



CEC 10/21/2

OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

8 - 10 October 2021

REPORTS FROM OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS

C E C is asked to:-

- i) **receive** the reports
- ii) **note** that unless this paper is starred for discussion prior to the meeting, printed copies will not be supplied

Reports submitted by:-

OU PRIDE

Due to the resignation of the Chair, there is no report from the Disabled Students Group (DSG)

Central Executive Committee (CEC)
September 2021
REPORT FROM OU PRIDE

1. Committee Updates

The OU Pride committee currently stands at 2 members, both elected positions. During the last period June - September we lost 2 members from the committee, one due to work and study commitments meaning they no longer had the time and one due to ill health. Committee meetings were held on the following dates:
15th July – specifically planning our Pride event
17th August
9th September

2. Group Membership

We currently have 723 members registered via OUSudents.com which is an increase of 84 from the last quarter.

The numbers are growing due to a printed leaflet the association had added to all the new books going out. This is very much appreciated! Our aim remains to continue to grow this number, with a focus on new and returning students who may not be aware of our existence yet.

We are regularly reaching out to our membership via the forums and Facebook asking them to join in and asking for ideas on events we can run, in fact we have a competition running at the moment with the person with the best idea receiving a reward and being involved in the running of the event. We hope this will encourage others to get involved with the events.

3. Communications

We currently have 635 members on our closed Facebook group, an increase of 113 from the last quarter. We have declined 2 membership requests between 12th August and 8th September due to missing answers to the membership questions, in each case the individual was sent a message advising why and inviting them to try again if they agree with the membership 'rules'.

Of these members, 541 were active members between 12th August and 8th September 2021. This number continues to grow with more of our members becoming, and staying, active members.



This can be attributed to the regular daily posts on the platform with a mix of news and fun items all with their own #.

We continued this trend over the traditional summer break.

We also saw a lot of activity on our page and forum due to the Gender Critical Research Network, more on that to follow.

Our posts currently have an average reach of between 300 and 400 and an average engagement of between 30 and 60.

The forums have been a bit quieter over the summer period, but this has started to get busier with new students joining and saying 'hello'.

Our Discord server has also continued to grow with 68 people now assigned to the server. This medium has been used for members to make friends and generally chat.

We have 4 main channels; general, make-new-friends, lgbt-news-and-issues and resources. The news and issues channel has proven popular and there is usually a few members chatting each day.

4. Events & Activities

Our regular events are:

Drop-In – a chance for members to join us online, meet the committee and have an informal chat:

25th June

30th July

The drop-in was only 1 or 2 members through June and July so we cancelled the August drop-in to allow the committee to have a rest.

Monday Morning Rise and Shine

7th June

5th July

We did not have any members join either of these but we have put this down to the summer holidays. We plan to try this event for 2 months after the modules start back, then we will review and decide whether to continue.

OU Pride Book Club – a book club where the book is written by a queer author or has strong queer representation within the book:

22nd June

27th July

We did not have any members join either of these but we have put this down to the summer holidays. We are changing how this event works slightly, with 8 weeks between each event to allow more time for people to read the book etc.

OU Pride 'Have Pride'

We ran a Discord disco on 26th June and had 27 participants join.

Everyone who registered for the event were sent a pack with face paints, a Pride Flag and OU Pride stickers.

We had a minutes silence to mark friends or family we had lost throughout the year. We had music playing, a talent show and people were generally chatting.

Towards the end of the event we started playing games and this actually continued until 2am!

We received a few emails of thanks which was lovely and this is definitely something we will do again.

I know at the minute there is a lot going on that's negative and I just wanted to put something positive.

Last night after an awful day at work I returned home to find a padded envelope in my door. It was the OUPride pack for the event that's coming up. The bits that are in it are awesome and it brightened up my day. Thank you so much to the whole team who are working hard



Some other feedback received was due to the medium we used and this is something we will take on board and try Teams next time.

During this period there were a few major events in our calendar, with the main one being Pride Month (June).

To mark this we had a number of social media posts with definitions, games for cheesy Pride anthems, educational pieces

CARE.COM

How To Explain Pride Month And Lgbtq Rights To Kids

Any time is a good time to talk to kids about what it means to be L...

And sharing support groups such as Mind, Kaleidoscope Trust and Stonewall.

We were asked to take part in a show of solidarity with our trans and non-binary students and teachers. We were asked to submit pictures of ourselves holding a trans banner or flag and this was collated into one big picture



July was non-binary awareness week (11th – 17th), with International Non-Binary Peoples day in the middle of this week (14th).

We used this time to educate on definitions and pronouns, with a shout out asking people to put their pronouns on signatures to try to 'normalise' this.

Lyndsay also attended a meeting to discuss the possibility of managing an event during Student Voice Week. It has been agreed that OU Pride should definitely have a space here.

Lyndsay attended the EDI Working Group workshop which was excellent. We discussed what can be done in the EDI space to support our student base.

It was very helpful to give OU Pride a voice and let us shape how we move forward to create the most supportive space for our members.

We have the following events planned for the next period:

Freshers 'OU Pride and the 3 W's' – 22nd September

Book Club – 12th October, 14th December

Drop-In – 22nd October*, 26th November

Monday Morning Rise and Shine – 4th October, 1st November

Halloween Fancy Dress – 31st October,

The Halloween Fancy Dress event will be similar to our OU Pride Have Pride event, a chance for our members to chat, play games and with a prize for the best dressed!

*Our October Drop-In has a special guest, Zoe Clayton, who is coming to talk to our members about the new Safe Space Reporting System. This will be heavily advertised in the coming weeks.

Lyndsay was unable to attend the latest Group Chairs meeting with Patrice Belton (26/07) due to work commitments however did manage to catch up with Patrice afterwards.

We have a few major events coming up over the next quarter:

Bisexual Awareness week runs between 20th and 26th September. We have posts scheduled on education and famous bisexual faces. This week coincides with our Freshers event so we will be using this event to show what we do.

20th October is National Pronouns Day

26th October is Intersex Awareness Day

13th – 21st November is Student Voice week which we have a place in

13th – 19th November is Transgender Awareness Week which culminates in Transgender Day of Remembrance on 20th November.

1st December is World Aids Day

5. Student issues & challenges

During this quarter we encountered a major issue for our members and the wider LGBTQ+ community.

A group of academics associated with the Open University created a Gender Critical Research Network in June, coinciding with Pride month.

This created deep unrest, worry and stress for my membership. Our Facebook page and forums were extremely busy and fraught, and the membership demanded action from ourselves.

We set up a survey to get our members opinions on whether that changed how they felt about the open university, and we created an open letter and invited our membership to sign.

At present there are 183 signatures on there.

Lyndsay has attended numerous meetings with OUSA and staff networks to discuss what we can do regarding this.

Meetings were held on:

22nd June

29th June

6th August

7th September

We encouraged our members to call Student Support and speak to a Gender Identity Champion if they were affected by this issue. Over 40 students have used this service. We are currently organising an interview with a Gender Identity Champion to further highlight this service.

Whenever there have been pertinent updates, we have been posting these on our social media spaces.

A number of members have said they no longer want to study with the OU due to the handling of this issue and one of my committee has stood down, partly due to their mental health but the handling of this has not helped.

We have ensured that all posts to our social media is moderated to prevent any rules being broken which could cause upset to anyone on either side of this issue.

We have tried to balance keeping our membership informed with giving them something else to focus on.

This issue is continuing but due to various ongoing complaints we will not see any major updates in the foreseeable future. This has been fed to our membership.

Whilst this issue has been difficult and stressful to manage this has increased the focus for OU Pride and brought people to us who were not previously aware we existed.

6. Any other initiatives or updates

We have been approached the OUStudents Community for our membership to take part in the EDI Freshers event, separate to our Freshers event.

Our membership were asked for anyone who would be willing to be interviewed about their study experiences within the OU.

It has been another quiet quarter with all our membership taking a well-deserved break. The committee took this opportunity to also take a break over August.

The committee have started putting together our pack for Freshers, using the opportunity to show what we do and what support we provide.

We also have events planned up until December and have started thinking about a bigger event towards the end of the year.

With the 2 departures this quarter we have started to think about changing the structure slightly and then co-opting 'mini-posts' to help with day-to-day things such as social media and member engagement.

We are going to wait until the new modules have started and people are settled into a routine before proceeding with this.

Lyndsay Thomson

Chair

For and on behalf of OU PRIDE