Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held over the weekend of 14 – 16 July 2017 at Kent’s Hill Training Centre in Milton Keynes MK7 6BZ

PRESENT
Lorraine Adams – VP Education
Cath Brown – Faculty Association Representative Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
Peter Cowan – VP Administration
Victoria Crawford – Area Association Representative England
Claire Davey – Faculty Association Representative Open Programme
Cherry Day – VP Equal Opportunities
Amelia Gackowska – Area Association Representative Continental Europe
Patricia Gray – Area Association Representative Scotland
Padraic Ivers – Area Association Representative Republic of Ireland
Alison Kingan - VP Student Support
Tanya Malone – Faculty Association Representative Arts & Social Sciences
Cinnomen McGuigan – Area Association Representative Northern Ireland
Caroline Poppenga – VP Representation and Research
Anca Seaton – Area Association Representative England
Nicci Simpson – Acting President (Chair)
Claire Smith – Area Association Representative Wales
Steph Stubbins – VP Community
Barbara Tarling – OU Council Member
Jan Thompson – Faculty Association Representative Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies

IN ATTENDANCE
Rob Avann – General Manager
Wendy Burrell – Deputy General Manager
Philippa Costello – Representation Officer (part)
Kate Dungate – Head of Digital Communications (part)
Magda Hadrys – Head of Operations
Sam Harding – Head of Student Voice
Sally Kitchingman – Head of Resources
Beth Metcalf – Head of Volunteering (part)
Leanne Quainton – Executive Assistant (minutes)
Verity Robinson – Head of Student Support (part)
Pooja Sinha – Research & Information Officer (part)
INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. PRESIDENT’S WELCOME

The Acting President welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular the three newly elected CEC members, Padraic Ivers (Area Association Representative for Republic of Ireland), Tanya Malone (Faculty Association Representative Arts & Social Sciences) and Claire Davey (Faculty Association Representative for the Open Programme). A member of staff, Philippa Costello the new Representation Officer was also in attendance as part of her induction.

B. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Rachel Hughes – VP Communications

C. MINUTES

C.1 The Minutes (CEC 4/17/M) from the April meeting were approved.

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 7/17/1

2. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES CEC 7/17/2

3. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE FACULTY ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES CEC 7/17/3

4. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS & OU STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBER CEC 7/17/4

5. RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT CEC 7/17/5

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

6. REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES CEC 7/17/6
These Minutes will remain subject to approval until the next meeting of the CEC

6.1 The 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 15 May 2017 and the minutes can be found on the OU Students Association website.

6.2 Several points were made regarding the decision made by Trustees to change the President’s remuneration to full time in the recent by-election.

7. STUDENT CONSULTATIVE PROCESS  

7.1 Head of Student Voice, Sam Harding summarised the paper that listed the recent online Boards of Study (BoS) consultations as well as the confirmed dates and locations of the upcoming face to face meetings scheduled for the autumn. It was advised that the next meeting of the University Students Consultative Executive was scheduled for 17 July so until then there was little update to give. More information will be available to the CEC after this meeting.

7.2 Points were raised over the BoS consultations and that they had been poorly advertised with each one having variable degrees of success that showed inconsistently across each BoS. Sam confirmed that lessons had been learnt in this first year of trialling these consultations and further work would be done with the BoS to ensure best practice is replicated across the board with improved communication channels also being looked at.

7.3 Feedback regarding Associate Lecturers (ALs) dominating some of the conversations had been received from students that attended the spring face to face meetings and a recommendation would be going to the University Students Consultative Executive that ALs only attend as facilitators/students, rather than in their AL capacity in the future.

7.4 ACTION: Head of Student Volunteering to update the CEC on the recent volunteering consultation.

8. STAFF AWARENESS SURVEY  

8.1 The Research & Information Officer reported on the findings of the recent Staff Awareness Survey that was completed by 815 Open University staff members’ on their awareness of different aspects of the OU Students Association. The findings will be used to explore next steps for increasing awareness levels and encouraging dialogue between OU staff members and the Association.

8.2 40% of respondents indicated that they were familiar with the Association’s work however feedback suggested that work around clarifying the scope and impact of our activities was needed.

8.3 Discussions were had over how the Association could better raise awareness amongst OU Staff. The STEM FAR suggested a one page summary of the Association, given to all student facing departments. It was highlighted that VP Communications, VP student support and Head of Student support are working with staff in AL Services on a page
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for tutor home that features the Association’s support services available. It is hoped that if successful, the page could be expanded to include community projects and activities. The General Manager highlighted that it has been flagged to the OU Redesign HR Workstream that students are not typically involved in any staff induction procedures. A meeting has been arranged to discuss this further.

8.4 Awareness will continue to be a key objective in the Association’s Strategy.

9. COMPLAINTS & DISCIPLINARY POLICY REVIEW CEC 7/17/9

9.1 VP Administration stated the need of a thorough review of the Complaints and Disciplinary procedure. He stated that many of the basic principles will remain the same however any changes that have been made to the procedure over the years have been done incrementally so a comprehensive look at the processes across the policy is needed.

9.2 CEC Members agreed that introducing an informal resolution procedure was a good idea that would help prevent escalations to formal complaints. There was some support in the room for the proposal of moving the procedures to outside of the Bye-Laws into a separate document to avoid the bureaucracy if amendments were needed. VP Administration will explore this further.

9.3 Discussions were had around the feasibility of the Association being able to monitor and discipline unacceptable behaviour on Social Media. It was agreed that although social media is difficult to monitor, the Association needs to be able to take action and be accountable when students are displaying bad behaviour on our official channels. The General Manager highlighted two actions in the revised strategy that this would fall under: the Code of Conduct and bringing that document up to date regarding the use of Social Media and; the introduction of a Bullying and Harassment Policy. He pointed out that it would be beneficial to talk to the OU on this piece of work to investigate their direction on it and how we can work together.

9.4 VP Administration highlighted that there are some groups more vulnerable to criticism so additional separate detail would be needed on any procedures - these would be Forum Moderators, CAP (Controller Advisory Panel) and the Appointments Committee. Complaints against the CEC would also form part of the review however the section on complaints against the BoT would fall under the constitution and would be looked at as part of rules revision in the run up to Conference 2018.

9.5 ACTION: VP Administration to review and produce a draft for the next CEC meeting.

10. NEW STUDENTS SURVEY CEC 7/17/10

10.1 The New Students Survey is run annually by the OU’s Institute of Educational Technology and includes three questions relating to the Students Association: ‘Have you heard of the Open University Students Association’, ‘Which of the following communication channels would you use to find out about the Open University Students Association?’ and ‘What would you like to hear about from the Students Association?’. Overall awareness within new students in 2017 was at 82%, a 10% increase on 2016.
10.2  The Research & Information Officer drew attention to the findings that showed that new students have an interest in areas such as representation (29%) and social events (28%) however twice that number expressed interest in hearing about OU related news. This suggests the need for greater communications of the work being done by representatives in the key areas of student experience.

10.3  A request was made to link the regional statistics of awareness with the work that is being done in that area to communicate and share best practice e.g. coffee mornings and meet-ups.

10.4  **ACTION:** The Research and Information Officer to take away the following actions: To pull down further data on student characteristics. Clarification on ‘Special’ in terms of Regions and what this includes. Negotiate the rephrasing of question 1 to ‘Which channels would you like to use to hear about the OU Students Association.’

11.  **CEC OBSERVERS TO MEETINGS**

11.1  VP Administration gave an overview of the paper that proposed a new system for the way observers are invited to CEC meetings. It is known that observers attending meetings is a valuable experience, both to CEC members who benefit from effective input and alternative viewpoints in discussions but to student observers who get an insight into the CEC and the Association centrally with many going on to become elected members.

11.2  The CEC agreed the proposals of observers attending the January and April meetings and being a mix of regional and faculty based split over the two dates. Observers from the DSG, Plexus, Societies and two from the Trustees were also agreed. Discussions were had over the selection process with a centralised approach being favoured to ensure it a fair and open opportunity for all.

11.3  It was thought that any non-students attending should be classed as visitors rather than observers with attendance at just part of the meeting rather than the entire weekend being the optimum duration for any OU staff. A suggestion was made to also include middle tier management staff when inviting OU staff members.

12.  **VOLUNTEERING RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

12.1  Following preliminary discussions at the last CEC, a proposal for a volunteering piece of research was presented by VP Representation & Research. The research will focus on volunteering in the broader sense and will give us an insight into what motivates volunteers, the kind of activities volunteers are interested in as part of their volunteering with the Association, and how they can benefit from such opportunities. The findings will help the Association identify ways in which we can match volunteering opportunities with students’ interests and how best we can support volunteers ensuring they have the best resources and opportunities we can offer, that would also strengthen the Association’s voice long term.

12.2  The Research & Information Officer assured members that there will be resource to hold a further piece of research in addition to this work for those that felt efforts should
be focused around other priorities (OU Redesign and tuition were mentioned) and discussions will be had around these ideas in the forum.

12.3 RESOLUTION: The CEC approved the proposal.

13. VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP CEC 7/17/13

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 Proposals and a suggested VLE site map were presented following discussions had by a working group led by VP Communications to review the suite of VLE forums on offer to students, many of which are underused and difficult to navigate through. The site map detailed the proposed new structure that was intended to show a simpler, more accessible and less cluttered suite.

13.2 The CEC commented on the proposal, still feeling that the overall number of forums were too many which would result in many still being underused. The regional structure was also queried due to the Association moving away from this structure following the Grassroots project.

13.3 ACTION: A Forum will be open for two weeks following the CEC meeting for members to input their comments to the proposal further.

13.4 RESOLUTION: Subject to comments at the meeting and following the 2-week period for comment, the structure was approved. The new structure will be launched in October 2017.

14. RULES REVISION PROCESS CEC 7/17/14

14.1 VP Administration highlighted the legal requirement under the Education Act 1994 that Student Unions have to review their constitution every 5 years. In 2014, the OU Students Association agreed their review would occur every 4 years to tie in with Conference, with the next review scheduled for Conference 2018. VP Administration highlighted the proposed process of work to be done beforehand which consisted of an online consultation forum for students to discuss topics already identified as needing to be considered in the review but also given the opportunity to input other ideas throughout the 2 month window. This will be followed by a Rules Revision Convention over the weekend of 25-26 November 2017. A paper of the proposed changes will go to the CEC in January 2018 followed by the BoT for final approval. Conference delegates will then debate and vote on the proposals in June 2018.

14.2 The STEM FAR asked for faculty representation to be included in the attendees for the Rules Revision Convention. A suggestion of using Student Ideas alongside the VLE Forum was also made as this could not only reach a wider audience, allowing students to vote on good ideas but also to test the new engagement tool.

15. REMITS REVIEW CEC 7/17/15
15.1 VP Administration will be leading a full review of the CEC remits before the 2018 elections to ensure the role descriptions and responsibilities adequately reflect the reality of the roles. Alongside the remits, the CEC’s composition will also be looked at and whether changes need to be made in terms of overall numbers of members on the committee.

15.2 All CEC members have been asked to provide a detailed breakdown of workloads to determine how much work is done within remit as well as indicate how much is done out of remit due to their individual expertise and interest. Common factors have already come through, most noticeably being the requirement for role descriptions to be much more detailed, giving more accurate time requirements.

15.3 **ACTION:** A workshop on CEC remits to be held at the informal CEC Meeting in September.

16. **ELECTIONS REVIEW** CEC 7/17/16

16.1 Further to the initial elections review paper submitted to the April CEC, the Working Group had reconvened to provide further information on the recommendations on live hustings and to provide more detail on the exploration of other channels of hustings to engage students less active on the VLE.

16.2 The Working Group recommended that live hustings would be carried out for the President and Deputy President candidates only as the top roles and to ensure not to overwhelm students with content. All other roles will continue to have Q&A on the VLE. The recent live hustings was mentioned and there are some lessons learnt for the process in 2018. It was explained that the format will solely depend on the total number of candidates standing for the roles.

16.3 The exploration of other channels to distribute podcasts for hustings was agreed and comments were made that transcripts of hustings should be available to the electorate quicker than in the recent by-election.

16.4 **RESOLUTION:** Both recommendations were approved.

17. **OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION STRATEGY** CEC 7/17/17

17.1 The General Manager presented the draft OU Students Association Strategy 2017-20. The draft had been compiled following a workshop held on 23 April with the CEC, staff members and a Trustee that was facilitated by a member of staff from the OU’s Strategy and Information Office. A set of forums had then been available online for the CEC, Trustees and staff to input suggested actions under the new objectives. The staff Management Team then refined and developed ideas adding in potential timescales, ownership and milestones.

17.2 The CEC went through each value, objective and action, making amendments resulting in a final draft version that will be presented to the Board of Trustees at their next meeting on 27 July.
17.3 The General Manager advised that he would like to instigate some performance indicators and auditive measures into the strategy updates that will be looked at in future meetings.

17.3 **RESOLUTION:** Subject to the amendments made, the draft Strategy 2017-20 was endorsed by the CEC.

18. **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL**

18.1 The OU Student Council Member advised that Council had agreed for the CEC to deliver a presentation as part of the Council’s Development Day on 26 September. The CEC agreed that it needs to be a broad overview of everything that the Association offers, including the vision from the strategy with the inclusion of some key projects.

18.2 **ACTION:** A Working Group to be set up consisting of Cherry, Tanya, Claire, Cath and Caroline to take this forward and deliver on the day.

18.3 The OU Council Member highlighted the engagement activities to date stating a lot had been accomplished in a short space of time and big steps have been made to increase our awareness within Council.

19. **GRASSROOTS PROJECT**

19.1 Three main recommendations from the Grassroots Project had previously been approved by the CEC and the Head of Student Support gave an update on the progress of implementation of each.

19.2 The Community Champions will start to be recruited for in September and work on full inductions for the new role is underway.

19.3 Discussions continue around the format of the ‘meet and greet’ style events and whether these should be purely social or if they should perform a student voice function. A lengthy discussion was had amongst CEC members on the function, format and possible venues of these meetings. It was thought that the social element opportunity is covered through Meet-Ups and the Community Facebook chats hosted by VP Community therefore the meetings should have a student voice/consultative focus to allow students to feedback, comment and raise issues regarding their studies. The STEM FAR and Northern Ireland AAR proposed that this was part of the AAR/FAR role and were pleased to be involved and to take the lead in the meetings. Debate was had over the appropriate venue with a majority agreeing that a hotel/library/meeting room was more appropriate than a bar/café that implies a social meet up. It was clarified that the office staff would arrange the venue, leaving the AAR/FAR to lead the meeting.

19.4 **ACTION:** Verity to continue discussions around the meet and greets with the AARs/FARs alongside the Student Voice team.

19.5 External Engagement opportunities was the third recommendation and an introduction of a role to assist the Nations in this area. Funds for an additional staff role were not
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granted in this year’s subvention negotiations therefore the Grassroots Project Working Group proposed that a request go to the BoT for discretionary funds to secure a consultant to build a strong case of what support is needed in the nations, the opportunities that we are not part of at present, the complexities of the work and the expertise required to support future engagement around external affairs. It is hoped that once we have this information, a further case can be put to the OU for the need for this permanent resource.

20. PROPOSAL FOR HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP CEC 7/17/20

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

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

21. NOTED: BIG JUNE MEET UP CEC 7/17/21

22. RECEIVED: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES CEC 7/17/22

22.1 The Deputy General Manager reported that the Student Ideas engagement initiative is ready to launch in August 2017 and volunteers are being sought. The first Student Shadowing experience took place on 3 July with the Director of Strategy and a report of the experience will soon be available. The OU have a bank of staff willing to be shadowed however no student volunteers have come forward for a staff member to shadow them. It was suggested members of the CEC could start this process and then write a case study of the experience that would help advertise the process to others. Remuneration for the Student Partnership initiative had been decided as a financial reward however other incentives could be looked into if there were issues with benefits or tax implications.

22.2 A meeting for members across all the project workstreams is set for Mid-August. Wendy will confirm the date.

23. NOTED: UPDATES FROM THE VOLUNTEERS TEAM CEC 7/17/23

23.1 The CEC thanks the Volunteer Team for a great volunteer event that took place on 15 July. Very positive feedback had been received.

24. NOTED: WEBSITE REDEVELOPMENT CEC 7/17/24

25. GENERAL MANAGER’S BUSINESS

25.1 The General Manager reported that results of the Presidential by-election would be announced on the website at 10am, Tuesday 18 July.

26. PRESIDENT’S BUSINESS
26.1 The Acting President thanked the CEC for their support while she had taken on the role as Acting President, not only work related by taking on additional duties but also for the personal support given. The CEC in turn, thanked Nicci for stepping up to the role and the increased workload over the last few months.

27. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

27.1 The Vice Chancellor, Peter Horrocks, PVC Research and Academic Strategy Kevin Hetherington and Tony Martin, Transformation Director had been in attendance on the Friday night session of the CEC to discuss OU Redesign / Students First Transformation. The CEC put forward a number of questions to the panel and a blog of the session can be found on the [OU Students Association Website](#).

28. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

29.1 It was confirmed that the date of the next meeting would be over the weekend of 13 – 15 October 2017, which will also include the annual dinner.