



**CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)
27 – 28 April 2019
MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held on the weekend of
27 – 28 April 2019 at Kent's Hill Training Centre in Milton Keynes MK7 6BZ

PRESENT

Cath Brown – President (Chair)
Mark Cameron – Area Association Rep Scotland
Caroline Cowan – Vice President Administration
Peter Cowan – Vice President Education
Cherry Day – Vice President Equality & Diversity
Billy Docherty – Faculty Association Rep Arts & Social Sciences (FASS)
Sarah Jones – Faculty Association Rep Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS)
Alison Kingan – Vice President Student Support
Matt Porterfield - Faculty Association Rep Business & Law (FBL)
Lucy Richardson – Area Association Rep Wales
Anca Seaton – Vice President Community
Danielle Smith – Area Association Rep England
Steph Stubbins –Deputy President
Barbara Tarling – Student OU Council Member
Fanni Zombor – Vice President Media and Campaigns

IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Avann – Chief Executive
Wendy Burrell – Deputy Chief Executive (Staff & Student Engagement)
Michael Docherty – Observer, FASS/Scotland
Lorena Fontan Grana – Observer, FASS/Wales
Sam Harding – Head of Student Voice
Carl Hunt – Observer, FASS/England
Jeremy Lane – Observer, FBL/England
Alison Lunn – Deputy Chief Executive (Finance & Resources)
Leanne Quainton – Head of Executive Support & Staff Welfare (minutes)
Kathy Richardson - Carer
Pete Turner – Head of Student Community

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

The President welcomed the CEC to the April meeting, giving a special welcome to the newly elected CEC members attending their first CEC Meeting; VP Community, Anca Seaton and the Faculty Association Representative for Business & Law, Matt Porterfield. She also welcomed the four observers in attendance; Michael Docherty, Lorena Fontan Grana, Carl Hunt and Jeremy Lane.

B. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Amelia Gackowska – Vice President Student Voice
Michail Kasoutas – Area Association Rep Continental Europe
Wendy Reid – Area Association Representative Northern Ireland

C. MINUTES

C.1 The minutes of the last meeting (CEC 01/19/M) were approved.

D. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

D.1 None raised.

SECTION A: ITEMS FOR APPROVAL AND REPORT

1. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CEC 04/19/1

1.1 VP Media and Campaigns updated on the launch of the new student magazine, The Hoot. She reported that there was now a link to the magazine on OUstudents.com and to date, there had been 4346 unique views to the site with social media bringing the most traffic. A query was raised about whether students would be involved in moderating the content that goes into the magazine and it was confirmed that volunteers will be sought once the magazine had better established itself and the workload required is known. Until then there is a staff editorial team managing the site.

2. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS CEC 04/19/2

3. RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES CEC 04/19/3

3.1 The FBL FAR raised some concerns regarding this report highlighting that it appeared that there were ten Societies that had not submitted annual accounts which was in

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breach of the Bye-Laws and Society Guidelines. The Deputy Chief Executive (Finance and Resources) reported that those Societies had been chased and an extended deadline of 28 April had been given. She will be meeting with the Student Community Team who look after the Societies to discuss the next steps after this date.

3.2 The FBL FAR then went on to raise the issue of a Society not announcing or holding a formal AGM as per the guidelines state and he queried who to address that concern to. The President advised that it should be the Society in the first instance and then escalated to the CEC if required. It was explained that Societies are self-governing and run themselves, so the CEC has no dictation over them and issues arise when Society volunteers fall away leaving vacancies and outstanding requirements.

3.3 VP Administration advised that the Society Guidelines are currently being revised and the updated version will contain contact details of who to address comments and concerns regarding the societies in order to make the process more transparent. It is also the intention to simplify the guidelines to ensure that Societies understand exactly what is required of them.

3.2 **ACTION:** The Student Community Team to revise the Societies report to ensure it is up to date and accurate, showing the date of when the last grants were given to each society.

4. RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT

CEC 04/19/4

<p>SECTION B: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</p>
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5. RECEIVED: INCORPORATION

CEC 04/19/5

6. VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT, RECOGNITION

CEC 04/19/6

6.1 The President raised a number of comments regarding the paper. She queried the figure that detailed 17 moderators as she felt there were many more than this number shown. There was also an omission detailing that the Kitemark project had finished rather than being temporarily suspended. Her final point was that following a meeting with the FARs, it had been raised that increasing the number of functioning Learning Experience Reporters (LERs) would help them in their roles so a request was made to relaunch the LERs and discuss increased training for the volunteers.

6.2 **ACTION:** The Student Voice Team and VP Education to take forward.

6.3 Unfortunately the Chair of the BAME (Black and Ethnic Minority) Group had withdrawn so the Head of Student Support was overseeing the working group in the meantime until the position is filled which remained a priority for the Student Support Team.

6.3 The Volunteer Event was discussed and clarification was requested in regards to the proposed ballot. The Deputy President confirmed that because there was a limited and reduced amount of funds for this year's event, the ballot would be split into two areas;

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one for those who require accommodation and another for those who do not. Attendees would be allocated at random allowing 2-3 spaces for CEC members.

- 6.4 The President suggested that recruitment for the STUDIO Hosts is suspended until the outcome of the Strategy stop/start exercise is known which members had been asked to complete. VP Media and Campaigns confirmed that the Digital Communications team plan to review STUDIO and intend to bring a paper to the next CEC.

7. FORUM REVIEW CEC 04/19/7

- 7.1 VP Education confirmed that any review will be done with full consultation with all stakeholders and although it is an important piece of work, it will be time consuming and the stated 'medium term process' is probably a realistic assumption.

8. REPRESENTATION REVIEW CEC 04/19/8

- 8.1 The President queried when and if CEC views will be sought as part of the review. It was confirmed that CEC consultation will take place in July 2019.

SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
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9. REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES CEC 04/19/9

- 9.1 The Chief Executive introduced the regular report from the BoT, highlighting the requirement for the BoT to report to the CEC on its activities and giving the chance for the CEC to raise any questions. He went through the report point by point highlighting the Relationship Agreement which had been approved by the OU's Council in March. He advised that only one of our requests had not been incorporated which had been the commitment from the OU to cover the Association's costs in the event of closure. The OU have confirmed that the intention for inclusion is there and the details will be worked out for next years revisions.

- 9.2 He asked for any CEC members to let him or the President know whether they would like to attend a BoT meeting as an observer from the 10 September meeting onwards.

- 9.3 **ACTION:** BoT dates to be posted onto the CEC Forum for interested parties to confirm interest.

- 9.4 A query was asked regarding the third external Trustee and the timeline for recruitment. The Chief Executive highlighted that because the intention of the Board was to try and recruit an external Chair, he was seeking further advice around how to take this forward appropriately. Talks are being held with the two existing External Trustees regarding whether they will continue in their roles post July with it being likely that one will step down therefore recruitment for all vacant posts will be done simultaneously.

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9.5 Discussions went back to the Volunteer Event and the rationale behind the reduced funds that would only allow a small percentage of the overall volunteer numbers to attend. It was thought that this might cause disappointment amongst volunteers which was not the original intention for the event. The Deputy President advised that the funds were not available from the discretionary funds budget to hold a bigger event and the resources not available to cater for all volunteers but agreed that this does need to be taken into account and care taken as to how this is handled. Suggestions included whether the event should be cancelled if all volunteers could not be invited; if different groups of volunteers could be invited to the event in alternative years; incorporating an online element to allow more to take part; more giveaways to make volunteers feel appreciated.

9.6 **ACTION:** The Deputy President and the Head of Volunteering to discuss further and bring discussion back to the forum.

10. CULTURE CHANGE & RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS **CEC 04/19/10**

10.1 The Deputy President and Deputy Chief Executive (Staff and Student Engagement) updated on the progress of the pieces of work being carried out by the working group around culture change within the organisation.

10.2 The team had met with two consultants regarding commissioning an external culture review with a clear preferred choice. They had however come to the conclusion that for a meaningful piece of work to be achieved, costs are likely to be higher than the current discretionary funds could meet therefore they had decided to delay making a proposal while a third provider was met with (scheduled for 10 May) for a further comparison and then the group will come back with a proposal in the new financial year.

10.3 Twelve members of the staff team had attended the two-day Mental Health First Aid Training course and have all agreed to be Mental Health Champions, a role description of which had been included in the paper. A further ten staff members will be attending the one-day training on 9 May. It was acknowledged that Mental Health Champions are not experts and not there to diagnose conditions but are now equipped with the knowledge and understanding to be able to support students and each other in issues related to mental health.

10.4 The reasons behind seeking an external consultant for the review were discussed and the benefits of having external expertise that brings an impartial view explained. The Chief Executive stressed that there are areas of the Association's culture that are weak, and an honest look is required to be able to make positive changes and to move forward. He explained that the OU's culture external review carried out a few years ago had been a positive meaningful review with a number of credible recommendations made, however the OU had not been in a place to hear and implement the outcomes and changes required. The Association needs to go into this with an open mind, be open to change, be inclusive and to build on the good aspects and identify the areas that are not working at present.

11. CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES

CEC 04/19/11

- 11.1 David Conway, Careers and Employability Consultant was in attendance to give an update on the services offered by the Careers and Employability Services and the Enhanced Employability and Career Progression (EECP) strategic priority area.
- 11.2 He advised that the department is growing due to change in student demographics and the increasing number of students now studying with career motivations. The EECP's aim is to increase the number of students achieving positive career and personal outcomes which is done through a number of ways; embedding employability within the curriculum; employer engagement; scholarship; and the virtual internship offer.
- 11.3 OU Online Talent Connect is an online careers fair for students in which a number of employees offer students career information and this has proved to be a very popular event. It was suggested that the OU Students Association and Societies have a stand at future events.
- 11.4 The careers website offers a number of services to all students up to three years after they graduate; Opportunity Hub which shows the paid internships and scholarships available; Webinars and Forums; Guides and Tools which includes a CV builder and interview stimulator and Personal Guidance on how to get into specialist career pathways.
- 11.5 It was pointed out that for Open Programme students, getting to the Careers Service webpage through the Open Programme qualification site appeared to offer less resources than getting through from other qualification pages. David will take this away and investigate as this was not the intention. Another suggestion was to have an opt-in option for some of the services offered as not all students are career motivated. David will feedback.
- 11.6 The CEC are already on a lot of the groups and forums for Careers Services and do share contact and website details with students when required and will continue to promote the services offered.

12. VOLUNTEERING POLICY

CEC 04/19/12

- 12.1 The Deputy President introduced the revised Volunteer Policy advising that the main amendments had been made to the sections around confidentiality to incorporate GDPR compliance, complaints and volunteer conduct procedures and volunteering with a criminal record that had been brought in line with safeguarding procedures.
- 12.2 The CEC made a number of suggestions to the policy including the inclusion of referring volunteers to the Social Media Policy; around matching a student to the right role; sharing data with other student representatives and who makes the decision about a volunteer having to step down.
- 12.3 **ACTION:** The Deputy President and Head of Volunteering to take comments back. The OU Student Council Member offered to go through the document to ensure tone and wording was consistent throughout.

13. OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION STRATEGY

CEC 04/19/13

- 13.1 The Chief Executive introduced the paper that summarised some key progress made against the strategy objectives since the last meeting. He highlighted the ongoing work in creating the new strategy and a further workshop would be taking place on the second day of the CEC with representatives from the CEC, BoT and members of staff.
- 13.2 The FBL FAR asked whether the written off stock in the OU Students Shop due to the OU's change of branding had resulted in a loss for the Association. The answer was yes, over £10,000 worth of stock had to be written off. This had been frustrating with the team due to the amount of notice that had been given although unfortunately the Association does not get much say in these decisions. It had been discussed in detail by the OSL Board.
- 13.3 It was confirmed that the outcome of the Investing in Volunteers accreditation assessment would be announced by end July 2019.

14 ELECTIONS REVIEW

CEC 04/19/14

- 14.1 VP Administration is leading the review of the elections along with a working group. Several issues were identified by the group and brought to the CEC for discussion.
- 14.2 One concern was the number of roles and associated paperwork that was required in the main elections. A suggestion was made to split the Trustee elections from the CEC elections and hold them in alternate years. Although the CEC broadly felt this could be a good idea, VP Education warned that the Constitution could not be changed until 2022 so this would not be able to be implemented until then.
- 14.3 The Chief Executive raised that he felt there were too many separate roles being elected all at the same time which drowned the electorate in too much reading and information and a huge ballot paper.
- 14.4 The length of the election process was discussed, and it was agreed that a shorter process had been preferential to the longer process in 2016 however it was thought that the nomination process had been too short last summer for candidates to turnaround their manifestos and videos. Although this period had been extended in the By-Elections, more notice and information released prior to the process would be beneficial with candidates being able to plan.
- 14.5 ACTION:** The Working Group to come back with a proposal.
- 14.6 The CEC took a vote on the dates of the elections and the consensus view was bringing the elections forward to March-April.
- 14.7 Whether hard copies of the election packs should be provided was queried by the CEC. It was agreed that online should be default however anyone that needed a hard copy could request it.

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- 14.8 Discussions then moved to candidate video manifestos and whether they should be compulsory which it has been since the elections last summer. The CEC voted that they thought that it should be compulsory for some roles but not necessarily required for all roles. It was thought that some roles require the skills to present and be on camera but for those positions that don't, then it should not be a compulsory requirement. The Chief Executive recommended that the group liaise with ERS who run many elections nationwide about recommendations of what works and what doesn't.
- 14.9 **ACTION:** The Elections Working Group to come back to the CEC with concrete suggestions of the compulsory roles and what the process should be.
- 14.10 Communicating and advertising the election produced mixed feelings amongst students. VP Media and Campaigns advised that the Association loses followers and engagement drops due to the amount of advertising during election periods. The Association needs to come up with ways that promotes elections so that they are a benefit to students rather than unwanted information meaning they disengage. She advised that the #voteOUstudents day always has a big output so smaller, shorter promotion should be investigated. It was thought that bringing the election dates outside of the exam periods may help with this.
- 14.11 Candidate questions were debated with the CEC all in agreement that the forums were not the ideal platform. It was felt that the live hustings with the President and Deputy President candidates worked well however it was not practical to hold for all candidates, neither was bringing back live hustings to Conference due to the amount of candidates now involved in the elections. Adobe Connect was suggested as an alternative however practicalities including the accessibility of this would need to be investigated.
- 14.12 **ACTION:** The Elections Working Group to take away and come back with some options for the CEC to consider on the forums.

15 FACILITATION & SUPPORT PROCEDURE

CEC 04/19/15

- 15.1 The Deputy Present and Deputy Chief Executive (Staff and Student Support) advised that this procedure would implement facilitation and support interviews with volunteers who have indicated they have support needs. This came to light following a number of challenging situations arising where health and support issues had not been sufficiently communicated or staff had not known how best to deal with a situation. Facilitation and support phone calls had been held for Conference attendees since 2014 and this had proved a great success by giving students piece of mind that their requirements are being handled allowing them to be able to attend Conference confidently. The intention is that the outcome of these interviews and any reasonable adjustments are stored and kept so that the student will not need to keep repeating their needs and staff are better equipped in knowing the needs and requirements of those students.

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- 15.2 It was assured that this data will be confidentially stored and only shared with those who have the correct access levels. Details of this will be confirmed.
- 15.3 It was suggested that the form could be completed together with the student but if that was not possible then the form would always be shared with the students following write up to ensure accuracy. A query was made whether information would be shared with other student reps who required information e.g. the resi-school volunteers shared with the head resi-school rep. This will be investigated.
- 15.4 It was thought the form currently was related to Conference so there were some areas that required amending. The Wales AAR offered to assist with rewording.
- 15.5 ACTION:** The Deputy President and Deputy Chief Executive (Staff and Student Engagement) to take comments away.

16. ASSOCIATION POLICY SETTING CEC 04/19/16

- 16.1 The President discussed the background of how the OU Students Association implemented policy in the past and how discussions amongst CEC, Central Committee Representatives and other interested students had raised the need for the implementation of policy covering certain topics to ensure that any student rep attending a University meeting was aware of the Association's policy stance on the matter.
- 16.2 A workshop had been held at a previous CEC meeting where members had agreed to set some policies and had suggested potential areas to cover. These needed to be on the basis that they should not be too restrictive and that they could be subject to review if prompt changes were required.
- 16.3 **ACTION:** It was agreed that the external related policies discussed at the workshop around loan payments and postgrad loan issues would be referred to the Campaigns and External Affairs Strategy Working Group.
- 16.4 Association related policies included 'Volunteering', which is already covered in the Volunteering Policy. It was felt that 'Inappropriate conduct/language' could be incorporated into both the Culture Change and Forum Review processes. The third, Collective versus Individual Representation was agreed to be brought back for discussion at the July CEC Meeting.
- 16.5 The CEC related policy that had been raised was the way in which expenses and budget works.
- 16.6 ACTION:** VP Administration and Deputy Chief Executive (Resources & Finance) to discuss and start a discussion on the forum.
- 16.7 Discussion then focused on the eight OU related policies that had been raised. It was agreed that the two crucial policies to implement as soon as possible were the recording of tutorials and online only delivery due to them both being current issues that were moving forward.

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- 16.8 **ACTION:** The President to draft and put in forum for comments.
- 16.9 **ACTION:** VP Student Support and VP Equality & Diversity to work on a policy for delays in alternative formats. VP Student Support advised that there is work going on within the OU however the Association requires a policy stating that alternative formats are provided at the same time as normal formats.
- 16.10 **ACTION:** The OU Council Member will monitor the pilot that is trialling a module being offered to international students that does not have the fee supplement like many other modules come with for overseas students. If the number of students increases then it may be that fee supplements go down however if the result sees no effect, supplements may go up. It was agreed to await the trial outcome before taking any Association policy forward.
- 16.11 It was agreed that a policy on plagiarism was not required.
- 16.12 **ACTION:** The CEC thought that a statement of support in relation to the postgraduate Funding issues would be more helpful than a policy, which would detail that the Association are aware of the issues and supports action. VP Media and Campaigns advised that a campaign has already been drafted that she will share on the forum.
- 16.13 **ACTION:** The final area was consistency in modules where it was felt that further discussion was needed before any policy could be drafted to establish what consistency is required and setting the base-level requirements in the first instance. The President will raise with PVC Students.
- 16.14 It was thought that policies should be disseminated through the website, CCR/SRG Forums and the Volunteer Zone. CCRs will be required to use our policy however this will form part of the Representation Review so processes and procedures will be established once complete.

17. CEC CODE OF CONDUCT

CEC 04/19/17

- 17.1 VP Administration introduced the draft CEC Code of Conduct. A number of comments were made to the paper that VP Administration will incorporate.
- 17.2 The main discussion was around point 3.4.4 which had also generated a lot of discussion on the Talk to Your Students Association Forum. The feeling here was that a completely corporate approach was not the way to go although there is a difference in a CEC member publicly opposing a collective decision made to advising that they had disagreed but will support the decision of the CEC nevertheless. It was noted that any formal CEC vote would be minuted so there would be transparency in any outcome. The CEC agreed that this was fine and agreed to the change of wording to support this. It was stated that the CEC is part of a professional body and if a collective decision is made, then it is fine to disagree inwardly but publicly, good judgements should be made to remain professional in these public spaces and to ensure CEC decisions are not undermined.

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- 17.3 ACTION:** VP Administration to make the changes and re-post revised draft onto the Forum.

SECTION D: ITEMS TO NOTE

18. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

- 18.1 None reported.

19. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

- 19.1 The President had just completed two dates of recruitment interviews for the position of Vice Chancellor. She advised that she was able to be fully involved in the process and that all the student reps comments from the panel process had been taken on board. The outcome remains confidential until the decision is formally ratified.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 21.1 None reported.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

- 21.1 The next meeting of the Central Executive Committee will take place over the weekend of 19 – 21 July 2019.