



**CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CEC)
25 – 27 January 2019
MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held on the weekend of
25 – 27 January 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 – VP Administration
Peter Cowan – VP Education
Claire Davey – Faculty Association Rep Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)
Billy Docherty – Faculty Association Rep Arts & Social Sciences (FASS)
Amelia Gackowska – VP Student Voice
Sarah Jones – Faculty Association Rep Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS)
Michail Kasoutas – Area Association Rep Europe
Alison Kingan - VP Student Support
Wendy Reid – Area Association Representative Northern Ireland
Lucy Richardson – Area Association Rep Wales
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
Kate Dungate – Head of Digital Communications (part)
Raheema Hafeji – Observer, Open Programme/England
Sam Harding – Head of Student Voice (part)
Alison Lunn – Deputy Chief Executive (Finance & Resources)
Leanne Quainton – Executive Assistant (minutes)
Beth Metcalf – Head of Student Volunteering (part)
Luke Nazarko – Resources Assistant (part)
Marcus Parker – Observer, STEM/Wales
Matt Porterfield – Observer, FBL/Scotland
Kathy Richardson - Carer
Maureen Windridge – Observer, FBL/England

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

The President welcomed the CEC to the January meeting, giving a special welcome to the four observers in attendance; Maureen Windridge, Matt Porterfield, Raheema Hafeji and Marcus Parker. Alison Lunn, the new Deputy Chief Executive (Finance & Resources) was also in attendance as part of her staff induction and Luke Nazarko, Resources Assistant was also observing his first CEC meeting.

B. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cherry Day – VP Equality & Diversity

C. MINUTES

C.1 The minutes of the last meeting (CEC 10/18/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

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| 1. | RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE | CEC 01/19/1 |
| 1.1 | The Student Council Member's report had been starred by the Wales AAR. She noted her disappointment to read that there continues to be pressure from the OU Council for the Association to affiliate to the NUS. The Student Council Member assured the CEC that the comment was made by one Council Member and that it was meant in good faith as a helpful suggestion. The Association continues to be able to use the NUS resources and continue with our work and relationships without the need to be affiliated. | |
| 2. | RECEIVED: REPORTS OF OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS | CEC 01/19/2 |
| 3. | RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES | CEC 01/19/3 |
| 4. | RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT | CEC 01/19/4 |

SECTION B: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5. **RECEIVED: INCORPORATION** **CEC 01/19/4**
6. **RECEIVED: USER TESTING OF OUSTUDENTS.COM** **CEC 01/19/5**

SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

7. **REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** **CEC 01/19/7**
- 7.1 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 highlighted that two BoT meetings had been held since the last CEC report and the main items had included approving the End of Year Accounts at the October meeting and considering the final draft of the Articles of Association in December.
- 7.2 The Wales AAR advised that she was disappointed that the Fitness to Volunteer Policy Working Group had been wound up. The Deputy President explained that this piece of work was now coming under the bigger umbrella project that was looking at the culture of the Association as a whole and this specific policy will now be incorporated into the main volunteer policy rather than as a separate piece of work. She confirmed that members of the original working group will still have an input.
- 7.3 **ACTION:** The Chief Executive to upload the Annual Report and the revised Constitution to the website.
- 7.4 The CEC formally congratulated the people involved in the work to produce the Achievements video which was a great piece of work.
8. **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT STANDARD** **CEC 01/19/8**
- 8.1 VP Education introduced the paper highlighting that the project started in 2017 as part of the Listen and Represent objective of the Association's strategy under the working title of the 'Kitemark' project. Work on the pilot scheme has been taking place over the last few months included drawing up criteria for assessment for the scheme and putting a call out for OU Departments to take part and submit projects which were then assessed according to the criteria. The paper proposed that the next stage of work would be further development and raising awareness within the OU prior to the next assessment and award process starting in Autumn 2019.
- 8.2 VP Student Support asked about the criteria a project is assessed on as she had been a member of the working group of one of the four pilot projects and had felt that a large amount of student engagement had taken place but (although the standard had been awarded), it had only been given through a majority vote. VP Education advised that

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projects are assessed on the submission that the OU working groups/departments make, so although it may have included good student engagement, this may not have been reflected in the submission. Part of the next piece of work is raising awareness of the importance of including the right evidence in project submissions.

- 8.3 The President asked whether the panel would consider obtaining informal student feedback on the amount of student engagement from those who were involved with each project. This could also help to ensure that the submission of evidence required from the OU would not become too arduous and too much work to produce. It was assured that this would not be the case although feedback from students involved could be looked into.
- 8.4 A query was made regarding the budget of the project. It was confirmed that the next stage is raising awareness while the final project framework is being finalised so no budget would be needed although there may be cost required in the next financial year.
- 8.5 **ACTION:** The CEC asked to see the criteria of what good student engagement looks like. VP Education to share.
- 8.6 **RESOLUTION:** The CEC approved the continuation of the project.

9. RESEARCH STRATEGY

CEC 01/19/9

- 9.1 The Head of Student Voice introduced the final Research Strategy that the CEC had previously fed into at their last meeting. She asked for approval for the aims and objectives to allow the Research Team in the office to commence work.
- 9.2 She reminded the CEC that all members have the right to ask the team for a commissioned piece of work to help them in their roles and a forum thread will be set up to enable requests to be made.
- 9.3 The CEC praised the paper and the clarity of the aims and objectives which will give the Association and the OU the benefit of a good solid evidence base in all research projects carried out. They thanked the Research and Information Officer for a good piece of work.
- 9.4 The OU Council Member asked for further details on the Symposium taking place on 7 March. The Head of Student Voice explained that the Student Voice Symposium had been held annually over the last two years and this year's event was focussing on how we use research. It will include student presentations and workshops as well as input from OU staff. Student Voice volunteers, CEC members, CCRs and Student Researchers have all been invited to be involved in the event which will be streamed live. The agenda was still being finalised but would be shared once available.
- 9.5 **RESOLUTION:** The CEC approved the aims and objectives set out in the paper.

10. MAGAZINE REDEVELOPMENT

CEC 01/19/10

- 10.1 Following a student consultation workshop that looked at the OU Students Magazine and the best format for it going forward, VP Media & Campaigns and the Digital Communications Team had been testing a new web based format on Wordpress. The team provided a demo of the new magazine during a drop-in session at the meeting. The next steps would include asking the CEC weekly questions regarding the magazine to help its development, an Adobe Connect Session explaining further about the functionality and accessibility and looking further into branding and colours.
- 10.2 The team explained the security levels and tabled the contributor journey displaying the different access levels for students with accounts and those without. It was highlighted that the magazine would be available to view and comment on by non-students - it was queried whether this would be an issue and how this would be moderated. The Head of Digital Comms advised that Student Moderator roles would be investigated for the magazine and they will be talking to OUSA Controller about how best to do this. It was not thought to be an issue that non-students can view the magazine, as that had also been the case with the previous PDF version on the website.
- 10.3 Students will be able to upload their own articles with this new format and that meant there will be a manual process for the staff team in checking prior to publishing. There is likely to be an agreement that the team will respond in a set period, such as a week, to manage capacity. There is added functionality of creating social groups and students receiving points for articles read/submitted although the view of the CEC was that these are merging into social media functions that the Association already has channels for therefore were not needed for the magazine.
- 10.4 The President and Deputy President both agreed that they were initially unsure about the online format and the loss of PDF. However, after seeing it, they were impressed and thought it was the best of the new without losing what appealed about the previous style. Having a highlights PDF version was seen as a good compromise.
- 10.5 **RESOLUTION:** The CEC agreed to the next steps of the project.

11 CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHM REVIEW

CEC 01/19/11

- 11.1 This item was of a confidential nature and has therefore been reserved to the confidential section of the minutes.

12. TRUSTEES CODE OF CONDUCT

CEC 01/19/12

- 12.1 The President introduced the draft Board of Trustees (BoT) Code of Conduct, advising that this piece of work had been started by the previous VP Administration last term and had now been considered by the BoT who were broadly happy with the Code of Conduct but welcomed CEC comments.
- 12.4 The OU Council Member disliked the wording regarding the strategy in 4.2 of the paper and thought that something along the lines of 'will work jointly with the CEC' would be more appropriate. The Chief Executive noted caution that responsibility for

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strategy is in the remit of the Board of Trustees as set out in the Constitution so the wording here could not overrule that duty. However clearly the principle of the comment was well made and care needed to be taken to set the right statement.

12.5 **ACTION:** The President would amend this wording in conjunction with the Trustees.

12.6 The President proposed having a CEC version and sought feedback. The CEC discussed the idea, which generated mixed feelings. It was generally considered a good idea as it would show the level and commitment that members are adhering to by being on the CEC. It was thought that it could be a helpful tool to be able to hold members to account without the need to go down a disciplinary/complaints route. Some of the CEC did like not the formality of this and felt that all content could be open to interpretation.

12.7 It was agreed that a lot of the contents in the BoT paper could be transferable to a CEC version as well as using other existing documents like the CEC role descriptions and CEC etiquette paper to assist with the work. The Scotland AAR highlighted that Scotland have a document on external expectation guidelines that he would also share.

12.8 Comments for additions of where the CEC version would differ from the BoT version were to add a heading for 'Relationships with the OU and external bodies', 'Relationship with Students and the expectations' and when talking about 'forums' clarify whether this meant the student facing forums or CEC internal forums.

12.9 **RESOLUTION & ACTION:** The majority of the CEC voted in favour of producing a similar Code of Conduct and discussions would continue in the forum with a view to bringing a final version back to a future meeting for approval.

13. VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT, RECOGNITION & SUPPORT CEC 01/19/13

13.1 The Deputy President and Head of Student Volunteering gave a general update on volunteer numbers and activity and the use of Slack. They asked the CEC for their views on the existing Spotlight Sunday scheme as well as the idea of implementing a new volunteer recognition scheme which included suggestions for President's Awards that would be awarded for projects that have helped the Association achieve aspects of the strategy and also a recognition for time committed to the Association.

13.2 The CEC were in agreement that awards should not be given out on time commitments as little time can have just as much impact as being able to give more and students should not be penalised if they are not able to as much time as others. It was also thought that any award should not be given out at specific intervals but rather when appropriate.

13.3 The Spotlight Sunday initiative received mixed views with the majority in favour of it, especially since the changes to make it a more transparent process in publishing who makes each nomination on the website.

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- 13.4 A suggestion was made to provide some sort of certification of volunteering for students that records the volunteer role and dates the student was in the role that could be used as a record for employability reasons.
- 13.5 **RESOLUTION & ACTION:** It was agreed to continue with Spotlight Sunday. The Volunteering team will investigate the idea of President's Awards further and come back to the CEC with a more refined scheme and will look into the proposal to supply a certification of volunteering.
- 13.6 **RESOLUTION:** Agreed to continue with the use of Slack but to keep the CEC updated on usage.
- 13.7 The CEC questioned whether there would be another volunteering event after the success of the one held in 2017. The Head of Volunteering will scope out plans and budget. A suggestion was made to have separate events in each of the nations which would also be investigated.

14. OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION STRATEGY CEC 01/19/14

- 14.1 The Chief Executive introduced the paper that summarised some key progress made against the strategy objectives since the last meeting. He advised of the plans to redevelop the strategy highlighting that a Steering Group had been set up with CEC/BoT and staff members that will oversee the project and the plans for workshops carrying out a SWOT Analysis on the existing strategy that will be held with all three groups soon. The weekend of the 2-3 March will now be based on Strategy for all CEC/BoT and staff to attend to have their say on the new vision and objectives.
- 14.2 **ACTION:** The President to share the Terms of Reference of the Steering Group with the CEC.
- 14.3 The OU Council Member advised she was happy to see that the BAME Group had progressed as well as the Library Support Partners. She was also pleased to hear that the student design-a-mug competition was being held again.
- 14.4 The CEC held their workshop on the strategy SWOT analysis during the course of the CEC Meeting.

**15. DEVELOPMENT OF THE OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION CEC 01/19/15
CULTURE**

- 15.1 The Deputy President introduced the paper that detailed a number of pieces of work that the BoT had previously approved to deliver under the strategic aim of 'develop our organisational culture to provide a welcoming, engaging and supportive environment for everyone with a positive, forward looking and professional image'. These included commissioning an external review of the Association's culture and working practices, the development of a team of staff mental health champions, reviewing the Volunteer Policy and Volunteering Agreement to include the new Fitness to Volunteer policy and introduction of facilitation interviews for all volunteers and elected post holders indicating they have additional needs.

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- 15.2 A Working Group had been formed and work is underway in speaking to agencies to carry out the review, collating costings for staff training and arranging a workshop to be led by the Deputy President on Culture Change as part of the JISC conference.
- 15.3 Concern was raised over an external agency carrying out the review. The Deputy President and Chief Executive advised that it will benefit this review to have an external agency carrying it out as it will be able to identify aspects that anyone internal could miss. The Working Group will need to ensure that it is specific with their brief in what we are expecting from them. The Deputy President advised the project is still in the early stages and more information will be given to the CEC on the process, costs and prospective timeline of the review. VP Education stated that he was pleased this work was being progressed, having supported it as a previous Trustee.
- 15.4 The Deputy President clarified the role of the Mental Health Champions explaining that they were enquiring with Mental Health First Aid England to run the training. The AAR for England confirmed that she had undertaken this training in her day job so was happy to be a mental health champion from the CEC.

16. STUDENT SATISFACTION AT THE OU

CEC 01/19/16

- 16.1 The President and Head of Student Voice gave an update on the Student Satisfaction Improvement Working Group (SSIWG) which is jointly chaired by the President and Liz Marr, PVC (Students) and also has the Deputy President and OU Council Member as members. It was originally formed following the NSS results although it was confirmed that the remit was not just to improve these figures, it genuinely wants to improve Student satisfaction across the OU as a whole.
- 16.2 The group have recently commissioned a consultation on the Students Consultation Forum on student satisfaction. They have arranged a Staff Engagement Event on 6 February that would include a variety of talks, presentations and a panel discussion chaired by PVC (Students). VP Media & Communications would be hosting a stand there on behalf of the Faculty of Business and Law.
- 16.3 The CEC discussed the work of the SSIWG and whether there was an overlap in the work being done by the Student Voice Steering Group as there had been initial discussions about merging the groups due to an overlap in some of the membership. The CEC agreed that keeping the groups separate was required as there were different aims - Student Satisfaction is the level of happiness a student experiences from all aspects of their study and Student Voice is enabling students to get their voice heard.
- 16.4 The CEC generally liked the definition of student satisfaction used by SSIWG. A suggestion was that the definition does not cover long-term satisfaction and students should be surveyed again 6-months after graduation. The Team will look at the DLHE Survey (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education).
- 16.5 Discussions moved onto the actions the CEC should take if they believe student satisfaction is being ignored by the OU. It was explained that it is important for the OU to hear the Association's voice but it can be a fine balance of maintaining OU relationships to ensure partnerships continue whilst being able to take action when

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required. The President advised that difficulties should be taken up the levels of authority if necessary. The Head of Student Voice highlighted the strength of the CEC voice collectively and it has a lot of sway that should not be underestimated.

- 16.6 Under the question of how should we as an Association should be responding to students who are unsatisfied, a query was made about the relationship the Association has with the first point of contact for students, the SSTs. It was confirmed that the FARs should all be building relationships with their SSTs. VP Student Support is also building on these relationships with the hope that there will be a more formal link in the future. It was reiterated that it is good to have these partnerships with SSTs and ALs but we can take our own voice when needed. The relationship with the Student Casework Office was another relationship the Association should make more of as they see the complaints come in and are aware of the areas across the OU that require improvements that would be useful for the CEC to see.
- 16.7 **ACTION:** The SSIWG to explore this further.

17. RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENT

CEC 01/19/17

- 17.1 The Chief Executive presented the draft revised Relationship Agreement that sets out how the OU and Students Association seek to work together and how we seek to foster and maintain a culture of partnership. The CEC have an opportunity to feedback on the changes proposed by the OU and make any further comments before the document goes to Council for approval in March.
- 17.2 There were two significant changes that had been proposed to the document. The first was the addition of the commitment of better sharing of committee papers as brokered by the previous President and VP Education last term. The second was that PVC Students becomes the primary relationship and liaison at a senior level for the Association and will be responsible for the relationship and helping us move things forward on behalf of the OU. The CEC were happy with these changes.
- 17.3 VP Education asked for 2.f to be extended to include the members of the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC), working groups and Fitness to Practice rather than just referring to Central Committee Reps when being able to attend remotely.
- 17.4 The issues of expenses were raised and the Chief Executive will take back and attempt for inclusion in the agreement. There was also a request to record a commitment in the agreement for the OU to incur costs in the event of closure.
- 17.5 **ACTION:** The Chief Executive to take these comments back to the OU for agreement.
- 17.6 The Chief Executive had listed a number of projects/objectives for possible inclusion in the paragraph titled 'Quality Enhancement Planning' which is the section of projects that the OU have agreed to work with us to enhance the quality of student experience.
- 17.7 **RESOLUTION AND ACTION:** It was agreed that this should be retitled to 'Partnership Commitments'. The CEC liked the list suggested by the Chief Executive adding Student Engagement in TEF Subject Pilot.

18. OBSERVERS TO CEC MEETINGS

CEC 01/19/18

- 18.1 The President had brought back a revision version of the CEC Observer Policy that took into account comments made at the last meeting.
- 18.2 **ACTION:** Item 3.4 to add in 'at a minimum' to show that categories can overlap and there is no set requirement for just one observer representing each listed.
- 18.3 The Observers attending this meeting had applied through the volunteer zone which seemed to have worked well and the Observers agreed that contact throughout had been good. A suggestion was made to add a box to the application asking whether observers would be happy to be contacted by the AAR/FAR before the meeting.
- 18.4 **ACTION:** The President will put the final revised version on the forum for final approval. Once agreed by CEC and BoT, the policy could be added to the Bye-Laws.

<p>SECTION D: ITEMS TO NOTE</p>
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19. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

- 19.1 None reported.

20. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

- 20.1 None reported.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 21.1 Elections: VP Administration reported that an Election Review Working Group had been established and a paper will be coming to the April CEC with recommendations.
- 21.2 By-Elections open in February for the vacant posts of 3 x Student Trustees, VP Community, FBL FAR and Republic of Ireland AAR. Head of Student Voice and Head of Student Volunteering will be the Returning Officers and are bringing in some new initiatives including a telephone Q&A, Twitter chats, Candidate clinics and CEC Promo packs. The Timetable is:
- 7 Feb – Nomination open
 - 18 Feb – Nominations close
 - 22 Feb – Profiles live and hustings opens
 - 27 Feb – Voting opens
 - 1 March – Hustings closes
 - 11 March – Voting closes
 - 13 March Results announced.

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- 21.3 Brexit: The European AAR advised of the concern amongst European students with regards to post Brexit. The President will be raising the issue with the Director of Academic Services at their next meeting.
- 21.4 Wales Volunteer Panel: The AAR Wales advised of their intention to look into setting up a Wales Volunteer Panel to fill the gap of the National Assembly. The President suggested discussing the idea with the other AARs and to call on the Student Community staff team for assistance if required.

22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

- 22.1 The next meeting of the Central Executive Committee will take place over the weekend of 26 – 28 April 2019.