

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

19 – 21 October 2018

MAGAZINE REDEVELOPMENT

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **note** plans to redevelop and relaunch the Association's magazine.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 For the duration of its publication, OU Students magazine has been a proven successful method for delivering articles, news and opportunities to OU students. However, it has become clear that major redevelopment of the magazine is required to ensure it continues to be effective and in line with trends in technology and the digital world. We believe a move to a website magazine format similar to many student unions is the best course of action.

2. Why development is required

- 2.1 Click-throughs - Over the last few years, readership of the magazine has dropped dramatically. Whilst the Winter 2016 edition received 55,769 click-throughs, the Winter 2017 edition received 11,736, a trend that has continued in the following editions with click-throughs sinking to as low as 7,277.
- 2.2 Current and projected digital trends - Mobile traffic to our website has grown by 12% since 2016 and shows no sign of decreasing - today mobile devices account for 42% of all traffic. It's clear that our content must be optimised for different devices. As such, PDF delivery of the magazine content is counterintuitive to encouraging readership as it is difficult to read and navigate through on mobiles and some tablets.
- 2.3 Insights - In the current format, it's difficult to find out about how students are interacting with the magazine beyond clicking through to it. This means we have no accurate way of measuring if all the articles are read by students and cannot strategically include similar content to encourage them to read more of the document.
- 2.4 Space and content type - We are currently limited in how much content we can include by the confines of the page size and the length of the magazine.

As interest in contributing to the magazine from students, volunteers and staff grew, the length of the magazine expanded to 48 pages – a deterrent to encouraging readership. Keeping the document to a reasonable length means that the most time-pressing content is chosen for publishing – a consequence of which is that editions of the magazine can appear dated soon after distribution and that much of the content is of a promotional nature.

3. Next steps

- 3.1 Platform - In terms of platform, we have identified three realistic options: a microsite with the current Association website provider, building a brand new website with a different provider or using a magazine/blog curation service with a custom theme. The latter option is significantly cheaper, offers the most potential to customise and a quick turnaround, and has been identified as the most ideal solution. After comparing various services, the provider we are most likely to select is WordPress. It is a well-known provider which serves equivalent customers such as Cardiff Student Media and is used by Nottingham University to host their student magazine.
- 3.2 Vice President Media and Campaigns and the Digital Communications team are planning a workshop which we expect to hold at the end of January. This will give members of the Central Executive Committee a chance to feedback on plans and shape the format of the magazine.
- 3.2 The winter 2018 edition will be the last PDF magazine. Students will be made aware of this via an article in the next edition. There will be no spring 2019 edition to enable work to be carried out on the redevelopment project with the aim of launching in April 2019.
- 3.3 Graham Healing, Learning and Teaching Development Manager (Evaluation) has offered to work with us free of charge to ensure accessibility and usability of the website. We will be seeking additional external consultation on this if required.

4. Further updates

- 4.1 We will keep representatives up-to-date with the project and share progress as it becomes available.
- 4.2 If you have any questions, please contact Fanni Zombor or Heather Bloomer

Fanni Zombor, Vice President Media and Campaigns
Heather Bloomer, Digital Communications Officer