

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

19 – 21 July 2019

OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION POLICY & POSITION STATEMENTS

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **comment on** and **approve** the proposed position statements
- ii) **discuss** how these are to be disseminated and used

1. Background

1.1 At the October 2018 CEC, a workshop took place concerning areas on which the Association could consider having high-level policy or position statements. In April 2019 CEC, the ideas emerging from the workshop were brought back to the CEC.

1.2 At April CEC, it was suggested that some draft statements should be agreed. These were on matters relating to the OU that were considered important, but within the Association, uncontentious.

1.3 The suggested statements herein are not intended to be the only such statements the Association will produce.

2. Statements

2.1 The suggested position statements on Recording of Tutorials and Online Delivery are in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively

2.2 The CEC are invited to comment on and approve these suggested statements

3. Use of statements

3.1 The CEC are invited to discuss:-

- How we communicate our position statements to our members
- The expectations of students on committees with regards to use of our position statements

Cath Brown
President

Appendix 1: Draft position statement on tutorial recordings

Tutorials are an important part of their learning for OU students. Many students have expressed to the Association, through formal and informal routes, the value they place on tutorials.

Many students have also made it clear that they feel recordings of online tutorials can be vital for their learning. Whilst it is ideal if students can attend tutorials “live”, a recording of a tutorial has several uses: -

- It avoids a student who is unable to attend missing out entirely on the learning experience
- It enables students to revisit tutorials to support their revision, or if they were behind the study calendar at the time of the tutorial and hence did not gain full benefit at the time
- Students with disabilities may need to be able to pause or revisit sections of the tutorial

The Association also recognises that:-

- There are some students who may feel inhibited from participating fully if their tutorial is recorded
- Some students will have reason not to wish their names to be visible on a recording
- Some tutorials include discussion of sensitive material, for which a recording may be inappropriate.

Accordingly, the Association’s position on the recording of online tutorials is that:-

- At least one recording of each type of learning event should be available to every student on a module
- The recording should in general be of an actual tutorial involving students, since students benefit from hearing the discussion and questions of their peers
- However, there may be circumstances (such as a technology failure) when an actual tutorial recording is not possible; an “empty room” recording would then be appropriate, but this should be informed by the student questions and discussions that took place in actual tutorials, and be structured to promote active engagement.
- It may be appropriate to pause the recording at intervals if very sensitive matters are being discussed, or to allow participants to ask questions they would be reluctant to ask if recorded. However, given the benefit derived from discussion and questions, there should not be an automatic pausing of the recording for all discussion and questions
- Recordings need not be fully anonymised (for example, the tutor may address a student by name) but the recording produced should have participants labelled simply as “participant 1”, “participant 2” etc, rather than by their full names.

- Recordings from a module should continue to be available to any students studying for a resit of that module, or who have a discretionary postponement of that module
- When there is more than one instance of a particular learning event available to each student, at least one of the events should be unrecorded, to allow those students for whom recording is an inhibitor to attend.
- It should be clearly stated in advance which tutorials are designated to be recorded, and which designated to be unrecorded, to enable students to make an informed choice
- For any tutorials that take place in addition to the one recorded and one unrecorded, the decision whether to record lies with the tutor(s) and students attending

Appendix 2: Draft position statement on online delivery

The Association has carried out formal research on student preferences on module delivery [https://www.oustudents.com/uploads/ousa.poweredbygravite.co.uk/Module_Delivery-report%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.oustudents.com/uploads/ousa.poweredbygravite.co.uk/Module_Delivery-report%20(1).pdf) . The recent feedback from our members, through both informal and formal routes, confirm that the views and concerns expressed by the participants in this research are still representative of current students.

It should particularly be noted that online delivery is problematic for:-

- students in rural areas
- students frequently obliged to travel
- students who are only able to access the internet in public places

Electronic delivery, whether online or otherwise, is problematic for:-

- students who have limited access to devices
- students who have some specific disabilities
- students who are obliged to use screens during much of their working day

Additionally, a significant number of students report impaired depth of processing when reading substantial amounts of material on-screen.

In the light of the clear concerns expressed by our members about online delivery, and the categories of students adversely affected specifically the Association's position is as follows:-

- 1 For any module with substantial fixed content (i.e. content that will be broadly the same from one presentation to the next, intended to deliver information, concepts and ideas about the subject matter of the module), that fixed content should be provided to all students, at no additional cost, as hard copy format in addition to electronic versions.
- 2 For any inherently onscreen activities
 - A downloadable, offline version should be provided whenever possible
 - The materials should be structured to facilitate study for students who have only periodic access to devices and to an internet connection
 - The bandwidth required for online activities should be a consideration, to avoid disadvantaging students with poor connections.
- 3 The design of any new module should involve "design for print" and "design for alternative formats" from the start
- 4 If it is proposed that a new module be presented online with no provision of hard copy, even if this is a replacement for an existing online module:-
 - A full justification of this intent should be given during production
 - Appropriate scrutiny of this decision is carried out through governance.