

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code has been redefined to include new ways of working, reinforce already agreed practices and support an inclusive one team ethos as recommended by the Culture Review. The objective of the one team ethos is to strengthen and enhance collaborative working between the Association staff, elected representatives and the wider volunteer community. Working as part of one team will ensure that the Association can utilise the strengths of all members and provide the best support possible for all Open University Students.

To promote better understanding, we use the terms ‘must’ and ‘should’ throughout this code.

Must is used to denote when a CEC member is required to follow a mandatory policy.

Should is used to denote a strong recommendation that CEC members are expected to follow.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Code is designed to supplement the existing Volunteers’ and Disciplinary Policy and whilst it may repeat some of the provisions listed in those documents, does not replace them.
- 1.2 Members¹ are also reminded that they must abide by the OU regulations applying to any student.
- 1.3 Members should refer to ‘One Team Guiding Principles’ appended to this code as examples of the conduct, ethos and culture that we aspire to.

2. General Provisions

- 2.1 Members must respect and uphold the stated values of the Open University Students Association.
- 2.2 Members must act within the Articles and Byelaws of the Association and abide by all agreed policies.
www.oustudents.com/articles-of-association-and-by-laws
- 2.3 Members must act in the best interests of the Association at all times.
- 2.4 Members must not seek to profit from any decision made and must declare all conflicts of interest; i.e. situations where the concerns or aims of two different parties are incompatible.

¹ For the avoidance of doubt ‘Members’ in this document refers to Members of the Central Executive Committee

- 2.6 Members must always respect confidentiality, whether at CEC, University or individual level unless there is express permission by the relevant party for information or data to be released. They must also adhere to the Association's data protection and privacy policies.

www.oustudents.com/data-protection

- 2.7 Members must use Association issued @open.ac.uk email addresses for official communications due to data protection considerations and GDPR compliance for the protection of members and the Association.

3. Meetings and other discussions

- 3.1 Meetings can be held in person, online via Microsoft Teams, or other platforms

3.1.1 Members are encouraged to play an active role in all meetings, so that the Association can benefit fully from the skills, knowledge and experience that they bring to the table. Some best practices to support our 'One Team' ethos are as follows:

3.1.2 Preparing for meetings by reading papers in advance so that they are able to contribute fully to the discussions.

3.1.3 If unable to attend a meeting, a member should inform the Chair either directly or via the Association's Office. If that member wishes to make comments on the discussion papers to be included in the meeting, these should be submitted to the Chair in advance or posted in the appropriate forum.

3.1.4 Members should make every best effort to ensure that their papers and reports for meetings are received in the Association Office by agreed deadlines. If any problems are foreseen or unexpected circumstances arise, they should contact the organiser of the meeting at the earliest opportunity to have further discussions.

3.2 Microsoft Team Discussions

3.2.1 Members are expected to engage regularly in asynchronous Microsoft Team discussions, or on other platforms when appropriate, as part of their role, and to regard these in the same light as face to face meetings.

3.2.2 Members should check 'Teams' at least once or twice every week wherever possible to keep abreast of general business. When a response is needed by a cut off date, members will be tagged into messages to make them aware of deadlines.

3.2.3 Unless it is impossible to do so, members should indicate in 'Teams' or by email to the Office or the President if they will be unavailable for a week or more. The President will inform the wider team if there is a need and agreement to do so.

- 3.2.4 'Team Feedback' is the space that is used for anyone to gather feedback on different issues. If a decision or feedback is required, members should make every effort to provide at least one week of notice in order to allow others enough time in which to participate.
- 3.2.5 A synchronous Microsoft Teams discussion may be called if an urgent matter arises or if the President feels that a discussion of this nature is required.
- 3.2.6 If a member is unavailable to attend, any comments to be included in the meeting should be sent to the President in advance or posted on the Teams Forum.

3.3 CEC Meetings

- 3.3.1 Formal CEC meetings are held quarterly, over weekends to be notified in advance, which all members are expected to attend. Those unable to attend should send their apologies in writing to the President.
- 3.3.1 In the week leading up to the weekend, an asynchronous element of the CEC meeting will be held in the CEC Business Forum on the VLE where important business items will be discussed.
- 3.3.2 Business papers for these meetings will be found in the CEC Business forum on the VLE.
- 3.3.3 The minutes of the CEC are the official public record of discussions which all members should review, notify of amendments where appropriate and ratify when all is in order.

3.4 General provisions for discussions (whether synchronous or asynchronous)

- 3.4.1 Members should show respect for the opinions of colleagues (members, staff, observers and external contributors) and employ objectivity, sensitivity and astuteness where these differ from their own. Differences of opinion should be respectfully agreed.
- 3.4.2 Members should conduct discussions in a fair and reasoned manner.
- 3.4.3 Members must accept the decision of the Chair on closing discussions, if necessary.
- 3.4.4 Members must accept the majority decision of the CEC and support the implementation of it. Members may ask that their opposition to this in any discussion or vote of the CEC be noted in the minutes so that there is a public record of their view. In any public discussion, regardless of on which platform it occurs, members should be mindful to express themselves in a way that does not undermine the CEC.
- 3.4.5 Members should not seek to revisit decisions made during earlier discussions unless circumstances have changed materially.

4. Relationship with the Board of Trustees

- 4.1 The CEC is the Leadership Team of the Association and is responsible for discussing policy. It is the public face of the Association and is the elected student representative body to the University and other organisations. The Board of Trustees is responsible for Strategy, Staffing Finances and Governance of the Association.
- 4.2 Whilst Association Strategy is the responsibility of Board of Trustees, there is agreement that Trustees will work jointly with the CEC on its implementation.
- 4.3 CEC Members support the work of the Board of Trustees and therefore must guard against engaging in any public criticism of decisions made which may otherwise undermine the Board of Trustees or the Association in any way.
- 4.4 A CEC Member who is also a member of the Board of Trustees must maintain a separation between these roles and recognise the different responsibilities of each.
- 4.5 CEC members have the right to challenge decisions made by the Board of Trustees and should do so by communication through the President to the Chair in the first instance.

5. Relationship with Association Staff Members

- 5.1 Members must respect the roles of staff, and of management arrangements in the staff team, avoiding any actions that might undermine such arrangements. If an issue arises from a decision made, members should seek to resolve this in discussion with the relevant staff member or if the matters are of a more complex nature, should contact the Deputy Chief Executive (Student and Staff Engagement) for further advice.

6. Relationship with Volunteers

- 6.1 Members share the responsibility to ensure that there is a culture supporting the wellbeing and valuing of all Association volunteers. The guiding principles appended to this code have been developed to inspire a 'one team' ethos and are the encouraged behaviours that the team aspires to.

7. Relationships with Students

- 7.1 Members are the elected representatives of the student body and are accountable to them and in that capacity are encouraged to be models of acceptable conduct in their interactions with fellow students and in all other dealings on the students' behalf.
- 7.2 Members should be prepared to answer questions from the student body either via the dedicated forum, directly by email or other appropriate means. A member may refer a directed question to another CEC member if they feel the topic is more suited to a fellow member's remit. Where questions are asked privately via email, any personal data, such as name and email address, must not be passed on without the permission of the person asking the question as this is unlawful to do so.
- 7.3 Questions should be acknowledged and a reply provided within a mutually agreed time depending on the nature and complexity of the query. Where a

timescale is unachievable, pre-planned follow ups would be recommended in order to reassure the student and develop trust. However, students need to be made aware that apart from the President and the Deputy President , members are volunteers with multiple calls on their time and therefore may not reply immediately.

- 7.4 Members should not feel pressured to answer all questions and queries that arise on unofficial platforms, for example, unofficial Facebook groups. Before responding to online discussion threads, members should review the nature of the conversation, reflect on the question being asked and the space it is being asked in, to understand if it is better to abstain from the discussion or to seek to continue the conversation in a private space.

8. Relationships with the University and other external bodies

- 8.1 Members must remember that they are the public face of the Association when dealing with anybody outside of our organisation. As such when engaging with other bodies, they must not act in any way likely to bring the Association into disrepute, for example by deliberately providing false information or by making details of private discussions public.
- 8.2 Members should be aware that in instances when confidential matters are made public or where the Association is brought into disrepute, disciplinary action may be considered.

9. Abiding by the Code of Conduct

- 9.1 Members are encouraged to abide by the direction and guidance provided within this code which is the agreed Code of Conduct of the Central Executive Committee. Members who have difficulty in understanding or following any of the detail should talk to their staff support in the first instance.
- 9.2 Disciplinary action may be considered against members who persistently, and without explanation fail to follow the agreed Code of Conduct.