

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

8 – 10 October 2021

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The C E C is asked to:-

- i) **note** this regular report from the Board of Trustees

1. There is a requirement under the Articles of Association for the Board of Trustees (BoT) to provide a report to the CEC at each meeting. This report is intended to provide the following:
 - a) a formal opportunity for CEC members to raise any questions arising from the minutes or other matters relating to the role of the Trustees, and
 - b) the opportunity for Trustees to raise any specific items with the CEC or report on progression of any non-routine matters.
2. The Board met on 27 July 2021 via Microsoft Teams. The meeting minutes can be found via the link [here](#).
3. The Trustees received the Chief Executive's report. The Chief Executive highlighted a discussion which had taken place at the previous meeting and asked the Board for formal agreement that the existing Investments Working group could assist the Head of Finance and Resources with drafting the Terms of Reference for the new Finance, Resources and Risk sub-committee. The Board confirmed their approval and noted that the draft Terms of Reference would be presented at the October Board meeting for approval.
4. The Chief Executive then moved on to the next section of his report which considered the Association's approach to student face to face activities after the end of July 2021. The President and Chief Executive had consulted within the organisation and reviewed the external situation. They proposed that student face to face activities should not resume until Spring 2022. Many Trustees were in disagreement with this proposal, outlining the importance and necessity of face to face events for students, and a strong desire to return to a level of normality. Following lengthy discussions, the Trustees agreed a position of no student face to face activities until at least December 2021, when the Board would review the position again with an expectation of some return to face to face activities.

5. Due to the vacancy for an External Trustee, the Chief Executive was keen to start recruitment and therefore proposed a number of considerations. He proposed that the Board should look to address the deficit in Board representativeness and diversity as highlighted in the Governance review by following through on the Association's EDI agenda and making a firm commitment to seek to appoint a Black or minority ethnic Trustee. As part of this, he expressed a concern that the appointment panel for this vacancy should include someone from a diverse background and he proposed that the Board invite VP EDI to join the panel to ensure an inclusive process. In addition, he proposed that a Trustee with digital skills would be an appropriate area of knowledge to bring in at Board level. This had been a gap in the recent work to procure the website and webstore, and it would be beneficial to have on Board to help with further digital developments in the post-Covid situation. The Board accepted the proposal to seek someone with digital skills, however they also recognised a desire for a Trustee with HR or culture change knowledge as a direct replacement for the recent expertise lost. These were agreed as the two areas of skills to seek in an advertisement. There was a lengthy debate on the issue of seeking a Black or minority ethnic Trustee. Trustees agreed to focus on reaching out to Black and minority ethnic candidates but not to exclude applications from other backgrounds. They also agreed with the Chief Executive's proposal to ask VP EDI to be part of the selection panel.
6. The Chief Executive then introduced the draft Implementation plan for the Governance Review recommendations on behalf of the Governance Review Working Group. This followed the action at the previous meeting and presented the implementation plan which had been prepared by the Working Group. There was a lengthy debate around some elements, with the Appointments Committee recommendations in particular, and some of the Student Leadership and Representation structure elements. Trustees approved the draft implementation plan to be put into delivery, with the exception of the recommended work around the Appointments Committee which was not agreed to proceed at this time but would be subject to further discussion. The Trustees further agreed to plan for Conference taking place in January 2022, subject to a go/no-go decision at the October Board meeting. The Trustees then agreed to have an additional Board meeting in December 2021 to approve the amendments to the Articles and the resolutions for Conference. The Trustees agreed the proposed approach to stakeholder communications to announce the decision to proceed into implementation. Finally, the Trustees noted the risk assessment and mitigating actions, particularly the capacity constraints that delivering this work would have for other strategy and business as usual activities.
7. Trustees then considered the proposed budget. This proposed plan assumes some resumption of face to face activity, and as a Conference year the expenditure will be up to £100,000 more than the income budget. The Head of Finance and Resources proposed a staff budget of just over £1.6million for 2021/222. This is an increase of £214k on the current year due to the proposal of several additional temporary roles in the Association staff team to support the Governance Review implementation, Conference delivery and website delivery among other aspects. Trustees approved the proposed staffing changes presented by the senior management team. Following further presentation from the Head of Finance and Resources, the Trustees also approved the proposed allocations for core operating costs, for projects and other activities and agreed to further consider a donation from reserves to OUSET, subject to a new

strategy being in place for OUSET developed by the OUSET Trustees. Finally, Trustees approved the contingency budget of £34k.

8. The Chief Executive introduced the Strategy Performance Report in the absence of the Strategic Projects and Change Coordinator. The Trustees received the Strategy Performance Report.
9. The Head of Finance and Resources updated the Trustees on the financial position as at the end of June. She expected the Association to end the year with a surplus of income over expenditure of c.£503k, taking the carry forward reserve to £1,080k. Trustees thanked the Head of Finance and Resources for her hard work in putting this together.
10. The Chair and External Trustee left the meeting, with the President assuming the Chairing of the meeting, to allow the rest of the Trustees to consider the proposal to renew their terms to 31 July 2023. The Trustees approved the renewal of both of their terms. This item concluded the business for the 27 July meeting.
11. On the forums, Trustees were updated on the recovery planning situation for the staff team. They were made aware of the analysis of the findings from the latest staff survey and informed by the Covid Recovery Group of the planned trial which will consist of blended working with staff working a minimum of one day a week from the office. The trial is intended to last for around 6 months before making decisions about the long-term situation. The Chief Executive outlined that he would update Trustees again when this trial is due to launch following ongoing work with the OU's teams.
12. Staffing matters: The last quarter has been extremely full on with various successful appointments. The Volunteering and Representation team has seen some changes, with Reiss Miller leaving her role as Events and Projects Officer to become the Conference and Association 50th Project Manager on a secondment to the end of 2022. Emily Cox has been successfully appointed as Events and Projects Officer to cover Reiss Miller's secondment. She will join on 27 September. Danielle Cafaero has been appointed as the Volunteering and Representation Officer, replacing Allan Musinguzi, and will start on 11 October. The Digital Comms team have also seen some changes. James Phillips left the Association on 29 July to start a new role in Silverstone's volunteering team. Ciara Linehan has been appointed as the Digital Communications Media and Admin Assistant, following the resignation of James. Kate Dungate is due to go on maternity leave on 30 September and Heather Bloomer, as of 20 September, has stepped up into this Head of Digital Communications role on a maternity cover contract. Subsequently, Gabby Willis has accepted an offer to be the Digital Communications Officer and will be starting on 11 October. Following approval from the Trustees for an additional temporary Digital Communications Officer, Hannah Prue has been offered a part-time role to provide further support to the team and we are currently awaiting references before confirming this appointment. Finally, Linda Aradi will take up the new part-time role of Projects Officer (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and will join the Association on 12 October. She will join the newly re-branded EDI and Student Welfare team, which replaces the previous Student Support function with recognition for their widened remit in recent months.

The first round of interviews for the position of Projects Officer (Student Community) were not successful, however, we were able to appoint in a second process and Georgia Demopoulou has been offered the role. Again, we are just following up on references etc before the appointment will be confirmed. We were unfortunately unable to appoint to the Head of Policy and Public Affairs role and this has gone back out to further advert.

11. The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Tuesday 12th October.

Rob Avann
Chief Executive