

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

2 – 4 July 2021

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORTS

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **receive** the reports
- ii) **note** that unless this paper is starred for discussion prior to the meeting, printed copies will not be supplied.

Reports submitted by:-

- President (page 2)
- Deputy Vice President (page 5)
- Vice President Administration (page 7)
- Vice President Community (report not available) (page 9)
- Vice President Education (page 10)
- Vice President Engagement (page 12)
- Vice President Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (page 14)
- Vice President Student Support (page 18)
- Student OU Council Member (page 20)
- Area Association Representative (AAR) for England *VACANT* (page 22)
- Area Association Representative (AAR) for Europe *VACANT* (page 23)
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- Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies *VACANT* (page 34)



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Sarah Jones
ROLE:	President
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Working on the undertaking of a Governance review of the Association</i>	
<p>The governance review went for presentation and discussion to CEC in April and to Bot after that. The implementation plan is being put together now to go to BoT in July and hopefully will then be taken forward.</p> <p>The governance review was one of the recommendations that came out of the Culture review that was undertaken. It has been an exciting project that I am hoping will make a big difference to how we can operate as an Association and better serve the students that we represent. It has now been undertaken and completed.</p> <p>This has links across all areas of our strategy and comes directly of the Culture review.</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Opportunities to share the work the Student Association are doing</i>	
<p>Over the last quarter I have had several opportunities to share the work that the association are doing. I have managed to secure a regular spot on Council of about 5 minutes to bring them up to date with what we are doing. I shared that in the 3 months leading up to Council in May Elected student reps attended 800+ meetings and were contacted by 700+ students and put in around 2800 hours! I also shared, alongside Sue McCabe, where we are with our Strategy and the things that we are doing to action the points in the strategy. Having the ability to showcase what we are doing to both Council and Senior Leader Team is pushing the student voice into the highest levels of the university.</p> <p>This links with the Influence and Transform strand of the Strategy</p>	
<i>AREA 3: Regular conversations with PVC-Students around what happens at VCE</i>	
<p>I now have regular meetings with Liz Marr, PVC-Students, to discuss the papers that go to the Vice Chancellors Executive. This really helps to them to get a student perspective on their discussions and it also helps me to have an overview of the direction of travel of the university. I am also having monthly meetings with Tim Blackman, Vice-Chancellor, to share with him what is happening with students and for him to discuss with me anything that is coming up that I may need to know.</p>	

These meetings are valuable to the Association as it raises the profile of what we all do for students and how we can work closer with the University always holding it to account on behalf of our students.

This links with the Influence and Transform strand of the Strategy it also goes towards our mission of making a positive difference for all students. This links with the Inform and Support strand of the Strategy.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?

Approx. 30

ISSUE 1: Graduation Questions

There have been a lot of questions around Face to face Graduations and when they will return. I have raised this in all areas that I can. The answer is that the OU are looking at Spring 2021. This is due to Covid restrictions and being able to book venues. Whilst I appreciate how much students want to attend Graduations the University are trying to be sensible. There have been a few fairly successful Graduations in the interim, all students are still eligible to attend a face to face even if they have attended an online one. As soon as there is further news we will make sure it is communicated with Students.

This goes towards our Inform and Support strand of our strategy and our mission of making a positive difference for all students.

ISSUE 2: Paying students to participate in focus groups and other university activities

This issue was raised at the Education Childhood Youth and Sport Student Voice and Wellbeing Group. Students across the university have the opportunity to get involved in many activities and also receive help from assistance funds. The problem with this is it discriminates students who are on benefits and causes issues for them. I have been in several meetings discussing how this may be solved. I am hoping that in the not too distant future the university will have something called a digital wallet that money will be able to be paid into and the student will be able to access it in a way that is beneficial to them without getting into any issues with benefits.

This goes towards our Inform and Support strand of our strategy and our mission of making a positive difference for all students.

ISSUE 3: EDI Issues

As part of our EDI conference that was held for our reps there was a session on the use of pronouns. Up until this point I really didn't get why this was so important (possibly because I am really happy and comfortable with the pronouns I have she/her). It was raised there and concurred by many students that if you have your pronouns obvious on your email or on your name on zoom it allows those who have had problems with their pronouns to feel more comfortable in sharing them with you. Since then I have been talking with various groups of people about the importance of doing this. I have had quite a few conversations with students about

the importance of this to them so I will keep raising awareness, I have also learnt that it is ok to get it wrong as long as you apologise and learn from it.

This goes along with the underlying EDI values that we have as an Association and our mission to make a positive difference for ALL OU students.



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Ian Cheyne
ROLE:	Deputy President
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Fitness to Volunteer</i>	
<p>This is one of several key areas to be addressed in an effort to minimise problems related to behavioural issues. We don't want to discourage volunteers. At the same time it is essential that all candidates are made aware of what is required of them and the potential harmful effects on themselves should difficulties (involving family responsibilities, personal mental and physical health, and so on) in any way compromise their ability to carry out volunteering activities. We can't alter the fact that everybody is different, and consequently there will inevitably be differences of opinion. A volunteer's ability to work for the Association, and with Association colleagues, is paramount to our success. We know the outcomes when this doesn't happen therefore it is crucial to get the appointment process right from the outset. I feel sure the policies and procedures currently being developed will be a great help in volunteer recruitment.</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Colleagues and their Actions</i>	
<p>On more than one occasion I have stressed the importance of being able to separate people from their actions. It isn't easy, and it has taken me a long time to be able to do this—even now I may occasionally find this difficult. But at the very least <i>agreeing to differ</i> is essential to the harmonious working of the Association—this also simplifies the process of reconciliation. I hope that I can see some progress in this essential area.</p>	
<i>AREA 3: Being where the students are</i>	
<p>Again and again I hear of OU strategies on engaging with students and the claimed need for more surveys, etc. During a recent roundtable session which discussed these questions a very significant question was asked; '<i>do we ever ask students how they want to be asked?</i>'. It sounds too simple. But until we ask the question <i>and</i> pay heed to the answers we will never successfully be '<i>where the</i></p>	

students are'. I am confident that given time and with persistence we will be able to get the answers we need.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?

8

ISSUE 1: Getting on with one another - The Association Governance Review

Area 2 above effectively covers this issue. With the implementation of the new policies on volunteering and the handling of complaints (by this I'm referring to difficulties being experienced by volunteers for whatever reasons) I feel confident that we are on track to ensure that difficulties are either prevented or resolved effectively, without recourse to formal '*fallings out*'! If we then add in the new CEC 'positions' procedures, to ensure that all reps are fully informed on any actual or potentially contentious issues, then we create a framework within which all volunteers can be assured of having the necessary support made available to them.

ISSUE 2: The art of being patient

All these things take time, and not a little self-control. And I freely admit to getting a bit impatient from time to time. But there is a lot to be done. I'm reminded of the woman who was advised by her GP to take up a new hobby, or whatever, to help her through a period of depression. She'd always wanted to be able to play the piano. But she hesitated asking how old she would be by the time she'd learned to play. The GP said the same age she would be if she hadn't started to learn in the first place.

ISSUE 3: How endemic are issues such as those highlighted by the Associate Lecturer Contract problem?

In the wake of the failure to achieve the new AL Contracts agreement I became conscious of a number of areas of OU development activity which have either been significantly delayed or even shelved (at least in the short/medium term). The OU Governance Review has highlighted areas of what may be considered inefficiency or ineffectiveness throughout the committee structure. Without the benefit of informed hindsight I can't be sure to what extent issues have stemmed from the OU's need to catch up because of its own failures which have seen it fall behind other HE providers in many areas. But it seems that a lack of coherent foresight (at least in administrative areas if not in academic/scholarship matters) has become endemic. The Association's own review proposes some structural changes which I can now see as being beneficial. So let's look forward to some all round improvement, as soon as possible.

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Matt Porterfield
ROLE:	Vice President Admin
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Make financial and management information more understandable and useful</i>	
<p>The Finance & Resource team have made significant improvements to the financial reporting to CEC and Board of Trustees and the internal management reporting, credit due to them and excellent leadership from Alison Lunn now she is focused on this area. The budget holders are now getting to grips with the new nominal chart of accounts which provides the improved reporting and I receive regular reports which I discuss with Alison. My main contribution is now challenging anything I do not immediately understand, hopefully anticipating the need for these questions from other Trustees. This has also led to the inclusion in the reports of non-technical explanations to aid wider understanding of some of the complexities. The lockdown has shown savings in some areas of expense allowing funds to be earmarked for other initiatives which support our strategy.</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Positively contribute as a Trustee of the Association, Director of the OUSET charity and a member of the Association leadership</i>	
<p>We now have working groups looking at implementing the Governance recommendations, reforming the Elections process, monitoring our Trading activity and formation of a Finance, Audit and Risk Committee which incorporates the former Investments working group. These groups will be operating over the summer, holidays permitting, ready for the new academic year. Already we are evaluating suggested changes to the election process which will hopefully make it more attractive for new candidates and encourage more students to vote. A timetable for reforming our Governance is being constructed although this has connected dependencies to other initiatives.</p>	
<i>AREA 3: Continually review the Articles and Byelaws of the Association, ensuring compliance and recommending changes if appropriate</i>	
<p>Work continues on encouraging all Societies to become fully compliant with the bylaws, and two new societies have now had their constitutions approved. The Societies Committee and Communities team have been asked to review and provide feedback on the Societies and Clubs sections of the ByeLaws for consideration as part of the Rules Revision process. The scheduled Rules Revision work (every 4 years) is due this year and will have to accommodate</p>	

significant changes to the Articles so the Governance recommendations can be implemented, as well as updating byelaws.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?

Direct contact n/a in this role

ISSUE 1:

The OU has a working group looking at improving student experience for modules starting in October. I am on this group with the FBL FAR. A suggestion has been put forward about reducing the late registration window as students can struggle to catch up and tutors have to provide extra support. VP Student Support has been made aware and we will be monitoring this at the monthly meetings.



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Anca Seaton (Report not available)
ROLE:	Vice President Community
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2020
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
AREA 1:	
AREA 2:	
AREA 3:	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Cinnomen McGuigan
ROLE:	Vice President Education
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Representation</i>	
<p>We are doing really well within the Volunteering and Representation team, building a great sense of community and ensuring that we share concerns amongst ourselves in order to better represent students at all levels of governance. I have been actively involved recently in both the new Tutorials Policy work and in the Academic Governance Review and making sure that students are considered at all times in both of these key areas. Working closely with the Quality Enhancement work that goes on at the university, ensuring that our reps on Boards of Studies are included in any reporting has also been a key progress area for me, I really wanted to ensure that all reps we place on these committees are valued and listened to. We are embedding student engagement as standard and that makes me happy.</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Support</i>	
<p>I spend a lot of my time supporting students in many different ways, whether it is by emailing and signposting to places they can access support, or by arranging a quick chat to keep them engaged and on track to continue their studies. I am always surprised by this side of my role, because I didn't really see VP Education as a very student-facing role, but it is much more relevant to support than you would imagine.</p> <p>Working to establish the Individual Representation pilot will mean much more of this sort of work, but with a focused drive and a range of resources to help support students in need better. And since I stood on a platform of completing this process, I actually can't wait to start getting stuck in. I always hated having to turn students away because we didn't offer one to one support for complaints and the like.</p>	
<i>AREA 3: Community</i>	
<p>I feel really proud of the sense of community that is happening in the Academic Governance Rep spaces, our Central Committee Reps and Senate Reference</p>	

Groups reps and even our Student Experience Links and Central Executive Members will come along to the monthly drop in. We are getting university support as well, as some of the academic staff are using that space to share upcoming projects and plans with the reps for input.

And on the other end of the scale, I help by hosting some community drop ins as well. We do both weekly and monthly writing sessions and the Book Club monthly event I co-host with the FASS Faculty Rep Bev Smit just turned one this month and is going from strength to strength.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this month to ask for support on a specific issue?

About 200-250

ISSUE 1:

Discretionary Postponement has made up the majority of my queries recently, as we come to the end of modules and students are wondering about the impact of this year on their studies, whether they should defer or postpone. What the fee implications are for either route, and that sort of thing. Luckily myself and VP Student Support Alison Kingan have been working closely with the OU to make sure the info is up to date in the Help Centre on all of this.

ISSUE 2:

The students I deal with have been really upset over the news that graduation ceremonies won't be held now until at least next year. We all understand the reasoning, and the governments ever-moving-goalposts on the resuming of big events has to guide our thinking. But it is so demoralising to be waiting years to attend a ceremony. Another thing that myself and Alison have been pushing the OU to make absolutely clear on the Help Centre, which they have now updated with the latest guidance.

ISSUE 3:

I have had a few queries around support for students going through complaints process, and a number of queries around social media – such as bullying and behaviour. Lots of day-to-day niggles about student concerns about their workload, tutors and feedback on work. All of which are relatively easy to signpost or just take a bit of chat to ensure they are clear on things. General stuff.

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Fanni Zombor
ROLE:	Vice President Engagement
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Association Communications work</i>	
<p>Many areas of work are being progressed here that I am leading on. Firstly, development of the new Association Communications Strategy – foundation work on this has been done at the start of the year, but in line with the governance review recommendations and business plans for the next year as well as looking at the CEC priorities, we are now in a good position to develop this piece of work. It will cover stakeholder mapping, a communications matrix and more guidance on how to incorporate communications into projects that are coming up. This work should allow us to communicate more effectively with and reach more students and to support the promotion of and raise awareness of the different projects the Association is working on for students.</p> <p>Secondly, we are working on a slight brand refresh, to make it more consistent and easier to recognise for our members. The last brand refresh was 5 years ago, and with the development of our new website, the shift should be quite smooth and avoid confusion for students.</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Student Voice Week</i>	
<p>Similar to last year, I am taking charge of the organising groups and working with the OU to make Student Voice Week 2021 happen. The initial meetings started in April and involved looking at lessons learnt – some of these were to make the agenda more balanced, to cater for some of our harder to reach students, to space sessions out more and to make better use of advertising so it reaches students further. We are now moving into the stages where the relatively small organising group will be meeting with teams ‘OU-wide’ to encourage them to start thinking about the sessions they would like to put on for students and where they could make the most of listening to student voice as part of projects they are already working on.</p> <p>The aim of this week is always to allow students to make their voices heard directly to the OU and Association in an organised and accessible way to as many people as possible. The aim is to have lots of projects and changes taken forward as a result of the student voice being listened to and ensuring the loop with participating students is closed so they can see the impact and difference they have managed to make in just over a week.</p>	

AREA 3: Association website

Although there hasn't been a lot to update on since my last report, at the time of writing this report, we are now due to sign the contract with our new provider any day now. Planning within the Association has started to move content and data across when the time comes, and I look forward to being part of building our new website. This project has been a high priority for me and the Association since the start of the project, as our website stores almost all information we share with students, so getting it as perfect and easy to navigate for students as possible is key to being able to attract and reach more students.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this month to ask for support on a specific issue?

100

ISSUE 1:

Guidance about extensions for TMAs ahead of final assessment – a surprising number of tutors and students are still not aware of the COVID measures in place (being able to ask for 15 days of extension and tutors having to grant it) so there is a lot of signposting to the help section to do still. Hand in hand with this, lots of students are not aware tutor guidance at the moment is to return TMAs within 15 workings days, so this has to be clarified to students a lot as well.

ISSUE 2:

Discretionary postponement of EMAs/ remote exams – Students were not clear that extensions for these couldn't be granted, and having never postponed myself previously, this is tricky to navigate, as the only information and reassurance I could give them has been to point them to the help centre. Also delays around confirmation from STT regarding requests has caused confusion as students were worried their requests wouldn't be approved (it was always explained these will be granted automatically this year for those who ask). SST will still be dealing with a backlog of requests, but this seems to have calmed down a bit now.

ISSUE 3:

New module registrations and student finance – Lots of guidance given about when student finance will open and how to apply (especially as a continuing student) as well as how module registrations work, particularly for full time students and those who started in a February or April presentation.

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Patrice Belton
ROLE:	Vice President Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (VPEDI)
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<p><i>This quarter was focused on reorientation and refocusing working patterns, by considering key areas where I (as VP EDI and other units I collaborate with or support across the Association; including Student Representatives, (other) Volunteers and EDI Committees) could reduce pressures, unnecessary workloads and unhelpful working patterns, to follow a more structured; Student, EDI and Association focused path. With aims to reconnect us back to the Association Strategy and be accountable to our (2020) EDI Action points; whilst enabling me to connect more with and build-up the EDI Committees and Groups and their outputs on behalf of the Students.</i></p> <p><i>AREA 1 – Self-assessment and Role-accountability</i></p> <p>I believe, If we are not looking internally to critically assess or reflect what impact and influences we may have or add to a problem, that we too become a part of the problem; complacency and stagnancy can only be changed with a change in mindset and individual culture (i.e. taking action (to unlearn poor practices, personal biases and unhelpful ways of working) and, adopting accountability (i.e. taking responsibility for where I fall short and ought to improve, to become a better support and leader).</p> <p>Once I returned to my role in April, I was certain that I wanted to move away from the culture of saying yes to every OU / EDI respective meeting to ensure I can attend those that will have key and/or real-time impact for students [meetings like; <i>Safe-Space Reporting Task and Finish Group</i> – Looking at developing a system to enable Students and Staff to (both report) anonymous and documented accounts of discrimination, abusive behaviour and bullying and more across the OU Community; or the <i>Access and Participation Plan’s Mental Health Declaration for Black Students/Subgroup</i> – Looking at language and communications used across the university, in our interactive spaces and classrooms which could discriminate, isolate, and exclude students from this and other EDI cohorts with protected characteristics).</p> <p>I also attended formal Training and Workshops; i.e. <i>Effective Time Management, GDPR, (some) AdvanceHE Race Access and Success Collaborative Project</i>, in collaboration with OU in Wales (OUiW) and Staff from the wider OU (EDI and People Teams to cover the 4 Nations) and, the Associations’ EDI Conference. All of which helped to equip me further with tools and knowledge-base I am already utilising within OU and Association spaces, but also to ensure I adequately</p>	

continue to reflect, apply and raise the collective EDI Student Voice (not only at the OU but) across the (wider) Higher Education sector.

(Strategy Links: Shared Values – Integrity / Aims – Influence and Transform)

AREA 2 - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Conference

“I truly valued collaborating with the EDI Conference Team, Jiten Patel and Speakers on ‘day 2’ of the Conference. I was also inspired and intrigued by the breadth and depth of content and discussions that took place and, helped to spark personal reflections across the audience. I would have loved to have seen more diverse representation from our Volunteers, Representatives and (wider) Student body...”

To rationalise; I would have hoped more of our volunteers (understood the importance of such a conference and had thus) had made more efforts to attend albeit for shorter intervals if they were time poor at the time). As the Conference was not as well attended as I would have hoped (and whilst reflecting on our collective drive for a culture shift towards inclusion, as an Association). The issue this poses for us, not having the necessary representation in the room, to pursue these difficult discussions (together) as Volunteers and Representatives is, it leaves room for misunderstandings to occur (through a lack of knowledge), harbours opportunities for discrimination to take place (both directly and indirectly) and is counterproductive to our collective drive to improve and live out Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plight. EDI is not an option even when given an option, it’s a bridge to connect us all.

The EDI Conference team and I agreed, we ought to do more (to foster a lead by example culture), particularly, to ensure **We** (the Association including all our Volunteers and Representatives) are working in line with our **statutory obligation to be welcoming and inclusive to all** (Students), by first understanding our individual or collective biases and attitudes which may influence how we work and interact with or offer support to others. As a result, We (the EDI Working Group) are now looking at other opportunities to raise and integrate EDI discussions within the wider Student body and (broader) Association events, starting with ‘Freshers 2021’ and. will pursue annual EDI Conferences to ensure we can all informed, involved, able to move forward together.
We all play a part!

(Strategy Link: Shared Values – All; Aims – All; also point 7 and 14 of EDI Action plan)

AREA 3: Update on representation for Students with Forced Migrant and/or Displaced status

Although we (the Association; namely the Student Support and Community Teams) had previously come into contact with some representatives from the OU (e.g. in Scotland), to discuss this initiative and support the OSTARS Club into fruition, it appeared much of the work across the OU was disjointed (or hit and miss). However, in May, I attended a joined-up meeting and introduction to the **OU’s University of Sanctuary Steering group**, tasked with supporting Students from Forced Migrant and Displaced backgrounds. This initiative now has funding, backing and representation from Marcia Wilson (the OU EDI Dean) and the Vice Chancellor’s Executive. Although it is still early days and, the terms of

reference and membership are in review, perhaps we can now collectively formalise our support systems to 'foster a culture of welcome and inclusion' extended to this underrepresented cohort.

Strategy Link: Shared Values - All; Aim – All

AREA 4: Volunteering Support from the Association Staff and Central Executive Committee (CEC)

This (the OU/Association Community) can often be **a distant and thankless place of work** by design, as at times we don't have opportunities for face to face, video meetings, phone-calls or even plans to connect and collaborate outside of our (joint CEC and Staff) *Microsoft Teams spaces, Emails and formal (but fewer collective) meetings*. Yet as a unit we strive to give matters our all and take on more than some of our shoulders can bare to fight for the rights of students. Having to step away for a month and return with challenges of uncertainty, I needed the support of a dedicated and compassion Staff and CEC colleagues to help me (not only get back up to speed with my work load) but to become more, once I found my Volunteer feet again, which often is a feat and expectation take for granted.

However, a valued part of working as a team (and becoming a strong, supportive and inclusive) leader is helping others up when they have little strength to help themselves up. Hence, I feel it appropriate to publicly extend my gratitude, to the Association's collective, for their patience and kindness to date, when things weren't working as planned behind the scenes for me as I carried out my (VP EDI) role. Specifically, I am grateful to the lovely Staff Member and President (who personally took it on board to help, support and) make room for me with updates, recordings and information from vital meetings I could not attend, so that I could catch up and get back up to speed quickly. Thank you, for being tolerant and compassionate towards me; "it really does take a village to raise some one up(!)" and I couldn't be more humbled, honoured and proud to be a witness and recipient, of such good practice, inclusion and team work; if we start with us perhaps it will radiate more broadly. (You're all phenomenal humans! It's true because I've said it! 😊)

(Strategy Link: Shared Values - All; Aim – All)

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek signposting/ask a question/flag an issue?	22+ (via Facebook/WhatsApp) 8 (via Email) 0 (via Forum)
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Student Contacts and Key Issues

ISSUE 1: Pastoral care during the Pandemic

Students reached out directly; to vent about personal challenges vs the limitations of the OU's support systems (e.g. **inconsistencies with pastoral support, namely from Tutors**, which has decreased during the challenges of the pandemic), as a result more students have been expressing feelings of distress, uncertainty and a lack of motivation towards their work (namely assessments) across various modules. This has been an ongoing issue across the last year and with pandemic fluctuations and OU changes, although this year has seen End of Module assessments go ahead as per the norm. Thus, I was able to raise it again with an OU Director for Student Support. I was reassured that 'training for Tutors

around Mental Health and Wellbeing, is on the way (although (fairly) this may take some time to implement broadly across the Uni); also the OU are presently developing Personal Learning Advisers (PLAs) to help students along in their study journeys, but my knowledge of the details is limited, but I imagine more will be announced in due course (perhaps by the Autumn).

Strategy Link - Shared Values: All; Aim – Influence & Transform, Inform and Support

ISSUE 2: Signposting and guidance

Several students have been reaching out to ask for guidance or signposting around EMAs and postponements, special circumstances applications and funding (due to additional pressures of the pandemic and a lack in motivation). Referring this also to the Director of Student Support, I was informed that, the number of postponements has increased this year, although only within two Faculties. Also, the OU are reflective on this and are adjusting (now – to process and grant any applications that were submitted within the allotted deadline and even if there have been processing delays). Equally, the OU are putting plans in place to increase staff numbers in time for resits and resubmissions in September (starting August) and, are also planning to continue with the Student Assistance Funding (which started in the pandemic), although this will be reformed to a more manageable and considered offering, in due course; that said concrete plans are presently in deliberation within the Working Group (which is a fair and hopeful start).

Strategy Link: Shared Values – Integrity, Openness, Equality & Inclusivity
Aim: Inform & Support

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Alison Kingan
ROLE:	Vice President Student Support
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<p><i>AREA 1:</i></p> <p>I chair quarterly Service Review meetings which generally deal with issues relating to anything we see online / onscreen including the Help Centre and Module forums. These meetings will be expanded in future to include Vice Presidents Education and Engagement and a staff member from the Community Team. One area we received positive feedback about were suggestions we'd proposed about how the OU could help advertise the Association more widely to students. This includes getting the Association's activities mentioned more often on the Help Centre where relevant. We requested to have additional information about our Peer Support Service added to the OU Help Centre and for it to be made more prominent in the section about Mental Health Support. This was actioned and can be found here https://help.open.ac.uk/mental-health-support. Other matters discussed included receiving assurances that lessons had been learnt following the December Sign in / Password changes which saw many students locked out. Another aspect mentioned was being told that in module wide tutorials the presenters / ALs giving the tutorial are able to see accessibility requirements of students who had signed up to that tutorial.</p> <p>These are examples of supporting the Influence and Transform area of the Strategy as well as Engagement if more students become aware of our activities, Groups, Clubs, Societies, and the Peer Support Service.</p>	
<p><i>AREA 2:</i></p> <p>The importance of having a good working relations with staff was in evidence regarding Discretionary Postponement requests. Due to the unprecedented number submitted by students this has had a few knock on effects. I was given notification by OU staff of the message students received when requesting their Discretionary Postponement. I was able to post general information on Facebook about what was happening with Discretionary Postponement requests and obtain quick responses for some students who had specific queries (see Issue 1). This reduced their stress at an already stressful time for them.</p> <p>These are part of the Inform and Support area of the Strategy.</p>	

AREA 3:

For some months I have been part of a group (the rest are OU staff) working on the OU's Student Gender Based Violence / Domestic Abuse / Domestic Violence Policy. The draft policy recently went through the Student Consultation process. The comments from students were generally positive, including about one area where I felt my contribution was particularly telling. The aim is that this policy will become live in the near future. In the meantime, the OU Help Centre has some information for anyone experiencing Gender Based / Domestic violence.

<https://help.open.ac.uk/domestic-abuse-support>

This is fundamentally to ensure that students are aware of support, so is connected to the Inform and Support Strategy section. It also involves the Transform and Influence Strategy section.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?

-

ISSUE 1:

There were a few issues around Discretionary postponement. These include whether students can download / look at exams even if they have submitted a Discretionary Postponement request. Answer is yes for those modules that enable those students to view the exam. However, the Discretionary Postponement request will be cancelled if any part of the exam is submitted. There was also whether there are delays in Discretionary Postponement requests being granted. Answer was that due to unprecedented DP requests being submitted there was a delay in these being processed and granted. Whether a deferral or a Discretionary Postponement would be the better option was asked – this was best answered by the student contacting their Student Support Team.

ISSUE 2:

Issues about exams including some wanting exams or EMAs to be cancelled whereas more seemed to be wanting to be assured these were going ahead. Some students were asking how to find and complete the Special Circumstances forms and what the impact might be on their final module result.

ISSUE 3:

It is not unusual for students to contact me direct with issues about complaints to the OU. My reactions depend on what the issue is. However, a student contacted me fairly recently about an issue they had with their complaint just as our new Individual Representation Service went live. I was able to refer the student to that member of staff rather than having to chase it myself.

Irrespective of whether it is part of the Strategy or not, it is fundamental to this role that I support and inform students.

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Danielle Smith
ROLE:	Student Member of Council
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Strategy Project Working Group</i>	
<p>I have been appointed to the working group tasked with delivering the outcomes for strategy project 4 (student engagement and support) of the Association strategy. At time of writing I was unfortunately unable to attend the first meeting due to my working hours, however have since contributed to offline discussions concerning initial scoping areas, and am looking forward to continuing to participate fully in the group and deliver on this project.</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Associate Lecturer Contract</i>	
<p>Following the announcement at the end of March that the OU would not be in a position to deliver the new AL contract later this year, the Students Association have been engaging with the UCU union and the University to ensure that whilst negotiations are ongoing, our students are not adversely affected by the situation, as many expressed concerns about how this would affect them and their studies.</p> <p>We worked together on several statements and additionally, the President and I, as the two student members of Council, wrote a letter to the Pro Chancellor and the other Council members to express our disappointment at the decision and to ask Council to work with us in ensuring a positive outcome for ALs and students, and to recognise the value that ALs represent to the University and us as students. We received a response from the Pro Chancellor, which has been shared with the student body, alongside our letter, on the Association website.</p> <p>My colleagues and myself continue to work together on this issue. Negotiations are still ongoing to agree interim measures for the staff who have been affected and we are hopeful that a positive outcome will be reached soon.</p> <p>Our tutors are key to our journey as OU students, and many ALs have been touched by the support shown to them by the Association and the student body.</p>	
<i>AREA 3: Elections Review Group</i>	
<p>The Elections Review Group continues to meet regularly. We have been working on several aspects of our election process which we think is in need of</p>	

improvement and are preparing our recommendations to the Central Executive Committee and Board of Trustees for their approval. We have planned some information scoping activities to understand the issues with our current process and to ask for suggestions from students.

VP Admin, Matt Porterfield, and myself, led a very interesting discussion with our team of Central Committee Representatives in May. There was a lot of great feedback on many aspects of the elections and some great points made about things we could do to improve awareness of our elections and the importance of voting in them. I'm very grateful to the reps who participated in that session for their input.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?

3

ISSUE 1:

To report some offensive behaviour occurring in one of the official Association social media spaces (x2 students). This was addressed promptly and referred on to the President for further investigation and action.

ISSUE 2:

Feedback from a student on the current elections process and suggestions for improvement. This was shared with the rest of the Elections Review Group (with permission) and incorporated into discussions at the most recent meeting.



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	VACANT
ROLE:	Area Representative in England
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
AREA 1:	
AREA 2:	
AREA 3:	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	VACANT
ROLE:	Area Representative in Europe
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
AREA 1:	
AREA 2:	
AREA 3:	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	VACANT
ROLE:	Area Representative in Northern Ireland
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
AREA 1:	
AREA 2:	
AREA 3:	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	VACANT
ROLE:	Area Representative in Scotland
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
AREA 1:	
AREA 2:	
AREA 3:	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	VACANT
ROLE:	Area Representative in Wales
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2020
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
AREA 1:	
AREA 2:	
AREA 3:	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Bev Smith
ROLE:	FASS FAR
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1:</i>	
<p>I have been involved with the student awards programme again. These will be awarded to students from the BAME community who have either performed well academically or have performed well under difficult circumstances. The aim is to improve this group's satisfaction and to support inclusivity, and also help retainment. The awards are due to be presented when the final details have been finalised.</p>	
<i>AREA 2:</i>	
<p>I have been involved with the planning of the next Arts and Humanities Speakeasy, to be held on 30th September, though the date is yet to be confirmed. This gives students an opportunity to meet and question staff from all three schools within the faculty. The Speak easy is to have the title 'Your Inclusive Faculty' and it is hoped that we can discuss EDI issues amongst other issues. This is a chance for students to become really involved with both the faculty and the Students Association, as both myself and Billy Docherty will moderate the evening. The event will be advertised on Social Media and module web sites, with students receiving a student focussed newsletter. This event will help to increase engagement and hopefully will engage students to become involved with both the faculty and The Students Association.</p>	
<i>AREA 3:</i>	
<p>I have been continuing to host the monthly FASS Connect online meetup. Although the last one was not well attended I hope that the numbers continue to grow. I was able to answer a few queries and there was general chat about module choices etc. These chats allow students to become aware of the Association and hopefully increase engagement.</p>	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	3

ISSUE 1:

One student had been given conflicting advice about module registration. (Students are advised to follow a particular pathway). This has now been resolved, but the student has had to change to an Open Degree, then change back to her named choice. The matter has been sent to Faculty for discussion. One student who contacted me last month just raised a couple more queries but these have now been resolved.

ISSUE 2:

There were more general enquiries this quarter. Students were unsure about discretionary postponements, and whether there was an option to have extensions for the final EMA. An email was sent out from the faculty to students to clarify these matters. The problems with adobe Connect are still ongoing. These queries were answered in the online drop in's and FASS connect chats.

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Gareth Jones
ROLE:	FAR FBL
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Enhancing the Student Experience</i>	
<p>Work has continued to help enhance the student experience when studying with the OU within FBL. Primarily, this has been through the exploration of extra-curricular opportunities available for students, offering the chance to gain a more rounded experience whilst with the OU and helping foster opportunities to meet other students.</p> <p>One exciting development on this front has been the development of the FBL Student/AL Conference, of which I am part of the planning team. In the last quarter, we have managed to set a date for the conference (11th- 12th October) and have sent out 'save the date' messages to all students and AL's in FBL. The structure of the conference is starting to take shape, with events and speakers being confirmed.</p> <p>Another key push for myself in the last quarter has been to help generate connections between our societies within FBL with the Faculty. Through the use of contacts in each, tentative formal working relationships have been established and it is hoped that this work will bring a more structured offering to students in the near future.</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Embedding Student Voice Within the Faculty</i>	
<p>Work has been taking place over a long period of time to both develop and subsequently imbed a Student Engagement Priorities document within FBL to ensure that the engagement of students within academic process is a 'business as usual' activity and not an afterthought. It also aims to provide consistency across the faculty, ensuring that each section of the faculty provides equal opportunity and shares best practice.</p> <p>As a result of this work, I was able to present the Student Engagement Priorities document, in conjunction with the Student Charter, alongside the Associate Dean for Student Experience and Teaching Deliver to the FBL Teaching Committee in April. This presentation was well received, and as a consequence, the Teaching Committee has committed to an annual review of student engagement across the faculty to ensure that these priorities are being fulfilled.</p>	

AREA 3: Extending reach of Student Voice

One of the more exciting processes that I have had the opportunity to be involved with during the last quarter was to be a part of the OU's external institutional validation process. Alongside the VP Education and VP Student Support, this trial involvement of students on validation panels allows us to bring our unique experiences as a student to what are largely panels consisting of academics.

Whilst the work involved was quite extensive, the insight gained has proven invaluable to me personally, whilst also further demonstrating to the OU the value of student input and am hopeful that this trial project can be rolled out on a more permanent basis in the future.

Student contacts and key issues:

Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this month to ask for support on a specific issue?

100+

ISSUE 1: Pandemic related issues

Questions arising as a result of the pandemic continue, though the actual content of the questions have changed as we move through the academic year and focus changes. Examples of issues include:

- Questions around the discretionary postponement process and consequences.
- Graduation questions
- Extension questions
- Impact on final assessments.

ISSUE 2: Modules starting in D&E Presentation – Enrolment issues.

Despite warnings to the faculty that issues with enrolment on D&E presented modules occur annually in advance (due to the timetabling of presentations), issues again arose. Students missed the final registration date for their next module, with some being provided conflict/false information that led to this.

A fix was put in place that allowed for late registration after conversations with the faculty, though concerns still remain over whether all affected students found a remedy.

ISSUE 3: Essay Mills/Resource Sharing Websites.

Increased prevalence of the advertisement of essay mills has caused some concern amongst students, with advice given on how to manage these interactions on social media.

However, this issue has gone further, with the sharing of a resource sharing website on social media causing a huge amount of concern. On discussing this with the faculty, this has caused some alarm due to the nature of the resources and is currently being escalated and will have wider issues across the OU. Due to the public nature of this report, I will omit details.

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Katie MacFarlane	
ROLE:	STEM FAR	
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021	
QUARTERLY SUMMARY		
Key progress areas:		
<i>AREA 1: Communicating between faculty and student body</i>		
<p>This quarter I have been continuing to find out the subject areas and issues that students are concerned about and ensure these are relayed to the Faculty. I am involved in several committees and working groups where I also raise these concerns and represent views of students, both positive and negative.</p> <p>I will continue to actively listen and relay the student perspective, and will continue to explore additional methods for student's voices to be heard more directly by the faculty.</p>		
<i>AREA 2: Social events for STEM students</i>		
<p>STEM drop-in meetings are now held on a monthly basis from October to June. These events allow for STEM students to come together for a chat with like minded students. The chats are not restricted to STEM subjects, as are a social gathering.</p> <p>Progress is being made on bringing back the PhD presentations, where PhD students give a presentation on their research and are available for a question and answer session afterwards. The next event is being organised for October/November and will be featuring students from the School of Life, Health and Chemical Science. Work is ongoing over the summer to organise presentations from students of the other STEM schools.</p>		
<i>AREA 3: Engage with Student body</i>		
<p>I continue to maintain an active presence on social media channels, and intend to keep this up going forward. I am always available by email, through FaceBook and through Twitter for students to reach out. Going forward I intend to be more proactive and to start regular drop in clinics from October where student's can raise any issues or discuss any concerns they may be having.</p>		
Student contacts and key issues:		
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	50	

ISSUE 1: Availability of chosen module

A student was unable to sign up for their chosen module due to a change in requirements for that module. Student was signposted to who to talk to and guided through the process. As a result the student was able to enrol for their chosen module.

ISSUE 2: Discretionary postponements

Several students had queries regarding discretionary postponements. Talked them through how the process works and how to apply. Signposted to student services where there were issues with requesting a postponement.

ISSUE 3: Delayed return of TMA's

Still receiving contact from several students regarding delayed return of TMAs. Continue to advise the students that if the return period, 15 working days, has passed to contact their tutors in the first instance and then SST if no response from tutor within a reasonable time frame.

CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	Lucy Richardson
ROLE:	FAR OAA
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2021
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
<i>AREA 1: Embedding role within the Open and Access programme.</i>	
<p>This goal is now well on track. Regular quarterly meetings have been established as well as good relations between the Association and programme on a day to day level</p>	
<i>AREA 2: Ensuring Student Voice is heard within Open and Access.</i>	
<p>Progress was made here including getting Central Committee Reps invited to the upcoming periodic quality review.</p> <p>Further to this I intend to work closely with VP Education to connect with Open and Access CCRs and Student Experience Links to gain a wider perspective along with one shot consultations with appropriate Micro Volunteers.</p>	
<i>AREA 3: Greater contact with students</i>	
<p>Freshers - it has been agreed to hold two supported sessions at Freshers with cooperation from Open and Access staff separately for Open and Access sessions for October Freshers.</p> <p>Comms</p> <p>Both myself in my role and the Association are greatly now more visible to Open and Access students via qualification websites and relevant forums.</p>	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this month to ask for support on a specific issue?	0
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	



CEC QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

NAME:	VACANT
ROLE:	FAR WELS
QUARTER / YEAR:	July 2020
QUARTERLY SUMMARY	
Key progress areas:	
AREA 1:	
AREA 2:	
AREA 3:	
Student contacts and key issues:	
Roughly how many students have contacted you direct this quarter to ask for support/seek sign-posting/ask a question/flag an issue?	
ISSUE 1:	
ISSUE 2:	
ISSUE 3:	