

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

16 – 18 April 2021

INFORMING RESOURCE AND BUDGET PLANNING FOR 2021/22 AND BEYOND

The C E C is asked to: -

- i) **Discuss** how and where we will operate in the longer term to inform next steps in our coronavirus recovery planning, as well as resource and budget planning for 2021-2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, we have all been delivering on our remits remotely since March 2020. All face to face activity is postponed until at least August 2021 but we can now see a light at the end of this very long tunnel. So, the purpose of this agenda item is to open a discussion about our future working arrangements to best achieve our goals, in the longer term.
- 1.2. Protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, volunteers and members is our number one priority. This will be at the forefront of any plans we might make. It is also worth remembering that social distancing measures are likely to be with us for some time to come, placing limitations on the number of people that can come together to work, to meet, to engage in activities. So, the focus of this discussion is on how we will operate once all restrictions are lifted. Once we have defined the destination, we can then look to put in place the route to it.
- 1.3. We have a unique opportunity to re-design the way we do (some) things, if it makes sense to, where it would improve our support for our members and delivery of our strategic objectives. The experience of the last year has shown us that some of these new ways of working are more efficient and effective, not least for reaching students who found it more difficult to take part previously.
- 1.4. Although there is still much uncertainty around the recovery from the pandemic, we feel we are at a point where it would be useful to begin to define the new normal for our organisation. This will help us to plan to put

the necessary steps and resource in place to work towards that, as well as to inform our activity and budget planning for 2021/22.

- 1.5. As part of this information gathering, we are currently consulting with staff, via a survey, on future working arrangements, seeking their views on two options. The first is a blended approach that would mean being office based for part of the week and home based for part of the week. The second option is being fully home based with occasional opportunities for coming together in collaborative spaces for meetings and/or activities and events. CEC and Central Committee Representatives have also been surveyed for individual views on future working arrangements associated with their own roles.
- 1.6. Although operating fully remotely in the longer term may have implications for our campus office space, there would be no cost saving from relinquishing part/all of this as our accommodation is provided, free of charge, by the University. However, if some meetings and other events and activities remained online too, the travel, accommodation, catering and other cost savings generated could be used to fund additional services, resources, etc.
- 1.7. To provide a framework for a wider discussion at April's CEC meeting, this paper poses a series of questions. These are just suggestions and you may have others.
- 1.8. **To help us to make the best use of the time we will have together at the CEC online meeting, we would like you to begin the discussion in the forum. This will help us to structure the discussion session around common themes and areas that appear to matter most.**

2. Questions to Consider

To take us on this journey of reflection to inform future planning, we would like you to consider the following questions:

- 2.1. What advantages are there to continuing to operate remotely in the future? What are the disadvantages of being fully remote in the longer term? By "fully remote", we mean that staff will be based at home with face-to-face meetings, activities and events being occasional.
- 2.2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a blended approach to working? This would mean staff being on campus for part of the week with a mixture of online and in person meetings, activities and events.
- 2.3. Thinking about a blended approach, what activities would you choose to stay online and what activities should be face-to-face? Why?
- 2.4. Is there anything we should stop doing, based on the experience of the last 12 months?
- 2.5. Is there anything we have introduced over the last 12 months that we should continue post pandemic?
- 2.6. Are there any new services, activities or events we should consider?

2.7. Are there any tools or resources in which the Association should invest in the shorter term, while we recover from the pandemic, and in the longer term if increased online activity is a feature of the “new” normal?

2.8. We can expect a subvention allocation of £1.9m for 2021-22, of which £1.6m is required to fund staffing costs and on-going contracts. What do you think our funding priorities should be beyond this?

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