BECOMING A STUDENT MODERATOR

The Open University’s Student Consultation Office is currently inviting students to volunteer to take part in a pilot project to introduce student moderators alongside staff moderators to the student consultation forums. We hope this will provide an interesting and challenging opportunity to support students in making a difference at the OU, to develop new skills and to play an important part in The Open University community.

WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?

The role of a student moderator would be to moderate consultations undertaken as part of the Open University Student Consultative Process. These consultations could take place on the following forums:

- University Students Consultative Forum
- Online International Students Consultative Meeting
- Online Disabled Students Consultative Meeting
- Board of Studies Student Consultative Forums
- Bespoke student consultations

Student moderators will be asked to moderate three consultations during Spring/Summer 2017. Each consultation is expected to be open between 10 days and three weeks and you will be expected to spend around 30-60 minutes per day during that time reading contributions and moderating as required.

You will be expected to check the forum for any issues that arise at least every other day and provide a brief summary of any discussions you are moderating towards the end of the consultation.

In summer 2017 you will be required to take part in an evaluation of the Student Moderators Pilot Project in the form of an online survey and a telephone conversation.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED

We are asking for volunteers with the following skills and experience:

a) Familiarity with the Open University’s Virtual Learning Environment;

b) The ability to act with impartiality to facilitate the contribution of a diversity of students’ views;

c) Excellent writing and communication skills;

d) Excellent organisational skills.

HOW DO I APPLY?

The role of student consultation moderator is open to students who meet the above criteria.

You are asked to write up to 500 words about why you want to take part in the pilot and why you think you are suitable for the role and email them to student-consultation-office@open.ac.uk with ‘Application for student moderator’ in the subject line.

The deadline for applications is the end of Sunday 27 November.
ROLE OF THE MODERATOR

The role of the moderator in student consultation is as follows:

a) Become familiar with the topic under discussion by reading any background material provided by the Student Consultation Office (SConso);
b) Introduce yourself to the forum and start discussion threads as agreed with the Student Consultation Office, where necessary explaining the objectives of the consultation and managing expectations;
c) Regularly read forum messages, acknowledging where appropriate;
d) Post to the forum with the aims of nurturing and encouraging discussion for all participants, curbing dominant voices, developing and maintaining a sense of online community and bringing impartiality and objectivity to consultations;
e) Regularly summarise points made to allow students to agree or disagree with the summary and maintain discussion.
f) Post any agreed resources supplied in support of the topic under discussion e.g. proposals, background papers etc.;
g) Answer questions on the topic under discussion; or seek a response from the ‘subject expert’ or Student Consultation Office as and when necessary;
h) Initiate new threads and merge threads as required, maintaining an appropriate structure and keeping the forum discussion tidy and accessible;
i) Encourage good practice/netiquette through example and, where necessary, intervention;
j) Monitor for compliance with the University’s Code of Practice for Student Discipline and the Student Computing Code of Conduct, referring potential transgressions to the Student Consultation Office.
k) Comment on the draft summary of the consultation prepared by the Student Consultation Office.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A panel comprising representatives of the Student Consultation Office and the Students Association will select six students to take part in the pilot. We will inform all students before Xmas if they have been selected or not.

Arrangements will be made for online moderator training early in the new year. This is likely to be a one-week online forum-based training module that will take approximately 4 hours at your convenience during that week.

Following completion of the training students will be invited to volunteer to moderate consultations as they arise. You will not be asked to moderate any particular consultation and you will not necessarily be selected to moderate every consultation you volunteer from.

Open University staff from the Student Consultation Office will be on hand to provide support for you during any consultations you moderate and to answer any questions. We will also put in place a private forum for you to be in touch with other student moderators involved in the pilot.

If you have any questions please email student-consultation-office@open.ac.uk.