

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

17 – 18 April 2021

DEVELOPING ASSOCIATION POSITION STATEMENTS

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **Review and discuss** the suggestions generated from the workshops
- ii) **Agree** the priority areas for which position statements are to be developed
- iii) **Assign** responsibilities for the development of the priority statements
- iv) **Agree** timelines for the development of the priority statements

1. Background

1.1 As part of the 2020-21 Strategy & Research Business Plan, a piece of work was specified to look into the development of formal Association position statements.

1.2 Formal position statements can be used to:

- Respond to an OU or government policy, position or decision
- Respond to significant UK/World events or movements
- Influence decision making (eg by the OU, governments, regulators)
- Give consistency to our messaging
- More powerfully advocate for the rights and needs of students
- Support our student representatives in being effective in their roles
- Manage legal or reputational risk

1.3 Examples of previous areas where we have developed a formal stance or position and/or issued a statement are:

- Black Lives Matter
- Face-to-face events during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Tutorial recordings
- Digital vs printed learning materials
- Module results
- Welsh & Scottish manifestos

- 1.4 Workshops were held with the CEC in January and with Central Committee and Senate Reference Group representatives in February to discuss and propose areas where it may be helpful for the Association to have a formal stance or position.

2. Priorities proposed during workshops

- 2.1 The priority areas proposed in the workshops are summarised below:

Common suggestions across both workshops:

- EMAs/Exams in the pandemic
- Micro-credentials / FutureLearn

Additional CEC Workshop Suggestions:

- Alternative formats
- Brexit impact on European students
- Tutors - consistency of advice/standards
- SQE exam (law students)
- Digital poverty
- Accessibility – disability/neuro-diversity/LGBTQ
- Mental health & well-being

Additional CCR/SRG Workshop Suggestions:

- OU new strategy goal 2 – ‘supported online learning’
- Tutorial accessibility
- Support for new students and younger (full-time) students

- 2.2 Additional suggestions were also made during break-out group discussions and via the Student Voice Café forum and these are also included as Appendix 1 for reference.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 The CEC is asked to review and discuss the suggestions and agree the priority areas for which position statements are to be developed
- 3.2 The CEC is asked to, once the priority statements have been agreed, assign responsibilities (ownership) for the development of each of the statements and to agree the timelines for the production of the position statements.
- 3.3 The Strategy & Research Team will support the statement development work by assisting with collating any pre-existing research/evidence and by supporting the further collection of student input where required.

- 3.4 As part of the work to develop the position statements, consideration can also be given to the best routes and platforms for sharing statements with the student body, with representatives and with staff members.

Sarah Jones
President

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Strategic Projects & Change Coordinator

Appendix 1

Additional suggestions from break-out discussions and forum threads:

Learning & pathways, including:

- Module materials to be made available in an easier to download format for off-line or post module use
- SLAS
- Alternatives/supplementals to online learning (eg books, CDs/DVDs, USBs)
- Return to face-to-face tutorials/day schools/lab schools post pandemic
- Single component assessment
- Named degree options for Open students

Communications, including:

- OU use of more instant messaging channels
- Social media issues and bullying
- More consistent information delivery on tutorials/EMAs/exams for new students

Representation & governance, including:

- Student involvement as standard in sub-groups/sub-committees
- Three student reps at Board of Studies
- Board of Studies agendas to include PG topics
- Students to be considered as equal partners in workshops & working groups
- Response for when the Quality Assurance Agency publish their review results at the end of May

General feedback, including:

- Doing more to share our achievements
- Being more timely and pro-active with the production of statements/ responses and escalating issues