

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**Central Executive Committee (CEC)**

25 - 26 April 2020

NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The CEC is asked to:-

- a) **discuss** the proposed reintroduction of volunteering opportunities to support student engagement.
- b) **approve** role descriptions for proposed volunteer opportunities.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Students Association Volunteer team, working with student reps and other staff teams have identified areas where student volunteers could have an impact in supporting the new strategy and encourage further student engagement.
- 1.2 Previously the Association had two volunteer roles which were piloted with mixed success; Learner Experience Reporters/Representatives and Community Champions. These roles were looked at by CEC and staff during the strategy 'start, stop, continue' exercise and it was agreed that President and Head of Volunteering would explore these roles in terms of grass roots engagement. Both roles had a range of successes and failures which we can learn from and we have worked with a range of stakeholders to explore how we can improve both roles to provide a valuable opportunity to students.
- 1.3 Learner Experience Reporters were a valuable team of volunteers with many LERs providing valuable insight into what it is like to be a student in a range of modules; information FARs could not have easily received without their support. Feedback from LERs at the end of their term was mixed, with a generally positive response, however, many felt they were unsure who to feedback to and that they would have benefitted from further training and support. It was identified that not all Faculties having an active FAR at the time of recruitment led to some of these issues, as well as the need to be more specific in the role description.

1.4 Community Champions were introduced following the grassroots working group recommendation for peer ambassadors in the student community. This group of volunteers were recruited at a time of multiple changes within the staff team and could have benefitted from more structured induction and specific tasks as many of the activities it was previously felt they could support were paused or altered. Feedback from community Champions was again, mixed, with many feeling they were able to get involved through supporting meet ups and online chats and others feeling unsure of their remit due to the nature of the role, and feeling they did not know who to go to for support/with questions.

2 Student Experience Link

2.1 Learner Experience Reporter role to be reintroduced as 'Student Experience Link'. This role will work closely with Central Committee Reps, Faculty Association Reps and other student reps as appropriate to support student voice activities, seeking student opinion and current issues and feeding back.

2.2 These volunteers will receive training and support via both the student representation officers and FARs. They will be invited to join the student voice café forum, and to attend the monthly 'student experience discussion' between relevant CEC members and Central Committee reps.

2.3 Their main responsibilities will be to pick up on student issues, concerns and praise to feedback to FARs and CCRs. They will also support the dissemination of information back to students, to complete the feedback loop and be provided with training to support them to signpost to relevant individuals/services e.g. student ideas platform, tutors, SST and student reps via a designated platform.

2.4 **CEC members are asked to approve to reintroduction of this volunteer opportunity based on the new role description attached in Appendix 1.** The proposed timescale allows us to open the first round of recruitment in September to support volunteers to receive training at the beginning of 2020-21 committee calendar (this will allow for recruitment during Freshers).

3 Students Association Ambassadors (name TBC)

3.1 As well as needing students to support our community work through roles such as meet-up hosts, there are a range of events and opportunities which come up across the year both with the Association and the University where a pool of trained and engaged students could support our mission to create a sense of community for students.

3.2 Roles identified as needing support from engaged volunteers included but are not limited to: Student research opportunities, Freshers, Adobe Connect drop ins, emergency cover for Graduations and Residential schools where appropriate (e.g. cover when a volunteer drops out last minute which would leave too small a number of volunteers to continue), filming and engagement projects, having a presence at day schools and supporting events on campus.

- 3.3 Students who are willing to be trained and respond to opportunities as and when they arise (some at last minute) would be perfect for this role. Training will need to be robust enough to allow volunteers to sub in other roles as required, and some tasks may require additional training. Opportunities can be shared in a similar way to library study volunteers: E.g. via a private forum or slack stating the time commitment and details of each task, volunteers can put themselves forward to help with a task.
- 3.4 This opportunity would be flexible and allow students to pick up tasks as and when suits them but would allow us to ensure we have a group of students trained and supported to be ambassadors for the Association.
- 3.5 CEC members are asked to approve the introduction of this volunteer opportunity based on the new role description attached in Appendix 2.**

Appendix 1: Student Experience Link role description

Appendix 2: Students Association Ambassadors role description (name TBC)

**President
Cath Brown**

**Head of Volunteering
Beth Metcalf**

APPENDIX 1.

Student Experience Link

Be our link to all OU students to support our Student Representatives.

Please be aware, as a volunteer, you will be expected to follow our [volunteer policy](#) and [volunteer agreement](#). We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, and you are expected to reflect this in your volunteer role.

What will I be doing?

Our Student Experience Links play an important part in gathering student feedback and opinion to support Student Representatives to influence University decision making.

You'll be the eyes and ears of the Association, chatting and being aware of what is happening in online forums, on social media, at tutorials, and everywhere students are. Through engaging with fellow students and being involved in student life, you can support the Students Association to pick up on academic and study related issues and successes and, feed these back into formal communication channels via our Student Representatives.

A key part of this role will be liaising with Central Committee Representatives and Faculty Representatives where students are expressing issues or concerns as well as supporting the Students Association to share important news and change within the University. In addition, you will receive training to be able to signpost students to relevant support and services.

How much time will I need?

This role is very flexible, but it is recommended that you spend at least an hour a week on your role in order to have an online presence which students can engage with.

Can I do this role from home?

Yes, this is an online only role, however you may meet or chat with students via face to face events should you attend these.

For this role you will need to:

- Be a member of the Students Association to apply (all registered OU students are automatically members according to our [Articles of Association](#)).
- be where students are and feel confident to get involved in discussions; providing signposting and gathering information from fellow students. E.g. attending face to face or online meet ups/events, accessing social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or using student forums.

What training will you receive?

All Association volunteers complete our basic induction package covering; GDPR (keeping personal data secure), Safeguarding (keeping young people and vulnerable adults safe) and Prevent (our duty to prevent extremist radicalisation).

For this role you will also be given access to our online training zone, packed with useful resources and offered online training via Adobe Connect to support you with your role.

To support you in role, there are also monthly 'Student Experience Discussions' online attended by other student representatives volunteering to support student voice at the University.

What you can expect from the OU Students Association:

- Support from the Volunteer team, Student Faculty Representatives, VP Education, Student Representation Officers and other student representatives as appropriate. Team contact details can be found in your volunteer handbook.
- This role will support you to develop xx of the Employability and Transferable Skills as defined by the Open University including: (list 3)
- You will receive a certificate of volunteering (on request).
- Your work in this role has the potential to make a real difference to OU students, and we will recognise that
- You will receive all the information and training necessary to carry out your role effectively; further training may be provided on request.
- Your volunteering will be appreciated and recognised for the value it brings.

Application Process:

Applications will be reviewed by a panel of student representatives to appoint students who have met the criteria for the role.

Closing date

XXX (12 noon)

In order to apply, you will need to create an account with the OU Students Association.

Role Excerpt

Help your reps make a difference to the OU student experience from your home, in just an hour or so a week.

LOCATION: Online TIME: Ideally, at least one hour a week.

APPENDIX 2:

Association Ambassador

Support fellow students to engage in a thriving student community.

Please be aware, as a volunteer, you will be expected to follow our [volunteer policy](#) and [volunteer agreement](#). We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, and you are expected to reflect this in your volunteer role.

What will I be doing?

All OU Students automatically become members of the OU Students Association upon signing up to the Open University, but not everyone is aware of all the opportunities and support that being a member can provide.

We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers across the world to help us promote the Students Association, engage with our student community and ensure we are providing relevant services and support to students.

Our team of Ambassadors are passionate about the Association and looking for opportunities to work in teams online and face to face to support OU students to understand the benefits of engaging with their Association and the range of events available throughout the year.

Whether you are totally new to the Association or have previous experience volunteering with us, you can help our community to grow. You won't be expected to know about everything we do as full training will be provided.

Potential opportunities include (but are not limited to!):

- Opportunities to be involved in research projects
- Engaging your student networks in important Association events, such as Conference or elections
- Attending Association or University events for a few hours to host a stall and share information about the Students Association
- Hosting online sessions via adobe connect, for example during Freshers
- Writing blogs or creating podcasts about your own experience as a student
- Cover roles where volunteers have had to drop out due to unforeseen circumstance e.g. helping at a local graduation ceremony or residential school.

How much time will I need?

As we have a range of opportunities for you, whether you have a couple of hours free a year, or more, this is the perfect role to get involved as and when you can making this a flexible opportunity for you.

Can I do this role from home?

This role offers the opportunity to be involved in both online or face to face activities (or both!). It is entirely up to you, so no matter where you live, or if you are unable to travel, this role will still offer you opportunities to engage.

For this role you will need to:

- Be a member of the Students Association to apply (all registered OU students are automatically members according to our [Articles of Association](#)).
- Be willing to join us in an online space to self-select tasks and opportunities

What training will I receive?

If selected as an ambassador, you will be supported by a training schedule to help you feel comfortable in your role. As part of this training, volunteers will be supported to understand the different services the Association offers, as well as being given basic Adobe Connect, Safeguarding, Prevent and data protection training. All training will be delivered online, but certain opportunities may require Ambassadors to undertake further training.

The role of an Association Ambassador offers a range of Employability and Transferable Skills as defined by the Open University, you can find out more about the OU's Employability and Transferable skills framework on their website: <https://help.open.ac.uk/employability-skills>.

What you can expect from the OU Students Association:

- Support from the Association staff team and relevant members of the Student Leadership team. Team contact details can be found in your volunteer handbook.
- This role will support you to develop **xx** of the Employability and Transferable Skills as defined by the Open University including: (list 3)
- You will receive a certificate of volunteering (on request).
- Your work in this role has the potential to make a real difference to OU students, and we will recognise that
- You will receive all the information and training necessary to carry out your role effectively; further training may be provided on request.
- Your volunteering will be appreciated and recognised for the value it brings.

Application Process:

We welcome all applications from those eligible to apply and upon completion of training, individuals will be added to the private online space to begin working with the team and self-select tasks.

Closing date

XXX (12 noon)

In order to apply, you will need to create an account with the OU Students Association.

Role Excerpt

Support the student community by offering your time to be involved in a range of exciting and important activities with your Students Association
LOCATION: Online TIME: Completely up to you!