1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 I am pleased to say that I present this annual report to Council with a considerable sense of purpose and optimism. That is partly based on the substantive matters which I am going to address in the report, but it is also based on my experience of events immediately following the presentation of my report in November 2012. Shortly after that Council meeting, I was included in a dialogue in which the Vice Chancellor picked up a number of the key points from my report and asked the Director, Students to let him know precisely what measures were being taken, or responses given, to those points. Having consulted the corporate OUSA memory-bank, I understand that this was the first time such interest and follow-up action had arisen from the OUSA annual report to Council. Did it make a difference? I believe that it did. I believe that it was an important signal that the University had opened a new chapter in its commitment to listen to students and I feel that many of the things that have happened during the last 12 months bear testimony to that new chapter; I am going to be able to say much that is positive. I am also going to be reporting on other things where my strong advice can only be “must try harder”! However, what happens as a result of this annual report will be an important indicator of the extent to which the commitment to listening to students is genuinely being embedded within the OU culture and the extent to which we are implementing our shared commitments under the new Student Charter.

1.2 In terms of the key issues from my report that formed the basis of the dialogue between the Vice Chancellor and Director, Students last year – student engagement with particular reference to collaboration and the role of OUSA; measures necessary to reduce the number of students identifying, via the NSS,
that they have no knowledge of the existence of a student organisation; the creation of a properly resourced and effective student consultation process; the adequate resourcing of OUSA for the future – these have indeed occupied a major part of our focus and attention over the last year and will figure prominently in my report. However, before going on to talk about these and other substantive issues, I’d like to use this introduction to say something about our continued development and extension of the ‘infrastructure’ of OUSA over the last 12 months, and how this is being used to help us deliver on those things that are important to students.

1.3 In 2011 our new organisation took an important initiative when it adopted the practice of producing a Strategy to better organise our priorities and measure progress toward their achievement. From August 2012 all members of our Central Executive Committee (C E C) were for the first time elected for a two-year term and we continued to develop our use of the OUSA Strategy by extending that process to look even further ahead. We now have a firm Strategy for the period to the end of the current term July 2014, together with a broad vision of our objectives to 2016. This should provide the incoming C E C in August 2014 with a good foundation on which to build and develop. This in turn will link with the work we are doing with our staff team to develop a more effective and robust system of business planning. A copy of the current OUSA Strategy together with the C E C’s “Broad vision of where OUSA needs to be in 2016” is attached here as Appendix B.

1.4 At the outset of the OUSA Futures project way back in 2007, undertaking a complete restructuring of our staff team had always been seen as one of the central issues in delivering the new organisation. In the event, that had to await other, more fundamental changes, before it could be achieved. The new OUSA Constitution created the conditions which would finally make it possible to undertake this work by replacing annual Conference and Elections with a biennial cycle. 2013 was therefore the first year in which OUSA did not have Conference and without that change, plus our decision in 2012 to create a role at the level of deputy General Manager prior to completing the rest of the staffing review, we would still not have been able to undertake this work. It has been a huge task taking up a considerable amount of staff time and also requiring considerable time and attention from our Trustees and our team of Student Association Officers i.e. the Deputy President and Vice Presidents. Even now we are still putting in place the final building blocks of our radically revised staff structure. After many months of detailed work and reports from the staff team, the Board of Trustees signed off the new structure in March. This included the introduction of revised job descriptions across the whole staff team as well as the creation of a number of new and different posts. In the course of undertaking this large, sub-project, a number of long serving staff left us for different reasons and this made the task both easier and more difficult. It was more difficult because we had to make decisions to hold some vacancies at a time when we really needed all the help we could get, but at the same time, it considerably eased the process of matching and slotting existing staff to new roles. In the early summer we advertised the remaining 6 posts with most of these new staff joining us on 1st August. Unfortunately for OUSA we lost one of our senior staff (an opportunity too good for her to refuse, I hear) just toward the end of the process which was something of a set back at a critical juncture. We have however recently filled that, and one other unplanned vacancy arising
from the implementation process, and by early December we hope to finally have the full complement of roles in our new structure filled.

1.5 This has been a major achievement for OUSA but I would like to put on record at this point our very sincere thanks to a number of OU colleagues, without whose help and support we could not possibly have completed this task so successfully. The Estates Department responded magnificently, and swiftly, to our request for changes to our accommodation. We now have a fully open-plan office which accommodates our extended staff team and provides some limited hot-desking space for our visiting student Officers. As a regular user of the office myself I am certainly impressed with the care that Estates have taken to accommodate our requirements. Moreover, even though office moves can be nearly as stressful as house moves, I’m told that the temporary move to MYB (Michael Young Building) and back again, could not have been handled more efficiently or with greater consideration. We are also grateful to many OU staff across Student Services, Faculties and other Departments who responded so positively to our request for our help with induction for members of our new team. However, I’d particularly like to thank Mary Kirby and Christina Lloyd for their support, encouragement and advice as well as their direct participation in our induction arrangements.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE LAST 12 MONTHS

2.1 As can be seen from the current OUSA Strategy and the broad vision to 2016 (Appendix B), we continue to see our overarching objectives centring on the themes of awareness, engagement and satisfaction. There is a continued need to raise the level of student awareness of OUSA. The primary motivation for raising awareness is to achieve student engagement – both with OUSA directly and, via OUSA with the University; our ultimate objective is to achieve high levels of student satisfaction with the services, opportunities, support and representation which OUSA provides. Although these themes are overlapping in part and interdependent; I nevertheless think they provide a useful basis on which to organise those matters that I particularly want to bring to the attention of Council.

Awareness

2.2 Historically OUSA has been concerned by its low profile both inside the University and externally. We are all aware of the tremendous time pressures on our students, and the competing demands on that time, but OUSA still attracts considerable criticism from those students who have been with the University for several years and only stumble across us by virtue of some chance piece of information or event. In 2012, for the first time, the NSS included a question about satisfaction with the student organisation at institutions. The results indicated that a massive 37% (the highest score by a long way) of those OU students surveyed didn’t know that there was a students organisation at the OU. This was a clear piece of independent evidence which appeared to corroborate our own concerns. Since awareness of OUSA has to be the first step toward engagement, we are taking this extremely seriously and have initiated a number of projects to change that reality. We have also called for support from the University to address this fundamental challenge.
2.3 This month we will be launching an entirely new OUSA website which sits at the
centre of a range of initiatives aimed at making OUSA more visible, more
accessible and of course, more attractive. I am pleased to say that, after
serious consideration of OUSA needing to have its website hosted externally to
the OU, we will be remaining on the University’s servers and within the OU
‘family’. This has not been without its challenges on both sides, but we are very
grateful to OU colleagues in Student Services, Communications and IT for
some of their time and expertise which has helped us to a very positive,
collaborative outcome that we hope will be in the long term interests of both
organisations. In the course of the last 12 months we have invested
considerable time and attention in developing our channels of communication
with students and have seen our following on Twitter and FaceBook rise
month on month to 6,000 and 10,000 respectively and growing steadily. Our new
website should provide a far more comfortable home for the continuing
development of what, for OUSA, is a new way of being in contact with
members. We have also invested a lot of time and energy in giving our online
magazine, OU Students, a revitalised identity and student responses to this
have been particularly rewarding. The next edition is due out shortly (we publish
4 editions per year) and the click-through rate for the last edition exceeded our
most optimistic expectations with more than 123,000 students who received the
link from us going on to open their edition. We understand that, by general
industry standards, that is a pretty amazing statistic.

2.4 We continue to work with the OU Director of Communications and his staff to try
to make the best use of opportunities for collaboration. We are most
appreciative of the much more productive relationship we now have with
colleagues in Communications and hope that this will continue to develop.
However, we are keen to see more effort being put into raising OUSA’s profile
with OU staff. Important initiatives like the way in which we handled the
consultation on the new Students Charter, and the symbolic branding of it as an
OU/OUSA collaboration, jointly presented to Senate by the VC and the OUSA
President, need to be used to good effect within the OU staff community -
rather than references to OUSA and the OUSA President slipping off the
agenda when it comes to briefing staff. OU staff, particularly, but not only, those
who are student facing, need to know that OUSA exists! Such awareness would
not only help to make a big dent in that awful 37% statistic, it would also help to
keep students at the centre of the thinking of many staff who don’t always have
the opportunity to deal with students directly.

2.5 Unfortunately, when NSS published the results for 2013, there was no change
at all in that 37% statistic. However, given that the results announced in 2013
were actually collected in January, only a relatively short time after publication
of the first results, I think a more appropriate test for OUSA (and the support we
hope to be having from the University!) will be the results that come out in 2014.
By then a number of our initiatives from the implementation of our current
Strategy will have had time to take effect. Also, we now have the capacity in the
staff team to undertake more rigorous analysis of the data behind the crude
statistics and we hope that, together with the general improvements we are
making to our own communications services, we will be in a better position to
respond more effectively to this challenge.

2.6 We are extremely conscious that, in a world where the majority of students will
be spending far less time with the University and where far fewer of our students are likely to have much/any spare time, questions of OUSA’s survival and its usefulness to students are going to come down to how quickly students find us. Students need to know from the very early stages of joining the University that there is a students organisation and that it has things of value to offer them. OUSA will continue to expect that the overwhelming majority of students are unlikely to ever want more than a discount card, a past exam paper or to ‘meet’ other students who might share their interests, hobbies etc. That is absolutely fine and we want to be there for those students. However, the more students we can be there for, the more likely it is that a) some of those students will find us when they have an issue, problem or want to provide some feedback and b) some of those students will actually make the decision that what we do is sufficiently worthwhile that they’ll give some of their time to help run the organisation. On the basis of this analysis, one of our current projects, being led by two of our Vice Presidents, is the development of a virtual ‘Freshers Fair’. We appreciate that work is currently going on in the University around student induction and we are linked in to that. We had hoped that we might be able to pilot our Freshers Fair this autumn given the enthusiasm of one of the Deans, but unfortunately it looks as if this will not now be possible so we will be piloting the initiative for those starting their studies in February 2014. Meanwhile, we will continue to work with OU colleagues to provide more informal ‘meet OUSA’ sessions in various introductory forums where this has been agreed with the OU staff concerned.

2.7 Another important aspect of our awareness agenda, is the question of OUSA’s profile in the wider Higher Education environment. OUSA has always taken the opportunity to make submissions at Governmental level, wherever possible, to champion the cause of part-time students and we do see OUSA as having a particular role to play in that regard. However, we have struggled in particular since devolution in the UK, to provide an effective level of support to our student volunteers and representatives in the different UK jurisdictions. In Scotland and Wales, our student representatives, usually with strong support from their OU centres, have made contributions at a national level, but it is certainly one of our strategic priorities to ensure that they receive more effective support from OUSA centrally. I believe that OUSA needs to be a more powerful voice for OU students in particular, and part-time higher education students in general, wherever they live and work. This is another aspect of our strategic priorities that we are finally in a position to address given the revisions to our staff team.

2.8 Meanwhile, we have continued to extend our contacts and influence over the last year. A number of Association Officers, C E C members and staff have been involved in several Higher Education sector events this year, mainly around the Q A A and engagement work but also in relation to Funding Council and NUS organised events. The Q A A established a Student Advisory Board last autumn and I have been one of the inaugural members. This has been an extremely valuable opportunity to gain insight into other institutions and their student organisations and activities and has enabled me to develop a useful network of contacts. In the summer, I was also invited to join Sir Tim Melville-Ross, Higher Education Funding Council England (H E F C E) Chair and Matthew Hilton, Director, Higher Education, Department of Business, Innovations and Skills, to form a 3 person appointment panel to make a
recommendation to the Government Minister for a new member of the H E F C E Board. I was also invited to act as one of the question panel members at the “Future Directions for Part-time Higher Education in Wales” Conference last April. There are signs that OUSA is becoming better known as an expert resource in relation to part-time students and I think that is a positive thing for the University as well as for our students.

Engagement

2.9 I have certainly felt that this year we have experienced a marked change in the University’s commitment toward engaging with OUSA and students at many levels. We have had a succession of important visitors and contributors to our C E C meetings including a number of members of V C E (Vice Chancellor’s Executive). Fraser Woodburn, University Secretary came to our meeting last November to talk to our students about how the University was faring with student registrations under the new arrangements. We had been very fortunate in the number of visits we had received from Will Swann in the run up to ‘Ready for 2012’ and I personally had not expected Christina Lloyd to be able to regularly make space at a weekend to come and talk to us, but she was only too willing to do so. This was extremely valuable because we have all been having to live with huge change and uncertainty and her willingness to come and take us through the very complex processes involved in the new student support arrangements has been reassuring. The time she gave in discussing Student Support Teams, the attempts to identify a new student consultation process and the whole question of student engagement generally was much appreciated by members of our Committee.

2.10 I am very proud to have been involved in the creation of the new Student Charter. The process we engaged in was, in my opinion, a vital ingredient of the finished product because it felt that it had integrity and was setting new standards about how we should all work together as part of a community; a community that is genuinely seeking to put the student at the centre of all that it does. However, I am not confusing the genuineness of the commitment in the Student Charter with the achievement of those commitments. There is without doubt, still considerable work to be done across the University to deliver on those commitments and I have advised all OUSA representatives to take a leaf out of my book and to take a copy of the Student Charter with them to every OU meeting and discussion they attend. This is part of OUSA’s contribution in helping to ensure that the commitments contained in the Charter really are embedded across the University. That said, another of the strengths of the new Student Charter is that this time, it will not be a monolith, but a living document. Let’s hope that we can get even more members of the OU community engaged in the discussion when it comes up for its first review.

2.11 In December last year I undertook a round of meetings with Deans and other senior members of the University responsible for academic units and student registration, including the University Secretary. I managed to see all but two of the Deans and was able to make separate arrangements with them at a later time so I managed to speak directly to all those on my list. My questions to them were to ask what they were doing by way of student engagement and what ideas they had about how the existence of OUSA and its ability to enhance student engagement was communicated or considered in their unit.
Initially, the reaction to my questions was that of surprise, but then, almost without exception, we went on to have some very useful discussions. Some of these discussions led to small, concrete initiatives but all of them better informed me to feed into the work we are doing as part of our Strategy and to consider my contributions to the review of the student consultative processes.

2.12 This leads me to one of the largest and most important projects we have been engaged in this year - the Student Consultative Processes Review. The question of a review of the consultative arrangements had been in prospect for many years and finally got underway in earnest about two years ago. It has been a difficult and sometimes rather uncomfortable process. I think that has been partly because of the huge uncertainty surrounding Student Support Teams (SSTs) and partly because students have not been convinced of the University’s claim that its objectives are to give more, rather than less, opportunities for students to have a real say in the things that affect them. The success of the new arrangements will be closely linked to my comments about the Student Charter and the University’s ability to embed a culture that puts the student at the centre of all that it does. We were finally able to agree the main elements of a new structure in July and are now working with the University to finalise all the detailed arrangements that will need to be made to get the new processes up and running. We were delighted that the University accepted the need to support the new processes with some dedicated staff resources and are pleased with the progress being made since Jerard Bretts took up his position. Both OUSA and the University have a tremendous amount to gain from collaborating to make these new processes work. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done in a relatively short space of time but I think we have made (and are continuing to make as an Implementation Group) the right decisions by starting with relatively simple structures that can be developed or elaborated over time if the need arises. The next 12 months are going to provide us with a good deal of information about what we have got right and what might need adjusting. However, for me the main issue is that the University must be prepared to offer opportunities for meaningful engagement to students and be prepared to share ideas and intentions at a time when it really is possible for the views and contributions of students to make a difference. In my opinion there will always be a place for student representatives who are willing to take on greater responsibility for representing student interests and concerns and who are willing to be accountable to students for doing this. However, I and my fellow OUSA representatives positively welcome the University fostering and encouraging the more widespread views and opinions of students. We feel that this will positively enhance the relationship between OUSA and the University.

2.13 As a previous Vice President Education, I have been particularly closely associated with the progress toward achieving student representation on all of the Programme Committees. I was therefore rather concerned when I learned of the intention to appoint students as panel members on Periodic Programme Reviews which are 3 day events. My primary concern was that although I feel it is vital to have student input I was worried that this would be extremely unlikely to happen if we needed to find students who could devote 3 days to be at the event as well as travelling time and the preparation time involved in reading a huge amount of information for the meeting. As a result of voicing of my fears, I was invited to attend a periodic programme review as an observer during July.
found that it was an extremely satisfying experience and I came away confident that it would be possible to involve students as full members of such panels and that this would be beneficial both to the University and the students concerned. I have submitted my report to the University and am awaiting a response to my recommendations. I do hope that the answer will be positive since I think that this is a very important way in which students can contribute to the enhancement of the quality of the learning experience.

2.14 As you would expect, OUSA is also undertaking a number of initiatives in its own right to increase student engagement. We recognise that the University’s shift of emphasis from a geographic to a curriculum basis for its student support will affect the way in which we relate to students too. Apart from our need to strengthen our support on a 4 UK nations basis, and give consideration to how we can make OUSA’s representative structure relevant on a curriculum basis, we still believe it is vital to retain the means of letting students across England, Europe and Rest of the World access our organisation on a basis that retains some element of a local feel. We have this year opened up the majority of our geographic-based Assemblies to all students in the locality concerned. In the main, meetings and discussions will take place online but there will still be the prospect for students to participate in some face-to-face meetings in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Out of respect for their greater degree of autonomy, we have asked our Assembly Executives in Scotland, Ireland and Wales to consider whether to retain their current elected arrangements or to adopt this new system.

2.15 We will of course want to make maximum use of the agreement to keep some limited face-to-face opportunities within the new OU structure for consultation with students. We already have indications that our new communications strategy is achieving considerable success in engaging students in a range of activities. We have record numbers of students vying for places in our University Challenge team and the response to the event we organised around the Shabana Mahmood visit exceeded our most optimistic predictions. We had 70 initial responses from students willing to come to a mid-week event on the campus and on the day we were able to invite the Shadow Minister to address 40 OU students who gave a pretty good impression of the diversity and enthusiasm of our students. I know that Rajay Naik and his colleagues were very pleased with the support we were able to give to their efforts and I hope that others across the University will consider asking for our help to support other events and activities.

2.16 Before finishing this section on student engagement, I need to ring a couple of alarm bells. The first one is quite straightforward. This University of ours, globally famed for its pioneering method of teaching students at a distance, needs to get far better at being able to allow students to participate in business meetings and discussions remotely. I raised this point recently with Christina Lloyd, in her capacity as Interim Director, Students, and was heartened to learn that this is already accepted by the University. Christina informed me that a project is underway to check what facilities are available in meeting rooms and to ensure that there is a system in place for those arranging meetings to know how and where they can provide the necessary facilities to accommodate students wishing to join both formal and less formal University meetings remotely. This is a project that I will be following closely, and that I will expect to
bear fruit before I finish my term of office at the end of next July.

2.17 I also need to raise a more serious and difficult concern about student engagement, that I know will not be welcome, because we have been raising the concern continuously for more than 5 years with no real success. The V LE adopted by the University has many strengths as a teaching/learning platform, but it has a fundamental weakness. The form of Moodle forums which it uses are simply not fit for purpose – or at least not as far as “building a vibrant student community” is concerned. We have worked with the University for years now to try to remedy the worst defects of this system, whilst watching our previously vibrant community diminish and virtually disappear. Amongst many other shortcomings, a fundamental flaw is that students simply can’t talk to each other and we are told that this can’t be remedied. When the V LE was first mooted several years ago, we were promised that since OUSA had demonstrated the extent to which online networking could achieve a real student community, OUSA’s requirements for the next generation of conferencing/forum tool ‘would not be bolted-on as with FirstClass, but would be built-in’. That promise has turned out to be the exact and total opposite of what has happened. Now that the viability and effectiveness of the new structure of student consultation is going to be heavily dependent on the use of Moodle, isn’t it time for the University to accept that this must be replaced by a tool that can do the job?

Satisfaction

2.18 OUSA has been aware for some time of the huge challenges we have to overcome to in order to be relevant and effective for a new generation of OU students. The time and energy we have put into changing our organisation over the last few years and the priorities we have in our current Strategy are all about meeting those challenges. The proof of success will be whether our efforts to make students aware of our existence and attract them into engaging with us, leads to them being satisfied with the experience. This year, we have worked with the University to put in place the first OU/OUSA Relationship Agreement. I hope that this will be approved by Council because we believe that it covers all those things that OUSA will need if it is to succeed in this main challenge.

2.19 In the meantime, it is some consolation that whilst we still have to tackle that 37% of students who don’t know that we exist, this year’s NSS results showed that OUSA’s relatively healthy satisfaction rating of 58% rose 3 points to 61% taking us 12 places higher in the league table. That figure is certainly not going to make us complacent but it does provide some encouragement that we are going in the right direction.

3. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

3.1 We have spent a large amount of time in the last 12 months getting arrangements in place in order to be able to ‘do’ things. We have restructured our office and staff team, we have devised a new website, we have put together a Relationship Agreement, we are somewhere near reaching the conclusion to 3 years of negotiation on our subvention and future funding, and we have worked with the University to create the framework for an entirely new system.
of student consultation. In the next few weeks, we hope that all these building blocks will be in place so that we can turn our full attention to the things that we actually want to build on them – a strong student community engaging with all parts of the University community. We have some exciting projects to bring to fruition in the early part of next year including the piloting of our Freshers Fair and of course our collaborative work around the establishment of the consultation forums for Student Support Teams. Let’s hope that we can move on from building the framework and turn our full attention to engaging with our student members.

3.2 We are also about to embark on the first of our Rules Revision conventions. When our new Constitution was adopted in 2011, although the general aim was to reduce the frequency for changing the OUSA Constitution to every four years, we built in a first review after 2 years. Work is in hand to encourage students to participate in the review, primarily via online discussion with a face-to-face event in mid January. Any proposals to change the Constitution would need to be adopted by our biennial Conference in June and subsequently endorsed by Council.

3.3 Basic arrangements for our next Conference, which will be held 27 – 29 June 2014 on the Milton Keynes Campus, are already in hand and immediately following the seasonal break our work on this will move up at least two gears. We were extremely relieved to finally have it confirmed that the Silverstone Grand Prix is not to take place on the same weekend! I’m sure that we will have more than enough things to worry about without having the extra concern about competing for hotel accommodation and transport. It is clear that students are expecting great things of us in 2014 as we made many new friends in 2012 who were disappointed to have had to wait two years for another opportunity to join us in Milton Keynes. Amongst other arrangements already confirmed, the Rt Hon John Bercow MP has accepted our invitation to attend Conference on the Saturday morning. I have high expectations that we will again achieve a very positive response from across the University in helping us to make sure that the 2014 OUSA Conference is even more successful than in 2012.

3.4 Our biennial Conference also heralds the biennial elections for all members of our CEC. This will be an interesting and challenging year for OUSA as we begin to enter uncharted water. Just as the University had no reliable way of predicting how well it would fare with student registrations in the autumn of 2012, so OUSA has no reliable way of predicting if and when some of the new regime students might be prepared to consider taking on such a big commitment as standing for election to our Executive. Inevitably some of our current student leaders will be completing their degrees and moving on and by the time of the next biennial elections in 2016 it is likely that there will be few transitional students still in the system with the scope for embarking on a 2 year term of office. As I said in my report last year, the new fees regime has faced OUSA with a very specific challenge in as much as it is set to lose a cadre of students who have traditionally provided the backbone of OUSA volunteers.

3.5 As elsewhere, we are taking steps to meet, or at least mitigate, this challenge. We expect a huge amount of our student leaders, as unpaid volunteers, and this has been one of the primary drivers behind our new staff structure. It is very clear that we will not be able to attract and retain the services of students of calibre if
we are unable to give them the support which they deserve. It is also our intention
to provide far better induction for incoming student leaders and I have already
spoken to the Interim Director, Students about us establishing a University-
specific element to our induction programme, at least for the team of Association
Officers if not for the whole C E C. I have received a very positive response to this
request.

3.6 As Council will be aware, I was a member of the selection panel which appointed
Keith Zimmerman as the new Director, Students. It therefore will probably not be
a big surprise to know that I was absolutely delighted by his appointment! I
believe that he will be a major asset to the University as it seeks to make the
student central to all that it does – and that to me is the essence of a good
Director, Students. Keith will be visiting his first OUSA C E C meeting later this
month and I very much look forward to the pleasure of introducing him to our
students. I believe that it will be of great benefit to both the University and OUSA
if the Director, Students and OUSA President can continue to have a relationship
of mutual trust and respect. I hope to be in a position to have established that
pattern before I hand over to my successor at the end of July.

4. 1994 EDUCATION ACT PART II – COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

4.1 Appendix A consists of a statement on those activities upon which OUSA is
required to report in compliance with the Education Act 1994. The requirements
of this Act are not altered by the fact of OUSA’s registration as an independent
charity and in fact, it now means that, in common with other students unions,
OUSA is governed by the requirements of both the 2011 Charities Act and the

4.2 The OUSA accounts are now presented in the format required under the
Charities Commission SORP (statement of recommended practice). Please note
that the financial statements relate to the year ended 31.7.2012 which were
previously presented to the Finance Committee in May 2013. The report and
financial statements for OUSA as an individual entity, and for OUSA and its
wholly owned subsidiary OUSA (Services) Ltd as a group, are both presented
together here as Appendix C. The report section of the financial statements is
the same in both. Our accounts for the year ended 31.7.2013 have recently been
subject to external audit and are in the process of being written up for approval
by the OUSA Board of Trustees in December, following which they will be
presented to the OU Finance Committee in January.

5. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I have mentioned the changes that have occurred within OUSA over the past year,
but we have one major change yet to face. Our General Manager, Trudi de Haney,
who has been with us for 14 years is retiring on 31st July 2014. This will leave a
large gap in our Association, as for as long as I can remember we have relied on
her professionally to keep us going and personally to keep us smiling. We shall, in
the early part of next year, start the process of seeking a new General Manager to
take OUSA forward into the future.
One of my principal ambitions for the next nine months is to see the Student Consultation Process functioning well, as well as to see students being able to communicate easily between themselves and therefore creating the vibrant student community that we all desire.

Marianne Cantieri
President & Chair of the Board of Trustees