



UPDATE FOR COUNCIL FEBRUARY 2021

SUPPORT

ENCOURAGE

EMPOWER

www.oustudents.com

Freshers Fortnight - 25th January to 7th February

- A [programme](#) of 49 events for new and returning students
- Highest engagement levels to date
- Information events including faculty, library and careers sessions
- Support events including accessibility and wellbeing sessions
- Community events including a Societies & Clubs Fair
- Social events including quizzes and bingo
- Student feedback:



STAR EVENT:
Welcome to the
Students Association
session:
165 attendees

I found the sessions I went to very informative. The range of things available to access was varied and diverse which I think attracted a wide range of people. Doing Freshers this week has made me realise, as a new student to Open University (starting Feb 2021), that the social aspect at the Open University of students is vast - I thought learning with the OU would be quite isolating but actually the social aspect took me by surprise and it almost feels a closer community than that of a red brick uni.

If it hadn't been for Freshers fortnight, I would be blind to so many great opportunities, tools & events that the OU has to offer. It gave me a well-rounded understanding of and insight into the OU, whilst being fun and social. I am so excited to be starting my OU journey!

Freshers fortnight was brilliant! It gave me the opportunity to get to know more about the OU, Clubs, events, the Students Association etc. It was also really beneficial to get involved and meet other new students - it felt a very positive and supportive environment. I now feel more at ease about starting my course, after engaging with as many Freshers' sessions as I possibly could, knowing that there is a huge amount of support available.

Individual Representation

- A brand new support service for students being launched later this year
- Individual case support for students involved in complaints and appeals
- An initial 15 month pilot programme funded by the University
- Better support for students coping with difficult and challenging situations
- To deliver improved student outcomes from complaints and appeals
- Helping the University to meet the OIA HE Good Practice Framework
- Supporting the University's Access, Participation and Student Success priorities
- Services being launched:

An online resources hub with support information, process guidelines, templates and sign-posting.

A dedicated Student Advisor as part of the Association staff team.

A triage system to evaluate complaints and identify students in most need of individual case support.

Individual case support for students with Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints and appeals.

Individual case support for students with cases before the Central Disciplinary Committee.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

- We issued a [statement on the Black Lives Matter movement](#) in June 2020
- We set out 12 pledges in our statement to confirm our commitment to EDI
- We have initiated a cross-organisational EDI Working Group
- We have created an equalities action plan to deliver against our pledges
- Some of our work to date:

Making 'unconscious bias' training mandatory for all student representatives, staff and Trustees.

Carried out consultation events for Black students in Oct/Nov 2020. Developing a wider EDI Research Programme.

Introduced and piloted a new 'Equality Impact Assessment' tool to be embedded into our business-as usual processes.

Reviewing our website and all other online channels. Creating a dedicated resource bank on our website.

Partnership working with the University on the Race Equality Charter and other EDI initiatives.

Policy & Public Affairs

- We have been working to highlight the pandemic impacts on OU students
 - Highlighting to ministers & politicians the role that OU students are playing on the frontline (especially in teaching and nursing) and reminding policy-makers of the impact on distance-learners from home schooling, job losses/insecurity and heightened social isolation
- We are also focussing on:
 - Improving student finance for part-time distance-learners across the nations
 - Highlighting the challenges for OU students from lack of connectivity and digital exclusion
 - The development of Welsh and Scottish manifestos for the devolved elections
- Some of our recent highlights:

Our President attended an APPG for Students and put a question to the Minister for Universities on maintenance loans

A response to the Welsh Government consultation on the Draft Tertiary Education & Research Bill

A response to the OfS consultation on digital poverty

Enabling students to attend a round table hosted by the Westminster Scottish Affairs Committee

Formalising a collaborative relationship with the Student Union of Athabasca University (a Canadian distance-learning HE institute)



**OU Students
Association**

PO Box 397
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6BE

Tel +44 (0)1908 652026

Contact us at

 www.oustudents.com

 [@OUstudents](https://twitter.com/OUstudents)

 fb.com/OUstudents

 instagram.com/oustudentslive