

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

25 – 27 January 2019

MAGAZINE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **agree** to the next steps of the project in terms of continued consultation with CEC workshop participants, recruited student participants and accessibility review from LTI.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Update on Magazine Redevelopment Project since the previous paper in October 2018.

2. Introduction/Background

- 2.1 On 26 November various members of the CEC came to MK campus to attend a workshop/consultation on the redevelopment of the magazine. Since then the Digital Communications team have been liaising with Vice President Media and Campaigns and the President on the next steps for the project.
- 2.2 Given the general positive response to a new web-based format for the magazine and the low cost of testing the new format the green light was given by the President and Vice President Media and Campaigns for the Digital Communications team to begin testing with WordPress with a view to test its accessibility and enquire about security.

3. Magazine Redevelopment Workshop/Consultation

- 3.1 Prior to the workshop the initial concern over the loss of the PDF format of the magazine was resolved by the commitment of the Digital Communications team to produce and distribute a PDF document on a quarterly basis (the same frequency as the previous magazine format) which requires fewer design hours.
- 3.2 The CEC participants were asked to offer their views on topics such as what content they would like to see in a reimagined magazine format. A write up of

notes from this half-day session are attached as an appendix. Participants have since been invited to add any additional comments.

3.3 The workshop included an explanation of the format we foresee for the quarterly email to all students. This would take the shape of a quarterly digest of non-time sensitive articles which are considered highlights.

3.4 Other information shared included the benefits to users of using a web-based platform including the superior user-experience offered to mobile-users and the access it will give us to analytics on the readership of articles, so we can better understand what content appeals to our readers. The team also shared the fact that a new web-based platform would open up possibilities in terms of what different content formats we could consider sharing in the magazine, including videos, audio and interactive quizzes. The new format would also have the potential advantage of allowing individual articles to appear on the Google rankings in their own right.

4. Update on other aspects of the project

4.1 As of January 2019 we have purchased a theme and a subscription to WordPress, so we are able to explore how a magazine could be compiled and whether it meets our standards in terms of accessibility and usability. The guidance we received from OU Communications on their use of the platform to run <https://ounews.co/> will no doubt prove invaluable in familiarising ourselves with its functionalities.

4.2 The Head of Digital Communications also attended training on Search Engine Optimisation in December 2018 alongside OU Communications. Any relevant learnings will be used to inform how the web-based magazine is set-up.

5. Next steps for Accessibility

5.1 As always, accessibility is a major focus for our team. We've been liaising with LTI's Learning, Teaching and Development Accessibility team. After initial discussion of the project we are planning for a beta version of the WordPress site to be reviewed by their team for accessibility and usability in February 2019.

6. Next steps for Consultation

6.1 CEC participants in the consultation/workshop have kindly agreed to be kept up-to-date about the project. The Vice President Media and Campaigns remains the project's student sponsor and the President has kindly offered her support as needed.

6.2 The Head of Digital Communications is receiving advice on how best to progress wider consultation activities with the broader OU student population. Using an advert in the more recent edition of the magazine, we have recruited a group of readers of the previous format of the magazine so they can take an active role in sharing their views as the new magazine format develops.

6.3 Having recently gained access to the WordPress platform at the time of writing, we are a number of steps away from the stage of working with

students on branding and design decisions, however once we have something more concrete to display we are keen to share progress of the WordPress pilot site with workshop/consultation participants (as well as wider CEC if desired) via Adobe Connect if appropriate. We may also mirror this approach with the OU student population including those who answered the consultation adverts in the Winter Magazine.

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