

**The book with
the Central
Executive
Committee
reports in...**

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Foreword

Welcome to the Central Executive Committee reports to Conference 2020.

The reports have been written to provide some insights, highpoints and achievements of Executive Committee Members for 2018 – 2020.

Their full reports can be found on the Association website using the following link: <https://www.oustudents.com/central-executive-committee-meeting-agendas-papers-and-minutes>

There is a useful page at the back of the booklet in case any acronyms have slipped through the net!



Picture of Central Executive Committee 2018-2020

President

Cath Brown

It's been an amazing two years – but who could have predicted it would end like this? From 18 months almost permanently on campus, to our first ever online-only conference.

With only 1000 words (I hate word limits!) I want to concentrate on two areas – what we've achieved and some highlights.

What have we achieved?

Have we done everything I'd hoped for? No – when does that ever happen! But looking back, there've been some real triumphs for this CEC.

We've developed our new strategy. The great projects coming out of it, including our Member Survey, should enable us to do much more for students going forward. It was brilliant to have involvement from the wider team – not just the CEC, but the staff team, trustees and volunteers such as central committee reps, as well as the invaluable input from the student consultation forums.

We've developed new ways to help students – personally I'm really proud of the “student journey” support videos we've set up, but innovations such as taking Peer Support to social media, developing new volunteer roles and running Student Led Projects are all things to be proud of.

We have really extended the reach of the student voice in the university. As well as all the formal committees, we are involved in multiple “Task and Finish” groups, Recognition of Prior Learning work, Scholarship Centres ... you name it, we're there! This has meant we are struggling to find enough reps – but it's a good problem to have, and a real incentive for us to get cracking in getting more volunteers involved.

This extension has been particularly apparent in the management of the response to the epidemic. Whilst I am certainly not going to claim I liked or agreed with every decision the university made, we were there at the table, we had a chance to feed in, and we most certainly did have an impact on several decisions. It was lovely to hear Tim Blackman acknowledge the work of all our student reps in his video thanking everyone for their response to the crisis.

There have been more events run in partnership – the student Analytics workshop led by the FASS FAR, the JISC CAN conference co-organised by VP Media and Campaigns, and with many of our reps presenting, the Student Voice event where all the talks and the workshops were co-led, the first student involvement in co-leading scholarship projects, the co-leading of the online Student Consultations which replaced face to face ones this year... We have set a precedent for the OU working with students in real partnership; hopefully we will never again be consigned to be a “tick box” student in the room.

One of my election pledges was to try to introduce individual representation. Whilst we are not there yet (I did say “try”!) we are much closer – we’ve had in depth discussions with the relevant OU staff, we’ve used focus groups to identify what, exactly, it should involve, and we have a well argued business case now with the OU, to persuade them to fund this key service going forward.

I have been particularly proud of how the team – CEC and beyond – have come together to support students during the Covid-19 crisis. People have rallied round to run three or four events for our students each week, from general chats to recipe and craft discussions to quizzes to film nights. We have spent long days out there answering student queries and offering support as the comms on assessment changes came out and taking concerns

back to the university. It has been exhausting but also exhilarating – and heart-warming to see how many students appreciate our efforts.

A Few Personal Highlights

The wonderful “OU 50th” celebrations – from the privilege of attending a reception at the House of Lords hosted by our Chancellor Martha Lane Fox, to our glorious triumph over OU staff in the Charter Day University Challenge match, to fascinating lecture series, to the fun (and free popcorn!) at OpenFest – it was a real year to remember.

Being involved in the appointment of the new Vice Chancellor, Tim Blackman. We had far more student involvement than previously, as all the candidates met a student panel, in addition to there being student representation in the interview process. I think we got the right one, anyway!

Our partnership with the university in setting up the “student nominated tutor awards” as part of the Recognition of Excellence in Teaching awards. Whilst there was an earlier similar scheme, this was on altogether a different scale, with 477 nominations received! Our panel of the Faculty Reps, VP Student Support, Student Council Member and myself had a job and a half getting these down to a manageable shortlist, but it was so inspirational reading all the lovely nominations from students who were so grateful for the teaching, support, encouragement and inspiration they’d had from their tutors.

For me personally, a few external activities stand out. Being the only student speaking at Wonkhe’s “Secret Life of Students” and producing a blog to accompany it was a good chance to show the world the reality of how it is for OU students. I was delighted to have the chance to put the case for maintenance loans for distance learners to an All Party Parliamentary Group (and this is a cause we must keep fighting). Presenting, with an OU member

of staff, at an academic conference on our model for student partnership in scholarship was a great opportunity, and it was lovely to get a lot of interest from other institutions.

To finish, I'd just like to thank all of our team – CEC, staff, and all our volunteers. Hardly anything is ever a solo effort or a solo achievement – we can be really proud of what we've done together.

I've loved being President and working with all of you.

And a thank-you to all OU students who've been in touch, voted, contributed their thoughts, engaged with us on social media. OU students are amazing and inspirational.

Deputy President

Steph Stubbins

I had a very positive experience in my role as Deputy President, my remit covered many areas and other areas that didn't sit specifically within my remit. I will summarise some of my work below:

Trustee

I participated at a Charity Trustee Training Event at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in London in October 2018 alongside other new Trustees. The following month I attended NCVO Trustee Conference 'Good Governance, Great Organisations' with Alison Kingan (Vice President Student Support) where we were updated with the latest regulatory standards and best practice for Charity Organisations.

Volunteering

I worked along with the volunteering team to support volunteers in their roles and build a sense of community for them. We launched the 'OU Students Volunteer Zone' on Slack where volunteers could meet-up online in a private area, to discuss their roles and to socialise. We held a 'Volunteer Celebration Event' in July 2019, 60 volunteers attended to network and celebrate volunteering, having the opportunity to share information and their experiences.

We gained our 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation in 2019, which is a UK industry standard for organisations that work with volunteers, provided through NCVO (National Council of Volunteer Organisations).

'Student-led Projects' was launched, which were submitted as ideas by OU Students to improve and support their community. Our largest pilot student-

led project around homelessness was called 'Donate & Donuts' and was held in Milton Keynes in January 2019. This was hosted by Sarah Jones (Faculty Association Representative for Wellbeing, Education and Languages); this was a successful event, attended by over 100 people and thousands of items were collected and shared with homeless organisations.

Postgraduate Research Students

I worked with the Community team to improve the sense of community for both part-time and full-time PGR Students who are based on and off campus; which included the launch of the pilot PGR Students' 'Common Room'. I judged the 'Bake Your Research Competition' in 2018 and 2019, where students baked their themed subjects and there was plenty of cake!

I attended PGR Student Inductions each year, talking to new PGR Students about the OU Students Association. I met with the Graduate School and Students from different faculties to discuss issues and questions they had, setting actions through the PGR Liaison Group to improve provision for them and share ideas for engagement activities. We held themed PGR Student events on campus and started 'mapping the OU Student Journey of PGR students', to understand their student experience.

Representation Review

I worked alongside Peter Cowan (Vice President Education) and the Student Voice Team on the review of Academic Representation (specifically '*Central Committee Representatives*') from governance level to grassroots representation. We gathered evidence to understand if current practice of academic representation was fit for purpose; identifying gaps in academic representation, considering the feedback loop and the impact our representatives have on students' learning experiences and wider Open University matters. This included work towards developing a new Code of Practice to support student representation.

Culture Change Review.

I was Student-Lead the Culture Change Review, working with our membership to bring change to our existing culture and ensure that we can provide a 'safe welcoming inclusive environment that exudes a positive forward looking and professional image'. All aspects of our organisation were within the scope of this project and the findings went forward to be used in an implementation phase.

Student Experience Discussions

I hosted dedicated monthly '*Student Experience Discussions*' sessions with OU Students, which was an opportunity to hear about the student journey and the different experiences that impact it, both positively and negatively. Feedback was collated, considered and prioritised (e.g. items of concern or to celebrate success from across the wider student body) and then added to a 'Student Voice' information paper. This was added to the Agenda of the 'Student Experience Committee' (a mid-tier governance committee) for discussion and the paper was then shared with the wider student body with feedback from the discussion around areas raised from it.

Student Voice

I attended a '*Student Consultation Awareness OU Staff Drop-in*' in November 2019. Which was hosted by the O U Student Consultation staff team to share information about the importance of consulting students in all areas of the University's work.

I have been involved in work around the new platform 'Your Ideas' which was launched in September 2019, which invites students to submit ideas to the OU Students Association. Students can view and vote on other students' ideas and when they reach 50 votes, they can be progressed forward.

OU Students Association Strategy

I was involved with our strategy work including workshops with the Central Executive Committee and our Trustees, and I attended the Strategy Launch Event on the Milton Keynes OU Campus in October 2019. I was also Student-Lead on the *'Engage and Empower Working Group'* around student engagement through volunteering, empowerment and community; Student Co-Lead on the *'Communication Strategy Working Group'* to create a communications strategy and Student Co-Lead on the *'Strategy Launch Working Group'* which had the aim of managing launch activities for the strategy.

Highlights

Aushwitz Visit – I travelled to Poland in November 2018, to tour authentic sites (the former Nazi concentration and death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau) and museum exhibits and a follow-up visit in London to reflect on the contemporary relevance of the lessons of the Holocaust.

Scotland Visit – I attended a Quality Assurance Agency 'Theme Leaders Event' in December 2018, where Universities shared best practice to engage students and enhance quality throughout the student experience. I then visited the OU in Scotland Edinburgh office and was introduced to various staff members throughout the building. They took time to explain their roles and it was clear there was a strong focus on enhancing quality in all areas of their work.

Wales Visit - I supported Lucy Richardson (Area Association Representative for Wales) with her 'OU Students Association Freshers Event in Cardiff' in September 2019, this was a great chance for welsh students to talk to Student Representatives. I then visited the OU Office in Cardiff and was given a schedule of meetings with different staff members, so I could gain understanding around the range of work they do for welsh students.

Unfortunately, I had to leave my role 4 months early due to a serious health condition and am saddened I couldn't continue to the end of my term. I am now recovering and in good spirits and hope to be volunteering within the OU Students Association in the near future.

VP Administration

Caroline Cowan

The following is a summary of my activity as VP Admin since taking office after a by election in 2018. It covers the major elements of the post plus additional work done as a member of the Central Executive Committee (C E C).

- Subvention negotiations. These took part against a background of the university continuing to make cuts in expenditure. As such it was increasingly difficult to obtain anything other than a basic inflationary increase and the Association needed to part fund some increases from reserves. Maintenance of these and funding for new activities as identified in the 2019-2022 Strategy will require specific business cases to be made on an individual basis rather than a general increase. As part of the negotiations, the Association undertook to obtain external sponsorship for the biennial Conference. While this has been overtaken by events the experience gained will be useful for planning Conference 2022.
- Incorporation. This was completed in June 2019 and the new body, Open University Association Ltd, is now in existence. There is no effect on the student experience of the Association with the Articles of Association duplicating the former Constitution except for minor administrative details required by Company Law. There remains some work to be done regarding formal agreements with the Open University. This is being undertaken by the Project Manager and Chief Executive Officer. The former unincorporated Association still exists as a shell and it will need a decision by the Board of Trustees to formally wind it up.
- Bye Laws review. These were reviewed to accommodate changes needed due to incorporation, the decision by the Board of Trustees to put limits on who can stand (and hold) elected office and the

findings of the culture review working group. These were reviewed and commented on by the Central Executive Committee at its April Meeting (and online in the C E C forums) and subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees at its May meeting.

- Elections review. This was not as wide-ranging as had been hoped initially but a meeting held by me, Wendy (Deputy CEO) and Steph (former Deputy President) with Election Reform Services provided us with some thoughts to bring to the Election Review Group and subsequently the C E C. The experiences of the last election cycle were considered and a move to an earlier election process was agreed. Other issues relating to candidates' videos and manifestos were much debated and a few changes agreed. The by elections held in 2018 and 2019 attracted a lot of interest. There was less for the main election held this year but this does need to be considered in view of the Covid 19 pandemic which certainly affected live hustings during the process and reduced publicity about it at the cancelled face to face consultations.
- Conference Steering Group. This was convened according to the changes made by the C E C which altered the membership slightly to ensure accessibility advice was built into the group. As Conference was not due to debate changes to the Articles of Association, the business side of Conference would just cover the basic requirements of the formal reports, minutes of Conference 2018 and provide the opportunity for delegates to question the C E C and Board of Trustees. The Covid 19 pandemic has resulted in Conference being moved to a wholly online experience due to government advice. It will be an interesting experience for all concerned as it is covering new ground.
- Directorships of the O U Students Educational Trust (OUSET) and OUSA Services Limited (O S L). As well as the usual work in making grants OUSET reviewed membership of its Trustee Board and its criteria. O S L has been operating against the background of losing payment for exam papers supplied and more recently the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic in closing the OU's warehouse and the

cancelling of the Spring Graduation ceremonies. A revised business plan was agreed by the Board of Directors and was presented to the Trustees at their May meeting.

- Other roles. I was involved in consultations regarding an induction process for taught postgraduate students as I was currently studying for an MA at the time of my election. I took part in the 2019 face to face Consultations and was scheduled to be at the Campus one in March 2020. I have also contributed to discussions on the C E C forums.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff in general and the Resources Team in particular, for all their hard work and support through my term of office. And to wish Matt all the best for when he takes over in August 2020.

VP Community

Anca Seaton

Spring 2019 seems like a lifetime ago! That is when I was elected as Vice President Community, in the bye elections. Bright eyed and bushy tailed... well, tired-looking and blue haired, I started my term, full of ideas and enthusiasm. Looking back at my manifesto, I am pleased to say I fulfilled part of my pledges. OU Students community is a vibrant place where any student can find their tribe, talk to other students, join clubs, societies, organise meetups and, why not, volunteer! I wanted to focus on raising awareness of the Students Association amongst our members and have a presence at face to face events, like residential schools and tutorial venues. My last “in person” activities as VP Community were in Manchester and Warwick, manning a stall at the Business School residenceals. Next on the agenda was organising a presence at the most popular tutorial venues, but apart from doing some background planning, I was not able to carry on.

One of the highlights of my term was organising Freshers’ Fortnight. It’s a task that needs a lot of collaboration with colleagues on the CEC, student volunteers, societies and clubs. I am proud to say our Freshers’ events welcomed our new students to the OU and the Association and we also gained a few more very enthusiastic volunteers!

The Bath residential school 2019 went smoothly. We brought the Association where students were, raised awareness of what the Association is and how we support students, organised quizzes and film nights, sold merchandise and, more importantly, were there for the students. We worked really well with the OU staff and were praised by the students attending the residential schools.

January 2020 saw the first face to face meeting of this year's University Challenge team. It was a great evening, and the matches between this year's team and last year's, and this year's and the OU staff team were full of drama! The event was streamed live on Facebook so more students could cheer the teams on.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the biggest challenge during this term was, and still is, the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only it changed the world as we know it, but it also changed the way the Students Association supports our students. Open University is a distance learning institution, so our students are used to working on their own, but the lockdown exacerbated the isolation. We listened to what students told us, and we organised more online chats, quizzes, film nights and other activities. The temporary cancellation of any face to face activities led us to create a new volunteering role, online meetup host, and a good number of students applied, trained and now organise online events.

I was looking forward to being a part of the Conference Steering Group, where, together with other student volunteers and Association staff, help organise the biggest event of the last two years. We started very well, with ideas flying everywhere, lot of enthusiasm and determination. Due to the current situation, it was decided Conference will take place online. It is not going to be the same, we'll all miss seeing our friends, make new ones, and take part in a marvellous weekend, but we are working very hard to shape the first online Students Association Conference. At the time of writing, the preparations are under way, and the programme looks very exciting!

I guess this is the sign of the things to come. We don't know what future brings, and when we can resume our face to face activities, but the pandemic taught us how to find other ways to keep in touch with each other and support each other. Instead of travelling up and down the country at weekends, taking part in events, consultations, meetups, revision weekends,

we are now spending time on Microsoft Teams, or having a Netflix watch party or a pub quiz from the comfort of our homes.

Despite the current situation, our societies and clubs rose to the challenge and created new ways of keeping in touch with their members and support each other. The events moved online, the Facebook groups and forums became a “home from home”. It was amazing to see students who only talked to each other online keeping an eye on their friends and colleagues, sharing hints and tips on how to cope with the situation, overcoming the lack of motivation and keeping everyone’s spirits up. I am proud to be part of such a wonderful community!

On a personal level, I’ve learned such a lot during this term. I had a few firsts, of course – first time in a job interview as part of the panel, not the candidate, first time travelling to Scotland, first time getting stuck in Scotland because of a storm, first time helping to organise an online conference. First time I cried in a job interview! Well, all in all, it was quite a tumultuous term, and it’s not yet over.

What will the future bring? Nobody knows. But I can say, without a shadow of a doubt, that the OU students community is more than equipped to navigate through these very difficult times. We rarely meet each other face to face in normal circumstances, so the move to “online-only events” is not such a big jump for us. We’ll keep doing what we do best, and look after each other.

I can not finish this report without thanking a few people who helped me in my role: my colleagues on the CEC, the Community Team, the wonderful student volunteers (meetup hosts, societies committee members, resi reps), the Association staff and, first and foremost, the OU students who elected me in this role and supported me by volunteering, attending events, advising.

VP Education (report submitted by Cath Brown on behalf of VP Education)

Apologies to all that this report is less than complete.

Since our VP Education Peter Cowan resigned in autumn 2019, the duties of that role have been spread between various other CEC members; I owe particular thanks to Barbara Tarling and Steph Stubbins for taking on so much of the burden.

The summary below derives from Peter's reports to CEC before he resigned, augmented by some details on the work carried on after his departure.

One of the most significant areas of work has to be the Students Association's Representation Review. The purpose of the review was to ensure that we have a wider range of representatives from all sectors of the student community, that we in the Association are supporting them properly, and that the OU also does its part in supporting reps and enabling their full and effective participation. Current reps were surveyed, to ensure we had a full understanding of what barriers are experienced, what works well and what needs addressing. We are continuing to take the outcomes of the Review forward with the university and a code of practice will be devised. The work carried out by Appointments Committee – very much assisted by feedback from Central Committee Reps – to improve and develop the processes of appointment, and increase transparency, will also feed into this.

The Association has continued to develop its support for Post-graduate Research (PGR) Students. VP Education and Deputy President have been on

the PGR Liaison group, which has kept us abreast of the issues experienced and enabled us to offer help and support where appropriate.

There have been opportunities to contribute to a number of external reviews; perhaps the most interesting one was the QAA consultation on standards in degree awarding – or, more informally, on “grade inflation”. There was the opportunity here to submit written responses but also to attend a consultation in person. President and VP Education were the only students at the consultation in this, and found it very interesting to hear the many and varied practices different universities adopt when classifying their degrees. It was clear that the OU’s approach is rigorous and that our standards remain exacting.

VP Education is inevitably very engaged with a number of OU committees and groups. A few details of some of the more interesting work carried out in them are given below:-

- Curriculum Portfolio Advisory Group – this group discusses the OU’s curriculum and what changes may be needed to accommodate, for example, students studying at higher intensities, as well as exploring potential new areas for which there may be a market. The introduction of new types of qualification such as microcredentials gets discussed here too. The student voice is clearly welcomed here; in addition to useful discussions in the committee, the President (in the absence of VP Education) had the chance to present to a wide range of OU staff at a workshop organised by the group, on the theme of “What OU students want” (The answer was – choice, flexibility and quality).
- Futurelearn PG Qualifications Steering Group – this group looks at putting OU qualifications on Futurelearn. The OU’s postgraduate offer currently is (many would say) rather limited, so if this offers

the opportunity to extend it (or to keep running qualifications that have only a small number of students), it could be beneficial.

- Quality Management and Enhancement (QME) Reviews are carried out regularly by the OU to monitor the work carried out by the different academic areas within the university. Work has been done to significantly increase student involvement in these, including the central committee representatives who sit on Boards of Studies and Teaching Committees.
- The OU is accredited with the “Middle States Commission” – this is an accrediting body in the US, which means the OU is one of only a very small number of UK universities to have its degrees accredited in the US. 2019 brought a “reaccreditation visit” – which is basically to ensure the OU meets the standards the Middle States Commission were looking for. There was a lot of work in preparation for this visit, including production of a long and detailed document explaining how the OU works and what it provides for its students. A range of students had the opportunity to meet the panel, and to give their accounts of what it is really like studying with the OU.
- The Student Experience on a Module (SEaM) survey that students are asked to complete at the end of every module has been up for review. The group working on this examined the fitness for purpose of the current questions and made suggestions for revising them, as well as looking at improving communications to students on it, and closing the feedback loop so students would see how their views and comments influenced change at the university.
- The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is used to attempt to gain a measure of universities’ quality of teaching. The OU has not to

date taken part in TEF, but with a realistic prospect of participation becoming compulsory, a lot of work has been done by the university in preparation. There has been substantial student involvement – from critiquing the proposed written submission, to having six students being part of the “Mock TEF Panel”, feeding back on subject submissions.

This report has hopefully given a flavour of some of the work VP Education (or substitute) has been involved in this year.

VP Student Voice

Amelia Gackowska

My name is Amelia Gackowska and I have held the position of VP Student Voice from August 2018. In the previous term I was the AAR for Continental Europe and began my OU journey a few years earlier in 2011.

I was motivated to volunteer for the Students Association primarily out of a desire to help other students feel involved in, supported by, and listened to by their university. After a bad experience at my first university, where I was made to feel like just a statistic, I quickly saw a very positive attitude amongst my fellow volunteers at the OU, and felt like I could have made a significant contribution had it not been for a Brexit-related stalemate between 2016-8. Therefore with European students such as myself still close in mind, I decided to apply for this position in order to work more closely with the university to ensure that student voices be sought out and taken into consideration. In summary, I was aiming to make sure that students recognised their right to be heard, and knew how to claim it, and to take steps towards university staff seeing such input as standard and valuable, as opposed to tick-box exercises or, well, non-existent!

This was ambitious and not realistic for a two year period, as culture takes time to change, but I feel like we, myself, my fellow volunteers and the Association staff team, have laid some important and sustainable groundwork which can lead towards these goals going forward. After inductions and introductory meetings, the first piece of work in which I was involved was the development of a Student Engagement Standard, which recognises the commitment of different areas within the university to involving student voice in their activities. In the autumn of 2018 I was also part of a working group developing a staff-facing student voice hub, sharing best practice about student input across departments and providing staff with ideas, tools and case studies for how to engage in dialogue and work in partnership with students. In May 2019 I took the chance to find out how student-led distance education is handled at other UK universities, by hosting

a discussion on feminist pedagogy in the digital classroom at the Jisc Change Agents' Network conference.

The Association student voice team hosted three events in order to inform, motivate, and help our volunteers on university committees to do their roles efficiently. The first of these, in January 2019, was training on how to prepare for meetings, how to speak and take notes during meetings, and how to write reports for a range of different audiences. This was followed by a Research Symposium in March, at which volunteers had the opportunity to hear about research projects and discover other ways to become involved, and the third event was a seminar at the end of June. Here students learned about the representation review and consultation process, met the P V C Students, Liz Marr, and gave input to the development of the new Students Association strategy. These events were all successful and the third proved especially popular with C C R and S R G representatives.

Deputy President Steph Stubbins and I hosted student experience drop-in chats, to encourage students to provide positive or negative feedback on any topic related to their studies. Topics ranged from intra-group conflicts on modules requiring collaboration, to delays in receiving materials in alternative formats, to understanding grading procedures, and we collated and furthered feedback as well as signposting students as appropriate. We also developed a new mechanism through which such feedback can be submitted via our website, in a user-friendly manner, with the aim of no comments or criticism being lost due to not fitting into clear categories with a dedicated contact person or process.

During the first year of my term I was also a member of the Student Voice Steering Group, the Senate Reference Group and the Student Consultation Management Group, which determines the topics and formats for student consultations. One of my personal highlights was attending the face to face consultation in Manchester in March 2019. This was a productive and enjoyable opportunity to meet new students, find out about the positive and negative aspects of their studies, present the Association and discuss ideas for student-led projects, with a very positive atmosphere overall.

Since the start of the term's second year I have had less to report as I have metaphorically been out of office for long periods of time. Since being elected I have graduated from the OU with a BSc Mathematics and its Learning, written an MA thesis for another university, moved to a new city and then twice more within the area, been promoted, started an additional full time job, taken four language exams, applied for naturalisation, had an operation, and had a lot of Covid-19-related overtime! It was not easy to step back from this role, especially as the commitment I had made to students was important to me, but ultimately that is the decision that I needed to make, and my fellow CEC members have been wonderfully understanding. I have been reading and contributing to our forum discussions as much as possible as well as attending and participating in CEC weekends, whether in person or virtually, and will continue to be involved with conference and handover procedures.

This role will not continue in its current form and there has also been some restructuring of the student voice team within the Association staff. Therefore the incoming VP Education and VP Engagement will have the chance to form their own student voice projects and I wish them the very best success and enjoyment in doing so!

Thanks for reading, enjoy the conference, and good luck with your current and future OU studies!

VP Media and Campaigns

Fanni Zombor

With my 2 years as Vice President Media and Campaigns coming to an end, it is time to give an overview of what I achieved over the last 2 years. Although I am carrying on as Vice President Engagement for the 2020-2022, there is certainly more I will aim to achieve. The focus of my new role will slightly shift to build on the foundations put in place over the last 2 years.

I got involved in Higher Education as a way to make my grandparents proud and have a degree more than anything. Getting involved in the Students Association has definitely given me a lot more than I ever hoped it would, including a very clear future career ambition. I am now lucky enough to have started my career by gaining employment at Wonkhe. So, granny and grandpa although you are no longer around to watch over me, I hope I did you proud!

This report is certainly not the place to cover every little task and achievement over the past 2 years and it won't include a lot of things we have achieved as a CEC or as the Association, as I am sure detailed information about it will be in others reports where they were leading on that specific work.

After taking on my role, I first got involved in the accessibility and usability testing of our current website (oustudents.com) to ensure it goes above the standards required and to have a central space accessible to all our students. Alongside this, I also led the Association in supporting a campaign aimed at making the advertisement of Essay Mills services illegal.

[The Hoot](#), the biggest single achievement of my term took over a solid 6 months of my time. It was created with the intention to move away from the

long PDF quarterly magazine to a readily available online magazine that is more engaging and has an interest to the wider student body. It gives the ability to promote articles one by one and people can comment and chat under the articles with a really easy function for students to submit an article in any area that may be of interest to other OU students.

The JISC CAN Conference in 2019 was held on OU campus in Milton Keynes. I got to be the student lead for this project and alongside organising the agenda and delivering sessions and a speech, I also had the opportunity to enable over 20 OU students to participate in the event. It was definitely one of the highlights of my entire term as the event brought the whole Higher Education sector together to focus on students as partners

Strictly speaking, this wasn't a CEC activity, but I got to be on the organising panel of a first-of-its-kind student conference, run specifically for students in the FBL faculty. It was an uplifting day on campus in Milton Keynes with a good mix of community and study related sessions with celebrations and speakers around it.

The STUDIO has been an amazing asset to the Association, but over time it became a very big task with relatively small engagement and value to our membership. We transformed it to make it an umbrella brand covering all sorts of media activities happening in the Association. This enables us to be more flexible in the content creation to meet the different needs of the Association while keeping it on-brand and ensuring all the content has a specific purpose.

Strategy and Communications Strategy - A big piece of work for the whole CEC and Association this term was building a brand-new strategy. Due to the nature of my current role I led on developing the Influence and Transform part of the strategy as well as leading on the communications strategy which supports the delivery of each part of the strategy

My current biggest piece of work, which won't be completed in this term is around improving our current website. A lot of the foundation for this was built during this last term. During my last 2 years we took on a smaller scale project to improve the existing site and its functionalities, but this current, much larger scale website development aims to look at our changing needs to ensure the website continues to support all our work to deliver the new strategy and beyond.

Over the last 2 years I had a consistent presence across all social media platforms and forums, actively participating in student discussions and being available for students who needed sign-posting or clarification and help raising their issues especially where they seemed to have fallen through the cracks. Most recently, during the announcement of changes to end-of-module assessments, I have also been around for a lot of online and face to face events. These have involved engaging the student body and volunteers to play my part in building the student community.

I have been involved in various OU Committees and meetings, including the Digital Skills Implementation working group; the NSS Campaigns group; the Core Systems Replacement reference group; the Student Consultation Management group; the CSR staff and student reference group; the VC interview panel, as well as meetings with OU Communications team and other departments as necessary.

I have also attended various events representing the Association such as the NCVO conference, Future EdTech Conference, OU Student Consultation events, various OU events talking about the Association and the strategy. I wrote numerous articles for the OU and externally and appeared in probably even more videos covering all sorts of topics.

I am sure there could have been a different way to carry out this role, but I feel I was really able to make the role my own and it grew with me as I was

thriving to make a difference in my activities to OU students. There have been ups and downs, where life took over or I was sitting in a meeting crying of laughter with other CEC colleagues, but I truly believe I gave my best to this role over the last 2 years. Here is to another 2 years of madness!

VP Student Support

Alison Kingan

The biggest change since writing Conference's 2018 report has been the virus; leading to the campus element of Conference being cancelled, along with many meetings since March. I hope you, your family and friends stayed safe and well.

I aimed to make a positive difference to students in this role. I oversaw the Students Association's Peer Support Service, was an OUSET (O U S E T) Trustee and Chaired some meetings where student representatives met OU staff. I sat on various Committees, Working Groups, and Task and Finish Groups to give the student's perspective. I was a member of Senate Reference Group and Senate, the OU's senior academic body. One highlight was attending a Graduation ceremony and watching students celebrate their successful journeys with friends and family. My thanks go to Association staff Verity, Anna and Sammi and President Cath for their support, counsel and putting up with me.

Peer Supporters are OU students who answer one off queries or offer longer one to one support. One reason I stood in 2018 was to help reintroduce the Peer Support Service following a review. The Service re-opened after the new Supporters completed their training. Since then Supporters have helped 139 students. In addition to being contactable via a forum and email, the Supporters have a Facebook Page. The Association's [Peer Support webpage](#) has more details.

I attended face to face and online meetings of the Association's Charity OUSET (OU Students Educational Trust) and considered applications for funds from students facing financial hardship. Details can be found [here](#). One outcome of the resignation of Immediate Past President, Nicola Simpson, as OUSET Chair was a review of our Declaration of Trust. The new

Governing Document includes flexibility of membership in case V P Administration or V P Student Support roles are vacant or Immediate Past President declines to be an OUSET Trustee. Lorraine Adams, a co-opted Trustee, and I were elected Chair and Deputy Chair. OUSET contributed to the OU's Carers Scholarship Fund. OUSET benefited from the kindness of the Write Club Society who donated profits from the book *The Gift*, written by their members.

I helped instigate meetings between OU Student Support Teams and our Faculty Association Reps. In July, Area Association Reps and Nation Offices staff will be included. In 2018/2019 Verity Robinson and I visited all OU England and Nation Offices to share what the Association offers which might be of interest to student facing staff as they spoke to students. I also attended a tutor training event to share Association activities. I have worked more closely with staff from OU in Scotland including membership of the Corporate Parenting Steering Group which seeks to improve the experience of students who have had experience of being in care.

I had various regular meetings with OU staff. One was with Assessment, Credit and Qualifications staff where Cath Brown and I requested enabling multiple submissions of emTMAs before the deadline, as we can with EMAs. Another was Service Review meetings where we discussed online experiences. One item OU staff shared was a link to where [IT Systems status can be checked](#). After I mentioned there was incomplete information about emTMAs on the Help Centre, this was subsequently improved. We heard students can still study while using Windows 7 even though Microsoft has stopped providing security patches.

During this term I talked to various OU departments and sat on Working Groups to talk about students' experiences. This was not focussed on my experiences but what other students have experienced too. These included discussions about: assessment; mental health and wellbeing; supporting new students; recording online tutorials; support for students taking exams or

submitting EMAs at a later date; and communications to students. I talked to students on Facebook, by responding to individual posts and taking part in Fresher events. I attended a small number of Adobe Chat Sessions.

While attending eSTeEM Conferences run by the STEM Faculty I discovered two of my modules were involved in research into how best to improve our study experiences. It wasn't accidental that on TM112 we were encouraged to request or give help to fellow students on online quizzes (similar to iCMAs). This is opposite to what we do on most modules and I benefited from fellow students going through aspects I struggled with.

I co-presented at a JISC Conference about involving students in projects based on my experience of working on a group ensuring OU student facing policies became more student friendly and easier to find on the Help Centre. That presentation led me to talk with OU staff about how to demonstrate that student feedback about the Help Centre leads to improvements. A section of the Help Centre where I had input has clearer information about assessment deadline extensions and how students request extensions.

I started this 2 year term taking on one aspect of the vacant V P Administration's role by sitting on the Student Led Projects Panel. I ended it taking on some V P Equality and Diversity's roles from January 2020. This included involvement in the Student Mental Health Working Group, which provided input into the OU's Student and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. I joined the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group plus SeGA meetings (Securing Greater Accessibility). I chaired Inclusion meetings which are attended by Group Chairs, Students Association staff and OU staff. I became ex-officio member of the Disabled Students Group Committee and took a more active role in responding to disabled students. Two major issues were lateness of alternative formats and requests for evidence from those needing alternative formats. These might be continuing issues for the new V P Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Over the next 2 years I want to reach more students to share what is available and find out any issues which I can take to the OU. These aims correspond with the recently agreed Association Strategy. My motto continues to be, to support students, with a bit of fun along the way.

OU Student member of Council

Barbara Tarling

Two years ago my report to Conference painted a picture of the challenges I faced in my first term as a member of the Open University Council. When I was elected to serve for a second term I thought that 2018-2020 would be plain sailing – which just goes to show how wrong you can be!

Celebrations

The first eighteen months (August 2018-December 2019) were filled with optimism and excitement. 2019 was the OU's 50th anniversary and the year was marked by a flurry of special events. On 23rd April we celebrated the OU's birthday across all four nations with a seemingly endless supply of cake. In Milton Keynes our Chancellor, Martha Lane-Fox, led the singing and helped the Vice-Chancellor cut the celebration cake made by OU student and professional baker, Liz Fox. I wasn't grand enough to be invited to any of the VIP events, but I joined the audience of millions who watched the birthday programme broadcast by the BBC and I attended a number of the Anniversary Inaugural Lectures held in the Berrill Theatre over the course of the year. As an OU alumna I was delighted to contribute one of the 7,000 golden leaves that make up the stunning Tree of Learning sculpture that now adorns the library and which raised £300,000 to support the 50th Anniversary Scholarship Fund for Carers. The anniversary events reminded us of all that is unique about the Open University and its mission to transform lives through education and it was a joy to celebrate my own special connection with it.

A Changing Landscape

If 2019 was a year of celebration, it was also a year of change for the University. In January Malcolm Sweeting took up the post of Chair of Council

following the retirement of Richard Gillingwater and in September we said an affectionate farewell to our retiring Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mary Kellett, before welcoming Professor Tim Blackman as her successor. Tim is no stranger to the University and is passionate about supporting the OU's mission to inspire learning and promote social justice through the provision of high-quality university education for all. There have also been significant additions to the Vice-Chancellor's leadership team, including the appointment of Dave Hall as University Secretary. New appointments at this level of seniority inevitably alter the dynamics of an organisation but they can also bring new energy and strength, which will be needed if the University is to bring its major projects to replace the aging IT systems and design a new employment contract for Associate Lecturers to a successful conclusion.

Although internal changes have been significant, the biggest drivers of change in the past two years have been external. In 2017 the Higher Education and Research Act made new provisions concerning the regulation of higher education and research in England and Wales. The Office for Students was established on 1 January 2018 and assumed its full powers on 1 August. OfS has the power to register and deregister higher education providers in England and Wales and to impose conditions upon them, and higher education governing bodies are required to ensure that all those conditions are met. Monitoring institutional effectiveness and performance has always been part of Council's role, but its importance has increased under the new regulatory regime.

Since March 2020 the Covid 19 pandemic has changed our ways of working in unprecedented, though hopefully temporary ways. Nation offices were closed on 20 March and the OU sites in Milton Keynes, Manchester and Nottingham shut down a few days later. Face to face tutorials and exams have been cancelled, Degree Ceremonies have been postponed and

alternative forms of assessment have been devised to allow students to complete their studies and gain their awards. The OU has remained open throughout the crisis, with staff working from home, and students continuing to study despite the difficult circumstances. Council meetings have been taking place online and, when necessary, additional Extraordinary Meetings have been added to our schedule in order to ensure that we have adequate oversight of the University's response to the pandemic. Plans for the recovery phase are already well advanced and I very much hope that we will all be able to celebrate our next Student Association Conference in Milton Keynes as usual.

Highs and Lows

Attending one of the Open University Degree Ceremonies as a member of Council is always a highlight of the academic year and I was lucky enough to join the Chair of Council at the Barbican in September 2019 to celebrate the achievements of hundreds of joyful students. I was hoping to repeat the experience again in 2020 but all Degree Ceremonies have been postponed as part of the response to the pandemic and we do not yet know when they will resume. However, even a global pandemic cannot stop the flood of delighted social media posts from students who have finally achieved the objectives they have worked so long and hard for, and their joyful outpourings have been a beacon of light in hard times.

On the plus side, I've been involved in a number of interesting initiatives over the past two years. I'm proud to have contributed to the design our new Association strategy and thrilled to see that it is now in place. I've also been working on the new Student Charter, which we expect to be approved in the summer, and I hope that my work on the Academic Governance Advisory Group will lead to improved support and respect for student members of university committees. I have enjoyed substituting for VP Education on the Qualifications and Assessment Committee during the

2019/20 academic year (my favourite committee despite its heavy workload) and in February I had an unexpected but enjoyable two-day introduction to the work of the Peer Review Group. As one of the judges of the revamped Recognition of Excellence in Teaching awards I also read hundreds of heart-warming citations from students who had nominated tutors for their outstanding pastoral support and inspirational teaching, which was one of the most enjoyable and satisfying tasks of the year.

On the downside, I have been disappointed that the business brought before Council often fails to focus on the impact that key initiatives will have on the student experience, neither clearly defining the benefits for students and the steps needed to realise them nor fully articulating potential risks and the measures needed to mitigate them. I'm also sad that many of our Initiatives to increase Council member engagement with the students who are the university's key stakeholders have largely fallen by the wayside over the past two years and I very much hope my successor will be able to remedy this.

And finally ...

Although I will be leaving Council and the CEC on 31 July I'm delighted to have been elected as a Student Trustee for 2020-2022 and to have been appointed as joint Lead Student Representative, alongside Sandra Summers, for the forthcoming QAA Quality Enhancement Review. I look forward to working with CEC and CCR colleagues to produce a student submission that fully reflects what it means to be an OU student in 2020.

Faculty Association Representative (STEM)

Patrice Belton

1. Motivation to stand for the role:

Curiosity!

As previous experiences studying at a brick and mortar University meant, distance learning and the Open University community were uncharted territories. Thus, for the first five years of study, contact with other students was in; face-to-face tutorials, module forums, the open-design studio and, (through) collaborative work truncated via WhatsApp. These interactions were not helpful, as they often felt forced, inorganic and isolating, they were accompanied by static photographs. This caused disengagement with the idea of connecting socially, so my time was spent focusing on study.

However, in the first few months of level 3, challenges with understanding the module materials inspired students to support each other and socialise in study sessions on WhatsApp. This sparked my interest, to find out more about what resources the OU offered its students, which led to my initial volunteer role, as Student Curator and judge, for the 2019 Annual Design Exhibition. I later presented as a 'Keynote Speaker' for the Faculty of Business and Law's Student Conference. These experiences of collaborating, offering support and interacting with other students, rekindled my passion for helping others, whilst connecting me to (some) OU Student Association Representatives and, offering some knowledge of the Association.

Although I knew I wanted to do more, to build a better student community, I wasn't sure how; so I kept volunteering at OU events (e.g. Student Hub Live (SHL)), until an opportunity to take part in a by-election was sent via email. I took a chance and it paid off and I hope this inspires others to do the same.

2. The key priorities and focus areas:

During the election, I was fully aware that my term in office would be limited which could limit any value I could bring, but I truly believed in my manifesto and, wanted to help build a better student community by giving a voice to students (like me) who were hidden or not engaging with all aspects of the 'student experience' at the OU. I also wanted to fulfil my role as, the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths' Faculty Association Representative (STEM FAR) but wasn't entirely sure what that meant.

However, as I enquired with other reps/volunteers and Students Association staff and, researched more about the background of the Association, I quickly understood ways in which I could support STEM students. This included:

- Having collaborative discussions with senior members of the STEM Faculty and STEM Central Committee Representatives (CCRs), to discuss our roles as Students Association/Faculty Reps and to champion ideas for collaborating and building better working partnerships which aim to support the OU Student Community and improve the visibility of Representatives and the Students Association across the Faculty. Although there is much still to be done, feedback from students advised, tutors were signposting them to the Association, whilst OU staff approached me (and other reps) to collaborate in projects; thus, highlighting some progress.
- Attendance to STEM Faculty Assemblies, to listen in on decisions being made on students' behalf and to raise questions about inclusion and representation, to ensure all students are being considered. Also, to highlight the value the Students Association brings to the OU in partnership, by presenting the Association's new strategy (which Cath Brown, Students Association President, presented on my behalf) and the new Student Charter.
- Taking student queries as a day-to-day mandate, referring to other Students Association Reps or members of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) (in particular the President, Deputy President, Vice Presidents of; Student Support; Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion;

Education and; Community, FARs and CCRs) and, signposting to Student Support, Module Teams, Forums, OU resources (e.g. Help centre) and more. This collective work meant student queries were being dealt with promptly and that the voices of many students across the faculty were being heard.

3. The biggest achievement or proudest moment:

There are many from; partnering with the CEC during the COVID-19 crisis to increase the support and resources offered to students online (e.g. Chats, quizzes etc); becoming a member of the eSTeEM (the OU Centre for STEM Pedagogy) student referencing panel, which enabled me to voice ideas to support students partnering scholarship and observe ways the OU are taking revolutionary steps to bring pedagogy to students; and, collaborating with various networks across the OU (e.g. the STEM Deanery, OU Implementation steering group, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Students' Voice Team, PVC-S Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group, and FBL Student Experience Team) to address matters of Access and Participation for underrepresented students.

Yet, my proudest moment was the collaborative work carried with the Students Association Student Support Team and BAME Students Group to plan and launch the BAME Facebook Group and BAME page on the Students Association website, with visions to help improve the representation for BAME students and raise awareness across the OU. Simply because it matters; not just for BAME student but for the OU Community in tandem, and although it is early days students are beginning to engage and participate.

4. Hopes for the future of the Association:

I hope for:

- the Students Association to be more inclusive and reflective of the diversity that makes up the OU Student Community

- students to have fair and adequate representation throughout the OU Community
- the Students Association to have visible and open working partnerships across all OU Faculties
- (and) the Students Association to be embedded in all areas of OU lifestyle; so that students not only remain the primary focus of the OU but that each one feels represented and valued here.
Positively, I see progress (collectively) but there is still much work to be done!

5. What have you gained (skills, confidence...):

Insight!

- As a student; I appreciate the wealth of my voice and its uniqueness
- As a Rep; I appreciate partnerships and collaboration
- (and) as an Advocate for BAME Students; I value inclusion and the spirit of community

I think this, more than anything else I could have gained, is valuable in this process because now I look at belonging differently.

Faculty Association Representative (FBL)

Matt Porterfield

This is my first report to Conference as a volunteer and member of the Association's leadership team. Prior to 2018 I had little contact with the Association however I was lucky enough to get a delegate place at the Conference held on campus in June 2018. I was inspired by enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge of the existing Central Executive Committee (CEC) members and I remember thinking that I could never do any of their roles. I was however encouraged enough to apply to be a volunteer and in September 2018 I was appointed to represent on the FBL Faculty Assembly. I began to get to know other volunteers, I was particularly assisted by Steph Stubbins, Deputy President and Fanni Zombor, VP Media & Campaigns in getting to grips with my new role and I am grateful to them as well as the friendship and support I have received from other volunteers.

In January 2019 I observed at a CEC meeting and was struck by the professionalism and hard work displayed by the members, as well as almost being overwhelmed by the amount of papers that had to be read before the meeting. When a by-election was called for the vacant FBL FAR post, I was encouraged to stand and was elected in March 2019. This report is a summary of the whirlwind of a year since then.

The first tasks were getting to know the other members of the CEC, all very friendly and supportive, and getting to know the key movers and shakers in the faculty. There was also a new list of acronyms to get to grips with but I will not try to explain them here. I quickly learned that people are not always aware they are using acronyms and are happy to explain them if asked. I also found I was on the Senate Reference Group (SRG), which had nothing at all

to do with Roman history, so I had to also learn about the academic and governance structure of the Open University (OU, but you knew that one).

In FBL I found I was breaking new ground as there had not been an active FAR for some time, but I was fortunate that Steph and Fanni were also business students so had useful contacts they could introduce me to in the faculty. I quickly found myself on a planning group for the first FBL student conference ever held where over 100 FBL students were invited to campus to see the facilities and enjoy a full day of events, with over 21 different sessions and activities to pick from. This proved to be so successful that it was planned to be an annual event, however a certain coronavirus has put paid to that for this year. At that Conference was a young (to me) law student called Gareth Jones who has become a valuable representative on the FBL Law Board of Studies and I am delighted to report will be taking over this role from me on 1st August.

I found this role to be more OU facing than I expected although keeping an eye on forums and social media provides a flavour of what is concerning other students, often matched by my own concerns. There are a number of Association forums (fora?) that give valuable information, particularly from other volunteers who sit on committees and then post a report to alert the rest of us to items that may be of interest. These may be within FBL or something happening in other faculties which can either provide a warning for us or an opportunity to take up a good idea. One example of this was an initiative by the FAR from the Faculty of Arts & Social Science to tour round the 4 nations with senior faculty academics and take questions directly from students, unfortunately although this was being planned, it has been overtaken by the coronavirus lockdown. The formal consultations organised by the Pro-Vice Chancellor's office were similarly hit with the planned consultation in Belfast being cancelled while I was on the flight over there. Pre-lockdown I was able to take part in some exciting and enjoyable

activities such as a Student Hub Live event, online Freshers discussions and attending my local Association meet-ups, which were actually hosted by a fellow member of the CEC.

There are a number of events which volunteering in any capacity provides an opportunity to attend and take part in, whether organised by the OU, the faculty or the Association. From attending the OU's 50th Anniversary celebrations, checking in delegates to a CAN conference held on campus to developing then publicising the Association's new strategy at events. They are all a great way to meet fellow students and get to know the staff based on campus. The volunteering continues during the lockdown with the difference being that all meetings are online so it has been a fun learning curve mastering how to contribute effectively to committees and groups over new platforms such as Skype for Business, Zoom and Teams, as well as the usual Adobe Connect.

The coronavirus lockdown has affected every area of our lives, personal and student, however I am aware that I am fortunate to study with an organisation which is better adapted than any other university to continue during these strange times. The recovery may take time but the opportunities for us to thrive and develop in the meantime are obvious. I am pleased to be handing over my FAR role to a safe pair of hands who will grow it better than I could ever have hoped and I am also looking forward to a new challenge in my next role from August.

Faculty Association Representative (WELS)

Sarah Jones

Hiya, I am Sarah Jones, and for the last two years, I have been the Faculty Association Representative for Wellbeing Education and Language Studies (FAR WELS).

Being elected as WELS representative was a bit of a shock to the system as I had not expected to be elected. As soon as I started to pick up the role I realised the scale of the task; thankfully there were many experienced student reps and members of the faculty who were prepared to speak to me and share their knowledge. By the time it was the first CEC in October 2018, I had started to meet the faculty, and I had my first Freshers Adobe Connect session, attended by 223 students! I had some fantastic experience in the room with me, helping the session to run smoothly. One of the most rewarding parts of being a student rep is talking to students and knowing that you can help them through difficult times. One of the many highlights from the role is talking to students is at graduation ceremonies and hearing their stories, and the stories of their families, about how they have journeyed through their studies and got to the point where they have graduated.

When I first started the role, someone said to me that I would spend a lot of time being filmed and I would get used to it. I really did not believe them, but it has happened. I have interviewed interesting people for the OU Students chat show Talking Points and I have made many films for the WELS faculty encouraging students in their studies and giving them information about activities within the University. As part of closing the feedback loop with WELS I have been involved in videos answering the 'you said, we did' questions. I have also been part of one of the new modules for HWSC,

almost a goggle-box experience! So now when someone says can we film you, my answer is always yes!!

I have been appointed to many committees as part of my CEC and WELS rep role. I have been on the over-arching Scholarship committee, learning about scholarship across the University and I have been part of PRAXIS, which is the WELS scholarship centre. I have also been on the WELS teaching committee and observed the ECYS Boards of Study so that I can understand what has been happening across the faculty. I have presented at all of the faculty assemblies that I have attended either giving an update about what I have been up to or an update on the Student Charter group that I have been part of. As part of the Student Charter I have had the opportunity to run discussions across the University to help with this. As the first two modules to go live on the Model Office are WELS modules, I am on the working group, and as part of this group, have had the opportunity to be an assessor at a model office recruitment day. As part of my CEC role, I have been heading up the monthly online student experience discussions and am involved with many Student Voice activities within WELS including having the privilege of being on both a panel for student awards and tutor awards.

Over my time, I have spent a great deal of time working behind the scenes with other student reps trying to make things right about alternative formats. I have been involved in the Student Learning Adjustment Strategy, and I have made sure that the student's voice is heard, we may not be where we need to be yet, but steps are being taken to make sure we are. And lastly, as part of the recent issues with COVID 19, I have worked closely to help and support students and advising the faculty with their communications.

I have been involved in embedding student voice within the faculty and ensuring support from within the faculty for the continuing role of FAR. I have given a presentation at the Student voice conference in addition to

helping facilitate a workshop. I have also made presentations to the Social partnerships network and attended the RAISE student engagement conference in Newcastle. As part of the regular student consultations, I have participated at those in person and helped to run them online as well. I have also run student engagement workshops using my love of Lego during student voice week.

I have had the opportunity to be part of one of the Associations first student-led projects. The idea was to raise awareness of homelessness in Milton Keynes and to collect food and clothing to be distributed; it was called Donate and Donuts. We managed to collect over 2500 donations and it was an absolute privilege to be able to help give these to the charities we worked with. I have also volunteered at various residential schools representing the student's association both in Bath and Milton Keynes and the first Freshers fair in MK.

During my term, it has been the OU's 50th Celebrations. I was at Charter Day in MK and an event in Scotland. I am so happy to be part of the OU at this time as my Dad was in one of the first cohorts of students to be awarded a degree.

As part of my CEC role, I have been on the Culture review group. We have performed a comprehensive review into the current Association culture and the culture we are aiming for. As part of this, I have had the opportunity to present our culture review project at the JISC CAN Conference. As part of developing a new Association strategy, I have been on the development review group and as the incoming President, I am looking forward to being able to see into place everything that has been envisioned this term.

During this time, I have been studying full time, and I have just finished my undergraduate degree in Primary Education. I aim to continue to a Master's in Education while continuing to represent students in my new role as

President. My two monsters have got two years older, though not necessarily wiser, and my husband has done a fantastic job supporting me through this to allow me to do all of the things that I have done. I could not do any of this without him and the monsters doing what they do.

Faculty Association Representative (FASS)

Billy Docherty

Standing for election to this role, I had prepared a manifesto built around two main pledges. These were to embed the student voice in the heart of the faculty and to start the process of building a stronger FASS community. I can say that I managed to achieve the main objectives I set out in my election campaigning.

Taking up my role on the 1st of August 2018, I had already prepared my own “to do” list which set out my main goals in the first six months of my term. These included spending time meeting the FASS senior management and staff teams, building my contacts within the faculty. This led to me being invited to join many committees to represent the student voice. This was something that I did not do alone, where possible I made sure that other reps and students were involved. This included having over forty students from across the nations attend the Faculty Assembly meetings. Not only did this allow the students to see what the faculty is doing behind the scenes to support them but also gave them direct access to the Executive Dean of the faculty, where they could ask questions and express their views on how the faculty was supporting students.

In 2019, I was approached by the school of psychology to lead a student panel as part of their reaccreditation with the British Psychological Society. This allowed us to bring a panel of twelve students onto campus and work together in presenting the students views on all aspects of the courses and the support they receive in learning. This was a huge success with the BPS commenting that the panel played an important part in their decision, as well as the three main recommendations being ones that the students had brought forward during the consultation. We had students from all levels of

learning and representatives from the four home nations participating. This process was supported by the Students Association Staff and a huge thank you has to go to Natalie Pope (Central Committee Representative) who assisted me in this process. The feedback we received from the participant's was overwhelmingly positive, with many of them commenting on how this showed the importance of the student voice within the OU Students Association and the faculty.

During my term I started 'FASS Connected', a monthly adobe chat for all FASS students. This allowed me to start the process of building the FASS community. This was supported by a team of FASS students, who acted as chat hosts at each event. I also was involved in student meet ups, mainly in Scotland as well as supporting the Open University Psychological Society in supporting and promoting student involvement across the UK. The success of my role was down to the support I received from the Students Association staff, faculty staff, support staff and most importantly the students of FASS. Unfortunately, the Corona Virus hit as we were about to launch the FASS 'Speakeasy', which I hope the next FAR will pick up with the faculty. It has been a complete honour to represent the students in FASS and due to personal circumstances, I had to step down just before the end of my term.

I personally have gained so much confidence from doing this role and have loved the chance to meet so many dedicated students and reps. I wish the incoming Central Executive Committee every success in the future.

Area Association Representative (England)

Danielle Smith

I've been volunteering with the Students Association since 2016, shortly after I started my second qualification with the OU. It all came about after I attended a Student Consultation event organised by the University. The Association has their own slot for the last couple of hours of the day at every Consultation, and the two student reps who were there that day to talk about the Association and all the opportunities on offer, were so passionate and enthusiastic about their experiences that I knew I had to get involved. I started by signing up to become a Central Committee Representative (CCR) on the Board of Studies for the School of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing. It was such an interesting experience, learning about how modules and qualifications are created and seeing for myself just how much the student voice counts as I sat among the team grouped around the table who regularly asked me for a student's point of view, that I knew I was doing something important and I wanted to carry on doing more of it. I then volunteered for the first time at a degree ceremony and also accepted an invitation to be one of six student reps who sit on the University's Senate, a role I held for three years as well as continuing to be a CCR moving through different committees. After being invited to attend a meeting of the 2016 - 2018 CEC as an observer, I was inspired to stand in the 2018 elections as a candidate for the next CEC. I felt the role of England AAR suited me perfectly, as I would get to meet students and tell them about the fantastic work the Association does, but also to answer queries and take any issues back to the team and on to the University. I was overjoyed to be elected and have loved every second of the last two years.

The main points of my manifesto were to continue building on the work done by my predecessors to build a vibrant student community and to make sure I was available for students who needed help or information.

I believe I have fulfilled those priorities to the best of my ability. I started by organising my own meet up in Newcastle at the beginning of the term and the following September, took it to the next level by borrowing an idea from the previous England AARs by having a Big Meet Up at the OU's campus in Milton Keynes. This was a fantastic day, with a Societies fair, campus tours that were superbly run by student volunteers and the opportunity to meet lots of OU students, including a student who travelled all the way from Switzerland! This couldn't have been done without the wonderful Community team in the Association office and I'm very grateful to them for pulling it all together.

Alongside that, I made sure I got out and about to meet OU students by attending face to face consultations in Manchester, York and, though a little out of my boundaries, Glasgow. In May 2019 I spent a weekend at the Warwick University campus where the OU Psychological Society were holding one of their revision weekends and ran a merchandise stall there. I volunteered at the Harrogate degree ceremony in October 2019, just a year after graduating there myself, and loved sharing the day with all of the students celebrating their success. It hasn't all been face to face encounters either. During the Freshers events that have been held each September and February, plus additional online events such as Community Drop Ins and Student Experience chats, I've attended a variety of these and met many more students across the country, whilst answering queries and providing support to students in all faculties.

Aside from the more social, student facing side of the role, there has been lots of work with the rest of the CEC and the staff in the office. The Students Association launched its brand new strategy in October 2019 and was the

result of many months work. I was asked to be a member of the steering group overseeing the work being done on the new Strategy as well as participating in the task and finish groups dealing with specific strands of that work. Many CEC members were present at the launch of the Strategy on the OU campus including myself and it was a proud moment for us all.

There were other workstreams to get involved in too. These included being a member of the Student Consultation Management Group, who organise all of the OU's student consultation events and decide the topics for consultation, getting involved in the elections review group and being part of a panel of students who were invited to meet the applicants for the role of Vice Chancellor to take over from Mary Kellet who retired last year.

On a personal level, attending the OU's 50th birthday celebrations on Charter Day in 2019 was a highlight for me. Seeing some of the student success stories made a few of us very emotional, especially the wonderful speech given by our own Association President, Cath Brown, and we felt incredibly proud to be representing OU students at the time of such a landmark celebration. I can only hope that those student reps on the CEC in another 50 years feel that same sense of pride when they attend the 100th birthday celebrations!

It's such a shame that during the last months of our term, we have been hit with the outbreak of a worldwide pandemic which has altered the way we all live and work but despite that, the OU student community is growing stronger all the time. I feel an enormous sense of pride that I have been part of that and will continue to be so in any way I can as long as I am an OU student.

Area Association Representative (Northern Ireland)

Wendy Reid

And so it began!

My Open University journey was launched in October 2011 with AA100, the first module on my pathway to a BA (Hons) History. Fellow students will recognise the feeling I had at the completion of AA100 was that of being totally hooked on the experience of being part of the OU family. At my graduation in 2015, I witnessed the work of the OU Students Association in action as they manned the thriving merchandise stall out in the foyer. They exuded enthusiasm! I found it contagious and considered this very much in keeping with the ethos of the Students Association that we're here to help and we feel very much a part of a growing and caring community.

So roll on 2018, I'm at the start of my current journey of studying Law (LLB) and I consider that it would be a new experience to put myself forward for the next round of association elections. I did and was elected as Area Association Representative (AAR) for Northern Ireland. I felt very proud and very honoured that other students considered me the right candidate to represent them at Association level. This I have worked to do for the past two years.

The student community in Northern Ireland

There are three universities in Northern Ireland and in a recent survey the Open University was voted the best for providing student satisfaction. We in the Association are proud of this. As it currently stands, the OU has nearly 3,600 students enrolled in Northern Ireland who are supported by 169 tutors and 46 members of staff based at headquarters in Belfast. That's a lot

students in a relatively small country with many of those students studying in rural locations. It is a challenge to create a community in which these students, who are studying remotely, feel supported and connected. The Students Association works to achieve this and the role of AAR is an important one because, in many cases, the AAR can be the link between the student who feels unheard and the network of support provided by the largest educational institution in the United Kingdom.

The role of AAR for Northern Ireland in 2018-2020

Let's remember that the OU was in the top half of higher education institutions in the UK Research Excellence Framework (2014). That kind of achievement needs promoted because in NI there are areas of educational underachievement in a society still scarred by 40 years of conflict. It's very important to remember that the Students Association is about community; working in the community, growing a working and cohesive community. In 2018, the work as AAR began by taking the opportunities that the OU provides to those in communities where access to higher education will make a huge difference. This kind of outreach has been successful and is ongoing in community centres for women, in centres where working class youth are discovering the value of the access courses that the OU provides as that first step towards a degree.

The role of AAR in Northern Ireland worked to grow new links between post-primary schools and the university. This was through outreach to teachers in secondaries, particularly in the area of special needs, by suggesting ways in which post-16 pupils could enhance their options. The Students Association is about encouraging not only youth in education but those adults who have recognised that a degree is certainly within their reach, no matter which background from which they come. The AAR attended open days, both at headquarters and in regional centres, to meet and encourage those prospective students.

Looking at what the role of AAR achieved in 2018-2020

The intention at the start of this mandate was to grow the role of AAR in Northern Ireland, to try and make a difference but without making the role 'too big' a pair of shoes for someone to step into in the future. The role does take a certain degree of your time – along with your studies, your private commitments, your job – but being creative about how to go about connecting with your student community is as important as making the effort to engage with them. Let's look at what happened over the period of 2018 – 2020:

- * Community outreach in regional centres.
- * Supporting the introduction of a higher education module in Kilcooley Womens' Centre, Bangor.
- * Promotion of the Open University's access modules at post-primary schools in areas of educational underachievement in Belfast.
- * Attendance at student consultations in Belfast and Dublin
- * Hosting of monthly student meet-ups in Belfast
- * Attendance at Central Executive Committee weekends in Milton Keynes
- * Representing the OU Students Association at OU Open Days in Belfast and at post-primary schools' Open Days.

Words of encouragement

It is important to make it clear that the role of AAR for Northern Ireland is one of the most worthwhile roles that an OU student in NI can consider doing. You will attend four meetings of the Central Executive Committee a year in Milton Keynes. This is where you are the voice of your students back home. This is also where you engage with your fellow committee members

across the weekend on issues of strategy, developments, raising issues as well as participating in training and workshops. It's fun and it's the opportunity to become informed and get any support that you need yourself in your role. The one aspect of the role is that it is not only one that provides support, it is one of receiving support.

The role of AAR 2020-2022

The role has now grown to encompass the Republic of Ireland, which brings new challenges for the AAR. In the next two years I hope to create a role into which the candidates of 2022 will feel they can step into and grow even further. The interests and concerns of the OU students of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will be central to that work.

Area Association Representative (Scotland)

Mark Cameron

Introduction

The role of Area Association Representative (AAR) involves a number of areas – representing the views of your nation (in this case, students in Scotland) to the Association and the University, but also to report back on what the Association is doing that impacts upon students in Scotland, and what the University is doing also.

The Scotland AAR role also involves representing students at an external level. What this means is attending events run by “external” bodies – for example QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) Scotland events and SPaQS (Student Participation in Quality Scotland). This report will highlight the bigger pieces of work that I've been involved in over the 2018-20 term and hopes for the future!

OU/Association highlights

I have had a number of opportunities, along with my role's predecessor, and other volunteers in Scotland, to put the student view across at various events and meetings over the 2018-20 term, plus opportunities to raise awareness of the Students Association and what we do.

Early into my term, myself and my predecessor, Patricia Gray, were afforded the opportunity to be present at an Associate Lecturer (tutor) event held in Glasgow. We were able to talk to many of them about the Association, our roles and what we do for students. It was a pleasure for me (as well as a surprise!) to meet one of my former tutors from college, who now is a tutor

within the Faculty of Business and Law as well as a tutor from a previous module. That tutor was one of those that steered me towards studying with the OU, and he remarked just how much he was aware of what we do for students!

We also have representation on one of the committees that the OU in Scotland have within their structure. It's called the Staff and Engagement Group (Scotland) (SSEGS for short) and meets twice a year, alongside the main student consultative meeting for Scotland, which takes place each spring. SSEGS covers a wide variety of topics, dependent upon current issues, from student recruitment and numbers, to regular updates from various areas within the OU in Scotland, and a regular update which I provide to each meeting on the activities the Association is doing and what I am doing in my role. These are valuable meetings to put the viewpoint across, and to influence what the University in Scotland is doing for our students.

Breaking down the barriers to study that our students face is important to me and I've aimed to be involved in areas where I can do this. This past year (2019-20) I have been involved in what is something that the OU in Scotland have never done before – a student mental health agreement. Along with other reps, I have been involved in the work that is being done, and this overlaps with some of the external support provided by NUS Scotland, through their Think Positive work with all institutions in Scotland on student mental health.

External highlights

As I touched upon in my introduction, I also attend many external events and meetings in my role. It's important that, as part-time students, we do as much as we can to get our views and experiences across to the rest of the HE sector, and to learn from other institutions as to what they do.

One of the many ways I do this is networking at events run by SParQS (Student Participation in Quality Scotland), where I meet other student officers at the other universities and colleges across the country – we discuss many topics within higher education in Scotland and what they mean for students in our institutions. They run a two day training event, “That's Quality”, each July, as an induction for new student officers. I was in a fortunate position last July to be attending, having had a year under my belt as AAR Scotland, so was able to help other student officers in background knowledge. SParQS also during this year set up a National Education Officers Network, where student officers across Scotland meet to discuss latest developments in the sector. It's important to put the part time voice across at these events and I have been involved in their work on mental health and wellbeing in the curriculum this year, also, as well as attending the NUS Think Positive events where possible.

A proud moment for me was the opportunity to do the Scottish Mental Health First Aid training course, alongside a member of staff at the OU in Scotland, over two days in late January 2020. This was an opportunity afforded to us by the Think Positive team and I learnt a lot from it. I have recently been invited along to weekly forum meetings by them, discussing how we are as student officers and reps, supporting students through the current Covid-19 pandemic. NUS Scotland have also invited me to weekly meetings with other student officers across Scotland in the same vein. I feel very proud to be able to help support students through the current situation in my role, when we are at a time when so much is unknown and uncertain.

Part of the work I have been involved in with the OU in Scotland on the QAA side of things is the QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes. These are themes which operate on a three year cycle and each institution in Scotland (we are no different) has student representation on their teams – I have been the

student rep on the OU in Scotland team as part of their work. The theme during my term of office has been Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience. As part of this work we came up with a student led project on analytics. I attended the main Themes Leaders Group events where updates on the project are provided as well as what other institutions are doing in their work on the Themes. My hopes for the future are that we can engage students more with this work as it has been a challenge!

The future

I have learnt a lot from the past two years and been able to expand on my knowledge and skills gained in my time with the Association. I feel proud to have represented the students of Scotland at all levels and wherever I have been attending events/meetings. I will continue to do so beyond this term and wish the incoming team all the best – in these times we live in that is more important now than ever before!

Area Association Representative (Wales)

Lucy Richardson

Having taken up role in August 2018, I set out to create links between the Open University in Wales, the main Student Association office staff on campus in Milton Keynes and the wider student community in Wales. In this I have been successful, and freely acknowledge the aid of Sarah Jones and Alison Kingan in helping raise awareness of the Student Association in the OU in Wales office who were, due to staff changes, functionally unaware of the existence of the Association. They are now keen to keep links and communication between themselves and the Association open and will include us in events and awareness raising.

My other main aim during the term has been to create a form of grassroots inclusion in the nation and to create a network of Welsh volunteers to (amongst other things) support the AAR with attending events in Wales should they be unavailable or need to be in multiple event's simultaneously. Sometimes this may just help with distance. This also allows the AAR to access a more varied range student opinions from across Wales.

Over the length of this term I have worked closely with the Volunteering and Community teams and over the last 2 years have managed to create a Wales volunteer panel which has started recruiting and is now in pilot. The aim is to provide the support and local attendance to raise Student Association profile. This pilot has already recruited a number of volunteers, and will shortly begin volunteer training, which has been significantly hampered by the ongoing pandemic. Should this be successful it is hoped this would then be expanded to the other nations and also possibly other CEC positions.

I have represented Welsh students at many levels, representing the Welsh students of the Association at the Charter Day celebrations for the 50th

anniversary at events in both England and Wales. I have spent countless hours in the elections review, the strategy review and other similar 'invisible' aids to the smooth functioning of the Association, as well as spending large amounts of time simply reading and commenting on CEC specific material to represent students across all nations, such as the continuing accessibility issues around course materials, and the ongoing push to retain printed materials where appropriate for all students.

Area Association Representative (Continental Europe)

Michail Kasoutas

This is a report about my activities as the Area Association Representative (AAR) for Continental Europe. In this role, I was responsible for representing and reporting upon the views of students living in Continental Europe to the CEC and informing the CEC about Association activities within Continental Europe.

Social Activities

There were no targeted social activities for European students, however they were promptly informed about the OU Students Association community drop-ins. There has been some interest for face to face meetings from students during my term. Students were prompted to seek support by the Community team.

Social Media

As administrator for the Facebook groups for Southern and Northern Europe I have kept students up to date with major OU and Students Association news. I continued to use my personal Facebook and Twitter accounts for the role during my term, but most news are shared through posting at the Southern and Northern Europe Facebook groups. VLE forums were mostly silent.

Other Activities

I participate at the Student Led Projects Approval Panel and I have been appointed as a CEC member of CAP. I also collaborate with VP Media and Campaigns in relation to issues affecting international students studying with the OU, and UK and international students wishing to use their OU qualifications for further study or employment outside of the UK.

In May 2019 a discussion was started between Emily Benson (Project

Manager, QACP), Caroline Nash (Business Manager, Student Recruitment and Fees), Rachel Hackett (Senior Manager, Qualifications), and Fanni Zombor (VP Media and Campaigns) which closely followed with collaboration with Fanni Zombor. At the time we tried to identify some issues and areas for further attention relating to international students studying with the OU and for UK and international students wishing to use their OU qualifications for further study or employment outside of the UK.

At the time we realized that people and groups that used to exist in support of international students no longer exist with the exception of the international marketing team who seemingly has taken the lead. Various issues in relation to international students and UK students wishing to work or study outside the UK have been surfaced around the university without a clear place for these issues to live:

- (i) There is a need for greater help and advice about recognition of Open University Qualifications outside of the UK – This is one of the largest issues.
- (ii) Careers and Employability support for those intending to work or study outside of the UK after completion of their qualification – At the moment this support is very UK focussed.
- (iii) Peer support for international students – there is no clear community space supported by the university, for international students to discuss issues and support each other.
- (iv) Although there is an International Students team in Student Recruitment, MK they deal with new students and enquirers but not continuing students.
- (v) There used to be a group of ‘International Champions’ in the SRSC (SR and SST), across all locations. After a review (October, 2018) their work was temporarily routed to the Student Recruitment Business Managers and finally to Student Recruitment.
- (vi) International students have some issues that are common to other international students, but different to UK students studying the same subjects/qualifications. OU doesn’t still demonstrate that is fully supporting international students in

- relation to professional recognition and accreditation of various qualifications, such as the MBA.
- (vii) There is no clear route for international students to raise issues that are affecting them as a group. Issues raised by international students (Boards of Studies, qualification or module forums) is diluted due to the small number of international students.
 - (viii) There are concerns in the international student community in relation to the impact of Brexit. Unfortunately, it is not always clear where the latest university updates on this situation can be found.
 - (ix) OU needs to be confident of the experience that international students are getting, and be very clear about how, and where, they may be able to use their qualification.
 - (x) OU curriculum offered via the FutureLearn platform must also provide clear guidance about recognition of OU qualifications outside UK.
 - (xi) Informal discussions with other universities about recognition of UK qualifications has indicated that this may not be as much of an issue as it is for the OU.

Various actions at the time had been identified that would help to address some of the issues raised.

Last, but not least at all, the new pandemic of Corona Virus led many European countries to impose a 'lockdown', restricting gatherings and forbidding international air travel, measures that are affecting European OU students physically as well as psychologically with effect also in their studies and unforeseeable end in the near future.

Appendix 1: Position statement on tutorial recordings

Tutorials are an important part of their learning for OU students. Many students have expressed to the Association, through formal and informal routes, the value they place on tutorials.

Many students have also made it clear that they feel recordings of online tutorials can be vital for their learning. Whilst it is ideal if students can attend tutorials “live”, a recording of a tutorial has several uses: -

- It avoids a student who is unable to attend missing out entirely on the learning experience
- It enables students to revisit tutorials to support their revision, or if they were behind the study calendar at the time of the tutorial and hence did not gain full benefit at the time
- Students with disabilities may need to be able to pause or revisit sections of the tutorial

The Association also recognises that:-

- There are some students who may feel inhibited from participating fully if their tutorial is recorded
- Some students will have reason not to wish their names to be visible on a recording
- Some tutorials include discussion of sensitive material, for which a recording may be inappropriate.

Accordingly, the Association’s position on the recording of online tutorials is that:-

- At least one recording of each type of learning event should be available to every student on a module
- The recording should in general be of an actual tutorial involving students, since students benefit from hearing the discussion and questions of their peers
- However, there may be circumstances (such as a technology failure) when an actual tutorial recording is not possible; an “empty room” recording would then be appropriate, but this should be informed by the student questions and discussions that took place in actual tutorials, and be structured to promote active engagement.
- It may be appropriate to pause the recording at intervals if very sensitive matters are being discussed, or to allow participants to ask questions they would be reluctant to ask if recorded. However, given the benefit derived from discussion and questions, there should not be an automatic pausing of the recording for all discussion and questions
- Recordings need not be fully anonymised (for example, the tutor may address a student by name) but the recording produced should have participants labelled simply as “participant 1”, “participant 2” etc, rather than by their full names.
- Recordings from a module should continue to be available to any students studying for a resit of that module, or who have a discretionary postponement of that module
- When there is more than one instance of a particular learning event available to each student, at least one of the events should be unrecorded, to allow those students for whom recording is an inhibitor to attend.
- It should be clearly stated in advance which tutorials are designated to be recorded, and which designated to be unrecorded, to enable students to make an informed choice
- For any tutorials that take place in addition to the one recorded and one unrecorded, the decision whether to record lies with the tutor(s) and students attending

Appendix 2: Position statement on online delivery

The Association has carried out formal research on student preferences on module delivery

[https://www.oustudents.com/uploads/ousa.poweredbygravit-e.co.uk/Module_Delivery-report%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.oustudents.com/uploads/ousa.poweredbygravit-e.co.uk/Module_Delivery-report%20(1).pdf) . The recent feedback from our members, through both informal and formal routes, confirm that the views and concerns expressed by the participants in this research are still representative of current students.

It should particularly be noted that online delivery is problematic for:-

- students in rural areas
- students frequently obliged to travel
- students who are only able to access the internet in public places

Electronic delivery, whether online or otherwise, is problematic for:-

- students who have limited access to devices
- students who have some specific disabilities
- students who are obliged to use screens during much of their working day

Additionally, a significant number of students report impaired depth of processing when reading substantial amounts of material on-screen.

In the light of the clear concerns expressed by our members about online delivery, and the categories of students adversely affected specifically the Association's position is as follows:-

- 1 For any module with substantial fixed content (i.e. content that will be broadly the same from one presentation to the next, intended to deliver information, concepts and ideas about the subject matter of

the module), that fixed content should be provided to all students, at no additional cost, as hard copy format in addition to electronic versions.

- 2 For any inherently onscreen activities
 - A downloadable, offline version should be provided whenever possible
 - The materials should be structured to facilitate study for students who have only periodic access to devices and to an internet connection
 - The bandwidth required for online activities should be a consideration, to avoid disadvantaging students with poor connections.

- 3 The design of any new module should involve “design for print” and “design for alternative formats” from the start

- 4 If it is proposed that a new module be presented online with no provision of hard copy, even if this is a replacement for an existing online module:-
 - A full justification of this intent should be given during production
 - Appropriate scrutiny of this decision is carried out through governance.

