



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

Minutes of the meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held on the weekend of 25 – 27 October 2019 at Kents Hill Training Centre in Milton Keynes MK7 6BZ

PRESENT

Cath Brown – President (Chair)
Patrice Belton - Faculty Association Representative Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)
Mark Cameron – Area Association Representative Scotland
Caroline Cowan – Vice President Administration
Cherry Day – Vice President Equality & Diversity
Billy Docherty – Faculty Association Representative Arts & Social Sciences (FASS)
Amelia Gackowska – Vice President Student Voice
Sarah Jones – Faculty Association Representative Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS)
Michail Kasoutas – Area Association Representative Continental Europe
Alison Kingan – Vice President Student Support
Matt Porterfield - Faculty Association Representative Business & Law (FBL)
Lucy Richardson – Area Association Representative Wales
Anca Seaton – Vice President Community
Danielle Smith – Area Association Representative England
Steph Stubbins – Deputy President
Barbara Tarling – Student OU Council Member

IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Avann – Chief Executive
Wendy Burrell – Deputy Chief Executive (Student & Staff Engagement)
Nicola Connolly – Observer, WELS/England
Bryan Devlin – Observer, STEM/England
Sam Harding – Head of Student Voice (part)
Magda Hadrys – Head of Operations (part)
Selina Hanley – Observer, FBL/England
Andy Loveless – Pecan Partnerships (part)
Alison Lunn – Deputy Chief Executive (Finance & Resources)
Sue Maccabe - Strategic Projects & Change Coordinator (part)
Deborah Maloney – FASS/England
Leanne Quanton – Head of Executive Support & Staff Welfare (minutes)
Kathy Richardson – Carer
Verity Robinsons – Head of Student Support (part)
Marilyn Salstrom – Observer, Disabled Students Groups (DSG)
Amy Undrell – Conference Project Manager (part)

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

A. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

The President welcomed the CEC to the October meeting, giving a special welcome to the newly elected CEC member, Patrice Belton, the Faculty Association Representative (FAR) for STEM. She then welcomed the observers in attendance; Marilyn Salstrom, Nicola Connolly, Bryan Devlin, Selina Hanley and Deborah Maloney.

B. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Theresa Adeoti – Area Association Representative Republic of Ireland
Wendy Reid – Area Association Representative Northern Ireland
Fanni Zombor – Vice President Media and Campaigns

C. MINUTES

C.1 The minutes of the last meeting (CEC 07/19/M) were approved.

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

D.1 Minute 10.4. A query was raised regarding the mental health training for the CEC. The Deputy Chief Executive (Student and Staff Engagement) advised that she was exploring the possibility of it being carried out by a trained OU member of staff rather than going to an external provider. An option of it being held during a CEC workshop weekend was suggested. The conversation will continue in the forum.

D.2 Minute 16.5. **ACTION:** Seek an update on the usage and progress of the Your Ideas platform with the Head of Student Voice.

SECTION A: ITEMS FOR APPROVAL AND REPORT

1. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CEC 10/19/1

1.1 The Wales AAR formally thanked everyone involved in the Freshers Event including the Societies and everyone involved in the event that had been held in Wales. It had been a well joined up initiative that proved a success.

1.2 The England AAR highlighted the high number of social forums for England which she had requested to be streamlined to reflect the Facebook group structure. She has also asked to rename some to better reflect the area that the groups are intended for.

2. RECEIVED: REPORTS OF OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION GROUPS **CEC 10/19/2**

- 2.1 A query was made about PLEXUS Plus. It was confirmed that the idea to work with other universities has been put on hold for the time being and PLEXUS will be concentrating on OU students.

3. RECEIVED: REPORT OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES **CEC 10/19/3**

- 3.1 The England AAR highlighted the discussion in April regarding the number of Societies not submitting accounts. Although it appeared that some had now done this, the report showed that the Development and Environment Society had been inactive since 2016 and it was queried whether inactive Societies should be included in the report. VP Community confirmed that the Community Team are trying to support Societies in the first instance as there are issues of vacant positions that leave some Societies struggling with no effective support. The Deputy Chief Executive (Finance & Resources) advised that action was taken to contact Societies who hadn't submitted accounts and only those that have complied to their affiliation are able to receive their grant this year. It was hopeful that these measures will help Societies comply and the balance of holding them to account and supporting them, assists them to run successfully.

4. RECEIVED: FINANCE REPORT **CEC 10/19/4**

- 4.1 The OU Council Member thanked the Finance & Resources Team for the new accounts that came to each meeting that were much more comprehensible.
- 4.2 **ACTION:** The OU Council Member to submit individual queries regarding the report on the forum for response.
- 4.3 **ACTION:** It was suggested that additional narrative be added when there are substantial changes to a budget or if areas have gone overbudget. The Deputy Chief Executive (Finance & Resources) will action for future reports.

SECTION B: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5. VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT, RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT **CEC 10/19/5**

- 5.1 The OU Council Member was really pleased to see that students on day temporary licenses had been involved in the Achieve Project. She was also happy that the Volunteer Recognition event was to become a permanent biennial event that will hopefully be able to continue to grow.
- 5.2 The FBL FAR queried the reason why there was only ten CDC volunteers when there was space for thirteen. The President confirmed that it was a decision by the Appointments Committee to only appoint those that were suitable and had the right experience to sit on the committee.

6. RECEIVED: INCORPORATION

CEC 10/19/6

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| <p>SECTION C: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION</p> |
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7. REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CEC 10/19/7

- 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 updated on the Incorporation process that was completed on 1 August 2019. Two remaining matters had been discussed by Trustees at their meeting on 14 October. The first was around the name of the new company, The OU Students Association Ltd. Trustees had agreed to remove the limited which had only been added to comply with the Scottish Charity Commission and was no longer required. The second was around dissolving the shell of the old organisation. Trustees had agreed to action this next Summer, giving some time to tie up any loose ends if required. The Chief Executive is looking into the agreements with the OU to formalise the services that they supply the Association in-kind, which includes a license to occupy office space, payroll, HR etc.
- 7.2 He highlighted the new Strategy being approved with the launch taking place on Monday 28 October.
- 7.3 Recruitment for the two external Trustee roles is underway with the adverts currently out. Shortlisting is scheduled for 18 November and interviews taking place 27 November. Successful candidates will be invited to observe the 6 December BoT meeting and if they are suitable for the positions, a paper will come to the CEC to recommend the appointments.
- 7.4 The England AAR raised the safeguarding recommendations and advised of her sadness that nothing had come to the CEC which she felt should have been done as the decision affected current CEC members. She felt this had been poor communication between the two bodies. The Chief Executive assured the CEC that all decisions taken by the Trustees on this matter was following recommendations received from our legal advisors on our current safeguarding procedures. The Association in general is working to continue to open opportunities for more volunteers but with that it has to ensure that the appropriate safeguarding measures are followed to stay compliant. He confirmed that the term semi-fiduciary, which had caused some concern, also refers to someone in positions of trust as well as looking after assets which the Association's volunteers are. He went on to say that there needs to be some level of trust in the Trustees that they are making informed decisions for the right reasons and for the CEC to understand that there are sometimes issues with how much information can be released to the public domain. Trustees communicate through their CEC report and by publishing their meeting minutes on the website, however he recognised that there was more that could be done that could have helped rectify these concerns. The Deputy President added that a long discussion was had at

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the BoT and all Trustees had a clear understanding of what they were agreeing to and no decision was made lightly.

8. UPCOMING FASS ACTIVITIES & EVENTS **CEC 10/19/8**

- 8.1 The FASS FAR talked about the projects he was working on in the FASS Faculty around building community; FASS Speakeasy, FASS Connected and Psychology Student Committee in Scotland. He added that he had a meeting due with the OU's Media Team who were setting him up a page on the module website for him to control and update which was thought to be great progress.
- 8.2 He confirmed that the students involved in the Psychology Student Committee would be trained to signpost students to information rather than give advice themselves. He went on to thank the office staff for their help and support in getting these events off the ground.
- 8.3 The CEC agreed that these were all great initiatives and congratulated the FASS FAR on the work done so far. It was hoped that this would be a good way for other FARs to leverage their faculties to do similar initiatives.

9. CONFERENCE FUNDING OPTIONS **CEC 09/19/09**

- 9.1 Further work had been carried out on options for funding Conference following a number of ideas put to the CEC at the last meeting in July. The Head of Operations and the Conference Project Manager reported on three package options for the CEC to discuss:
A voluntary contribution and retain the number of student places;
No charge to students but a reduction of total number of students' places;
The recommended option of a refundable deposit to attendees and retain the current number of student places
- 9.2 The recommended option gave more emphasis on retention and by requesting a £25 refundable deposit, it was hoped would deter the high number of no-shows that unfortunately takes place at every Conference which results in empty hotel rooms and high wastage costs. The option of being able to donate deposits after the event would also be given to attendees.
- 9.3 Sponsorship to help offset some of the overall cost of Conference is being investigated and a list of potential sponsors is being collated. A meeting had been held with Endsleigh who have already shown interest. The main work on this will commence when the Conference Steering Committee is in place.
- 9.4 A query was raised about the systems to administer a refundable deposit. The Head of Operations confirmed that options are being explored but it would be an external provider to administer as would be too much work to do in house. There would also be exemptions provided for those not able to pay the deposit and criteria and terms and conditions will be worked up. It was noted that all wording when describing exceptions is done kindly to be sympathetic to people's situations.

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9.5 RESOLUTION: The CEC voted in favour of Package 1 - of a refundable deposit to attendees and retain the current number of student places.

10. STRATEGY 2017-20

CEC 09/19/10

10.1 The final updates and achievements to the 2017-20 Strategy had been given in the paper. The Chief Executive reported that a draft communication closing the 2017-20 strategy will be put in the CEC forum for comments before being published on the website. The new strategy will be launched to students early November.

10.2 The STEM FAR advised that she was happy to help and be involved in the BAME Group if required.

10.3 The CEC thanked Sue for the great job she had done in producing the new Strategy.

11. NATION VOLUNTEERS

CEC 09/19/11

11.1 The Wales AAR and the Deputy President brought a proposal to implement a pilot Wales volunteer role that would enable and support the work of the Nation AAR with the wider student body and be involved in related Nation specific opportunities. The CEC discussed the key areas.

11.2 RESOLUTION: The CEC agreed with the objective of the role.

11.3 It was thought that knowledge of the OU, the Association and having local knowledge should be added to the desired skills.

11.4 A query was asked around the expenses for these roles should volunteers deputise for the AAR at an event. The Deputy President confirmed that more is to be scoped out with the Volunteer Team however it was thought that a bid could be made for discretionary funding. The Deputy Chief Executive (Finance & Resources) advised to look longer term than the pilot and whether funds could come out of existing budgets by replacing something else. The Wales AAR advised that costings for the pilot had intentionally been kept low but thought that if successful, a new budget line could be re-added for the Nations as there was prior to the regions restructure. The FASS FAR suggested approaching the OU in the Nations to help with funding.

11.5 A suggestion was made to add eligibility criteria. It was confirmed that this will be added in the final role description once formalised with the Volunteer Team.

11.6 RESOLUTION: With the comments taken into account, the shaping the role was approved.

11.7 A question was made about whether VP Community or VP Student Voice should be named to be on the recruitment panel. The Deputy President confirmed that it was left open intentionally depending on CEC availability but the intention would be to have people with knowledge.

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11.8 Further scope will be done around the length of terms and whether it would be beneficial to recruit in the intermittent years of Conference elections to ensure consistency for the AAR.

11.9 Equality and Diversity Training to be added to the list.

11.10 RESOLUTION: With the comments taken into account, recruitment and training was approved.

11.11 RESOLUTION: The resources and external engagement was approved.

11.12 ACTION: The Wales AAR and Deputy President will bring a full role description back to the CEC in January and continue discussions in the forum in the meantime.

12 CULTURE REVIEW

CEC 09/19/12

12.1 The Deputy President reported that the first planning meeting with Pecan Partnerships had taken place on 15 October. The review will focus on how successfully the Association is achieving the Mission and Vision in the Strategy and how closely we are reflecting our shared values.

12.2 The review will seek to understand those instances where the Association is living and breathing the values and any instances where they are not in evidence. It will be looking at what makes the Association special and successful but if there are any behaviours, attitudes, working practices that prevent us from having maximum impact. Pecan has undertaken to provide a depth of insight into these matters and provide recommendations as necessary that when implemented could make a fundamental shift in the culture that should make the delivery of the strategy more successful and impactful.

12.3 The consultation will consist of a review of key documents, processes and procedures, a number of observations including online, five focus groups of up to 12 individuals, personal interviews and an anonymous survey that will be posted across all the key communication areas.

12.4 Pecan Partnership expects to have a report prepared in the week prior to Christmas and the findings will be presented at the January CEC meeting.

12.5 A suggestion was made to give Pecan anonymised transcripts on the forums rather than have access themselves.

13 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

CEC 09/19/13

13.1 The WELS FAR advised of a Student Engagement Workshop that she will be running during Student Voice Week on what student engagement and student voice means. The main focus of the workshop will be around Lego Serious Play which uses imagination and a different way of thinking. The WELS FAR will report back after the event.

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13.2 ACTION: If the CEC would like to be involved, let the WELS FAR know.

13.3 The CEC agreed that the workshop was a good idea with a high output and for very little cost and congratulated the WELS FAR on the initiative.

14. STUDENT LED PROJECTS

CEC 09/19/14

14.1 The Head of Volunteering gave an update to the one-year pilot of the Student Led Projects which the CEC had approved in April 2018. 11 project proposals had come forward which had reached various stages of the model timetable. The Homeless Project, OU Student Book and Well-Box Project were three that had generated high success. The pilot and current structure had used a high staff and CEC resource therefore the Head of Volunteering made the recommendation for the initiative to continue but with amendments to allow both the Volunteer Team to adequately support project leaders and to also reduce the time demands on CEC members who form the approval panel.

14.2 The costs of the projects were queried. It was confirmed that there was a general community volunteering budget of £3,000 and each project had cost no more than £500 plus expenses however the budget is also used for other areas of work.

14.3 The England AAR confirmed that the Well Boxed project had created a huge buzz and had been really successful. There is a proposal for the OU in Scotland to do something similar which was a good outcome from this project.

14.4 A point was raised about the clear success of the pilot and because of this, why change it. The Head of Volunteering confirmed that having the four windows for projects to be submitted meant that it was hard to plan the workload and was difficult to time manage. Suggesting the one window per year would be easier to review all projects, manage the budget and for the panel to assess each one. Part of the recommendation was for student volunteers to sit on the panel rather than CEC members, which would lighten the load in CEC remits as well.

14.5 ACTION: The Head of Volunteering will start tracking the staff time required to the initiative.

14.6 The Head of Student Voice asked to ensure that other services are signposted for ideas that come forward that might not be suitable for a Student Led Project e.g. Student Ideas, Conference activities, articles in the Hoot.

14.7 RESOLUTION: The CEC approved option A, for the initiative to continue, reducing the application period to once per year, during which time 1-2 projects for the year will be approved by a panel made up of volunteers rather than CEC members.

15. STUDENT VOICE WEEK

CEC 09/19/15

15.1 The Head of Student Voice tabled the draft timetable of the scheduled events taking place during Student Voice Week over 18 – 24 November. The week consisted of online and face to face activities and had a balance of Association and OU sessions. Careers, the Library and eSTEEM were all involved from the OU. Communication will

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start going out from 28 October and all online content will be hosted on OUStudents.com.

15.2 ACTION: CEC members to let the Head of Student Voice know if they are able attend or would like to organise any session to run.

15.3 The President advised that the week looked great and was nice to see the OU getting so involved.

16. ELECTIONS REVIEW 2019-20

CEC 09/19/16

16.1 VP Administration and the Deputy President introduced the paper that outlined the scope of the election review, with the intention to bring recommendations to the January 2020 CEC Meeting.

16.2 The Chief Executive voiced his concern over the amount of work that had been done to date and had hoped that the review would be a lot further along by now. He warned that January would be too late to make any big recommendations for change if the elections were going to be brought forward earlier as intended to ensure that they miss the exam period. He had previously made a pitch for an external Returning Officer to manage the elections which the investigations and scope could have been done during the summer however little progress has been made. He highlighted that if the plans involve using ERS again then they will need to be booked early to ensure that they have availability to run the elections.

16.3 The Deputy President advised that some of the review could be turned around quickly and will request feedback from elected reps on what worked well, what didn't, thoughts on manifestos, communications, videos and ask what short term changes can be made to improve things.

16.4 The STEM FAR offered to provide input from most recent elections. The WELS FAR and England AAR offered to join working group.

16.5 Discussions were had around a number of factors for the elections; the use of photos and videos in manifestos and whether they were necessary; coming up with a way of making the manifestos information easier to read and compare; whether using the forums should be compulsory and whether they were the right platform to use for the Q&A; the rules about standing for more than one role and the overall importance around getting students to vote as the credibility of the Association and the representatives would be increased with an increased voting turn out.

16.4 ACTION: The Working Group to make some top-level recommendations by end November on the forum for decision before a final paper comes to the January CEC.

17. REMITS REVIEW

CEC 09/19/17

17.1 CEC Members and Association staff members had fed back their thoughts on the CEC remits to the President which were presented as initial proposals for discussion. The CEC discussed each change proposed in the paper.

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- 17.2 The paper proposed to follow the approach of the OU in Ireland and combine the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland AAR role into one single AAR for Ireland. The CEC discussed in the depth the implications of this, and the difficulties that it possesses. BREXIT was also mentioned as problematic to the proposal and the unknowns around it. VP Student Voice considered whether the Republic of Ireland could go into both the Northern Ireland and European AAR remits as both will have aspects in common. This was a popular idea although it would have voting implications in the elections.
- 17.3 It was noted that neither the Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland AAR were in attendance at the meeting and many of the CEC did not feel comfortable in making this decision without their input.
- 17.4 It was suggested to speak to John D'Arcy, Director OU in Ireland to get in views on whether this was the right time to be making changes to these roles considering the implications behind it.
- 17.5 ACTION:** Chief Executive to action.
- 17.6 RESOLUTION & ACTION:** The CEC agreed to seek the views from the NI and Rol AARs and John D'Arcy beforehand. The President will then put another proposal together.
- 17.7 The CEC discussed the proposal to combine the two roles of VP Media and Campaigns and VP Student Voice into one VP Communications & Engagement role. It was thought that this role would better support the strategic priorities in the new strategy whilst removing the operational elements that naturally sits with the office.
- 17.8 Discussions deliberated over the remit name as it was thought that engagement should be given the emphasis as would be the priority of the role. Swapping the titles to VP Engagement & Communications or VP Engagement were put forward as suggestions.
- 17.9 VP Community raised concern over the remit appearing very OU facing. The President assured that it would be both OU and student facing with roughly 7-8 days on campus required per year.
- 17.10 RESOLUTION:** The CEC agreed to combine the two roles into one named VP Engagement.
- 17.11 A new role of an Open and Access FAR was proposed. Support on module specific issues naturally sits with the corresponding FAR, although it had become apparent that there had been a number of non-module specific issues that had affected students on the Open Programme this term. Access students were another area that had become disconnected and with more improvements being made to the provision for Access students, it could result in higher take-up of students.
- 17.12 RESOLUTION:** The CEC approved the new role.

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17.13 RESOLUTION: It was agreed that Apprentices are covered by the appropriate FAR and for minority groups to continue to be covered by VP Equality & Diversity.

17.14 ACTION: VP Equality and Diversity to change to VP Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

17.15 Discussions were had over whether summaries including desirable experience was required for each role. The majority thought that transferable skills was more important than having CEC experience and to request this creates a danger of not appearing open to all. Employers often look for transferable skills over experience therefore a balance of both was required.

17.16 ACTION: The President will come up with some options.

17.17 The CEC broadly agreed with the recommendation in making some ex-officio aspects of certain roles optional, allowing the elected post holder greater flexibility around how often they were able to attend campus. VP Student Support felt that as long as workload was still fair across the CEC and that there were ways of getting the student voice heard when a CEC member can not attend a meeting.

17.18 RESOLUTION: The CEC agreed with the recommendation to remove some ex-officio roles from remits.

17.19 RESOLUTION: The CEC agreed that the work undertaken by CEC members on behalf of the CEC but was not necessarily related to their role should be much more prominent in role descriptions to give a greater idea of the time the role requires.

17.20 RESOLUTION: The CEC agreed for remits to focus on high level descriptions rather than specifying full detail in all cases to allow for membership of particular groups to be agreed between appropriate post holders, depending on skills and interest.

17.21 RESOLUTION: The other proposed key changes were agreed as follows:

- a) Membership of the Student Experience Committee to be revised to specify President, Deputy President or nominee or CCR.
- b) The OU Council Member to be an ex-officio on Senate. To request a 7th place on Senate from the OU. If limited to six to replace this with the President's nominee on Senate.
- c) FARs to have the choice of an ex-officio position on their Teaching Committee or Faculty Assembly.
- d) Remove the Chair of OUSET being in the Past President remit and for it to be optional.
- e) Remove the link between AARs and VP Community.
- f) Agreed that making use of social media be in all student facing role remits but ensure it is made specific which roles it is required for. Social media guidelines and training should be made available early.

17.22 ACTION: The President to post draft final remits onto the forum for comment.

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| SECTION D: ITEMS TO NOTE |
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18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

18.1 VP Administration reported that she is in the process of updating the Bye-laws that will shortly come to CEC for approval.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

24.1 The next meeting of the Central Executive Committee will take place over the weekend of 24 – 26 January 2020.