

## OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

### Central Executive Committee (CEC)

25 – 27 January 2019

## OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION STRATEGY UPDATE

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The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **note** the updates on progress with delivering the current strategy

1. The 2017-20 OU Students Association Strategy was approved by the CEC and ratified by the Trustees in July 2017. A number of discussions and working sessions had previously been held with the Board of Trustees, the Central Executive Committee (CEC) and the staff team to build the strategy around three major objectives:
  - Listen to OU students and represent their collective voice and academic interests
  - Engage students in a vibrant and supportive community and create new opportunities
  - Raise awareness of our actions and the impact of our work to enhance the student experience and student success
2. Underneath each objective, there are action points detailing the operational actions that we wish to undertake. The full strategy is available at <https://www.oustudents.com/our-strategy>.
3. The format of this paper has been amended following CEC feedback. It now captures and highlights developments and progress on projects under each strategic objective.
4. Under the objective to listen to OU students and represent their collective voice and interests, a paper on the Student Engagement Standard is being presented to CEC separately to highlight and agree the next steps with this project. Work has also commenced on the review of academic representation and this is also exploring individual representation. We are now advertising the volunteer roles of Chair and Working Group members for a new Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group. We have worked closely with the OU Library and Students in Secure Environments teams to devise and launch a new

volunteer role 'Library Support Partners' who will assist Level 3 and Postgraduate students in secure environments with their research needs. We are working with the University to secure a Bronze award for the Race Equality Charter and hope that work in this area continues given the move of, and changes within, the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team. A paper on the Association's Research Strategy is being presented to CEC.

5. Against our objective to engage students in a vibrant and supportive community, we are continuing to work alongside the University in supporting Postgraduate Research students and discussions have taken place to link up with Cranfield University's student community. We have formally applied for and commences assessment for accreditation of our volunteering offer. The one year pilot of student-led projects is underway, with the first such exciting project due to be delivered on Monday 28 January by Sarah Jones, Faculty Association Representative (WELS) alongside the staff team and other helpers! Early discussions are taking place with the University's Careers and Employability Services team about supporting Honorary Life Member sessions and careers-based talks on Adobe Connect. Two OU Students won regional awards and nine were highly commended in the Undergraduate Awards, with 341 submissions from across the Open University. Work is ongoing with the University to celebrate this success. A Code of Conduct for Trustees has been developed and is being presented to CEC. The OU Students Shop is deep in talks with the OU about supporting the 50th Anniversary celebrations with exciting new merchandise on the way later in the year. It is also in the process of discontinuing old stock with the old OU logo. The Science kits introduced in the Autumn were a huge success and very popular with students studying S111, to the extent that they sold out. A further student mug design competition is being planned for the Spring. Work is being scoped out on a possible re-introduction of Through the Gate Peer Support. Work is commencing on the review of the Students Association's culture, with a new working group having been formed under the leadership of the Deputy President. New forums guide and moderator role descriptions have been implemented and recruitment for additional volunteers will commence soon. Work is planned to update the Honorary Life Member section of the website and two new HLM Champions are in place.
6. On our objective to raise awareness of our actions and the impact of our work, we are continuing work to make our communications more inclusive and meaningful including introducing inclusivity statements as part of our volunteer recruitment and action planning against the findings of the volunteer research project to develop and support a more diverse team of student volunteers. The Achievements Project has prepared an excellent video highlighting the history and achievements of the Students Association. Work is ongoing on the magazine redevelopment project alongside communications work to support both Freshers and the upcoming by-election. Blog functionality on OUstudents.com is currently being trialled, alongside greater use of Facebook Live sessions with CEC members. Recommendations from the recent user testing work carried out on OUstudents.com are being considered and are presented to CEC for feedback. Consideration is being given to an annual members survey to support future developments. Tracked links were used in October's Freshers communications to reveal what referrals students followed when coming across the Freshers page. 7,000 students visited our website as a result of the first Freshers email with 4,000 visiting as a result of the second

email. This Freshers period was hugely successful with record engagement with our website and we hope to build on it for the current period. OUSET processed an all-time high number of applications for the October and November presentations. Work is underway to review OUSET's Declaration of Trust and membership of its Board of Trustees.

7. Work has now commenced on the project to develop and implement a new strategy for the Students Association which will replace the current one. A project Steering Group has been formed led by the President which includes representatives of the CEC, the Board of Trustees and the staff team. A date to note is the workshop weekend which is due to take place on 2-3 March 2019 where all CEC members, Trustees and staff will be invited to take part in a series of workshops to review our mission and values, to set a new vision and to agree new strategic objectives. Further details have been posted into the CEC forum.

**Rob Avann**  
**Chief Executive**