

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

19 - 21 October 2018

RESEARCH STRATEGY CEC WORKSHOP

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **Discuss** this paper as part of a workshop.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our research work informs decision-making within the Association and explores topics related to the student experience. The Research Strategy is being developed as part of aim L8 of the Association's Strategy (2017-2020): *'To further our approach to evidence-led decision making'*.
- 1.2 The Research Strategy will set out a clear mechanism to prioritise research projects, support decision-making and representation, and raise awareness of research within the wider student community. The five aims outlined in this paper will inform this document, and CEC input into these is invited as part of this workshop.

2. Aim 1: Prioritisation of research projects

- 2.1 *To set out a clear mechanism to prioritise research projects:* Aspects of the Association's work, students' experience with the Association, and topics related to their study are all areas that we have explored as part of our research work. Examples include surveys such as the Staff Awareness Survey, the recent Volunteering Research Project, and the Module Delivery Project. Our research work also supports various surveys and evaluations within the Association, and undertakes full projects on specific topics.
- 2.2 The workshop discussion will focus on setting up processes for prioritising topics, looking at long-term and short-term research projects, and identify mechanisms through which the wider student community can get involved in our research work.

3. Aim 2: Informing decision making

- 3.1 *To enable informed decision-making within the Association:* Research projects exploring different aspects of the Association's work help us improve the support we offer to our student members. The findings and recommendations from the recent Volunteering Research Project, for example, will inform how volunteering opportunities and support are developed. The workshop discussion will focus on the kind of topics that CEC members would like to explore with such research (this could be in relation to their role or a strategy item).

4. Aim 3: Representation

- 4.1 *To enable our student volunteers to represent OU students at the university and national levels:* The Module Selection and Module Delivery research projects explored topics specific to students' study experience. These projects offer student representatives an evidence base to draw on when discussing these topics, and support the Association's academic representation work. The workshop discussion will focus on ways to identify related topics for further research, and how we can best support the work of our student representatives.

5. Aim 4: Wider HE Sector

- 5.1 *To engage with other organisations within the wider Higher Education sector and further our understanding of HE issues:* We have taken steps to network with the wider HE sector, such as visiting other student unions and presenting our work at the NUS Membership Services Conference. The workshop discussion will invite suggestions for how we can build on this work, and the ways in which it will help us engage with the wider Higher Education landscape.

6. Aim 5: Research Communications and Engagement

- 6.1 *To engage the student community in our research work and disseminate research findings in fresh and innovative ways:* We are always exploring ways to make our research communications more engaging, using formats such as research videos and engaging students on social media. With the new Student Voice Researcher role, we are also offering students the opportunity to contribute and work on themed projects. The workshop discussion will focus on ways to raise awareness of research at the Association and encourage the wider student community to get involved and shape our research work.

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