



OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Central Executive Committee (CEC)

3-5 December 2021

Annual Membership Survey 2020 – a closer look at culture

The CEC is asked to:-

- i) **Receive the findings from the closer look at the culture results from the Annual Membership Survey 2020 (appendix 1)**
- ii) **Receive this paper with feedback from the Student Voice Week focus group**
- iii) **Discuss results and create a plan to implement changes**

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Following the results of the Annual Membership Survey 2020 at the July 2021 CEC meeting, the Vice-President of Engagement (Fanni Zombor) commissioned a deeper look at the culture results (question 25 of the survey).
- 1.2 A deeper look at the culture results was undertaken by the Research Assistant (Rebecca Coster) and discussed at a Student Voice Week focus group with students on Saturday 13 November.
- 1.3 A copy of the focus group presentation can be found in appendix 1. Discussion point 1 is referred to in 4.3 of this paper, discussion point 2 is referred to in 5.4 and discussion point 3 is referred to in 6.3.

2. The culture question

- 2.1 The survey questions asked students to let us know 'how they feel about the Association', giving us a response of 'strongly agree', 'agree', neutral, 'disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'not sure' to 5 key statements.
- 2.2 The statements were as follows:
 1. I feel the Association contributes in a positive way to my student experience
 2. I feel well informed about the activities and opportunities provided by the Association and I know how to get involved
 3. I find the Association events and spaces are friendly, caring and collaborative
 4. If it easy to get in touch with the Association

5. I understand how the Association works with the University

3 The focus groups

- 3.1 We invited students to attend a focus group to take a closer look at the culture statement results.
- 3.2 18 students signed up to attend the focus group and 4 attended.
- 3.3 Focus group attendees were asked to comment on 3 discussion points relating to the culture statement. All comments were anonymised.

4 Obtaining a more definite response

- 4.1 An average of 29.18% of survey participants responded with a neutral reaction and 25.24% responded with 'not sure'. Neutral/not sure are vague responses to the statements and could potentially be viewed as a negative response.
- 4.2 We need to see a shift from the vague to the more definite and we asked students in the focus group 'what would you like to see in the survey to help reduce the amount of neutral/not sure results?'
- 4.3 Students in the focus group suggested the following
 - 1. Remove the neutral option from the survey
 - 2. Including more information about the Association in the survey, for example a 2min introduction video to watch before completion.
 - 3. Rephrase statements to be more relevant to the student experience with the Association.

5 Length of study and negative results

- 5.1 Students who have been studying with the Open University for 1-3 years had the highest negative response to the culture statements (48.24% strongly disagree and 52.95% disagree). This was followed by those who had been studying for 4-6 years (27.65% strongly disagree and 21.63% disagree).
- 5.2 Students in the focus group were asked why they think the negative response rate was so high for these groups and what could be done to improve the results.
- 5.4 Students in the focus group made the following comments:
 - 1. At 1-3 years, issues from early study days may still be on going and the student is feeling frustrated about lack of support or resolution.
 - 2. Students may be confusing their experience of the Association with what is happening with their relationship with the Open University.
 - 3. Midway through your studies, you may feel frustrated about your progress and not know where to turn for help - Association needs to be a constantly presence in the common student areas.
 - 4. More feel-good stories about how the Association is supporting and empowering students
 - 5. The Open University need to appreciate how valuable a resource the Association and encourage tutors and other staff to publicise the support.

6 Feeling informed about the Association

- 6.1 The survey results for the statement regarding feeling informed about the Association received mixed but generally positive results.
- 6.2 We asked the students in the focus group to think about how they like to be kept informed about the Association.

- 6.3 Students in the focus group made the following comments:
1. A student commented that this is a difficult question to answer as students do not necessarily know what information they need and when.
 2. Continue to have a wide variety of communication channels.
 3. Be present in all student common areas.
 4. Hard copy newsletters or leaflets sent to students at certain times through the year to remind students about the benefits of the Association.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 CEC to discuss the results and feedback from the Student Voice Week focus groups and suggest ideas on how to improve results on our culture questions in the 2022 Annual Membership Survey.
- 7.2 CEC to create a plan on what actions need to be taken to make these improvements.

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