement agenda, and it allows you to learn how to use this to improve students learning experience, this is being held in Dundee and is specifically for university student association staff, and student officers with an education remit, I was invited to attend this in my role as Area Association Representative for Scotland.

Scottish Working Committee meeting will be held on 11th October in Edinburgh.

**Ongoing Meetings**

Further planning for Festival of OU community life in Scotland.

The event is being held in Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, on Saturday 30th September. It will be a family friendly event for all Scottish Open University Students to attend

This concludes my report.

*Patricia Gray*
*Area Association Representative for Scotland*
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 July 2017

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 last report. I remain in active contact with the other two members of the Northern Ireland Assembly via the VLE forums, social media and email. In light of the changes occurring to Assemblies and the implementation of a new role this will be the last time this section appears in my report.

Student Consultative Meetings

I attended a Widening Participation Event at the OU in Belfast. This offered a great opportunity to see how the OU is looking to engage better with different core groups from around the country. This was one of four workshops held across the four nations. I talked to a range of people there.

Social Meetings/Groups/Activities

There is a rolling student meet-up on the second Thursday of each month at the OU Belfast office. Local students are also encouraged and supported to organise student meet-ups, and I attended the one held this weekend in Belfast as part of the Big Meet Up.

Social Media

The OUSA Northern Ireland Facebook page is growing with 396 members. I have a role specific Facebook page for the AAR Northern Ireland that is steadily growing, as is the Twitter account in the same name. I have 70 followers on Facebook and 291 on Twitter, where I engage with staff and students on a pretty much daily basis.

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 there most days. Most of my interaction with students currently comes via Twitter, Facebook or email.

Working Groups

I am active on a number of different working groups as part of my role and I engage with them as often as necessary.

Activities since last report

16 - 18 April CEC Meeting
4 May Charter Day (wrote blog post about this)
11 May  Widening Participation Workshop: OU in Belfast
12 June  Student Ideas Workshop at OU in Milton Keynes
17 June  Big Meet Up in Belfast, Botanic Gardens

**Future Commitments/Activities/Dates for Diary:**

5 July  Student Ideas Meeting (remote attendance)
7 July  Student First Transformation: Listening Event at the OU in Belfast
14 - 16 July  CEC Meeting

*Cinnomen McGuigan*

*Area Association Representative for Northern Ireland*
Central Executive Committee (CEC)
14 – 16 July 2017

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

Assembly Executives
No regular activity. E-mail communication with one executive member in Northern Europe regarding their input to the Grassroots Project.

Communication
As a result of the lack of awareness of the Association demonstrated by the international students’ consultation, I drafted an email introducing myself and the Association, which was sent to all students in Europe through the CAMEL system on 8th June 2017. The message included links to support services, volunteering opportunities, societies, the V L E forums and social media. Since then, I have received a number of e-mails from students who have expressed interest in writing for the magazine, joining societies and attending online chats. Others have introduced themselves and said that whilst they are not looking for further involvement now, will save the links for potential use in the future. Generally the tone has been positive, although one student was confused as to why they were receiving an introductory message in the latter stages of their degree.

Student Support
An issue at an exam centre in Northern Europe was brought to my attention, which after consultation with VP Student Support I have raised with the relevant member of OU staff. The student has also raised this themselves through the complaints and appeals procedures.

Social Activities
OU Live chats for students in Continental Europe still attract small numbers but those who do attend tend to stay and talk for the full hour. I was not able to host one in June due to business travel but will continue to aim for one session per month over the next academic year. The majority of students say that they think they are alone in their regions or states, despite registration numbers being much higher; this demonstrates a need to further develop local communities in Europe, and I have began to consider ideas for Freshers’ events to help to highlight numbers and connect local students. Preliminary ideas include a video and photo montage made up of clips of students introducing themselves in front of local landmarks and photographs from past meet-ups, however large or small. I’d also like to run a quiz entered through the V L E forums as an incentive to increase activity there, given that approximately 30% of the
students who contact me individually do not use social media.

No face to face meet ups have been held of which I am aware, and my proposed Prague meet-up has been postponed due to a change in my personal schedule. As I have several business trips in September and October, I am considering asking permission for a mini-blog series along the lines of, “Your AAR on tour,” in which I post potential meet-up times in advance and welcome all local students to come and say hi, as well as sharing photos showing how I combine study and work when on the move.

Due to connectivity issues I was unable to attend the Big June Meet-Up on OU Live, but noted less participation from international students in the Facebook event than in February.

I have twice taken part in the Community Drop-In Sessions on OU Live, talking to a range of students including one from Continental Europe.

**Social Media**

I continue to share news and promote events in the Facebook groups for Northern and Southern Europe, and have added pinned posts with relevant links. Both groups have recently seen an increase in new members, especially since the CAMEL e-mail was sent, but discussion remains quiet, with most threads being started by myself.

Although I seek to take a more active role in the Open University unofficial Facebook groups, I have found the etiquette confusing and remain unsure as to the balance between posting as a student and as a representative.

I also continue to use Twitter for this role and now have 86 followers. My communication is usually targeted @theouglobal in order to reach as many students in my region as possible, and as I have also decided to welcome students from outside of Europe to online chats in order to increase numbers.

In mid-June I posted a news thread on both V L E regional forums.

**Consultative Meetings**

Online consultation on student volunteering opportunities, 19/06 – 03/07.

**Other Activities**

Participation in the Student Shadowing and Student Partnerships working groups.

I am in the early stages of producing a small downloadable document to function as a ‘Survival Guide for International OU Students.’ The document will include information about the education and grading systems and explain common OU/UK-specific acronyms, as well as provide links to the Association’s online activities and services and quotes from current overseas students.

**Attended Meetings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 May 2017</td>
<td>European Students’ Live Chat (OU Live)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 June 2017</td>
<td>OU Students Community Chat (OU Live)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 June 2017</td>
<td>OU Students Community Chat (OU Live)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17 June 2017   Big Meet-Up Online (Facebook)

**Future Commitments**

6 July 2017   Student Engagement Project Team Meeting
9 July 2017   European Students’ Live Chat (OU Live)
17 July 2017   University Students Consultative Executive
6 August 2017   European Students’ Live Chat (OU Live)

*Amelia Gackowska*

*Area Association Representative for Continental Europe*