

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

19 – 21 October 2018

OBSERVERS TO CEC MEETINGS

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **discuss** the paper
- ii) **approve** the recommendation in part 3.
- iii) **recommend** if (and how) to move forward with the ideas in part 4.

1. Background

- 1.1 Inviting students to attend CEC meetings as observers is a long-standing practice. Observers may participate fully, except that they may not vote and will generally be expected to leave the room when confidential (“green”) papers are discussed. This is obviously desirable in terms of openness, and often helps inform potential future election candidates.
- 1.2 The way in which observers were selected, and the categories in which observers were recruited, have changed over time due to alterations in Students Association structures (for example, the removal of the English regional assemblies).
- 1.3 The approach used during the last CEC is detailed in the paper brought to the July 2017 meeting (paper 7/17/11) – a copy is attached as Appendix 1

2. Reasons for proposed changes concerning student observers

- 2.1 Whilst the principles of the July 2017 paper are undoubtedly sound overall, I am proposing some amendments.
- 2.2 The reasons for the proposed amendments are:-
 - To make the recruitment of observers an easier process
It is necessary - to specify who should decide which observers come, in the event of too many applying. But it is easier if any member of the CEC can suggest a possible observer, and may well increase our reach

- To reduce the total number of observers at any given CEC, whilst maintaining the number of observer places overall.
This is because if there is too high a concentration of observers in one meeting, there can be a tendency for them to interact less with CEC members and to have an impact on the nature of the meeting (beyond their welcomed individual contributions)
- To be less prescriptive about numbers within categories of observer, whilst maintaining a diverse selection.
This is because not all places in a given category were necessarily filled, and so greater flexibility should facilitate more students being able to take advantage of the opportunity

3. Proposed approach for selecting student observers

3.1 Frequency

No student to be invited as an observer if they have previously attended a CEC meeting, as an observer or member.

In exceptional circumstances the CEC may decide to invite an individual for a second occasion when there is a specific reason for their presence.

3.2 CEC meetings involved

Observers to be invited to attend any CEC meeting except the initial autumn (October) meeting

3.3 Total number of observers

The total number of observers per academic year is limited to 20, with a maximum of 8 at any one meeting

3.4 Categories of observers

The invited observers during an academic year should include the following:-

- a. One from the Disabled Students Group
- b. One from Plexus
- c. One nominated by the Societies Committee
- d. One studying in each Faculty, and one studying the Open programme (5)
- e. One from each UK Nation, and one from outside the UK (5)

However, these categories may overlap – for example, a Scottish student who is studying in FASS would count in d) and e)

Other observer places may be filled as deemed appropriate.

3.5 Advertising the opportunity to be an observer

This should be done 2-3 months in advance of the relevant meeting, and the routes used include (but not be limited to) the Association website, social media and individual contacts.

3.6 Selection of observers

In the event that more observers wish to attend than spaces are available, priority should first be given to students who have some history of activity within the Association. In the event this is not sufficient to make the selection, a panel of at least 3 CEC members, led by the Deputy President, will be convened and asked to make the decision.

4. Non-student observers

4.1 The paper of July 2017 discussed the possibility of inviting non-student observers, such as:-

- External members of Council
- University central staff
- Associate Lecturers

4.2 I would invite the CEC to discuss the merits or otherwise of this, and if inviting such observers is considered desirable, to suggest some criteria and approaches.

4.3 Two points of information:-

- unless specifically excluded, someone in any of these categories who is also a student would be eligible to attend as a student observer, should they so wish
- the AL Assembly do often invite a student observer to their face to face meeting in November, so that might possibly be considered a case for our reciprocating

Cath Brown
President