

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

25 – 27 October 2019

CONFERENCE FUNDING OPTIONS

The CEC is asked to: -

- i) **decide** on a package for funding OU Students Association's Conference 2020.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. At the last Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting in July 2019 paper number **07/19/20** was presented which set out the background, objectives and options for funding conference (Appendix B).
- 1.2. Following feedback from the CEC, a further assessment was carried out which reduced the number of options to three packages which look at both reducing cost and reducing attrition.
- 1.3. This report sets out the three preferred packages and asks that CEC make a decision on which to pursue for conference funding.

2. Packages for consideration

- 2.1. The three packages put forward for consideration are:
 - Refundable deposit to attendees and retain the current number of student places
 - Voluntary contribution and retain the current number of student places
 - No charge for student places, but reduction of total number of student places
- 2.2. Option details and examples are outlined in appendix A.
- 2.3. The Day Ticket option is outlined in Appendix A. Following further consideration this is not considered a viable option for Conference. It is not appropriate to charge students for the business part of Conference. Although this option would reduce accommodation costs, it is unlikely to positively impact the attrition rate. In addition, day tickets do not fit with the conference programme due to the timing of key business.

3. Sponsorship

- 3.1. In July 2019, it was agreed by the CEC that the students Association should seek sponsorship for the conference 2020.
- 3.2. Sponsorship is applicable to all options outlined in this paper and is therefore considered separate. We are currently pursuing sponsorship opportunities.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1. Package 1 - Refundable deposit to attendees and retain the current number of student places is the recommended option for funding conference 2020.
- 4.2. This option is recommended as it will continue to retain current student numbers whilst reducing the drop outs of registered delegates and contributing to the cost of those delegates that do.
- 4.3. In addition, we will further explore the options of over and under booking of the accommodation and catering.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. The CEC to provide a decision on whether to proceed with package one, two or three.

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Appendix A. Options for consideration

Package	Description	Example	Benefit/Cost
Package 1 (Recommended) Refundable deposit to attendees and retain student places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deposits not charged until eligibility for attending conference is checked • Delegates charged refundable deposit when ballot results are announced. • Deposit only refunded to conference attendees, or when notifications of cancellations are received • Option for delegate to donate deposit to conference. • Exemptions 	<p>In 2018 there was 43 (12%) drop-out and non-attendees. At a non-refundable deposit of £25, this would cover £2,225 of delegate costs.</p> <p>In 2018, 90 cancellations were processed.</p>	<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of drop outs • Reduction of non-attendees • Small amount of costs covered • Stronger cancellation T&Cs • Reduction of resources wastage <p>Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased admin cost • Reduced interest • Costs associated with processing fees • Limited impact on overall conference cost
Package 2 (not recommended) Voluntary contribution and retain student places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students to make a voluntary contribution to the cost of conference. • Contribution values suggested at registration i.e. £25. • Students can define their own contribution amounts. 	<p>Upon registration students are offered voluntary contribution of recommended rates, but it is not mandatory.</p>	<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives students opportunity to pay for what they feel conference is worth to them • Does not disadvantage students that are financially challenged • Does not reduce interest in registrations <p>Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to predict student contributions that are not guaranteed • Costs associated with processing fees • Students may end up paying different amounts which may cause controversy • Difficult to set student expectation when paying upfront
Package 3 (not recommended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are not charged for conference • Cost reduction for travel, accommodation and catering 	<p>Reduction of places by 20% (from 377 delegate places to 300 delegate places) is likely</p>	<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Staff time distributed appropriately

No charge for student places and reduction of student places		to achieve savings in the region of £28,500.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined programme and planning of activities <p>Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer available places to delegates may lead to disappointment
Day Tickets (Not viable option)	Delegates specify whether they would attend the full weekend or specific days. Tickets (free or charged) are allocated per request.	No income is generated, however 30% should attend for only one conference day, and this would make an accommodation saving of approximately £24,500.	<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for substantial cost saving on accommodation and catering Gives flexibility to students who could not commit a full weekend, reducing drop-outs <p>Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes conference planning and event participation more complex (e.g. who will get right to vote on business) Need to agree and publish conference programme earlier to ensure transparency to delegates planning a day trip
Sponsorship (being pursued, regardless of overall funding package)	Identify and engage with corporate sponsorship to get contribution to overall conference budget.	Sponsorship packages could be offered which would include branding, exhibition stands, workshops, speakers and refreshments.	<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for substantial cost savings on all conference activities Develop new relationships with 3rd parties that benefit the SA in other ways <p>Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsors may be overly demanding May take away from overall 'SA' experience Needs careful selection for social, political and economic reasons