WE ARE

#OUSTUDENTS

Your guide to the student elections and a first look at Conference 2018
The OU Students Association elections for your student leadership team are right around the corner. The team, known as the Central Executive Committee, and the Board of Trustees are elected every two years, and we want you to get involved. All members of the Students Association (that’s you!) can stand for a role and vote.

Keep reading for more details on how to stand, what to stand for, how the voting works and much more... Also included is a sneak peek at the planning for Conference 2018!

OU Students Association team

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The Students Association Anti-bullying Pledge

- I pledge to speak out if I experience bullying and ask for help when I need it.
- I pledge to challenge and report bullying wherever I see it.
- I pledge to always consider that what I say and do can affect people.
- I pledge to support friends and loved ones when they are being bullied.
VOTING DATES

Key dates to keep an eye out for...

- **30 April**: Nominations open
- **6 May**: Nominations close
- **14 May**: Profiles live and forums open
- **Weekend of 18 May**: Live candidate questions
- **21 May**: Voting opens
- **30 May**: Voting closes
- **1 June**: Results announced
CANDIDATES WELCOME!

Every member of the Students Association is eligible to run for and vote in our biennial elections, regardless of whether they have been involved with us in the past. We know that our members have a wide range of experiences, and have much to offer fellow students in terms of ensuring their views are represented to the University.

It’s an open competition - those who don’t have Association volunteering experience should sell their other experiences and skills as a reason why they could do the role they are standing for. This includes having some self-awareness of the things you’d have to learn, and how you’d approach that. Those with Association experience should talk about why that is important, what they’ve brought to the organisation and how their skills/experience have developed through the opportunities they’ve had and the hard work that they have done. This is an election, and we can’t assume the electorate (made up of over 170,000 OU students) is aware of every bit of experience that each candidate has - they need to represent themselves as the most credible student for the role.

Remember, you may not agree with how the organisation has worked in the past but it is always advisable to recognise the huge effort of your predecessors on behalf of other students and the strides made in the last term and over past years. Everyone who stands and/or votes in the elections clearly cares about the OU Students Association and wants it to be the best that it can be. Sometimes that means people won’t agree, but a good debate is one where the participants respect and listen to each other though they may disagree on the solution.

Other top tips:

- Find students who may not already be engaged with the Students Association and encourage them to exercise their democratic right.
- Focus on yourself, not your opposition. Be friendly and positive.
MANIFESTOS MATTER

As voters in the 2018 elections, you will need to sift through dozens of manifestos to ascertain which candidate is most suitable to represent you in that position. But, how do you spot a good manifesto?

A manifesto should tell the voter why the candidate should represent the student body and why the electorate should vote them into that particular role. It sets out ideas and plans of what the candidate aims to do if elected and why they would be the best candidate for the role.

MANIFESTO /ˌmanˌˌfestō/ (noun): A written statement to publicly declare the intentions, motivations, or beliefs of a person or group. From the Latin manifestus — to clearly reveal, to make public.

A good manifesto should include:

- Good knowledge of the role that the candidate is standing for.
- Reasons why the candidate is standing for that position.
- What they want to achieve in their term.
- Realistic and tangible promises.
- Reasons why they are the best candidate for the role.

Thinking about standing for a position yourself? Here are our top tips for writing and recording your manifesto...

- Tell voters what your objectives are, you are accountable to the student body!
- Make it relevant to the position you’re running for. Show voters that you are a great leader, that you’re passionate and that you’re the best person for the role.
- Be concise and use clear language. Don’t use long or complicated words and acronyms.
- Your manifesto is about you, not the people you’re running against.
- Be informed and representative – do your research on the role, OU matters and issues and the OU Students Association!
- Think about being creative and inspiring, what are you going to do to make the student experience better?
- Make it personal, truthful and realistic.
- Try and find the balance between achievable and appealing.
- Plan and practice your manifesto videos before the final filming!
- Make sure you film in a suitable space with good light and speak slowly and clearly.

Closing date for nominations is midnight on Sunday, 6 May 2018. Candidate profiles and their manifesto videos will be live from Friday, 11 May 2018 on the Elections portal. You will have your chance to question all candidates from Monday, 14 May up until voting closes on Wednesday, 30 April.

Don’t miss out on your chance to elect the right candidate to represent your student needs!
Elections will be taking place for 23 positions for student representatives to sit on the Central Executive Committee and Board of Trustees for the 2018-20 term, which commences from Wednesday, 1 August 2018. Here are the positions available...

**President**
The President is the elected head of the OU Students Association, a member of OU Council and a Trustee of the Association and the OU Students Educational Trust. They are responsible for leading the organisation and ensuring the objectives of the Association are met and is the lead in representing the Association to external organisations and within The Open University.

**Deputy President**
The Deputy President’s primary role is to support the work of the President and to deputise for the President as necessary. You will take on oversight of the Association volunteering strategy and support projects which fall outside of other Central Executive Committee member’s remits. The Deputy President is also a Trustee of the Association and a Director of OUSA Services Limited.

**Vice President Administration**
The Vice President Administration has primary responsibility for the Association’s assets, financial management and Constitution. They are a trustee of the Association and of the OU Students Educational Trust (OUSET). They also lead on the annual funding negotiations with the University. It’s an important and time-consuming role.

**Vice President Community**
The Vice President Community is responsible for encouraging and enabling a vibrant and supportive student community, enabling OU Students to engage with and participate in the Association at local and national levels.

**Vice President Education**
The Vice President Education has the responsibility for keeping the University’s educational programmes and related matters under continuous review. They also have the responsibility of ensuring we have effective academic representation and make sure student views on the quality of and aspirations for learning and teaching are represented to University academic governance committees.

**Vice President Equality & Diversity**
The Vice President Equality and Diversity has the responsibility for ensuring the Association and the University fulfil their commitments to Equality and Diversity in accordance with relevant legislation and policy. They shall be the Association’s point of contact for issues relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

**Vice President Media & Campaigns**
The Vice President Media and Campaigns has the responsibility for overseeing and reviewing the Association’s communication strategy to ensure that we are effectively communicating with students and other stakeholders. In addition they will offer advice to the Central Executive Committee on the best use of media for campaigning purposes.

**Vice President Student Support**
The Vice President Student Support has the responsibility of ensuring that the University provides the necessary support for students enabling them to study. This is a wide ranging remit which involves a significant time commitment for the post holder.
**Vice President Student Voice**

The Vice President Student Voice has primary responsibility for ensuring that the Association is engaging with the student body so that the representations made to the University are soundly based on the views and aspirations of students. Working in collaboration with Vice President Education, Faculty Association Representatives, Central Committee Representatives and Learning Experience Representatives to provide a cohesion in our Student Voice activities.

**Student Member of Council**

Council is the executive governing body of the University exercising control of University affairs including strategic planning, monitoring effectiveness and performance, finance, audit, estate management and human resource management.

The student member of Council is not considered a student representative in this context and must, as with all Council members, put the needs of the University first.

**Faculty Association Representatives**

There are positions available to represent the four faculties: Wellbeing, Education & Language Studies (WELS), Faculty of Business & Law (FBL), Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) and Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences (FASS).

Faculty Association Representatives have the primary responsibility for ensuring that there is faculty representation of Association members in regards to all areas of the student experience.

**Area Association Representatives**

There are positions available to represent the six nations (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Europe).

The Area Association Representatives have the primary responsibility of supporting the development of a student community in their area and, where necessary, representing the views of students in their assigned area to the Central Executive Committee, the Open University and relevant external bodies.

**Student Trustees – three positions available**

The OU Students Association Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility for the Association’s affairs and exercises its powers subject to relevant legislation in addition to our Constitution and Bye-Laws. This includes oversight of the governance, staffing, finances and strategy of the Association. Read more about Trustees [here](#).

All roles require different skills, have varying workloads and time commitments required so if you are interested in standing for a role on the Central Executive Committee or as a Trustee, click [here](#) to view the full job descriptions.

**Why we have elections...**

As a registered charity, the Students Association is governed by charity law and the Education Act 1994. Elections have to be held in line with our Constitution which stipulates that all of the roles above must be elected by members. Very soon we will be calling on our members (yes, all 170,000 odd of you!) to elect not only the student members to the Board of Trustees, but also our Central Executive Committee (CEC). The CEC work as a team along with the Office to realise the Association’s mission, vision and strategic objectives. Our Board of Trustees oversee and are accountable for everything we do as an organisation, ensuring that the Association’s affairs are managed professionally. These are hugely important roles and as you can imagine, elections are pretty important for us!

Our Bye-laws stipulate how elections are to be run. We are working with Electoral Reform Services Ltd (ERS) who are administering the election process for us. Take a look at our [bye-laws](#) for more information.
HOW YOUR VOTE IS COUNTED...

The Students Association elects its Central Executive Committee using Single Transferable Vote.

What is Single Transferable Vote?
The Single Transferable Vote is an electoral system that produces ‘proportional representation’ while at the same time giving voters more choice over who their representatives will be.

The Single Transferable Vote is a logical system of election designed to attain its objectives with economy, efficiency and certainty. It ensures that as far as possible every vote has a positive part in helping to elect a candidate, that no voting power is wasted and that no voter has a greater influence on the result than any other.

What does a transferable vote mean?
Instead of the voter placing crosses next to their favourite candidates, the voter is encouraged to rank as many candidates as they like in order of preference.

The number “1” must therefore go next to the name of their first choice candidate, for that ballot paper to be valid. Thereafter, they have the choice of voting “2”, “3” etc next to the names of other candidates. They should continue to rank the candidates until they can express no further preferences.

This does not mean that the voter has as many votes to cast as there are candidates. The voter has one vote for the whole election – a transferable vote in the event of their first choice candidate having more votes than that person needs to get elected, or not enough votes to get elected.

Thus the voter is saying: “I really want candidate A to get elected. In the event of candidate A having more votes than they need according to the quota for election (see below), or similarly, not enough others also supporting A’s candidacy, I want my vote transferred to my next favourite candidate, B.”

How are votes counted in an STV election?
The first step is the calculation of the number of votes which candidates must receive to be elected. This is called the ‘quota’.

The quota is calculated by dividing the total number of valid votes by one more than the number to be elected. The quota is set at the point that the first person is elected. At each stage prior to the first person being elected the quota is recalculated with the non-transferable papers removed from the count of the valid votes.

At the first stage the voting papers are counted to determine the total valid vote and then calculate the quota for election. Any candidates who have at least a quota of first preference votes are deemed elected at this stage.

If a candidate has not achieved the election quota in the first round of counting, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated. That candidate’s votes are then transferred to the (unelected) candidates marked as the next choice by the voters.

The transfer of surpluses and the elimination of candidates continue until the required number of candidates has been elected.
WHY SHOULD I VOTE?

Election season is upon us! And although it would be all too easy to sit by and watch the Elections go by, it will be hard to ignore the saturation of emails and social media posts that will be on colourful display in the coming weeks. However, despite the gravitas attached to our elections, the numbers of actual voters is disappointingly low. Historically, there are a great deal of students who will not vote in the elections even though it is imperative that more students vote in order for the Students Association to be the most demographically representative and effective organisation it can be.

It may be down to a lack of understanding on how influential the elected Representatives and Students Association can actually be, but it's the work of these dedicated few individuals that has meant students have access to named degrees, support to complete your studies under transitional arrangements, access to eduroam, access to postgraduate loans, and much much more that we can often take for granted. Successful candidates for Trustee positions will have legal responsibility over an incredibly large organisation, some of whom will have very little practical experience of this. If I was a student affected by the decisions of a few individuals, I know I would want a say in who is elected.

There are many enthusiastic, brave individuals who put themselves forward at each round of elections hoping to be chosen to represent you and your views and they would love the opportunity to engage with you. These students put themselves forward because they genuinely believe that the Students Association and the Open University can improve and they want to help shape those improvements. The focus of these improvements can be yours to decide as you vote for the candidate who bests represents the interests that you share. And of course, if you don't agree with any, you can always vote for RON (Re-Open Nominations) to show your dissatisfaction in the candidates.

The whole of the Central Executive Committee and the Student Trustees will be representing you for two years, they are accountable and answer to you, the electorate. If you do not vote you make it harder for the elected Representatives to say they represent the collective voice of the students, a very powerful tool to have in their arsenal as the OU enters into some rather uncertain times.

In other words, make your voice heard in the elections, engage with the candidates and find out how they can help to resolve any issues you have relating to your studies with the OU. It is essential to vote so that you can ensure the Students Association works for you.
GET THE BUZZ FOR CONFERENCE BUSINESS!

Whether you’re attending face to face or online your Saturday morning at Conference will be all about the Business!

There will be the opportunity to hear the current Association President reflect on all the wonderful achievements the Association has been part of for the last year and to say a quick ‘hello’ to your new elected Central Executive Committee. It’s always good to put a face to a name isn’t it?

Conference will also hear on Saturday morning from eminent voices in the world of Higher Education and politics and we’ll make sure you as OU students have chance to ask questions that relate to being part time and distance learners at the biggest UK university. Start thinking of some good ones now!

Before Conference all the relevant information will be available online and you will have received a link so that you can read at your leisure in preparation for the big day. Then when you arrive at Conference you will receive your Business Folder with a range of bright, easy to read booklets inside with all the relevant information you will need for an interesting Saturday morning. We also including a handy checklist to help guide you through all the Saturday morning sessions!
Conference will include you making some important decisions as Saturday morning is an exciting time when you can help shape the future of your Association - what a great position to be in!

To prepare for these important decisions you need to know:

**Why it’s important to vote**

Your voice matters to the Association so make sure your voice is heard loudly and clearly. Decisions made at Conference 2018 will be used by the Association when planning for the coming years.

**What the votes are about**

This year you will vote on:

- Formal but necessary matters such as receiving reports and accounts from your Central Executive Committee.

- A new way of structuring your Association. The proposal is to change from an unincorporated charity to an incorporated one. Not sure what incorporation means and want to find out more about the proposals? Find out more and prepare for your vote by looking [here](#).

- New guidelines for your Association. Every four years there is the opportunity to revise the Association’s rules. Your opinion is wanted on all sorts of issues from who should be Chair of the Board of Trustees to considering the diversity of your Central Executive Committee.

**How to vote**

Casting your vote on the Saturday morning won’t even require leaving your seat! If you’re voting at Conference it will be done via a simple handset and, if online, using a unique link. All the necessary information will be provided at Conference but it really couldn’t be easier to have your say!

There will be a fully trained team of volunteer student Business Champions on hand before and during Conference to support you to contribute fully to the Business session on Saturday morning.

Please look out for lots more information dropping through your letter box or pinging into your inbox. It’s shaping up to be the most interesting Business session we’ve had in years and you can be part of it! How exciting!
It’s not just business at Conference 2018, there’s also a variety of other events and activities for you to get involved in! From workshops to games, find out what else you can get involved in over the Conference weekend...

Friday, 22 June
Conference 2018 officially starts from 2pm on Friday, 22 June on Milton Keynes campus. After you register, there will be a number of campus tours occurring throughout the afternoon as well as a chance to find out more The Open University faculties and services through our OU Expo in the Jennie Lee building.

You can also check out the research that goes on at the University during the postgraduate poster showcase. There’ll also be a chance to meet and greet other OU students throughout the evening at the delegate reception.

Saturday, 23 June
Saturday, 23 June starts off with the Business section, which will run all morning to discuss important matters with your Association. After business and lunch there will be a range of workshops and speakers that you can attend and get involved in, including our Societies Fair in the marquee, as well as food and games on the Mulberry Lawn.

Also in the marquee will be our OU Students Shop, where you can buy a range of OU and OU Students Association merchandise throughout Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

Sunday, 24 June
For the last day of Conference we have a number of Association workshops going on throughout the morning, as well as more workshops and speakers lined up which will be revealed closer to the event.

There’ll be another opportunity to visit the Societies Fair before finishing Conference 2018 with lunch in the Hub!
Fingers on Buzzers!
Why not come long to the University Challenge Quiz event taking place on Saturday afternoon. It is a great chance to put your knowledge to the test and see our 2018 team take on other OU students and staff.

At the January warm-up event from the moment the gong was sounded the 2018 University Challenge Team did not fail to impress and proved to be quite the experts on figure skating! Who would of thought it? Crowned the winners at the 2018 warm-up event, who will step up and take on our 2018 University Challenge team?

Societies Fair
Societies are a big part of the student community in the OU Students Association! We currently have 24 societies affiliated with the Association, from academic based societies such as the OU Psychological Society and OU Alchemy, to hobby based societies like the Mountaineering Society and Write Club.

A number of societies will be at Conference based in the marquee on the Mulberry Lawn showcasing what their society is all about and how you can get involved through displays and interactive workshops.

The Societies Fair will run on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning so don’t forget to visit the marquee and get involved!

Keep a look out!
There’ll be a treasure hunt going on throughout the weekend so keep your eyes peeled for more info!
A LOOK BACK AT CONFERENCE 2016...
DIGITAL DELEGATES

If you aren’t able to attend Conference in person, then you can still take part online as a Digital Delegate. You will need to enter the ballot to be a Digital Delegate and, if successful, you will be able to vote in the Business section of Conference with a special voting code.

In addition to this you’ll get an exclusive goodie bag to help you enjoy Conference online and you will be able to get special online content and games on our website. Being a Digital Delegate is a fantastic way to get involved so if you aren’t joining us in person, make sure you sign up!

KEEP UP TO DATE!

Don’t forget you can find out all the latest information on the OU Students Association elections and Conference 2018 by signing up to our website and checking out our social media pages!

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