



## OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

### Central Executive Committee (CEC)

24 – 26 January 2020

### WONKHE STUDENT UNION'S SUBSCRIPTION

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **discuss** the potential for a Wonkhe SU's subscription
- ii) **approve** a submission to Trustees for the funding of one of the Wonkhe SU's subscription options

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Wonkhe is the “home of higher education policy, bringing the sector together through expert analysis”.
- 1.2 For some time it has run subscription services for universities designed to draw together the most important events from across the sector that universities need to know about, key reports and publications, parliamentary activity (including devolved assemblies) and the latest from the rumour mill since the previous edition – to improve decision making in universities.
- 1.3 In 2019 it launched a dedicated subscription service aimed at UK students' unions, and since March has attracted over 50 subscribing SUs.

#### 2. Strategy

- 2.1 A subscription to Wonkhe SU's would support us with the following strategic objectives:
  - Establish purposeful and impactful relationships with key internal and external stakeholders.
  - Influence education policy.
  - Introduce a new Policy & Public Affairs role within the Association to advocate for OU students with external agencies and government.
  - Produce a manifesto for life-long learning.
- 2.2 Beyond our strategic objectives, it would also help us to work more in partnership with other SUs and provide us with opportunities to share best

practice with each other. It also allows us to support other SUs in how they engage with and support their distance learners allowing us to lead and shape on this work even further.

2.3 Some of the additional benefits outlined in 4.3 also give us the potential to have access to wider research and participate in research facilitated by Wonkhe, saving us a lot of resources for our internal work.

2.4 Please note that sections 3 and 4 are from the Wonkhe SU's leaflet which can be found in Appendix 1

### **3. Benefits to students**

- Students could potentially attend Wonkhe events at discounted rates
- Students could benefit from the collaborative SU approach and have access to more services/ information
- Student representatives (not just CEC) would have access to a wider information 'bank' on any issues that may come up on committees etc without having to do extensive research on current HE policies

### **4. Potential issues**

4.1 As it currently stands, the subscription could only come out of the discretionary funding for its first year. Alternatively, it would replace something else. Moving forward after the first year of subscription, if the next CEC decided to carry on with the subscription, it would have to come out of a 'business as usual' budget (so be budgeted for by a teams budget).

### **5. Wonkhe SU's**

5.1 The service describes itself as follows:

Representing students effectively is tough when policy is complex, confusing and constantly changing. We know that officers and staff that understand the environment are more effective and get more done. We will help with that.

We think the challenges on students and students' unions are increasing, and require rapid, creative thinking. We can both provide and facilitate that too. We love students' unions. Many of us began our careers in students' unions. We think the UK students' union system is unrivalled around the world and makes UK higher education better. So, we naturally want to deliver work in this area.

We see work with students' unions as an investment in our mission to improve higher education policymaking, provide a platform unheard and diverse voices, and an opportunity to support the sector's wider talent pipeline.

5.2 What we're not

We're not a representative body – we'll never seek to speak on behalf of students or students' unions. That's your job, along with your National Union.

We're also not a campaigning body – there won't be a national demonstration or a lobby of parliament.

We're not democratic and we're non-partisan. That doesn't mean you won't hear professional opinions from the team and doesn't mean we won't involve SUs and students in our work – but we won't take a policy position or have an elected committee.

### 5.3 We mean policy

As well as strict higher education policy, we have an interest in and expertise in wider areas that apply to HE – like equality and diversity, governance and charity law, and freedom of speech.

We know you are busy – so we'll do the reading, so you don't have to, distilling the essentials and helping you lead and deliver for your students in the process.

When you are as familiar with the issues as your university's senior team, you're more effective.

We're up to date – in the sector we're relied upon for our quality and timely analysis, so we like to stay nimble and be responsive. We keep our operation lean, our partnerships wide and don't get bogged down by bureaucracy or layers of complexity.

## 6. Subscription options

### 6.1 Wonkhe SU's Basic (£2000 +VAT)

- Twice weekly policy briefings and beginner's guides on key issues in higher education
- A bespoke weekly email for SUs featuring the latest developments, news coverage, analysis and opportunities for SUs as well as news from around the network
- Access to our WhatsApp alerts and group
- Full access to the Wonkhe Daily – the sector's email briefing sent directly to your inbox before work every day.

### 6.2 Wonkhe SU's Full (£3500 +VAT)

All the above, plus

- An entitlement to a day's training for your officers on effective policy analysis and creation
- Team Wonkhe on retainer, offering advice and support with your representation and policy issues (with a monthly Skype catch up call with key officers and staff)
- Weekly interactive webinars from the team on issues in HE you will be discussing with your institution
- Discounted rates to Wonkhe events, including the flagship Wonkfest
- Access to the Wonkhe termly policy digest

### 6.3 Additional Benefits

As well as our subscriptions, we will also:

- Run bespoke events and seminars aimed specifically at students' union officers and staff
- Access to bespoke opt-in projects on key contemporary policy issues raised in manifestos and strategies
- Strike a partnership to offer impactful collective student research that has an impact
- Offer specific services, both in house and with leading partners, to develop your policy and representation work and thinking
- Practitioner forums for key management and policy staff with access to key sector bodies
- Contribute the latest thinking to student movement events
- We'll also help you respond to consultations, understand the local implications or national issues, and identify opportunities to apply for funding

## **7. Topics for discussion/ approval**

1. Would you find either of these subscriptions useful for your role?
2. Do you think a subscription would be useful for the Association as a whole?
3. Is the Full subscription worth it over the Basic one?
4. Should there be a submission to trustees for funding of the subscription?

**Fanni Zombor**  
**Vice President Media and Campaigns**