

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

2 – 4 July 2021

ANNUAL ANALYTICS

The CEC is asked to: -

- i) **note** annual analytics for the website, The Hoot and social media.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Over the last two years, we have been sharing monthly analytics reports with staff members to evaluate the success of engagement on our platforms. When Leah left the Association in November 2020, these monthly reports stopped for a while when the team was short-staffed. Andy has since provided a six-monthly report, so the reports are back up to date.
- 1.2 We have also shared annual reports with the student leadership team, which have included general information on oustudents.com, The Hoot, Facebook and Twitter. These have enabled us to improve our content and approach, and to gain more information about our audience and their activity on these platforms to support evidence-based decision-making. This report is the latest of these reports, and covers the period from 1 January 2021 – 31 May 2021.
- 1.3 All data is collected anonymously to protect the privacy of our members.

2. Key findings

- 2.1 Our average monthly figures have gone up considerably for our website and The Hoot, and we reached our six-monthly target for our website of 100,000 users (based on the new monthly average figure of 17,398).
- 2.2 A 'like for like' comparison between last year and this year for our Facebook page showed a reduction in our page views, likes and followers, but an increase in our post reach and engagement. Our Twitter account received a huge increase in profile visits (over 530%), mentions and followers.
- 2.3 Posts giving advice and hints and tips performed well on The Hoot, while 'question posts' which invited interaction did extremely well on Facebook. The most popular tweets on Twitter included our statement about the OU

Associate Lecturer contracts, plus posts about our Representative roles, recruitment, support and training.

- 2.4 The majority of users across our platforms identify as female, but increasing numbers of 18 to 24-year olds are engaging with our website content.

3. oustudents.com

- 3.1 Last year's average monthly user figure (January to June 2020) was 14,944, but this year's average monthly user figure (January to May 2021) is 17,398. There has also been an increase in returning visitors (nearly 18% as opposed to 16% last year). The bounce rate – the percentage of visitors who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page – was 58.31%. Last year's figure was slightly lower (56.63%) so we should look to lowering our bounce rate again for next year. Our average session duration has reduced from 2 minutes 8 seconds to 2 minutes 4 seconds, so it would be good to get this back up for next year.
- 3.2 Targets were set last year for 100,000 users (in six months), 2 minutes 30 seconds for average session duration and 50% for bounce rate. We didn't get there with the duration and bounce rate, but our six-monthly figure (based on the monthly average of 17,398) is 104,388, so we did reach that target. This is very encouraging.
- 3.3 More 18 to 24-year olds are using our website than last year, so the figures are now 29% each for 18 to 24s and 25 to 34s. The traditional notion that The Open University is made up of predominately mature students is not true for our website usage. 53% of our users are female – it was 54% last year.
- 3.4 40% of traffic to our website is from organic searching (last year was 42%), which shows that our site continues to be optimised efficiently for search engines. As was stated in last year's report, this suggests that links to our site are appearing at the top (or close to the top) of the search results for people looking for the Association or its activities.
- 3.5 Referrals show you the sites that 'referred' visitors to your site by clicking a link. The MSDS address (which refers to people signing on to OU systems) is by far by the biggest referral source.
- 3.6 As stated in last year's report, in order to ensure our pages and content are accessible and adaptable for all devices, it's important to know the devices our audience is using to view the site. Our monthly figures for desktop and mobile usage has gone up from last year – desktop: 7,773 (last year) / 8,936 (this year); mobile: 6,664 (last year) / 8,149 (this year). However, our monthly tablet figures are down from last year – 550 (last year) / 463 (this year). The proportion of desktop users has gone up from 53.9% to 55.8% as well.
- 3.7 Our most viewed pages have been past exam papers, TOTUM and shop discounts, but it's good that people have been engaging with our Freshers content, accessing our advice on fees and funding, and looking up our societies, clubs and groups.

4. The Hoot

- 4.1 The Hoot launched in April 2019 – the figures given in last year’s report covered 15 months (April 2019 to June 2020). Last year’s views total was 34,948 – a monthly total of 2,330. This year’s total of 42,852 views covers 11 months (July 2020 to May 2021), leading to a monthly total of 3,896, which is a massive increase.
- 4.2 For the views and referral information for The Hoot, we have looked at the last 12 months (as it hasn’t been possible to customise the dates to find out the data from January to May 2021 for a WordPress site). September 2020 and January 2021 were the most popular months for page views (our Freshers periods). December also saw a lot of traffic, with students engaging with our daily Advent calendar posts.
- 4.3 By far the most popular post over the last 12 months was by Rebecca Escott, a Creative Writing student describing her experience of doing a degree whilst working full time. Our top four posts for the period give advice or hint and tips – it’s notable that students are engaging with this content. They are also interested in any written support that we can provide.
- 4.4 Search engines have been our highest referrer over the last 12 months – again proof that people are able to easily find The Hoot when searching for the site. It’s also notable that nearly 4,000 users have accessed The Hoot via the WordPress Android App. This again appears to show that users are seeking out The Hoot, rather than finding it ‘by accident’.

5. Facebook

- 5.1 Unlike last year’s report, Facebook allows users to access information spanning a longer period of time than before (when one could only get information based on the previous 28 days). Our lifetime figures for users of our Facebook page shows that 69% of our users are women, with more 25-34s (both women and men) using the page than any other age group. 78% of our users have been from the UK.
- 5.2 We have had 36,400 likes and 35,861 followers to date since the page was created. This is an increase of over 2,000 likes and 1,500 followers since last year’s report.
- 5.3 Our page reach for the first five months of the year was nearly 60,000, with peaks occurring when some of the most popular tweets were sent (see slide 17), as well as the end of January when Freshers took place.
- 5.4 Our top Facebook post from January to May 2021 was ‘How’re you feeling today OU students?’, which reached 12.4K users. Most of the top tweets during this time were questions put to students – it’s really encouraging to see that our students were engaging with this and interacting with the Association (and with each other). Our statement on the OU Associate Lecturer contracts also got out to many of our students, which is good.
- 5.5 A ‘like for like’ comparison between last year’s report and this year (looking at the last 28 days) shows a reduction in our page views, likes and followers. However, our posts have been reaching far more people, which has led in turn

to more engagement with our posts. It is easy for users to bypass any Facebook home page, but maybe we could do something to make ours more inviting.

6. Twitter

- 6.1 The engagement with our Twitter page has increased hugely from last year. Our profile visits have increased by over 530%, with the mentions and followers increasing healthily too. These figures are based on five months too, whereas last year's report was based on six months, so these are great figures.
- 6.2 It is no longer possible to access audience statistics for Twitter. However, we can see that our statement about the OU Associate Lecturer contracts was the most popular tweet over the last five months. Three of our 'question posts' were in the top ten, and it's good that there has been plenty of interest in our Representative roles, recruitment and training, as well as students becoming aware (or being reminded) of the support available to them.

7. Next steps

- 7.1 The Digital Communications team will continue to utilise analytics to evaluate the success (or otherwise) of our content, and hold meetings regularly to evaluate (and if necessary) modify our planning accordingly on our platforms.
- 7.2 The team will continue to produce an annual report to the student leadership team in order to compare findings each year.
- 7.3 We have begun recently to start putting more content onto our LinkedIn page, so we will provide these figures in subsequent reports.
- 7.4 For any queries, please contact the Digital Communications team.

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