Payment of O U Students Association President and Deputy President

Arguments for:

- Roles are requiring increasing time and workload and it is unrealistic to expect students to continue to do this unpaid.

- Payment should enable a greater commitment to be made to the role

- The O U is out of step with the rest of the higher education sector on this issue

- If these two officers are paid, students will regard them as more ‘professional’. Strengthening the student voice and giving students greater confidence that their voice is being heard.

- Posts are more attractive and enable a larger number of students (possibly of a higher standard) to put themselves forward

- Post-holders may feel more accountable for the work they are undertaking

- Reduce the feelings of stress and being ‘out of pocket’ for these roles

- Role holders may be more likely to serve a full term if they were paid.

- Paying the officers would increase their profile in the O U and beyond.

- The level of payment, alongside the level of work expected, would be unlikely to attract those only interested in the money.

- No-one is likely to stand for either role for mercenary reasons. The paid roles are time limited. And we all have a vote in our choice of the most appropriate candidate.
• I think they should be paid but that the role should have time and financial parameters that would ensure it didn’t seep into becoming a full-time job

• These roles are very time consuming and involved. It is reasonable to pay appropriately

Did the Students in the Online Consultation think they should be paid?

• 56% of students asked were clearly in favour of paying

• 6% Preferred the current model

• 19% Would need more information and discussion before reaching a decision

• 19% Would prefer a different type of model where students are offered a higher level of financial compensation for the time spent in the roles

Arguments against:

• Paying these two officers part-time may set an unwanted precedent for further volunteer roles to be ‘professionalised’

• Could make them less in touch with the student body and be more exclusive.

• Payment may attract candidates with financial or career motivations

• Creating a two-tier officer team with potential acrimony and resentment between the paid and the unpaid

• Attracting more candidates makes it more difficult for students to engage with elections and make an informed choice
• There would be a greater need for mechanisms to hold the post-holders to account

• Students receiving benefits may be put off applying because of implications for their other income

What do the Students Association think?

The Association's profile has risen in recent years and with greater student engagement within the University and externally the time pressures are such that the Association feels that the time is right to explore and fully consider whether moving to a model of having a paid President and Deputy President, at least on a part-time basis, would be a step forward rather than maintaining the current expectations on volunteers.

Next steps:

The Students Association's Board of Trustees will make the final decision on whether to implement payment.

There will be a debate and vote on the principle at the forthcoming OU Students Association Conference, 17-19 June 2016 when student delegates will get to have their say.

Following Conference, the outcome of all of the practical advice we have sought, the findings of this student consultation and the outcome of the debate and vote at Conference will be considered in full by the Board of Trustees and they will make a final decision. This is likely to be made during July 2016 and will be made known to students via the Association’s website and other communication channels as soon as possible.

More information about the debate on the principle of paying Student Association President and Deputy President can be found on page 51 of your General Business – Book 1.